

POWER PERCEPTION PROFILE

A SUMMARY

Situational Leadership,[®] Perception, and the Impact of Power

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The concepts of leadership and power have generated lively interest, debate, and occasionally confusion throughout the evolution of management thought. Leadership is typically defined as the process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group in efforts toward goal accomplishment. Power is well described as the leader's *influence potential*: it is the resource that enables a leader to induce compliance from or influence followers. Given this integral relationship between leadership and power, leaders must not only assess their leadership behavior in order to understand how they actually influence other people; they also must examine their possession and use of power. The purpose of this paper is to integrate the concept of power with Situational Leadership by showing how the perception of a leader's power bases can affect the utilization of various leadership styles. The paper is divided into sections that include (1) a discussion of power and its sources, (2) an integration of the concept of power and Situational Leadership, and (3) a description of the "Power Perception Profile" (PPP) instrument—and a discussion of its uses to measure perceptions of power.

BASES OF POWER

Since leadership is the process of attempting to influence the behavior of others, and power is the means by which the leader actually gains the compliance of the follower(s), the two concepts are inseparable. Leaders cannot automatically influence other people; they must utilize power to succeed in any influence attempt.

A number of bases of power have been identified over the years as potential means of successfully influencing the behavior of others. Seven important power bases¹ are defined as follows:

Coercive power is based on fear. A leader high in coercive power is seen as inducing compliance because failure to comply will lead to punishment such as undesirable work assignments, reprimands, or dismissal.

Connection power is based on the leader's "connections" with influential or important persons inside or outside the organization. A leader high in connection power induces compliance from others because they aim at gaining the favor or avoiding the disfavor of the powerful connection.

Expert power is based on the leader's possession of expertise, skill, and knowledge, which, through respect, influences others. A leader high in expert power is seen as possessing the expertise to facilitate the work behavior of others. This respect leads to compliance with the leader's wishes.

Information power is based on the leader's possession of or access to information that is perceived as valuable to others. This power base influences others because they need this information or want to be "in on things."

Legitimate power is based on the position held by the leader. Normally, the higher the position, the higher the legitimate power tends to be. A leader high in legitimate power induces compliance from or influences others because they feel that this person has the right, by virtue of position in the organization, to expect that suggestions will be followed.

Referent power is based on the leader's personal traits. A leader high in referent power is generally liked and admired by others because of personality. This liking for, admiration for, and identification with the leader influences others.

Reward power is based on the leader's ability to provide rewards for other people. They believe that their compliance will lead to gaining positive incentives such as pay, promotion, or recognition.

Given the wide variety of power bases available to the leader, which type of power should be emphasized in order to maximize effectiveness? Numerous studies² have attempted to examine the relationship between the leader's primary power base and the follower's performance, but the results suggest that the appropriate power base is largely affected by situational variables. In other words, a leader should vary the use of power depending on the circumstances.

²As examples see J.G. Bachman, D.G. Bowers, and P.M. Marcus, "Bases of Supervisory Power: A Comparative Study in Five Organizational Settings," in A.S. Tannenbaum, *Control in Organizations*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968; J.M. Ivancevich and G.H. Donnelly, "Leader Influence and Performance," *Personnel Psychology*, 1970, 23(4), 539-549; R.J. Burke and D.S. Wilcox, "Bases of Supervisory and Subordinate Job Satisfaction," *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science*, 1971; and D.W. Jamieson and K.W. Thomas, "Power and Conflict in the Student-Teacher Relationship," *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 1974, 10(3).

¹Five of these descriptions of power bases (coercive, expert, legitimate, referent, and reward) have been adapted from the work of J.R.P. French, Jr., and B. Raven, "The Bases of Social Power," in D. Cartwright (Ed.), *Studies in Social Power*, Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan, 1959, pp. 150-167. One power base (information) was introduced by B.H. Raven and W. Kruglanski, "Conflict and Power," in P.G. Swingle (Ed.), *The Structure of Conflict*, New York: Academic Press, 1975, pp. 177-219. In this paper, some of these definitions have been modified and a seventh power base has been added: connection power.

For further information on power see also A. Etzioni, *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations on Power, Involvement, and Their Correlates*, New York: The Free Press, 1961.

Power Bases and Readiness Levels

There appears to be a direct relationship between the level of readiness of individuals and groups and the kind of power bases that have a high probability of gaining compliance from or influencing those people.

One way of looking at readiness³ is in reference to the *ability* and *willingness* of individuals or groups to take responsibility for directing their own behavior in a particular area. Thus, readiness is a task-specific concept, and people are considered to be more or less ready depending on what the leader is attempting to accomplish through their efforts.

Ability is a person's skill. People who have ability in a certain area have the skill, knowledge, and experience to perform related tasks. *Willingness* refers to a person's motivation. People who are willing to perform tasks in a particular area think that area is important and are committed to those tasks and self-confident in their ability to perform them.

As people move from lower levels to higher levels of readiness, their competence and confidence to do things increase. The seven power bases appear to have significant impact on the behavior of people at various levels of readiness (Figure 1).

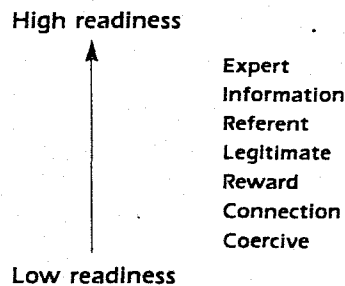


Figure 1. The impact of power bases at various levels of readiness

INTEGRATING POWER BASES, READINESS LEVELS, AND LEADERSHIP STYLE THROUGH SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP®

Situational Leadership⁴ can provide the basis for understanding the potential impact of each power base. It is our contention that the readiness of the follower not only dictates which style of leadership will have the highest probability of success, but that the readiness of the follower also determines the power base that the leader should use in order to induce compliance or influence behavior.

A Review of Situational Leadership

According to Situational Leadership, there is no one "best" way to go about influencing people. Which leadership style a person should use with individuals or groups depends on the readiness level of the people the leader is attempting to influence. The bell-shaped "prescriptive curve" in Figure 2 shows the appropriate style directly above the corresponding level of readiness.

Each of the four styles—"telling," "selling," "participating," and "delegating"—in the "prescriptive curve" is a combination of task behavior and relationship behavior.⁵ *Task behavior* is the extent to which a leader provides direction for people: telling them what to do, when to do it, where to do it, and how to do it. It means setting goals for them and defining their roles.

Relationship behavior is the extent to which a leader engages in two-way communication, which includes active listening and providing supportive and facilitating behaviors.

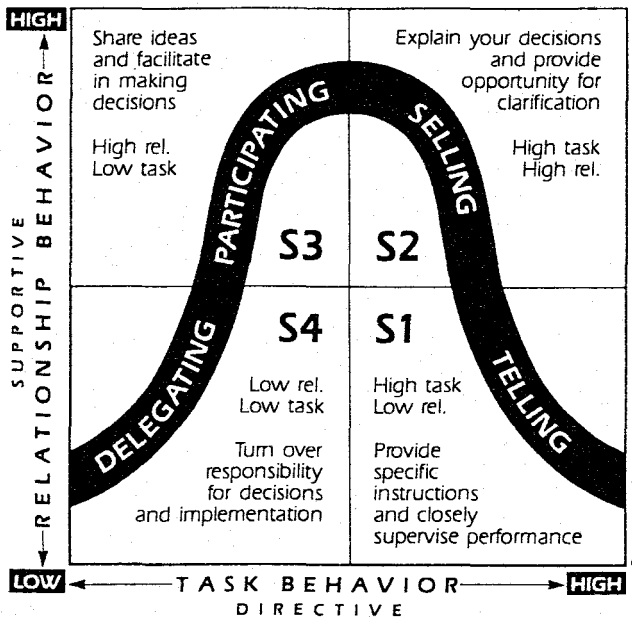
The readiness of followers is a question of degree. As can be seen in Figure 2, some benchmarks of readiness are provided for determining appropriate leadership style by dividing the readiness continuum below the leadership model into four levels: low (R1), low to moderate (R2), moderate to high (R3), and high (R4).

³For extensive discussions of the concept of readiness, see C. Argyris, *Personality and Organization*, New York: Harper & Row, 1957; *Interpersonal Competence and Organizational Effectiveness*, Homewood, IL: Dorsey, 1962; and *Integrating the Individual and the Organization*, New York: John Wiley, 1964; and P. Hersey and K.H. Blanchard, *Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources* (5th ed.), Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1988. Instruments to measure self-perception ("Readiness Scale—Staff Member Rating Scale") and the perception of others ("Readiness Scale—Manager Rating Scale") in terms of job readiness (ability) and psychological readiness (willingness) are published by Leadership Studies, Inc., Escondido, CA, and are distributed by University Associates, Inc., San Diego, CA.

⁴The most extensive discussion of this concept can be found in P. Hersey and K.H. Blanchard, *Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources* (5th ed.), Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1988.

⁵Leader Effectiveness & Adaptability Description instruments to measure self-perception of leadership style ("LEAD Self") and the perception of others' leadership style ("LEAD Other") in terms of task behavior and relationship behavior are published by Leadership Studies, Inc., Escondido, CA, and are distributed by University Associates, Inc., San Diego, CA.

LEADER BEHAVIORS



HIGH		FOLLOWER READINESS		LOW
R4	R3	R2	R1	
Able and willing or confident	Able but unwilling or insecure	Unable but willing or confident	Unable and unwilling or insecure	

Figure 2. Situational Leadership® leadership styles correlated with readiness levels of followers

The appropriate leadership style for each of the four readiness levels includes the right combination of task behavior (direction) and relationship behavior (support).

“Telling” is for low readiness. People who are both *unable and unwilling* to take responsibility to do something need clear, specific directions and supervision. This style is called “telling” because it is characterized by the leader defining roles and telling people what, how, when, and where to do various tasks. It emphasizes directive behavior. Too much supportive behavior with people at this readiness level may be seen as permissive, easy, and, most importantly, as rewarding poor performance. “Telling” involves high-task behavior and low-relationship behavior.

“Selling” is for low to moderate readiness. People who are *unable but willing* to take responsibility need directive behavior because of their lack of ability, but also supportive behavior to reinforce their willingness and enthusiasm. This style is called “selling” because most of the direction is still provided by the leader. Yet through two-way communication and explanation of why certain things need to be done, the leader tries to get the followers psychologically to “buy into” desired behaviors. This style involves high-task behavior and high-relationship behavior.

“Participating” is for moderate to high readiness. Since the follower at this readiness level has the *ability* to do what the

leader wants, but *lacks self-confidence or enthusiasm*, the leader needs to open the way for two-way communication and active listening to support the follower’s efforts to use the ability that the follower already has. This style is called “participating” because the leader and follower share in decision making, with the main role of the leader being facilitating and communicating. This style involves high-relationship behavior and low-task behavior.

“Delegating” is for high readiness. Since people at this readiness level have both *ability and willingness*, little direction or support is needed from the leader. Followers are now permitted to “run the show” and decide on the “how, when, and where.” At the same time, they are psychologically ready and therefore do not need above-average amounts of two-way communication or supportive behavior. This style involves low-relationship behavior and low-task behavior.

The key to using Situational Leadership is to assess the readiness level of the follower and to behave as the model prescribes. Implicit in Situational Leadership is the idea that a leader should attempt to help followers grow in readiness as far as they are able and willing to go. This development of followers should be done by adjusting leadership behavior through the four styles along the “prescriptive curve” in Figure 2.

Situational Leadership contends that strong direction (task behavior) with followers who are low in readiness is appropriate if they are to become productive. Similarly, it suggests that an increase in readiness on the part of people who are low in readiness should be rewarded by increased positive reinforcement and socioemotional support (relationship behavior). Finally, as followers reach high levels of readiness, the leader should respond by not only continuing to decrease control over their activities, but also decreasing relationship behavior as well. With high-readiness people the need for socioemotional support is no longer as important as the need for autonomy. At this stage, one of the ways leaders can prove their confidence and trust in people who are high in readiness is to leave them more and more on their own. It is not that there is less mutual trust and friendship between leader and follower; in fact, there is more, but it takes less direct effort on the leader’s part to prove this to followers who are ready.

Regardless of the level of readiness of an individual or group, change may occur. Whenever a follower’s performance begins to slip—for whatever reason—and willingness or ability decreases, the leader should reassess the readiness level of this follower and move backward through the “prescriptive curve,” providing any appropriate socioemotional support and direction.

The Situational Use of Power

Even if the leader is using the appropriate leadership style for a given readiness level, that style may not be maximizing the leader’s probability of success if it does not reflect the appropriate power base. Therefore, just as an effective leader should vary leadership style according to the readiness level of the follower, it may be appropriate to vary the use of power similarly. The power bases that may influence people’s behavior at various levels of readiness are pictured in Figure 3.⁶

⁶This figure depicts only the readiness part of Situational Leadership and does not include the leadership style portion of the model.

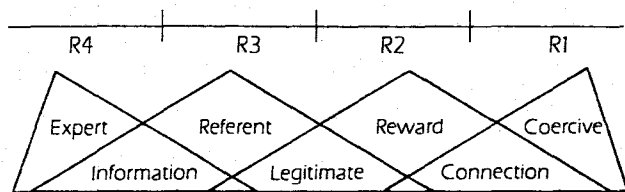


Figure 5. Power bases necessary to influence people at specific readiness levels

Developing Sources of Power

While these seven power bases are potentially available to any leader as a means of inducing compliance or influencing the behavior of others, it is important to note that there is significant variance in the powers that leaders may actually possess. Some leaders have a great deal of power while others have very little. Part of the variance in actual power is due to the organization and the leader's position in the organization, and part is due to individual differences among the leaders themselves. The power bases that are most relevant at the below-average levels of readiness tend to be those that the organization or others can bestow upon the leader. On the other hand, the power bases that influence people who are above average in readiness must to a large degree be earned from the people the leader is attempting to influence. Therefore, we suggest that the word "compliance" is most descriptive with coercive, connection, and reward power bases, and that the word "influence" more accurately describes the effect on behavior from referent, information, and expert power. Legitimate power seems to be descriptive from both viewpoints—compliance and influence—depending on whether readiness is below average or above average. It should be remembered that these power bases together constitute an interaction-influence system. That is, power does not develop in a vacuum. Each power base tends to affect each of the other power bases.

The Perception of Power

It is important to remember that truth and reality do not necessarily evoke behavior. It is perception or interpretation of reality that produces behavior. For example, when a couple has a fight it does not matter whether the cause is real or imagined—it is just as much of a fight.

It is the perception others hold about a leader's power that gives that leader the ability to induce compliance or to influence their behavior. Therefore, power is like money in the bank. The ability of a person without identification to cash a check is dependent not only on the funds the person has deposited in the bank; it also depends on whether that person gives the impression of affluence. Thus, an individual's power base, like wealth, has to be known to others before it can effectively be used. Therefore, if leaders are to increase their probability of successfully influencing the behavior of others, they need information about the sources of power they are perceived as having by other people. Also, it is important for leaders to communicate to others the power they actually possess.

In summary, it is not just style that determines whether a leader is maximizing effectiveness. Also important is whether the power bases available to the leader are consistent with the readiness level of the individuals or groups the leader is trying to influence.

THE "POWER PERCEPTION PROFILE"

To provide leaders with feedback on their power bases, so that they can determine which power bases they already have and which they need to develop, the "Power Perception Profile" (PPP) has been developed.⁷ There are two versions of this instrument—one measures self-perception of power and the other determines an individual's perception of another's power.

Development of the "Power Perception Profile"

The "Power Perception Profile" contains 21 forced-choice pairs of reasons often given by people when asked why they do things that a leader suggests or wants them to do. Each statement reflects one of the seven sources of power discussed earlier. In the following pair of statements, referent power is represented by the first statement and coercive power is depicted by the second statement.

	I like this person and want to do things that will please.
	This person can administer sanctions and punishments to those who do not cooperate.

Respondents are asked to allocate 3 points between each set of two alternative choices. They are asked to base their judgments on the relative importance of each alternative, judging either their perception of why people comply with their wishes (self-perception) or why they comply with a particular leader's wishes (perception of other).

Respondents are asked to allocate the points between the first item and the second item based on perceived importance in the following fashions:

3	2	1	0
0	1	2	3

After completing the PPP, respondents are able to obtain a score of the relative strength of each of the seven bases of power. This score represents the perception of influence for themselves or some other leader.

One of the shortcomings of most forced-choice instruments is that they provide comparisons only between items or categories but do not offer any perspective on the overall scope of the concepts. In other words, a leader might score high or low on a certain power base when that power base is compared with each of the other power bases, but no indication is given of how that power base score compares to the score another leader might receive. For example, even if a leader's

⁷Published by Leadership Studies, Inc. and distributed by University Associates, Inc.

score on coercive power is low in relation to the other six power bases, that leader may be relatively high in coercive power when compared to other leaders the respondent has known. To correct this deficiency, the PPP goes one step further than most forced-choice instruments and asks respondents to compare the leader with other leaders they have known, in reference to each of the seven power bases.

Uses of the "Power Perception Profile"

The "Power Perception Profile" can be used to gather data in actual organizational settings or any learning environment, i.e., student or training groups.

In learning groups the instrument is particularly helpful in groups that have developed some history—that is, they have spent a considerable amount of time interacting with each other analyzing or solving cases, participating in simulations or other training exercises, etc. In this kind of situation it is recommended that the group complete one instrument together, using a particular member as the subject and arriving at a consensus on each of the items on the instrument. During each discussion the person whose power bases are being examined should play a nonparticipant role. That person should not ask any questions or attempt to clarify, justify, or explain actions. An appropriate response that person may make is "Could you tell me more about that?" or "I'd like to hear more on that point." Then, at the end of the group's assessment, the person whose power bases were being examined is given an opportunity to respond to the group's discussion. This process is repeated until every participant has had a turn to get feedback from the group.

If the PPP is being used to gather data in an organization,

each organizational member from whom perceptions are desired should complete a separate instrument. In this case it is strongly suggested that the leaders not collect the data themselves. Instead, some third party who has the trust and confidence of all involved—such as a representative from personnel or human resource management—should administer the instrument. It also is important to assure respondents that only generalized data will be shared with the leader, not the scores from any particular instrument. These suggestions are important because if leaders collect their own data, even if the instruments are anonymous, there is a tendency for some respondents to answer according to what they feel the leaders want to hear or do not want to hear. Thus, to help establish a valid data base, leaders may want to have their data gathered by a third party.

CONCLUSION

As has been emphasized throughout this paper, whether a leader is maximizing effectiveness is not a question of style alone, but also a question of what power bases are available to that leader and whether these power bases are consistent with the readiness level of the individual or group that the leader is trying to influence. As managers consider these relationships, it appears that dynamic and growing organizations gradually move away from reliance on power bases that emphasize compliance and move toward the utilization of the power bases that aim at gaining influence with people. It is important to keep in mind that many times by necessity this change will be evolutionary rather than revolutionary.

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POWER PERCEPTION PROFILE

Perception of Self

Developed by Paul Hersey and Walter E. Natemeyer

Your name _____

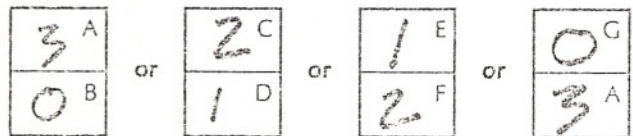
PURPOSE

This instrument is designed to provide you with some important information about utilization of various types of power as the basis of your leadership attempts.

PART I: Instructions for completing the profile

- Listed below are 21 pairs of reasons often given by people when they are asked why they do the things the leader suggests or wants them to do.
- Allocate 3 points between the two alternative choices in each pair. Base your point allocation on your judgment of each alternative's relative importance as a reason for others' compliance to you.
- Allocate the points between the first item and the second item based on perceived importance as shown in the ex-

amples below, making sure that the numbers assigned to each pair add up to 3:



- After you have completed this profile, use the "Power Perception Profile Work Sheet" to relate the data gathered to various levels of follower readiness.

Others respond to my leadership attempts because:

1.	A	I can administer sanctions and punishment to those who do not cooperate with me.
	B	They realize that I have connections with influential and important persons.
2.	C	They respect my understanding, knowledge, judgment, and experience.
	D	I possess or have access to information that is valuable to others.
3.	E	My position in the organization provides me with the authority to direct their work activities.
	F	They like me personally and want to do things that will please me.
4.	G	I can provide rewards and support to those who cooperate with me.
	A	I can administer sanctions and punishment to those who do not cooperate with me.
5.	B	They realize that I have connections with influential and important persons.
	C	They respect my understanding, knowledge, judgment, and experience.
6.	D	I possess or have access to information that is valuable to others.
	E	My position in the organization provides me with the authority to direct their work activities.
7.	F	They like me personally and want to do things that will please me.
	G	I can provide rewards and support to those who cooperate with me.

8.	A	I can administer sanctions and punishment to those who do not cooperate with me.
	C	They respect my understanding, knowledge, judgment, and experience.
9.	B	They realize that I have connections with influential and important persons.
	D	I possess or have access to information that is valuable to others.
10.	C	They respect my understanding, knowledge, judgment, and experience.
	E	My position in the organization provides me with the authority to direct their work activities.
11.	D	I possess or have access to information that is valuable to others.
	A	I can administer sanctions and punishment to those who do not cooperate with me.
12.	E	My position in the organization provides me with the authority to direct their work activities.
	B	They realize that I have connections with influential and important persons.
13.	F	They like me personally and want to do things that will please me.
	C	They respect my understanding, knowledge, judgment, and experience.
14.	G	I can provide rewards and support to those who cooperate with me.
	B	They realize that I have connections with influential and important persons.
15.	A	I can administer sanctions and punishment to those who do not cooperate with me.
	E	My position in the organization provides me with the authority to direct their work activities.
16.	B	They realize that I have connections with influential and important persons.
	F	They like me personally and want to do things that will please me.
17.	C	They respect my understanding, knowledge, judgment, and experience.
	G	I can provide rewards and support to those who cooperate with me.
18.	D	I possess or have access to information that is valuable to others.
	F	They like me personally and want to do things that will please me.
19.	E	My position in the organization provides me with the authority to direct their work activities.
	G	I can provide rewards and support to those who cooperate with me.
20.	F	They like me personally and want to do things that will please me.
	A	I can administer sanctions and punishment to those who do not cooperate with me.
21.	G	I can provide rewards and support to those who cooperate with me.
	D	I possess or have access to information that is valuable to others.

Read the following descriptions of the power bases to interpret your perceptions of your leadership attempts with others:

POWER BASES¹

- A. **Coercive power** is based on fear. A leader scoring high in coercive power is seen as inducing compliance because failure to comply will lead to punishments such as undesirable work assignments, reprimands, or dismissal.
- B. **Connection power** is based on the leader's "connections" with influential or important persons inside or outside the organization. A leader scoring high in connection power induces compliance from others because they aim at gaining the favor or avoiding the disfavor of the powerful connection.
- C. **Expert power** is based on the leader's possession of expertise, skill, and knowledge, which, through respect, influence others. A leader scoring high in expert power is seen as possessing the expertise to facilitate the work behavior of others. This respect leads to compliance with the leader's wishes.
- D. **Information power** is based on the leader's possession of or access to information that is perceived as valuable to others. This power base influences others because they need this information or want to be "in on things."
- E. **Legitimate power** is based on the position held by the leader. The higher the position, the higher the legitimate power tends to be. A leader scoring high in legitimate power induces compliance from or influences others because they feel that this person has the right, by virtue of position in the organization, to expect that suggestions will be followed.
- F. **Referent power** is based on the leader's personal traits. A leader scoring high in referent power is generally liked and admired by others because of personality. This liking for, admiration for, and identification with the leader influences others.
- G. **Reward power** is based on the leader's ability to provide rewards for other people. They believe that their compliance will lead to gaining positive incentives such as pay, promotion, or recognition.

PART I: Power Choice Scoring

In order to score your instrument, go back through the 21 items and add up all the scores that you have given to each of the A, B, C, D, E, F, and G items. Enter the total for each category in the boxes below. The total of these scores should

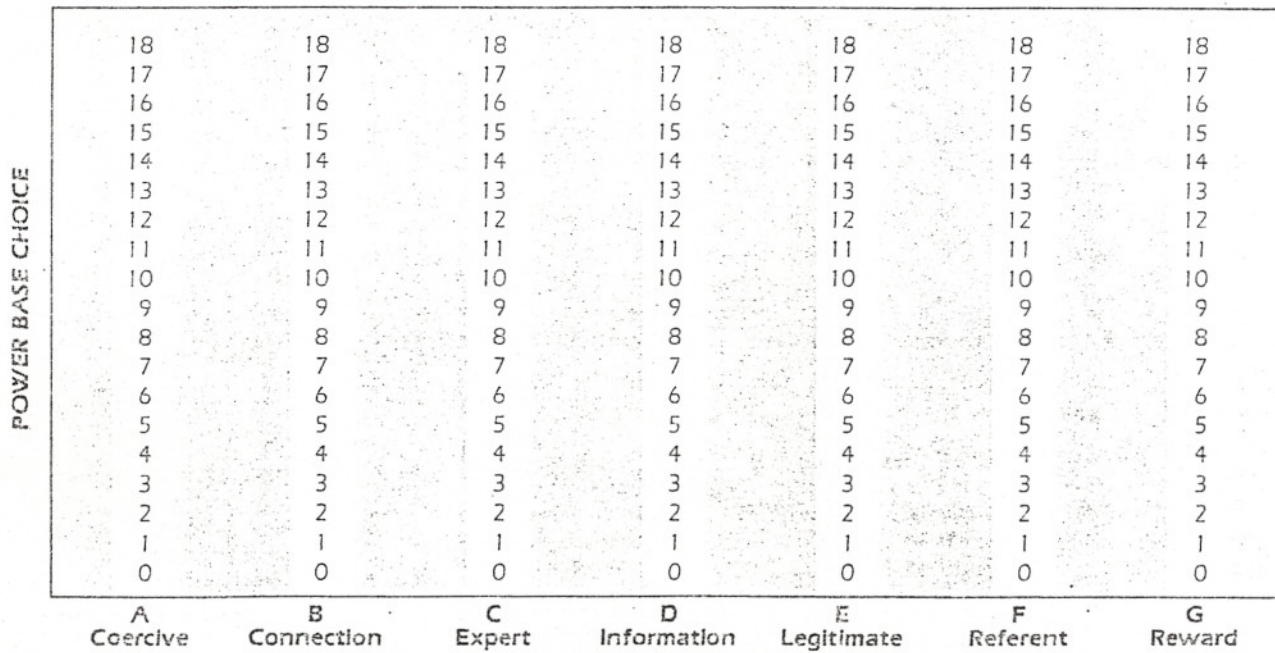
equal 63. These scores reflect your perception of the utilization of various types of power as the basis of your leadership. You will use these data in Part I: Power Choice Profile below.

TOTALS: ^A + ^B + ^C + ^D + ^E + ^F + ^G = 63

PART I: Power Choice Profile

Transfer your score totals from Part I: Power Choice Scoring and plot them on the graph below by circling the corresponding number on each scale. Connect the circled points

to complete your profile. This provides feedback on your perception of the relative strength of each of your power bases.



¹Five of these descriptions of power bases (coercive, expert, legitimate, referent, and reward) have been adapted from the work of J.R.P. French, Jr., and B. Raven, "The Bases of Social Power," in D. Cartwright (Ed.), *Studies in Social Power*, Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan, 1959, pp. 150-167. One power base (information) was introduced

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