**power and status struggles:**

**a HIERARCHICAL perspective of conflict in groups**

***Santosh Srinivas1, Ruchi Sinha1***

*1Indian School of Business*

**Abstract**

Power and status, two distinct yet related bases of social hierarchy, are intensely sought resources in groups. In this article, we propose a theoretical framework that examines how power and status motives of individuals lead to intragroup struggles. We differentiate between power/status contest and power/status conflicts, and present propositions on how they are related to one another. Drawing on tenets from sociology and psychology, we integrate these phenomena, and propose a process by which they shape group dynamics. We examine how perceptions of socio-structural variables (legitimacy, stability and permeability of hierarchy) moderate the effect of power struggle on status struggle, and power/status contest on conflict. Lastly, we highlight the implications for intragroup conflict research.

*Keywords:* groups, conflict, power, status, social hierarchy

**power and status struggles:**

**a HIERARCHICAL perspective of conflict in groups**

Conflict, a ubiquitous phenomenon in groups, has been the subject of a large body of organizational research. The meta-analysis on the subject by De Dreu and colleagues (2003) looked at the two types of intragroup conflict: task conflict and relationship conflict. Subsequently two meta-analysis have been published: one that investigates process conflict, along with the task and relationship conflicts (de Wit et al., 2012), and another that illustrates the importance of both conflict *processes* (i.e., how teams interact to incorporate the differences) and conflict *state* (i.e., the source and extent of disagreement) in groups (DeChurch et al., 2013). In contrast to these empirical studies that have explored the level of different types of conflicts, there has been substantially less attention given to the interpersonal power and status dynamics underlying intragroup conflict. The aim of this article is to conceptually examine how power and status, two distinctive bases of social hierarchies in groups (Magee & Galinsky, 2009), shape the intragroup conflict dynamics.

Intragroup conflict is defined as perceived differences between group members about interests, resources, beliefs, values, or practices that matter to them (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008, p. 6). Prior studies suggest that while conflict in groups can arise over many issues, including when the members compete for material needs, the nature and intensity of conflict varies based on the differences in the individual members’ motive to garner relative power and status in groups (e.g. Keller, 2009). Recent research has also examined how power struggles (eg. Greer & van Kleef, 2010) and status conflicts (Bendersky & Hays, 2012) impact group’s proximal and distal outcomes. However, the effect that the motivational function of power and status hierarchies have on the intragroup conflicts remains largely unexplored. In addition, a closer examination shows that the measurements of power and status struggles are confounded in most studies. Furthermore, as Lovaglia and colleagues (2005) pointed out, one of the weaknesses of studies which have investigated the intertwining of power, status and conflicts in groups has been the lack of conceptual integration across disciplines. We propose a theoretical framework in this article that integrates sociological and psychological theories and attempts to describe the process by which power and status dynamics impact intragroup conflict.

We begin with exploring how power and status hierarchies shape intragroup dynamics. We define power and status struggles, and provide conceptual distinctions between them. We then propose a conceptual framework examining the themes of intragroup struggle, offer seven propositions about the central phenomena, and examine the way in which struggles transform and affect group dynamics. Lastly, we discuss our contributions and implications for research and practice.

**Power and Status in groups**

Before we turn to the proposed theoretical framework, it is essential that we clarify the working definitions of power and status used in this article. Power of an individual is defined as his or her ability to get others in the group to do something that they would otherwise not do (Dahl, 1957). Power arises from individuals’ asymmetric control of valued resources in the group (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Status, a marker of competence (Overbeck et al., 2005), is determined by the amount of respect, deference and social influence an individual has (Ridgeway & Walker, 1995). Status arises from a consensual estimation of an individual’s worthiness by other group members (Lovaglia et al., 2003).

***Bases of social hierarchies***

Power and status hierarchies are considered as distinct rank-orders. Power and status are seen as two analytically separate, but combinable central dimensions of micro social interactions (Kemper & Collins, 1990). Both power and status are important bases for formally or informally rank-ordering individuals in groups (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). There are others who consider power and status as reciprocal, and hence the resulting power, status or prestige social orders as essentially the same (e.g. Mannix & Sauer, 2006). In this article, we adopt a view that though power and status hierarchies might be distinct at some stages of group evolution, they are related and eventually merge into a single hierarchy in which high-rank individuals essentially garner both more respect and resources than those in lower ranks. This perspective of social hierarchy is based on the insights from the status characteristics (Berger et al., 1972, 1977) and status value theories (Thye, 2000). According to status characteristics theory, diffuse status characteristics (such as gender, age and ethnicity) and specific status characteristics (such as task-relevant functional knowledge and experience) get translated into performance expectations, which in turn shape the power and status hierarchy of the group (Knottnerus, 1997). That the status is a determinant of power is further supported by status value theory which demonstrates that the resources held by high status individuals are accorded greater value than those held by low status individuals (Lovaglia et al., 2003).

***Shaping group dynamics***

As noted earlier, conflict research till now has given very little attention to how power and status dynamics shape intragroup conflict. Most of the recent studies have focused on defining the struggles, disagreements and conflicts arising over these dimensions, distinguishing these concepts from the three currently accepted conflict types (task, process and relationship conflicts) and understanding how these affect group outcomes. For example, Keller (2009) illustrated how group personality composition and group climate predict *power conflicts* (defined as struggles for control and dominance within the group), and how these conflicts affect group member stress and turnover. Similarly, in field and experimental studies, Greer and van Kleef (2010) examined the conditions in which *power struggles* (conceptualized as the degree to which members compete over the relative levels of valuable resources held by members within the group) are likely to occur and affect group outcomes. Gardner (2010) examined the effects of *status disagreements* (defined as disagreements amongst group members arising from incompatible assessments of each other’s relative rankings on status hierarchy) on task conflict, coordination and performance. On similar lines, a recent study by Bendersky and Hays (2012) illustrated how structural *status conflicts* (defined as disputes over people’s relative status positions in their group’s social hierarchy) moderates the effect of task conflict on performance.

These studies suggest that the contested and negotiated nature of intragroup power and status is likely to lead to interpersonal conflicts. But scholars have not attempted to clearly disentangle conflicts and struggles on power and status dimensions, and investigate their relationships. Definitions of conflict have been used interchangeably with struggle, making analytical comparison difficult. Furthermore, these phenomena are confounded in their conceptualizations. For example, the dominance assertion items appear in both power conflict (Keller, 2009) and status conflict (cf., Bendersky & Hays, 2012) scales.

We believe that more scholarly attention on the intertwined fronts of power and status is needed for following reasons: (1) power and status, though unique, are closely related; (2) conflicts and struggles over power and status dimensions are distinct in nature, and can have differential causes and effects; and (3) conflicts and struggles over power and status dimensions can transform into each other. We also believe that a better perspective of conflicts in groups can come from a more nuanced and integrated understanding of social hierarchies based on intragroup power and status.

**Intragroup conflict: A proposed conceptual model**

Based on the above theoretical background, we develop a conceptual model that relates power and status struggles, and describe the process through which they affect group outcomes.

***Distinguishing conflict and struggle***

To distinguish power struggle from status conflict, we define the term “*struggle*” as comprising of both contest and conflict (Oxford Dictionaries, OED.com). The basic delineation between power contest and power conflict (and similarly between status contests and status conflicts) is then the difference between the two behavioral phenomena: *contest* and *conflict*. For a conceptual distinction between contest and conflict, we follow Schmidt and Kochan’s (1972) framework which suggests that while perceived goal incompatibility characterizes both these behaviors, contests involve “parallel striving” (Fink, 1968) and conflicts involve interference with each other’s goal attainment. Thus, power/status contests and power/status conflicts are behaviorally distinct. In an intragroup interaction, a search for cooperative solutions, deference or yielding with little reluctance is more likely in contests than in conflicts (Hartup, 1989).

***Defining power and status struggles***

In defining the phenomenon of our interest, we draw on the following perspectives from Magee and Galinsky (2008): (1) hierarchy in organizational groups is either formally instituted or develops informally; (2) hierarchical differentiation is based on power and/or status dimensions; (3) hierarchies can be based on single or multiple valued dimensions; and (4) multiple hierarchies could exist simultaneously within groups.

In addition, the following assumptions are made in defining the phenomena of our interest: (1) though multiple formal and informal hierarchies can exist in a group, at any specific moment only one hierarchy is most salient to group members; (2) informal hierarchy in a group initially develops based on status characteristics of its members; (3) in a formal hierarchy, those higher up in the hierarchy almost always have greater power, but whether or not they also have higher status is contingent on the perceptions of fairness and legitimacy of hierarchy; (4) in an informal hierarchy, those higher up in the hierarchy almost always have higher status, but whether or not they also have greater power is contingent on their positional consistency with formal hierarchy; (5) a hierarchy that is perceived to be legitimate (i.e. a hierarchy in which bases of differentiation is considered proper, and accordance of power and status fair) is almost always a power hierarchy. This last assumption is supported by the following logic: (a) if the legitimate hierarchy developed based on power dimension, then this assumption axiomatically follows; and (b) if the legitimate hierarchy developed based on status dimension, then according to status value theory (Thye, 2000), which suggests that higher status begets more power, this assumption again follows.

Based on the above conceptions, we define both *power struggle* and *status struggle* as the process that emerges when members in a group implicitly or explicitly negotiate their relative rank ordering in an intragroup social hierarchy. Unlike power struggles, status struggles can entail the process of re-differentiating the hierarchy by making a valued dimension that is different from the current dimension as the new salient basis, so as to garner relative status advantage for self.

We further differentiate power contests from power conflicts, and status contests from status conflicts. *Power contests* and *power conflict*, both behavioral subsets of power struggles, essentially arise when members, usually within the same rank order, contend to attain a higher rank position, a resource that in itself is limited. As noted earlier, power conflicts, unlike power contests, entail perceived interference with each others’ higher rank attainment.

We define *status contests* as process emerging from group members’ striving to attain higher intragroup status in an established hierarchy. Status contests also comprise of individual’s efforts to establish a valued dimension on which one has a relative status advantage as compared to other group members as the new hierarchical basis. In status contests, an individual may attempt to enhance one’s intragroup status either by drawing attention of the group to an external environment in which one’s possessed status characteristic is generally more valued, or by convincing the group to see the situation at hand in a different frame – a frame in which one’s possesses status characteristics, such as expertise, are more valued than in prevailing framing (Owens & Sutton, 2001). In contrast, *status conflicts* entail disagreement among group members about either: (a) the valued dimension on which the hierarchy is differentiated; or (b) others’ relative rank in the hierarchy.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Insert Figure 1 about here

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Furthermore, we draw on past literature (Martorana et al., 2005) to incorporate the distinction between covert and overt actions in comprehending the nature of power and status struggles. We suggest that status contests, in which an individual attempts to gain status by drawing group’s attention to the need for re-differentiating an existing hierarchy, are usually subtle and covert. On the contrary, power and status contests in which an individual uses various occasions and avenues, such as meetings (Owens & Sutton, 2001) or brainstorming sessions (Sutton & Hargadon, 1996), to display one’s relevant skills or status characteristics and negotiate rank within an existing hierarchy could be either overt or covert, depending on the political skills of the status-seekers in contextually hiding their rank interests. Similarly, power and status conflicts can be either overt or covert. The nature of such conflicts depends on factors, such as interpersonal dynamics and organizational culture. For example, Morrill and colleagues (2003) suggested that interpersonal trust, identification and friendship could reduce the likelihood of covertness of conflict.

Based on the above theoretical derivations, assumptions and definitions, we develop the following conceptual model (figure 1) linking power and status struggles.

***Rank motivations and struggles***

Recent reviews in the organizational literature highlight the motivational function that the hierarchies serve, suggesting that higher ranks in power or status hierarchies provide individuals with opportunities to satisfy their social, psychological and material needs (Anderson & Brown, 2010; Magee & Galinsky, 2009). We propose that power and status struggles are more likely in a group in which individuals have greater motives to accumulate power and status, and greater perseverance in rank attainment pursuits.

There is evidence to suggest that some individuals are more predisposed to engaging in influencing, dominating, aggressive or assertive behaviors (e.g. McClelland, 1975, 1985). Research on developmental antecedents of *implicit power motive*, defined as the unconscious need to be involved in an influencing relationship, or the capacity of obtaining emotional satisfaction from having impact on others (Winter, 1973), suggests that this disposition is established in early stages of cognitive development, and is shaped by parenting and cultural practices (McClelland & Pilon, 1983; Hofer & Chasiotis, 2011).

Prior studies investigating the behavioral correlates of the implicit power motive holds that those with high power motive have a greater tendency to choose work environment that provides for greater influencing opportunities (Browning & Jacob, 1964) and engage in behaviors that are instrumental to having impact (Schultheiss et al., 2005; Carré et al., 2008). Those with high need for power are more likely to acquire social power through greater assertion (Schultheiss et al., 1999), by garnering more prestige (Assor, 1989) and by taking on leadership positions (McClelland & Burnham, 1976; Winter, 1988). Furthermore, studies have also revealed the inclinations of power motive individuals in competitive tasks and dominance contests (Schultheiss et al., 1999; Schultheiss & Rohde, 2002).

Based on these past evidence and suggestions, we propose that power motives of group members will positively relate to power struggles. Since higher ranks in a social hierarchy invariably provide disproportionate power to the occupants, power struggles are more likely in a group characterized by individuals with high levels of implicit power motive. Prior theorizing and evidence which suggests that those individuals high on implicit power motive perceive greater conflict, especially when they experience thwarting of their power motive (Fodor, 1985; McClelland, 1976, 1982), provide additional support to our proposition. Furthermore, a recent study that investigated the motivations underlying power dynamics, found support for the tendency of group members to seek greater power after social comparison of their own power with that of others (Dijke & Poppe, 2007). Thus, we posit:

*Proposition 1: Greater the need for power amongst the group members, greater the likelihood of power struggles within the group.*

Similar to material resources and rewards, individuals also increasingly contend for respect and status, and constantly worry about the social reputation they hold (De Cremer & Tyler, 2005). The underlying motive for such status seeking is explained by social identity theory which proposes that one likes to derive a positive relational self by means of one’s membership in groups and relative status within a group (Steele, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Research indicates that some individuals, typically those with high levels of trait self-esteem and self-efficacy, and an internal locus of control, are more motivated than others to seeking status (Overbeck et al., 2005). Those high on status-seeking motives are more likely to constantly monitor one’s status, and work to maintain or gain status (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2005). Since status relations are dynamic and status hierarchies seldom stable, status struggles are likely to be frequent in a group comprising of many status seekers. Thus, we suggest:

*Proposition 2: Greater the status-seeking motive amongst the group members, greater the likelihood of status struggles within the group.*

***Contests and conflicts***

As noted earlier, we base our distinction between contests and conflict on Schmidt and Kochan’s (1972) suggestion that greater the degree of shared resources, interdependent activities and perceived goal interference amongst members in a group, greater the likelihood of contests transforming into conflicts. We draw on social dominance, performance evaluation and behavioral approach and inhibition systems to suggest how power and status contests shape into conflicts in an intragroup context.

Social dominance theory postulates that consensus on ideologies promoting inequality minimizes intergroup conflicts (Pratto et al., 1994). So when power and status contests are perceived as challenging the hierarchy-legitimizing myths, intragroup conflicts, especially between those across hierarchical ranks, are likely. Low-rank members’ actions seeking to rise in the social hierarchy are likely to be unwelcomed by others in the group who are high on power and status motives, actual and perceived powers, and status. In fact, high-rank members experience threat on perceiving possible challenges to status-quo, while those in low ranks experienced threat on perceiving status quo (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2005). As evidence from the performance evaluation literature suggests, high-rank members are increasingly negative in their evaluations of others and increasingly positive in their evaluations of self (Georgesen & Harris, 1998). Furthermore, recent work investigating the interactive effects of power and status found that low-status power holders tend to demean others (Fast et al., 2012).

Building on these findings, we expect that group members, who either directly partake in or those who are likely to be affected by power and status contests, might be driven to interfere with the rank attainment goals of others, thereby escalating contests to conflicts. This assertion is further supported by the behavioral inhibition systems theory that posits that those in elevated power are more likely to engage in disinhibited and pernicious social behaviors such as aggression and hostility (Keltner et al., 2003).

Further, we suggest that the likelihood of contests transforming into conflicts in groups, is influenced by two socio-structural variables: perceived permeability and perceived stability of hierarchy. *Perceived permeability* of hierarchy refers to the ease with which an individual can rise up the hierarchy by working within the system (Martorana et al., 2005). According to social identity theory, perceived permeability affects whether or not low-status members adopt upward mobility strategies (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Empirical evidence in intergroup status literature suggests that when group boundaries are permeable, disindentificiation and social mobility are likely to be adopted by low-status groups (Bettencourt et al., 2001). Based on this, we argue that when members perceive their intragroup power hierarchy as impermeable, they are likely to engage in overt or covert activities that interfere with other’s upward mobility aspirations. Such behaviors are likely to arise from negative emotional reactions to perceptions of impermeability (Martorana et al., 2005). Thus, the following proposition follows:

*Proposition 3: Greater the power contests in a group, more likely are power conflicts. This relationship is strengthened when the perceived permeability of hierarchy is low than when it high.*

*Perceived stability* refers to the perception of whether the hierarchy is likely to change as a result of actions one takes by acting within the system (Martorana et al., 2005). Past theorizing suggests that when high-status groups perceive that a change in social hierarchy is possible (i.e. perceived stability of hierarchy is low) they are likely to feel threatened and engage in discriminatory behaviors against out-groups (Turner & Brown, 1978). From this we infer that when intragroup status hierarchy is perceived as unstable and when status-seekers engage in gaining status, their efforts are likely to face resistance by those who perceive losing their current status. In the face of such injustice, status-seekers may engage in disagreements on and disruptions of existing hierarchy (Martorana et al., 2005). Thus, we posit:

*Proposition 4: Greater the status contests in a group, more likely are status conflicts. This relationship is strengthened when the perceived stability of hierarchy is low than when it high.*

***Power struggle and status struggle***

Systems justification theorists have argued that there is “a general (but not insurmountable) system justification motive to defend and justify the status quo and to bolster the legitimacy of the existing social order” (Jost et al., 2004). They contend that members of status disadvantaged groups do not engage in social change as long as their systems justification motives surpass their ego motives. However, Martorana and colleagues (2005) argued that system condemnation and actions against hierarchies though rare are likely to occur when low-ranked individuals with high sense of power perceive prevailing power and status hierarchies to be unstable, illegitimate and impermeable. Furthermore, a recent study, challenging the conventional notion that social hierarchies are stable, developed a dynamic conception termed *power heterarchy* and demonstrated that the expressions of power by group members varied as the situational demands and uncertainties shifted (Aime et al., 2013). Their study also showed the effect of members’ perceptions about the appropriateness of power shifts on the group outcomes. These works suggest that power struggles could lead to status struggles, i.e. actions against prevailing power hierarchy by gaining consensus on a new dimensional basis. In addition, evidence on the effects of *sense of power* on actions against authority (Galinsky et al., 2003), suggest that the status struggles are more likely when the group consists of members high on implicit power motives.

*Perceived legitimacy* of hierarchy refers to perceptions that those in the power and status hierarchies have attained their rank positions in reasonable and legitimate ways (Martorana et al., 2005). Intragroup power or status hierarchy is perceived to be legitimate if the group members perceive the hierarchy to be in “in accord with the norms, values, beliefs, practices, and procedures accepted by a group” (Zelditch Jr., 2001). The perceived legitimacy of a hierarchy is affected by the hierarchy’s adherence to procedural justice (Tyler, 2001), and on subjective appraisals that distribution of power and status is based on the actual differences amongst individuals on inputs (such as traits, abilities and qualifications) and efforts (Major & Schmader, 2001).

Past social scientific research suggests various factors that influence the psychology of perceptions (Jost & Major, 2001). For example, Berger and colleagues (1998 argued that evaluative information, such as task failures, can delegitimize power and prestige hierarchies. We propose that when hierarchy is perceived to be illegitimate, power struggles are more likely to lead to system condemnation and transform into attempts to re-differentiate a hierarchy. Thus, expressions of power when perceived as illegitimate could exacerbate the nature of struggles. We suggest:

*Proposition 5: Greater the power struggles in a group, more likely are status struggles. This relationship is strengthened when the perceived legitimacy of hierarchy is low than when it high.*

***Struggles and group outcomes***

Past research has shown that power struggles have negative consequences on group outcomes. It is argued that in groups with frequent power struggles, especially of the kinds that challenge the existing social hierarchies, constructive interactions are more likely to transform into detrimental interpersonal relationships (Mannix & Sauer, 2006). Evidence suggests that power struggles result in negative attitudes and behaviors in the group (Georgesen & Harris, 2006), impair the quality of conflict resolution (Greer & van Kleef, 2010), and increase stress and turnover (Keller, 2009). Furthermore, power conflicts are likely to lead to political behaviors, in turn impacting performance (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988). This suggests:

*Proposition 6: Power conflicts, unlike power contests, are more likely to negatively affect group outcomes.*

Prior studies have shown that status contests, in which people overtly bid for status in a fair way, can enhance group outcomes by creating positive peer pressures (Sutton & Hargadon, 1996). However, when status contests are seen as threatening one’s status and rewards associated with it, high-status members are likely to exert greater control over communication pathways and block activities of status contestants. We posit that these status assertion attempts lead to overt status conflicts and thereby affect group effectiveness. Some recent evidences support this proposition. For example, Gardner (2010) in her recent research found that even small differences in status perceptions among group members can result in task conflicts, and negatively affect team coordination and performance. Furthermore, recent work theorizing the negative consequences of status conflicts provides evidence that status conflicts moderated the effects of task conflict on group performance and hurt performance by undermining information sharing (Bendersky & Hays, 2012). Thus, we propose:

*Proposition 7: Status conflicts, unlike status contests, are more likely to negatively affect group outcomes.*

**Discussion and implications**

Research on intragroup conflicts is yet to find conclusive evidence for when conflicts are likely to be constructive (de Wit et al., 2012). Scholars have suggested that dynamics of power and status could augment our understanding on this front (Mannix and Sauer, 2006; Fast et al., 2012). However, the interactive effects of these dynamics in groups have received little scholarly attention (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). The need for more interdisciplinary research that draws insights from sociology, social psychology and organization literature to understand these dynamics has been emphasized (Mannix & Sauer, 2006). In lines with these calls, we have taken a social hierarchical perspective of intragroup conflict, and proposed how power and status interplay to affect distal and proximal group states.

Lovaglia and colleagues (2005) pointed out that various disciplines investigating the concepts of power, status and conflict are ironically in conflict with themselves over terminologies. It is not surprising that the measures of these conceptualizations in the recent literature are therefore confounded. So, our first attempt in this article has been to define and distinguish the phenomena of power and status struggles in theoretically and empirically useful ways. Although we have suggested how power contests, power conflicts, status contests and status conflicts are behaviorally distinct, we understand that future qualitative and quantitative research is needed to clearly demonstrate the analytical distinctions between these closely intertwined phenomena in groups. Future research is also needed to develop more nuanced measures of intragroup power and status struggles.

Furthermore, research is needed to identify the distinctive nature, antecedents and outcomes of power and status dynamics in groups. While we have looked at implicit power motive and status-seeking motive as antecedents of power and status struggle, other possible antecedents (such as sense of power, social dominance orientation and Machiavellianism) could be explored by future research. In addition, whether and how the antecedents proposed in this article - power and status motives - are related is a relevant avenue. Future research is needed to investigate how perceptions of socio-structural variables of hierarchy interactively moderate the effects of power and status struggles. As past evidence suggests coupling of these variables (such as legitimacy and stability) in an investigation can provide for a better understanding of when power and status struggles, and system condemnation are likely to occur (Bettencourt et al., 2001; Martorana et al. , 2005).

The transformation of intragroup contest to conflict, and direct and mediated effects of these on group’s proximal and distal outcomes are other promising avenues for investigation. Future research could investigate the relationship between power and status struggles, and other conflicts – task, relationship and process. We also suggest that power and status struggles take different shape as the group evolves, and hence consideration of the stage of the group is warranted in future research.

Finally, there are also important measurement issues for future empirical research to consider. In this paper, we have argued that power struggles and status struggles are related, but distinct constructs. We encourage future empirical investigations to recognize this and examine the phenomenon with more appropriate measures. Future work is needed to address the current inconsistencies and devise measurements for power and status struggles that exhibit better psychometric properties and content validity. In particular, measures that are more nuanced in terms of delineating power contests, power conflicts, status contests and status conflicts are needed.

**Conclusion**

In this article, we have attempted to articulate how power and status, considered two distinct but related bases of social hierarchies, are important to be studied in the context of intragroup conflicts. We focused on extending the current literature on conflict by distinguishing and relating power and status struggles. Our proposed model examines how the perceptions of social hierarchy (permeability, legitimacy and stability) interact with other factors in affecting group outcomes. We believe that the motivational benefits of social hierarchies in organizational groups can be maximized by optimizing structural contests and minimizing structural conflicts. Future qualitative and quantitative research on the central themes and propositions examined in this article would greatly enhance our understanding of the micro-dynamics of social hierarchies, and the mechanisms through which group effectiveness can be enhanced.

**References**

Aime, F., Humphrey, S., DeRue, D., & Paul, J. (2013). The Riddle of Heterarchy: Power Transitions in Cross-Functional Teams. *Academy of Management Journal*.

Anderson, C., & Brown, C. E. (2010). The functions and dysfunctions of hierarchy. *Research in organizational behavior*, 30, 55-89.

Assor, A. (1989). The power motive as an influence on the evaluation of high and low status persons. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 23(1), 55-69.

Bendersky, C., & Hays, N. A. (2012). Status conflict in groups. *Organization Science*, 23(2), 323-340.

Berger, J., Cohen, B. P., & Zelditch Jr, M. (1972). Status characteristics and social interaction. *American Sociological Review*, 241-255.

Berger, J., Fisek, M. H., Norman, R. Z., & Zelditch Jr, M. (1977). *Status characteristics and social interaction: An expectation-states approach*. Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company.

Berger, J., Ridgeway, C. L., Fisek, M. H., & Norman, R. Z. (1998). The legitimation and delegitimation of power and prestige orders. *American Sociological Review*, 379-405.

Bettencourt, B., Charlton, K., Dorr, N., & Hume, D. L. (2001). Status differences and in-group bias: a meta-analytic examination of the effects of status stability, status legitimacy, and group permeability. *Psychological bulletin*, 127(4), 520.

Browning, R. P., & Jacob, H. (1964). Power motivation and the political personality. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 28(1), 75-90.

Carré, J. M., & McCormick, C. M. (2008). Aggressive behavior and change in salivary testosterone concentrations predict willingness to engage in a competitive task. Hormones and Behavior, 54(3), 403-409.

Dahl, R. A. (1957). The concept of power. *Behavioral science*, 2(3), 201-215

DeChurch, L. A., Mesmer-Magnus, J. R., & Doty, D. (2013). Moving beyond relationship and task conflict: Toward a process-state perspective. *Journal Of Applied Psychology*, 98(4), 559-578. doi:10.1037/a0032896

De Cremer, D., & Tyler, T. R. (2005). A matter of intragroup status: The importance of respect for the viability of groups. *Research on managing groups and teams*, 7, 1-21.

De Dreu, C. K., & Weingart, L. R. (2003). Task versus relationship conflict, team performance, and team member satisfaction: a meta-analysis. *Journal of applied Psychology*, 88(4), 741.

de Wit, F. R., Greer, L. L., & Jehn, K. A. (2012). The paradox of intragroup conflict: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 97(2), 360.

Eisenhardt, K. M., & Bourgeois, L. J. (1988). Politics of strategic decision making in high-velocity environments: Toward a midrange theory. *Academy of management journal*, 31(4), 737-770.

Fast, N. J., Halevy, N., & Galinsky, A. D. (2012). The destructive nature of power without status. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48(1), 391-394.

Fink, C. F. (1968). Some conceptual difficulties in the theory of social conflict. *Journal of conflict resolution*, 412-460.

Galinsky, A., Magee, J., Gruenfeld, D., Whitson, J., & Liljenquist, K. (2003, June). Power and the inattention to obstacles and social constraint: Implications for disobedience, conformity, and dissonance. *In 16th Annual IACM Conference Melbourne, Australia*.

Gardner, Heidi K. 2010 (Working Paper). *Disagreement about the Team's Status Hierarchy: An Insidious Obstacle to Coordination and Performance*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School. (http://www.hbs.edu/research/pdf/10-113.pdf)

Georgesen, J., & Harris, M. J. (2006). Holding onto power: Effects of powerholders' positional instability and expectancies on interactions with subordinates. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 36(4), 451-468.

Greer, L. L., & van Kleef, G. A. (2010). Equality versus differentiation: The effects of power dispersion on group interaction. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 95(6), 1032.

Hartup, W. W. (1989). Social relationships and their developmental significance. *American psychologist*, 44(2), 120.

Hofer, J., & Chasiotis, A. (2011). Implicit Motives Across Cultures. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 4(1), 5.

Jost, J. T., Banaji, M. R., & Nosek, B. A. (2004). A decade of system justification theory: Accumulated evidence of conscious and unconscious bolstering of the status quo. *Political Psychology*, 25(6), 881-919.

Jost, J. T., & Major, B. (Eds.). (2001). *The psychology of legitimacy: Emerging perspectives on ideology, justice, and intergroup relations*. Cambridge University Press.

Keller, K. M. (2009). Power Conflict: Struggles for Intragroup Control and Dominance.

Keltner, D., Gruenfeld, D. H., & Anderson, C. (2003). Power, approach, and inhibition. *Psychological review*, 110(2), 265.

Kemper, T. D., & Collins, R. (1990). Dimensions of microinteraction. *American Journal of Sociology*, 32-68.

Knottnerus, J. D. (1997). Social structural analysis and status generalization: The contributions and potential of expectation states theory. *Status, network, and structure: Theory development in group processes*, 119-136.

Lovaglia, M., Mannix, E. A., Samuelson, C. D., Sell, J., & Wilson, R. K. (2005). Conflict, power, and status in groups. *Theories of small groups: Interdisciplinary perspectives*, 139-184.

Lovaglia, M. J., Willer, R., & Troyer, L. (2003). Power, status, and collective action: Developing fundamental theories to address a substantive problem. *Advances in group processes*, 20, 105-131.

Magee, J. C., & Galinsky, A. D. (2008). 8 Social Hierarchy: The Self‐Reinforcing Nature of Power and Status. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 2(1), 351-398.

Major, B., & Schmader, T. (2001). Legitimacy and the construal of social disadvantage. *The psychology of legitimacy: Emerging perspectives on ideology, justice, and intergroup relations*, 176-204.

Mannix, E. A., & Sauer, S. J. (2006). Status and power in organizational group research: Acknowledging the pervasiveness of hierarchy. *Advances in group processes*, 23, 149-182.

Martorana, P. V., Galinsky, A. D., & Rao, H. (2005). From system justification to system condemnation: Antecedents of attempts to change power hierarchies. *Research on managing groups and teams*, 7, 283-313.

McClelland, D. C. (1975). *Power: The inner experience*. Irvington.

McClelland, D. C., & Burnham, D. H. (1976). *Power is the great motivator*. Harvard Business Review, 54, 100–110.

McClelland, D. C., & Pilon, D. A. ( 1983). Sources of adult motives in patterns of parent behavior in early childhood. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 44, 564– 574. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.44.3.564

McClelland, D.C. (1985). *Human Motivation*. NY: Cambridge University Press.

Morrill, C., Zald, M. N., & Rao, H. (2003). Covert political conflict in organizations: Challenges from below. *Annual review of sociology*, 391-415.

Owens, D. A., & Sutton, R. I. (2001). Meetings as Status Contests: Negotiating order in on-going workgroups. M. Turner, ed. *Groups at work: Advances in theory and research*, 299-316.

Overbeck, J. R., Correll, J., & Park, B. (2005). Internal status sorting in groups: The problem of too many stars. *Research on managing groups and teams*, 7, 169-199.

*Oxford Dictionaries*. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://oxforddictionaries.com/

Pratto, F., Sidanius, J., Stallworth, L. M., & Malle, B. F. (1994). Social dominance orientation: A personality variable predicting social and political attitudes. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 67(4), 741.

Ridgeway, C. L., & Walker, H. A. (1995). Status structures. *Sociological perspectives on social psychology*, 281-310.

Scheepers, D., & Ellemers, N. (2005). When the pressure is up: The assessment of social identity threat in low and high status groups. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 41(2), 192-200.

Schmidt, S. M., & Kochan, T. A. (1972). Conflict: Toward conceptual clarity. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 359-370.

Schultheiss, O. C., Campbell, K. L., & McClelland, D. C. (1999). Implicit power motivation moderates men's testosterone responses to imagined and real dominance success. *Hormones and Behavior*, 36(3), 234-241.

Schultheiss, O. C., & Rohde, W. (2002). Implicit power motivation predicts men's testosterone changes and implicit learning in a contest situation. *Hormones and Behavior*, 41(2), 195-202.

Schultheiss, O. C., Wirth, M. M., Torges, C. M., Pang, J. S., Villacorta, M. A., & Welsh, K. M. (2005). Effects of implicit power motivation on men's and women's implicit learning and testosterone changes after social victory or defeat. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 88(1), 174.

Steele, C. M. (1988). The psychology of self-affirmation: Sustaining the integrity of the self. *Advances in experimental social psychology*, 21, 261-302.

Sutton, R. I., & Hargadon, A. (1996). Brainstorming groups in context: Effectiveness in a product design firm. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 685-718.

Tajfel, H. (1978). The achievement of group differentiation. In H. Tajfel (Ed.), *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations*  (pp. 77-98). London: Academic Press

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behaviour. In S. Worchel & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (pp. 7–24). Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall.

Turner, J. C., & Brown, R. ( 1978). Social status, cognitive alternatives, and intergroup relations. In H.Tajfel ( Ed.) , *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 202– 234). New York: Academic Press.

Tyler, T. R. (2001). A Psychological Perspective on the Legitimacy of Institutions and Authorities. *The psychology of legitimacy: Emerging perspectives on ideology, justice, and intergroup relations*, 416.

Winter, D. G. (1973). *The Power Motive*. Free Press, New York

Winter, D. G. (1988). The power motive in women—and men. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54(3), 510.

Zelditch Jr, M. (2001). *Theories of Legitimacy. The psychology of legitimacy: Emerging perspectives on ideology, justice, and intergroup relations*, 33.

*Figure 1.* Social hierarchical perspective of power and status struggles

Implicit

Power motive

Group outcomes (proximal & distal)

**Power struggle**

Power contest

Power conflict

Status-seeking motive

Perceived

Permeability of hierarchy

**Status struggle**

Status contest

Status conflict

Perceived

Stability of hierarchy

Perceived

Legitimacy of hierarchy