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The Antecedents of Power Loss: A Semi-Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Power research has a relatively long tradition in the field of organizational psychology, not only due to its theoretical complexity but also due to its real-world relevance. Power plays an essential role in today's working environment, in the political sphere and in almost any organizational context. As such, the literature on gaining power is immense. In contrast, the phenomenon of losing power that one had before has received much less attention in the academic literature – although it is part of the everyday reality of employees, leaders and organizations. Therefore, the current study investigated the antecedents of power loss in the context of differing power bases, that are relevant to obtain power in the first place. A semi-systematic literature review was conducted, featuring the 3 databases of Business Source Premier, PsycInfo, and SocINDEX, yielding a total of 9 selected articles. Articles were excluded that were not peer-reviewed, published in English, or focused on other forms of power than individual power. The findings showcase that gender and biased perceptions by powerholders contribute to power loss. By bringing together results from different disciplines, the current study importantly contributes to our knowledge base on power loss. Simultaneously, the review highlights the need for future studies to investigate the phenomenon of power loss in a more diverse cross-cultural setting, and to overall study power loss more widely. Specific suggestions for the methodology of future research are discussed.

Keywords: power loss, power threats, semi-systematic review

The Antecedents of Power Loss: A Semi-Systematic Literature Review

"Power is to organization as oxygen is to breathing" (Clegg et al., 2006, p. 3), a quote from the opening paragraphs of the book "Power and Organizations" by Clegg and colleagues (2006). It stresses the vital importance that power has within organizations, giving leaders the ability to guide and structure their workforce, thereby making organizational achievements possible.

Given power's paramount relevance in organizations, it is not surprising that a lot of research has focused on power (Sturm & Antonakis, 2015), thereby enabling practitioners within corporations to understand and use power in the best way. As a result, many organizations offer leadership training aimed at teaching leaders how to gain power and how to use it most effectively. What is astounding, however, is that a research-based understanding of how power is lost seems to be missing completely from this picture (Anderson & Brion, 2014). This seems to undermine the effort put into developing powerful and effective leaders, as knowledge on how to gain and apply power may be of little use if it is quickly lost again. Adding to this perplexion about the lack of focus on power loss is the fact that shifts in power dynamics are a reality in organizations that most of their members will be aware of. Former interns get employed and gain seniority, employees are promoted for good performance, and a proactive team leader may one day lead more than just their team. On the other hand, team leaders who do not achieve given objectives might be demoted, the number of power positions may generally reduce due to implementing flatter hierarchies, and people eventually retire from positions of power. Especially given the fact that reducing the number of middle-managers seems to be a recent trend (Ingvaldsen & Benders, 2020) it is crucial to find out which managers lose their power and what effect this has.

While there is ample research on power in general, very little is known about the causes and effects of power loss. Especially when it comes to the factors that contribute to power loss, the current research is extremely limited (Anderson & Brion, 2014). The few

articles and reviews that have touched on the possible antecedents of power loss provide some limited insight into what these factors may be. For instance, Anderson and Brion's (2014) review suggests that individuals contribute to their own power loss through dysfunctional reactions, primarily by reacting in self-serving ways (Wisse et al., 2019) to power threats. These dysfunctional reactions are assumed to be influenced both by individual characteristics and contextual factors (Anderson & Brion, 2014).

The present research aims to fill this apparent gap in the literature by gaining more insight into these contextual and individual antecedents for losing power. For this investigation, a semi-systematic literature analysis is performed to gather and synthesize the current knowledge about the subject in the published literature.

Theoretical Framework

In this section, we will start by defining power and the related concept of status. Then we will provide an overview of the current interests and findings in the field of power research. Thereby we will show what is missing so far in this research field: information on how power is lost. This gap results in the goal of the current semi-systematic literature review, to provide a starting point for future research on the factors leading to power loss. For that, we will begin by providing a definition of power loss that is coherent with the current definition of power and discuss its implications. Further, we will stress the importance of power loss research, both theoretically and practically. We then will suggest a model that we believe is best suited for researching power loss at this point. Lastly, we will discuss some variables for which we believe a connection to power loss is likely.

Power: Definition and Conceptualizations

Although research on power has a long tradition, there is no consensus on a universal definition of power. Therefore, it is warranted to clearly define the construct of social power in the context of this review and distinguish it from related constructs, which are sometimes wrongly seen as synonymous with power.

Power is typically defined as asymmetric control over valued resources in a social relationship, giving the powerholder the potential to influence the outcomes and behaviors of another person (Fiske & Berdahl, 2007; Keltner et al., 2003; Magee & Galinsky, 2008) This definition stresses the interpersonal nature of power, which one person can only exercise over another (Anderson & Brion, 2014). Importantly, these resources that can give rise to the potential to influence others are manifold (Cenk Sozen, 2012; Ocasio et al., 2019; Oldmeadow et al., 2003) and can be both tangible and intangible.

These resources that give people their power are often referred to as power bases and, based on the seminal work of French and Raven (1959), research has most commonly identified five bases (Wood, 2014). These five bases include coercive power (based on threatening/administering punishment), reward power (based on promising/giving rewards), legitimate power (based on the social norms connected to hierarchical positions), referent power (based on respect and attraction) and expert power (based on expertise). Different powerholders may rely on different power bases to a varying extent, but in an organizational context power often involves multiple, if not all bases (Rahim et al., 1994; Taucean et al., 2016). Informational power (the power of argument or persuasion; Raven, 1965) as a sixth base is sometimes also mentioned (Frost & Moussavi, 1992; Rahim, 2009), although there is some disagreement about whether it should be included as a power base. Further, a more elaborate taxonomy with eleven power bases (Raven et al., 1998) or more also exist but is rarely used in practice (Elias, 2008). For these different taxonomies, power bases can generally be grouped into two higher-order categories (Rahim, 2009; Yukl, 2013).

These categories are often referred to as soft power bases versus hard power bases (Elias, 2008; Peyton et al., 2019), depending on how much freedom a target has to not comply with the influence attempts built on a power base (Raven et al., 1998). However, it can also be helpful to differentiate between positional and personal power bases (Yukl & Falbe, 1991). As the name implies, these power bases are grouped according to whether they are dependent

on someone's position or not. For reasons that are discussed below, we believe that the distinction between positional and personal power bases is more useful in the context of an investigation of the antecedents of power loss. Further, both approaches practically yield the same groups with coercive-, legitimate-, and reward power in the positional (strong) category and referent plus expert power in the personal (weak) category (Yukl, 2013; Zigarmi et al., 2015).

Summing up, power is defined in terms of asymmetric control over resources. These resources generally fall into one of five power bases, further grouped into personal and positional power bases. Whereas expert and reward power (personal powers) are mainly based on individual characteristics and behaviors, reward-, legitimate-, and coercive power (positional power bases) often stem from the position one possesses.

Status: Definition and Differences to Power

For the purpose of this review, it is also helpful to address status, a concept closely related to that of power. Despite being highly correlated and sometimes used interchangeably (Blader & Chen, 2014), status and power do not describe the same construct. Status is the reputation and respect attributed to a person relative to others in their social group (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009b; Fiske, 2010). This definition differs from the conceptualization of power in the sense that status is something that is attributed to a person by others. In contrast, power describes the control over valued resources and outcomes, which implies the possibility of exercising this control by denying resources or changing valued outcomes for others. That might also explain why power decreases perspective-taking whereas status increases it (Blader et al., 2016). Despite these theoretical and practical differences, there are also some significant similarities between power and status. Namely, both concepts can constitute the bases of social hierarchies and thus often share similar outcomes (Fiske et al., 2016). Further, it has also been proposed that status leads to power in exchange relations because it makes the resources one possesses more valuable (Thye et al., 2006). Lastly, the potential to influence

another person can also be based on status or power (Blader & Chen, 2014). Therefore, while acknowledging the definitional distinction between the two concepts, it is warranted to include both power and status in the present review.

State of the Art: Power Research

In the long history of psychological studies on the concept of power, two main research streams have emerged and comprise the vast majority of papers on the topic. One of these streams deals with the social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral consequences of possessing power (Guinote, 2017; Sturm & Monzani, 2018). The other stream of research investigates what is called power dynamics, the change of power levels over time (see Anderson & Brion, 2014 for a review). With a large number of studies in these two areas of research, our understanding of power has already drastically increased in the past decades (Galinsky et al., 2015). From research on the effects of power, it is known, for instance, that power holders display more cognitive flexibility and more approach motivation, especially concerning goal pursuit (Guinote, 2007a, 2007b). One current area of interest is the circumstances under which power leads to behaviors that serve the powerholder versus the social group or organization (Sassenberg et al., 2014; Williams, 2014; Wisse et al., 2019).

In contrast, studies on power dynamics have provided insight into who is most likely to gain power and through which processes this power is maintained. When it comes to individual differences that might benefit power gain, a multitude of factors from perceived competence (Rubin et al., 2002), trait dominance (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009a) to the amount and strength of social ties (Carter et al., 2015) have been identified. When looking at the processes through which power is maintained, it was found that power holders use political skill to preserve their power (G. Ferris et al., 2007) and even that an empowering leadership style can help solidifying their position (Edelmann et al., 2020).

When looking at these topics of interest generally, but specifically given the stream of power dynamics research, it becomes apparent that one topic has not been addressed: power

loss. Remarkably few studies or reviews even pose the questions of how power is lost or what it means if it is, let alone provide a consistent answer to these questions (Anderson & Brion, 2014). This lack of research severely limits our understanding of these aspects of the power dynamic. Therefore, the present semi-systematic literature review aims to make the first step towards this understanding by answering which factors contribute to a loss of power.

Power Loss: What Is It and Why Does It Matter?

A Definition of Power Loss and its Implications

In order to effectively conduct a literature review to answer the question of which factors lead to power loss in organizations, we first need to define the concept of interest clearly. In line with our previously stated definition of power, power loss is defined as a reduction in the potential of one individual to influence another resulting from the decrease in the asymmetry of control over valued resources in a social relationship. This definition implies two possible pathways to a loss of power.

The first pathway is a powerholder's direct loss of a valued resource. This direct loss reduces the individuals' power because giving or denying this source (or the promise/threat thereof) can no longer be used to influence others. This primarily affects the positional power bases of coercive and reward power, which rely on the possibility of distributing rewards or administering punishments, which are often based on a transfer of resources (Molm, 1988). The second way a loss of power can occur is a decrease in the value of one's resources. This value loss can be seen in terms of objective value, as with the current inflation, where monetary rewards are less valuable than material rewards, like a company car (O'Brien, 2022). However, as Raven and colleagues (1998) note, power also inherently depends on the target of potential influence. Suppose a subordinate does not believe their manager can significantly affect who gets promoted or does not believe the manager will use this ability upon compliance with a request. In that case, the manager's resource does not translate into power. The same is the case if the subordinate does not value the resources that might be

attained with a reward or lost with a punishment (Raven et al., 1998). Sticking with the above example, if the higher position with more responsibility does not appeal to the subordinate, a manager's control over promotions does not translate into power. Therefore, while a resource's objective value certainly plays a role, the subjective evaluation of that resource by an influence target is directly connected to others' power, and changes in that evaluation could lead to power losses.

The two most obvious but also the most extreme cases of power loss in the organizational context are being demoted or being fired. They are the most extreme because, in contrast to a gradual power loss, being fired or demoted immediately strips the powerholder of all positional power bases of legitimate, reward, and coercive power by removing the former powerholder from their position of power (Rahim, 2009; Yukl, 2013). In the case of being fired, the power holder is also removed from the immediate social context in which they could use that power to influence others, thereby also affecting personal power bases. Especially expert power is conditional on a social context in which expertise in a specific matter is valued. Taking an expert out of this social context decreases the influence that they can usually exert because of their expertise (Quast, 2018). Unfortunately, there are very few studies on these topics, and the few studies on demotion that are available only address its primarily negative outcomes (Hennekam & Ananthram, 2020; Josten & Schalk, 2010).

Theoretical Importance: The Other Side of the Power Dynamic

From a theoretical perspective, understanding the antecedents of power loss is vital for an accurate picture of power dynamics in general (Anderson & Brion, 2014). Although there is an ongoing debate about whether power should be seen in zero-sum or variable-sum terms (Read, 2012), there seem to be limits as to how much power can be gained by one party without entailing power losses for another party (Coleman & Voronov, 2008). Therefore, due to power being defined in relative terms between two or more social actors (French & Raven,

1959), one cannot fully understand either power gain or power loss without considering the other.

Research into the antecedents of power loss can also be used to qualify the notion of power being self-reinforcing. It is often assumed that having power is associated with gaining more power in the future, making those already powerful even more powerful (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). For example, powerholders often make the first offer in negotiations (Magee et al., 2007) which has been shown to lead to more attained resources (Gunia et al., 2013). However, power loss can be easily observed when looking at organizations where people get demoted or fired (Eib et al., 2021; Verheyen et al., 2016). This must mean that there are certain circumstances under which this effect of self-reinforcement is negated or at least dampened. Identifying the antecedents of power loss can be a first step to finding these potential moderators of power maintenance versus loss.

Lastly, investigating factors that contribute to power loss can also deepen our understanding of power and what it entails. Specifically, a potential moderating effect of power level could support the argument that there are not only quantitative but also qualitative differences between different power levels (Handgraaf et al., 2008). Suppose different factors precede power loss of individuals with very high power versus individuals with medium power levels. In that case, it could mean that there is not only a difference in the amount of power these individuals possess, but that power itself has different properties at different levels. One could also say that the effects of different factors on power are not linear (Schaerer, du Plessis, et al., 2018). This would complement the same assumption made by researchers when talking about the difference between low power and no power (Handgraaf et al., 2008; Schaerer et al., 2015)

Practical Importance: The Costs of Power Loss

From a practical perspective, understanding the factors preceding power loss is essential to reducing the organizational costs associated with power loss. Within

organizations, individuals are entrusted with power under the assumption that it is used for the benefit of the company and the achievement of its goals (Coleman & Voronov, 2008). When managers within such an organization lose their power, this also limits their ability to benefit the company as much as they otherwise could. Further, if the sustained power loss eventually results in a loss of position, the organization is confronted with the turnover costs of filling this position anew. These costs include the cost of recruitment and training a new candidate, as well as the costs due to a decrease in production in the time until a replacement is employed (Kacmar et al., 2006). To avoid these costs, organizations must know which factors contribute to a loss in power to help their managers and supervisors protect themselves and the power entrusted to them. This gains further significance when considering the ample evidence that those most drawn to power and arguably least likely to lose it are often not the best persons to possess this power, as indicated by correlations with different kinds of immoral behavior (Sassenberg et al., 2014). In turn, this might mean that the best leaders also have the biggest need for help in protecting their power.

Summary

The definition of power loss we derived from the commonly accepted definition of power implies that power can be lost in two ways. It is lost when resources are lost or when these resources lose value for targets of influence attempts. Further, there is a clear indication of a need for research on the antecedents of power loss, both from the standpoint of increasing our theoretical understanding and for the practical benefits such research could promote.

The Current Study: A Potential Model of Power Loss

For a semi-systematic literature review with a rather explorative focus such as this one, it is useful to work with a research model that is broad enough to ideally include the full scope of an emerging topic in psychological research. For the specific case of research on the antecedents of power loss, such a model can be adopted from Anderson and Brion's (2014) review. Like their model, the current research also categorizes antecedents of power loss as

either exogenous or endogenous and additionally considers the possible interactions between these two types of factors. However, Anderson and Brion's (2014) model does not offer the possibility of differentiation regarding which type of power might be affected by these antecedents. We believe that this differentiation is essential, as it has been shown that powerholders rely on different power bases and that the effects of different factors across these bases vary (Aguinis & Henle, 2001; Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1990; Schwarzmüller et al., 2014). Thus, going beyond the model of Anderson and Brion (2014), the present research model also includes the possibility for a differentiation of antecedents depending on the type of the targeted power base (see Figure 1). Namely, we will differentiate between personal and positional power bases. As mentioned above, we believe this categorization is more useful in the context of power loss research than the more often used distinction between strong and weak power bases. This is because weak and strong power bases are defined in terms of an effect *of* power, namely how much control it leaves to an influence target. However, as the current investigation addresses effects *on* power, this distinction is conceptually less fitting. In contrast, personal and positional power are defined in terms of whether sources of power are due to personal characteristics, skills, and achievements or whether they are due to the position one occupies. This definition fits into the current framework coherently and will therefore be used to group the results.

Figure 1.

Research Model of Power Loss
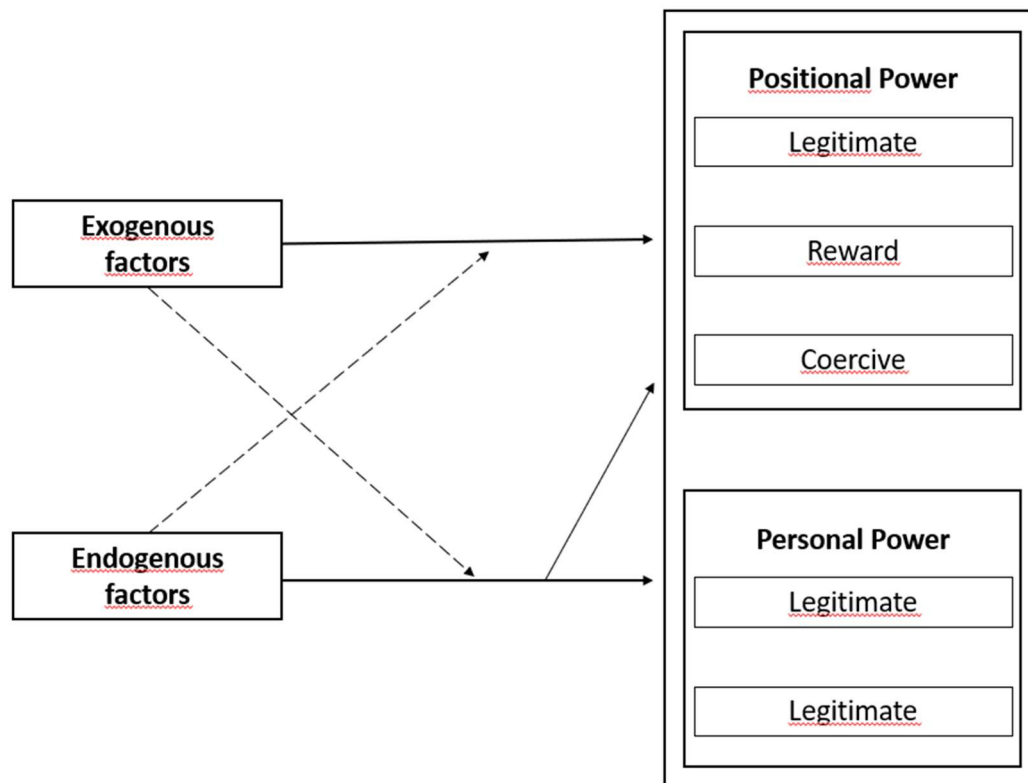
Expected Relationships between Type of Antecedent and Type of Power

       As outlined above, our model allows the distinction between exogenous and endogenous antecedents of power loss and the distinction between a loss of positional and personal power. This also allows us to make some predictions for the relationships between these variables. Firstly, we believe that while positional power may be directly affected both by exogenous and endogenous factors, the only direct effect on personal power is expected to be by endogenous factors. This assumption stems from the fact that personal power is defined as relying only on the powerholder's personal characteristics and skills (Yukl, 2013). However, as a meta-analysis by Carson and colleagues (1993) on the interdependence of different power bases has shown, it is possible that endogenous factors may indirectly affect personal power bases through positional power bases. Further, while talking about direct or

indirect effects, we acknowledge that, as discussed above, all effects on power are indirect because they always depend on a target's evaluation of a given resource in varied contexts. Lastly, interactions between endogenous and exogenous factors are also expected, but there is no clear indication linking them specifically to only one type of power base.

Endogenous Factors

Endogenous antecedents of power loss refer to the factors that relate to the powerholders themselves and include their perceptions and individual difference variables such as physical characteristics or personality traits. We believe that the most obvious avenue for finding endogenous factors that are potentially connected to power loss is to look at the factors that play a role in gaining power. The logic behind this approach is that when some factors are necessary or beneficial for gaining power, a lack of those factors may also lead to losing the power someone already possesses.

One endogenous factor that has long been associated with differences in power dynamics is gender (Carli, 2001; Lee & Pratto, 2018; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). Research even suggests that the differences between the effects of male and female gender are comparable to the differences between high-power and low-power individuals (Rucker et al., 2018). Further, it is widely accepted that it is harder for women to attain powerful positions within organizations (Bosak & Sczesny, 2011; Isaac et al., 2009), and many theories are trying to explain this effect. One such an explanation comes from Phelan and Rudman (2010) who reviewed evidence of the so-called backlash-effect. This term is used for the negative reactions that women experience when showing behaviors likely needed for power gain, like agency, competence, and self-promotion. The authors suggest that the reason for these negative reactions is a desire by many to maintain the gender status-quo, including the status quo of men being powerful (Phelan & Rudman, 2010). It seems likely that a desire to maintain this status-quo would not only lead to the described bias in hiring decisions but would also effect those women who actually manage to attain a position of power. In fact, an

analysis in Belgium already revealed that women are more often demoted in terms of their job authority (Verheyen et al., 2016) clearly showing a connection of gender and power loss.

Another factor potentially associated with the loss of power is the performance of the powerholder. As with gender, performance also accounts for differences in power dynamics with high performing individuals being more likely to gain and maintain power. In groups, leaders are often awarded power to use that power to help the group achieve valued goals (Coleman & Voronov, 2008; Keltner et al., 2008). In that regard, many leaders' power is contingent on their success in getting optimal outcomes for their group. This is especially the case in organizations, which are often characterized by power-holders being accountable for their own performance as well as for the performance of their group as a whole (Schaerer, Lee, et al., 2018) Therefore, it can be expected that powerholders' insufficient performance on tasks associated with their powerful role will decrease the power these individuals hold.

In the same line of reasoning, it is suspected that immoral and self-serving behaviors can lead to power loss in the long run. Although the specific circumstances under which powerholders are more likely to act in self-serving ways are still under investigation (Foulk et al., 2020; Maner & Mead, 2010), it seems clear that a link between power and immoral behaviors exists (Guinote, 2017). It has also been suggested as a potential antecedent to power loss by previous reviews (Anderson & Brion, 2014). As the term self-serving behaviors implies, it is generally believed that these behaviors benefit the powerholder, which would speak for a power increase, at least in the short term. However, as mentioned above, power is often contingent on the position that one is chosen for by the group or organization (Keltner et al., 2008). Therefore, it is reasonable that over the long-term, behaviors that serve the powerholder rather than the organization may lead to the demotion or termination of said powerholder, which, in turn, means losing his position-related power.

To put it concisely, by looking at factors that have been associated with differences in power dynamics, we identified three factors potentially related to power loss. First, due to

ample literature showing that women experience backlash effects which aim at retaining the gender status-quo, it is likely that they also have a harder time maintaining positions of power. Second, low-performing powerholders due not contribute sufficiently to the achievement of their group's goals, for which they are accountable, eventually leading to power losses. Third, immoral or self-serving behaviors, though likely beneficial in the short-term, may contribute to power losses in the long run.

Exogenous Factors

In this section about exogenous factors potentially related to power loss, we want to pay special attention to power threats. Many of the threats to power described in the literature are exogenous (Deng et al., 2018), meaning that they originate outside the powerholder in the social- or organizational context. We believe that threats to power hold a prominent position when thinking about power loss for two reasons. The first reason is that the conception of threats to power implies the potential that this power is lost directly (Deng et al., 2018). The second reason is that the few researchers addressing the issue of power loss have proposed that an inappropriate response to power threats may be one way leaders lose their power (Anderson & Brion, 2014). For finding the most prominent threats existing literature can be helpful.

The legitimacy of power, for instance, has been manipulated in numerous studies to induce a threat response in those who hold power (e.g., Goff, 2013; Michener & Burt, 1975) and there is reason to believe that this may lead to power loss. It has been found, for instance, that illegitimacy moderates the effects postulated by Keltner and colleagues' (2003) approach-inhibition theory of power. These effects include that powerholders, compared to low-power individuals, pay more attention to rewards than to threats, and that they act in disinhibited ways. Although these propositions have received empirical support (Cho & Keltner, 2020), illegitimacy has been shown to reverse these effects. Namely, in situations where the power difference is perceived to be illegitimate, powerholders acted in more inhibited ways,

including being more risk-averse (Lammers et al., 2008), which suggests that they focus on regards vs. threats was changed. Further, when power differences are illegitimate, those with no power show more behavioral approach tendencies such as enhanced goal pursuit (Willis et al., 2010). In combination, these effects may contribute to power changes as powerful individuals cannot reap the benefits usually associated with their power, whereas the formerly powerless are better able to pursue their (power-related) goals.

A second threat that is often described in the literature is the stability of power hierarchies (Deng et al., 2018; Maner et al., 2007). This refers to the frequency or likelihood by which changes within the hierarchy are to be expected. These changes can not only consist of upward movement within the hierarchy, as there is a limited number of power- or leadership positions within most groups and especially within organizations. Consequently, some of these changes must consist of downward movement within the hierarchy, meaning a loss of power for some individuals. Therefore, it can be assumed that within hierarchies that are characterized by instability power loss happens more often than in stable hierarchies, making power-stability a likely antecedent for power loss. This also relates to intragroup competition, as a higher number of qualified competitors for a certain position will also affect the likelihood that there are changes within the hierarchy, thereby decreasing the stability of the hierarchy.

Lastly, we want to address changes in the social context, a factor that is not always seen in terms of a threat to power, but which we believe can constitute one. This assumption is mainly based on an article by Neeley (2013) who investigates such changes in a French high-tech company. To be specific, the decision of the investigated company to make English a common language led to status changes for the company's employees. Those who were non-native English speakers experienced a loss in status independent of their level of fluency in this language. Further, those non-native speakers who perceived their fluency in English to be low, displayed more behaviors associated with inhibition (Neeley, 2013). The combination

of loss of status (a variable strongly related to power) and the effect of inhibition among less fluent English-speakers (also associated with low power) makes us believe that such changes can constitute a threat to some powerholders and, eventually, lead to them losing their power.

Summing up, we identified three exogenous threats that may lead to power loss. Illegitimacy of power reverses the effects of power on approach and inhibition, benefiting the powerless and restricting those who have power. The stability of hierarchies and the competition within them determines the likelihood that powerholders experience downward movement within the hierarchy (or losing power). Lastly, changes in the social context may lead to power losses by changing the determinants of employees' or managers' status.

Summary

In the previous sections we proposed a model for investigating power loss that builds on a previous model by Anderson and Brion (2014). Distinguishing the antecedents of power loss by exogenous and endogenous factors and power itself by positional and personal power, also allows us to make some general predictions about the relationship between those variables. Namely, we believe that exogenous factors mainly affect positional power, whereas endogenous factors may affect both personal and positional power. For the expected interactions between exo- and endogenous factors no clear predictions can be made. In the last two sections we proposed some factors that are potentially related to power loss. Among the endogenous factors, these include gender, performance, and the display of immoral behaviors, whereas prominent exogenous threats to power include illegitimacy, instability, and changes in the social context.

Method

To synthesize the current findings on the factors leading to power loss into a cohesive framework, a semi-systematic literature review was conducted in line with suggestions by Sturm and Antonakis (2015). This review is a master thesis project created in collaboration with another student, Akvilė Sabulyte. We collaborated on the following steps: scoping,

identification, deduplication, selection, and manual inclusion of articles. Additionally, we created an article database for our two research models (one focusing on antecedents of power loss and the other one focusing on consequences of fear of power loss). Subsequently, we worked independently to analyze the resulting articles in our respective databases. Thus, in this paper, we only discuss results relevant to the present research model. Due to the limited time available and feasibility concerns, we took several decisions that are in line with current practice (Shaw, 2010). First, we limited the databases for our search (as can be seen in Figure 2). Second, we excluded gray literature even though it might have provided additional value for a coherent systematic review (Lawrence et al., 2014). This means that the focus is exclusively on published and peer-reviewed articles. Please note that in this review "article"/"paper" and "study" are used synonymously, except in the results and discussion sections where studies in articles are specified. The method procedure consisted of two major stages: 1) Literature search, and 2) Article selection.

Literature Search

In line with recommendations in the field (Shaw, 2010), we undertook several steps to ensure the quality of data collection. First, during the scoping stage, the most efficient keywords and the most relevant databases were identified after conducting some trials to get the best ratio between the overall number of results and topic-relevant ones. The potential keywords used for trials were gathered from the relevant literature about power (e.g., Anderson & Brion, 2014; Sturm & Antonakis, 2014). The list of potentially relevant databases was created according to scholars' (e.g., Daniëls et al., 2019) and our supervisor's recommendations. This list of these databases and an example of the preliminary keywords string are shown in Figure 2. We found significant overlap between databases; thus, we excluded some based on the following criteria: the ones that delivered too few relevant results ("World Cat," "Web of Science ") or too many irrelevant results for the scope of this review ("JSTOR"), or a combination of both ("Scopus"). The best keywords, that led to a

combination of the most topic-relevant and the least topic-irrelevant results, were combined into a Boolean search string and used in an abstract and title search in the three remaining databases ("EBSCO Business Source Premier," "PsycInfo," and "SocINDEX ") (see Figure 2 Identification stage).

While searching for articles, some filters in databases were applied, such as document type (articles only), publication type (peer-reviewed only), language (English only), source type (academic journals only), science categories (management, business, psychology, and sociology only). The search was conducted in February 2022. Initially, we found 2096 peer-reviewed articles in English. After that, we engaged in a deduplication process. Firstly, we used the program "EndNote.20" for automatic deduplication. Later, to ensure the accuracy of the final sample, duplicate records were sorted out manually. After the deduplication was completed, 1693 unique articles were left in the sample to be screened for eligibility (Figure 2).

Article Selection

The selection of relevant articles from the deduplicated set was conducted in five phases: phase 1 - articles selection by journal relevance; phase 2 - article inclusion by title and abstract; phase 3 - backward search; phase 4 - content screening of the articles' text, and phase 5 - in-depth reading of the articles and classification according to the model.

In phase 1, 144 published articles were removed due to the irrelevance of the journals' core topics to the research question. The removed articles were published in journals such as "The Journal of Clinical Nursing," "Infant Mental Health Journal," and "Journal of Psychotherapy & the Family."

In phase 2, we checked articles' titles, then read the abstracts, and selected the ones that fit our inclusion criteria. Articles had to contain empirical quantitative studies that included measures (this study) or manipulations (A. Sabulyte) of power or status loss, had to have an individual level of analysis, had to be peer-reviewed, and were available in English
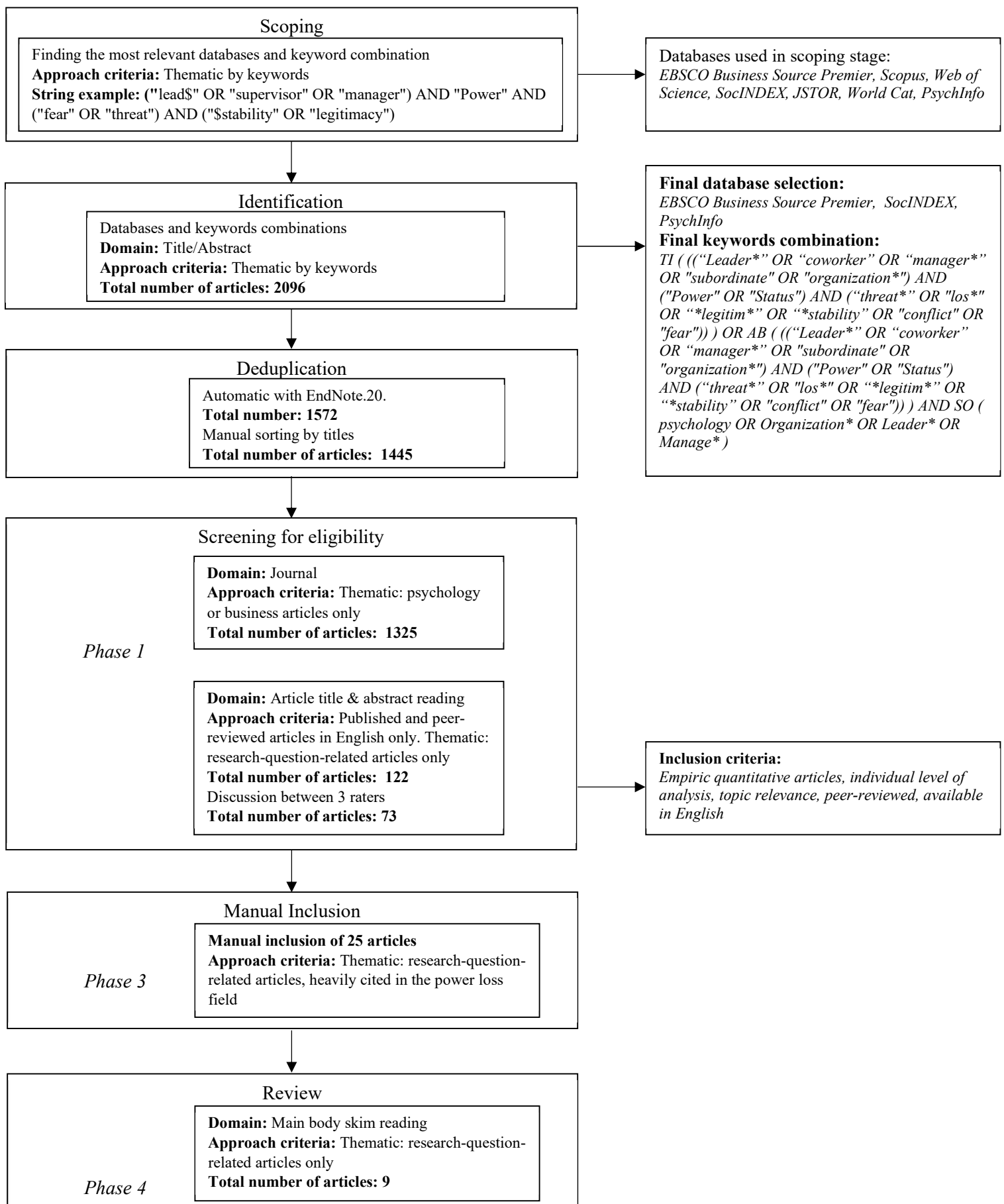
(see Figure 2 Screening for Eligibility stage). We decided to include only the articles focused on the individual level of the analysis since our model focused on individual-level processes. Therefore, we excluded articles focused on the organizational- or group-level of analysis. The selection process consisted of the two collaborators on this project independently rating the articles based on the aforementioned inclusion criteria. In the case of disagreements, we discussed the article's merits, often resolving the disagreement. In the rare case when no agreement could be reached, a third evaluator broke the tie. After the selection by journal, title, and abstract, 79 topic-related articles were left.

In phase 3, the sample was supplemented by nineteen heavily cited articles in the field of power (loss) that were included based on a backward search. This type of search uses the references of already selected articles to find relevant articles that may have been missing in the initial search (Briscoe et al., 2020). The final sample consisted of 98 articles.

In phase 4, we skim-read the articles to ensure their relevance to our specific research questions. For the present review, focusing on the antecedents of power loss, we could identify nine relevant articles. The review focusing on the consequences of leaders' fear of power loss ended up with a final sample of nine articles, which will not be discussed here. The process was finished with phase 5, in which the articles were fully read and classified according to the research model (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Review procedure

Scoping
Finding the most relevant databases and keyword combination **Approach criteria:** Thematic by keywords **String example: ("**lead$" OR "supervisor" OR "manager") AND "Power" AND ("fear" OR "threat") AND ("$stability" OR "legitimacy")

→

Databases used in scoping stage:
EBSCO Business Source Premier, Scopus, Web of Science, SocINDEX, JSTOR, World Cat, PsychInfo

Identification
Databases and keywords combinations **Domain:** Title/Abstract **Approach criteria:** Thematic by keywords **Total number of articles: 2096**

→

Final database selection:
EBSCO Business Source Premier, SocINDEX, PsychInfo **Final keywords combination:** *TI (((("Leader*" OR "coworker" OR "manager*" OR "subordinate" OR "organization*") AND ("Power" OR "Status") AND ("threat*" OR "los*" OR "*legitim*" OR "*stability" OR "conflict" OR "fear"))) OR AB (((("Leader*" OR "coworker" OR "manager*" OR "subordinate" OR "organization*") AND ("Power" OR "Status") AND ("threat*" OR "los*" OR "*legitim*" OR "*stability" OR "conflict" OR "fear"))) AND SO (psychology OR Organization* OR Leader* OR Manage*)*

Deduplication
Automatic with EndNote.20. **Total number: 1572** Manual sorting by titles **Total number of articles: 1445**

Screening for eligibility
Phase 1 **Domain:** Journal **Approach criteria:** Thematic: psychology or business articles only **Total number of articles: 1325** **Domain:** Article title & abstract reading **Approach criteria:** Published and peer-reviewed articles in English only. Thematic: research-question-related articles only **Total number of articles: 122** Discussion between 3 raters **Total number of articles: 73**

→

Inclusion criteria:
Empiric quantitative articles, individual level of analysis, topic relevance, peer-reviewed, available in English

Manual Inclusion
Phase 3 **Manual inclusion of 25 articles** **Approach criteria:** Thematic: research-question-related articles, heavily cited in the power loss field

Review
Phase 4 **Domain:** Main body skim reading **Approach criteria:** Thematic: research-question-related articles only **Total number of articles: 9**

Results

Overview of Results

The paragraphs below will discuss the articles found using the previously described methodology. Nine articles could be identified that contained studies relevant to the investigation of the antecedents of power loss. All nine papers used at least one experiment, while three also used at least one correlational design (Brion & Anderson, 2013; Rudman et al., 2012; Van Dijke et al., 2010). Three papers contained only one study (Brescoll et al., 2010; Fehr et al., 2010; Nesler et al., 1993), whereas the rest of the sample consisted of multi-study papers. Only a single paper (Brion & Anderson, 2013) used a longitudinal design in a field setting to investigate power loss. Further, it must be said that most studies used WEIRD (meaning **w**hite **e**ducated persons living in **i**ndustrial and **r**ich **d**emocracies (Henrich et al., 2010)) student samples.

According to our research model, the studies were then thematically categorized depending on whether they dealt with endogenous antecedents, exogenous antecedents, or interaction effects. The majority of the papers addressed interaction factors ($N = 5$). Papers on endogenous factors ($N = 3$) made up the second biggest category, but there was only one paper investigating exogenous antecedents to power loss (see Table 1 for an overview). Additionally, whenever possible, papers within those categories were distinguished according to whether the power loss pertained to personal- or positional power. However, it must be mentioned that not all papers measured power bases directly, with some using composite measures for power and others using related concepts like status, resource attainment, or leader support. For these studies, we have used the framing of the measures in question to decide which type of power they pertain to. This was not possible for all studies, and we have reported these cases accordingly.

Endogenous Factors Contributing to Power Loss

With three papers containing studies on endogenous factors, they made up the second biggest category. As already mentioned, we also tried to cluster the articles within this category depending on which type of power they addressed. Of the three papers, two found effects on variables connected to positional power, and one paper mainly related to personal power. In two of those papers, some variables could not be clearly assigned to a power type because of the measure used in the studies.

Endogenous Antecedents Affecting Positional Power

Two articles gave some insight into the endogenous antecedents that affect power loss. Namely, it was found that biased assessments of alliances (Brion & Anderson, 2013), a reluctance to delegate authority, and over-providing effort (Fehr et al., 2010) led to resource losses for power holders.

Firstly, Fehr and colleagues (2010) showed in an experimental study that when people had the power to choose a specific outcome, they did not delegate this authority to a subordinate, even if this would benefit the powerholder. Further, they provided more effort (associated with a cost) to know the values of different outcomes than would have been ideal. As a result, the achieved outcomes were lower than the expected outcomes across the different scenarios employed in the study. This suggests that when powerholders try to hold on to their power and do not delegate some of their authority, it will reduce their own resource gains.

Secondly, Brion and Anderson's (2013) paper suggests that powerholders' biased assessments of their social relationships and the strength of their alliances can lead to a decrease in the strength of those alliances and eventually to the loss of power. These biases in assessing alliances, determined by comparing team members' actual ratings of loyalty and support towards each other with the ratings of how loyal and supportive the team members are believed to be by the individual, are termed *illusions of alliance* by Brion and Anderson

(2013). The authors show that powerholders are more likely to hold illusions of alliance and that those who held illusions of alliance were excluded more often from agreements. Further, when they reached an agreement, they received fewer resources compared to powerholders with a more accurate assessment of their alliances. The studies in this paper also provide support for a mediation of the mentioned effects by the strength of actual alliances. This means that when powerholders overestimate the strength of their alliances, the strength of actual alliances eventually decreases, resulting in a reduction of obtained resources and more frequent exclusion from agreements.

Both papers describe a reduction in the resources of the powerholder. This decreases the asymmetry in the control over those resources, constituting a loss of power as defined in our theoretical section. Further, both papers use a type of point-based currency as a resource, meaning that the loss affects the ability to give rewards or administer punishments by distributing or withholding this resource. Thus, both papers can be said to describe a loss of positional power.

Lastly, Brion and Anderson (2013) also found another effect of powerholders' illusions of alliance: a drop in the rank within the group's hierarchy. While this clearly constitutes a loss of power, it is not possible to assign it to either personal or positional power. The measure used to determine each person's rank within a small group combined questions that relate to both types of power, most prominently legitimate and referent power. Therefore, it cannot clearly be said whether these illusions of alliance also affect personal power bases in addition to the already established effect on positional power bases.

Summing up, three endogenous antecedents could be identified within the two selected papers. Not delegating authority enough, providing too much effort, and having biased assessments of one's alliances lead to positional power losses, mainly in terms of a reduction in obtained resources. Biased assessments of alliances were also shown to lead to a reduction in the strength of those alliances and a drop within the hierarchy of one's group.

Endogenous Antecedents Affecting Personal Power

The only paper that assessed the effects of endogenous antecedents on variables connected to personal power was provided by Brescoll and colleagues (2010). While looking at an interaction effect that will be discussed in a later section, they also investigated the effects of gender on attributions of status and competence. They reported that there was no effect of gender on competence or status attributions. However, this result should be seen in the light of the study design used by the researchers. Namely, because their main goal was the investigation of gender-congruency of occupations, the scenario described in their study refers to two leadership positions that are very congruent with one gender but very incongruent with the other. This could be masking the fact that leadership positions and positions of power are generally seen as more congruent with the male gender stereotype (Rudman & Glick, 2001) and that the penalty for being in a gender-incongruent job should, therefore, be higher for women than for men.

Summary

Putting it concisely, we found that the loss of personal and positional power can be preceded directly by endogenous factors. Not delegating authority to others is one way by which powerholders can lose valuable resources and, thus, their positional power. Another way is by having positively biased assessments of one's alliances' strength, which can also lead to a drop in the rank of a group's social hierarchy. The only paper addressing direct effects on personal power found that gender was unrelated to status and competence. However, this last result should be viewed critically.

Exogenous Factors

Although only one paper with studies on exogenous antecedents could be identified, the topic of this paper fits into the preconceived themes in this category. Namely, Ratcliff and Vescio (2018) used four experiments to show the effect of illegitimacy on the willingness of powerholders to give up their position, actual retention of power, and the support of

subordinates for leaders differing in legitimacy. In the first set of two studies, the authors found that illegitimate leaders are more willing to relinquish their position of power and relinquish more of their power when given the option. Both effects are mediated by a reduced feeling of belonging to the leadership role or being worthy of it. Relinquishing one's leadership position can be seen as almost exclusively reducing positional power bases while leaving personal power bases largely unaffected.

In two further experiments, Ratcliff and Vescio (2018) found that leaders who illegitimately retain their power are less supported by their subordinates than leaders willing to give up their power. It is, however, not possible to attribute this decrease in support to either personal or positional power bases due to the composite measure used to assess leader support in this study. In sum, the studies show that people in illegitimate positions of power are more willing and likely to voluntarily give up this position-related power. Those who retain their illegitimate position still lose power, as they are less supported by their subordinates than legitimate leaders.

Interaction Effects

Interactions Involving Gender

Two of the papers identified in this review dealt with the effect of gender on power and found interaction effects that, combined, paint a picture, suggesting that women may be more likely to lose power than men, either because of unfavorable attributions of status and competence or through direct sabotage by subordinates. Competence can be seen in relation to either positional power (e.g., a competent leader vs. an incompetent leader) or personal power (e.g., high competence and knowledge in terms of expertise), depending on the framing used. On the other hand, status is clearly related to personal power due to its connection with the referent power base.

Brescoll and colleagues (2010) found that after low job performance, individuals in positions of power in a gender-incongruent occupation were attributed less status and

competence than those in gender congruent occupations. Further, low job performance's effect on attributed competence mediated its effect on attributed status. It is important to note that status is mainly connected to personal power due to its overlap with referent power. For the measure of competence used in this study, it is not possible to clearly assign it to personal or positional power as it uses questions related to both types.

The second interaction effect on power loss that involves gender was reported by Rudman and colleagues (2012; Study 4), who showed that women in positions of power might have to expect power losses in two different ways, depending on their level of agency. Powerful women low in agency were seen as significantly less competent than their non-agentic male counterparts. While not affected in terms of attributed competence, Agentic female leaders experienced more sabotage by their subordinates compared to other groups. When tasked to design a challenging anagram test for either a male leader or a female leader, participants chose less helpful clues for agentic female targets compared to agentic male targets. There was no difference in sabotage for agentic male leaders and non-agentic leaders, irrespective of their gender. In the context used by the researchers, both the attribution of competence and the sabotage of a leader's performance can be seen as targeting positional power.

Adopting the explanation by Rudman and colleagues (2012), women in a position of power are sabotaged more because people want to defend the status quo of leadership positions being stereotypically male. This also fits the findings of Brescoll and colleagues (2010), as in their study, individuals are punished for violating these norms. As already mentioned in the section on endogenous factors, it is possible this study did not find any differences between genders because they chose situations where men and women are equally violating these norms. Generally, however, leadership positions may be seen as being more gender-congruent for men than for women. Consequently, women will experience more negative effects when in power, making their position less secure.

Interactions Involving the Stability of Hierarchies

Two papers provided evidence for the relevance of the stability in intra- and intergroup hierarchies for power losses. Specifically, unstable group hierarchies limit powerholders' ability to perform creatively when needed. In contrast, changes in the stability of intergroup status hierarchies can affect which leaders are seen as preferable and, thus, who gets supported.

On the topic of stability of intragroup hierarchies, Sligte and colleagues (2011) used three experiments to investigate the connection between power stability, power level, and creative performance. They showed that when the power hierarchy is unstable and creativity is relevant to effective functioning in a position of power, those with high power perform worse on creative tasks. Namely, under these conditions, power holders had less creative insight and less cognitive flexibility on brainstorming tasks than individuals in low-power positions. This reduction is mediated by a change in processing style, in that a local processing style is more prevalent under unstable power conditions. The reverse effect appears under stable power conditions. This suggests that in high-power positions that require high creativity, unstable power has adverse effects on the ability and potential of powerholders to maintain their power by reducing their creative performance. In addition to being inhibited in the skill needed to protect their power, their power also gets reduced in a different way. Namely, the combination of an unstable power hierarchy in which creativity is needed also benefits the creative performance of those not in power, thereby further increasing the relative power loss of the powerholder.

In a second paper on the moderating effects of the stability of hierarchies on power loss, Gleibs and Haslam (2016) found that the stability of intergroup status hierarchies and the current status of a group affects the level of support for competitive leaders. Groups of high status showed less support for leaders who engaged in intergroup competition when intergroup status was unstable compared to when it was stable. The reverse was seen in low-

status groups, showing less support for competitive leaders under stable versus unstable conditions. The measure the authors used to assess subordinates' support for their leader mostly touches on personal power, whereas positional power was not assessed.

In summary, unstable intragroup hierarchies seem to affect leaders' performance, especially in creative tasks, while unstable intergroup hierarchies seem to affect the support for different types of leaders.

Differential Effects at Different Power Levels

Two of the five papers with interaction effects had power level as a moderator (Nesler et al., 1993; Van Dijke et al., 2010). In both cases, the investigated effect was only significant for either high- or low-powered supervisors. Interestingly, however, the direction of moderation is different.

On the one hand, Van Dijke and colleagues (2010) found that low procedural fairness by powerholders led to them being perceived as less legitimate (reduced legitimate power) and less charismatic (reduced referent power). Thereby it seems to affect both positional and personal power bases. As mentioned, this effect was moderated in that it was only significant for high-power supervisors, whereas it could not be found for supervisors with low power. On the other hand, Nesler and colleagues (1993) could only find their effect for supervisors with low objective power. These were perceived to have even less power when they also had low credibility. The effect of low credibility was significant for the perception of all power bases, indicating that the credibility of low-powered supervisors can lead to losses of both positional and personal power bases.

In sum, these two studies clearly imply that the factors that lead to someone's power loss, both for personal and positional power bases, depend on the level of the target's power. Further, the direction of this moderation does not seem universal, with some factors only affecting targets in positions of high power but not those with low-powered positions and vice versa.

Summary

Interaction effects made up the biggest group of articles with five papers. Among those, three thematic categories emerged: interactions involving gender, interactions involving the stability of hierarchies, and effects that are moderated by the level of power someone possesses. Women are sabotaged in different ways depending on their agency, and power holders in gender-incongruent occupations are punished harder when making mistakes. Unstable power makes powerholders in creativity-dependent positions perform less creatively, and unstable intergroup hierarchies predict the support received by competitive leaders. Lastly, high-power managers lose power when perceived to have low procedural fairness, whereas low-power managers lose power when they have low credibility.

Table 1

Summary of Findings of the Selected Articles

Type of Factor	Authors	Research Design	Antecedent to power loss	Findings
Endogenous	Rudman et al. (2012)	multi-study (5) mixed-method (survey, experimental)	Gender, Agency	Agentic female supervisors are sabotaged more by their subordinates. Agentic women are also less liked than agentic men. Further, non-agentic women are seen as less competent than their non-agentic male counterparts.
Endogenous	(Brescoll et al., 2010)	experimental	gender-occupation congruence, job performance	Leaders who made a mistake are attributed less competence and status. This effect is stronger for leaders in gender-incongruent occupations compared to leaders in gender-congruent positions. The negative effect of low performance (making a mistake) on attributed competence mediates the effect on the status attributed to the leader.
Endogenous	Brion & Anderson (2013)	multi-study (3) mixed-method (correlational, experimental)	biased assessment of alliances in their group	People in high-power positions overestimate how loyal and friendly others are towards them. This leads to a decrease in the strength of the alliances with others and eventually results in an actual drop within the group hierarchy. When alliances are needed to obtain resources, individuals with a higher power who overestimate their alliances are

Type of Factor	Authors	Research Design	Antecedent to power loss	Findings
				more often excluded from alliances by their lower power counterparts and receive less resources.
Endogenous	Fehr et al. (2010)	experimental	Delegation of authority	Participants in an authority position do not delegate their authority, even if the delegation of authority would be beneficial for them. Further, they provide more effort than the ideal amount predicted by the Nash equilibrium. A combination of both factors leads to decreased outcomes for both the person with authority and the subordinate.
Exogenous	(Ratcliff & Vescio, 2018)	multi-study (4) experimental	Legitimacy, Retention of power	Illegitimacy leads to a decrease in leadership belonging (feeling worthy of the leadership role), which increases the willingness of leaders to relinquish their power. Illegitimate leaders who do not relinquish their power are less supported by their subordinates.
Endogenous X Exogenous	(Van Dijke et al., 2010)	multi-study (3) mixed-method (correlational, experimental)	Procedural fairness, Objective power	Supervisors with low procedural fairness are less trusted and consequently seen as less legitimate and less charismatic. In all three studies, effects were only found for high-power supervisors, whereas they were less pronounced or not present for low-power supervisors.

Type of Factor	Authors	Research Design	Antecedent to power loss	Findings
endogenous X exogenous	Gleibs & Haslam (2016)	multi-study (3) experimental	interaction of group status with group status stability and leader behavior	Support for different types of leaders varies depending on their group's status and the stability of this status. Especially leaders who engage in intergroup competition are less supported in groups of high and unstable group status or groups with low stable status compared to groups with high and stable status or low and unstable status. These effects were less consistent for cooperative leaders.
exogenous X exogenous	(Sligte et al., 2011)	multi-study (3) experimental	power-related functionality of creativity, stability of power	When power is unstable, and creativity is functionally relevant to maintaining power, power holders perform worse on creative insight and generation tasks. Thus, they are inhibited in the skill that would help them maintain their power when it is unstable.
exogenous X endogenous	Nesler et al. (1993)	experimental	Objective power, credibility	Managers with low objective power are perceived as even less powerful when they have low credibility. This effect is significant for all five power bases. High-power managers' credibility does not affect their power.

Note. "exogenous X endogenous" denotes and interaction effect

Discussion

Summary of Research and Results

In the present paper, we conducted a semi-systematic review to provide an overview of the already published literature on the antecedents of power loss. Increasing the knowledge about these factors has both practical and theoretical relevance. From a practical perspective, power loss of leadership may reduce a team's efficiency and, when resulting in the extreme cases of being fired or demoted, the organization incurs high costs for this turnover. Further, there is reason to believe that those who are best suited to have power may also be the ones who need the most help with keeping it. Such help should be based on research, which, unfortunately, is rarely available today (Anderson & Brion, 2014; Sturm & Antonakis, 2015). To change this fact and to give a starting point for future research, we conducted a semi-systematic literature review synthesizing the current empirical evidence about the antecedents of power loss into a cohesive framework.

After providing some definitional clarity and an overview of the current streams in power research, we proposed a model for future investigations of power loss (Figure 1). Further, we proposed some factors likely to correlate with power loss. We followed the review procedures suggested by previous research (Sturm & Antonakis, 2015) and then classified the articles we found in relevant databases (Figure 2) according to our model. We expected endogenous antecedents to be more strongly connected to personal power bases, whereas we expected exogenous antecedents to affect positional power exclusively. We found nine articles published between 1993 and 2018 related to the research question. Although there were not enough articles to draw final conclusions about the accuracy of our predictions, we also did not find articles that contradicted these expectations.

In the following sections, we will put our results into perspective while giving special attention to some selected results. Then, we will acknowledge the strengths and limitations of the present research. Last, we will use both parts to give recommendations for future research on the antecedents of power loss.

The Results of the Review in Perspective

Perspectives on the Methodology of the Identified Articles

Concerning the methodological aspects of the identified studies, there were a few interesting findings that we think should be discussed. Firstly, all studies used WEIRD samples, meaning samples from a population of white, educated persons living in industrial and rich democracies. This is concerning, as the results we have right now are all from the same cultural context. Thus, it is impossible to generalize results to other cultural contexts, as cross-cultural differences such as collectivism vs. individualism might lead to different effects in other contexts. In fact, it has been shown that the qualities associated with leadership and therefore expected within leaders can drastically differ between different cultures (Gerstner & Day, 1994; Javidan et al., 2016). Secondly, the results show a severe lack of longitudinal designs and field studies. The former is especially concerning as power loss is a change that may only occur over time and, thus, can only be assessed accurately using a longitudinal design. The latter is problematic because the multifaceted nature of power in real life is challenging to capture in an experimental setting. However, it could be this multifaceted nature that needs to be considered when trying to understand the processes of power loss fully. This problem is also present in how power is measured, which is the last methodological aspect we need to address. Many studies we analyzed that measured power rarely used multi-factor measures of power, like assessing the power bases. Instead, power was often operationalized with a compound measure that included questions relating to multiple power bases (e.g., Brescoll et al., 2010; Ratcliff & Vescio, 2018). We believe this is an issue because these measures cannot capture the differential effects of factors on the varied power bases that exist.

In a nutshell, the three main methodological issues that could be identified were the selection of WEIRD samples, the lack of longitudinal and field studies compared to

experimental studies, and the use of compound measures of power. These findings are also reflected in our recommendations for future research, outlined at the end of the section.

Perspectives on the Results of the Identified Articles

Biased Perceptions and Valuation. Our results indicate that biased perceptions and valuations on the part of the powerholder can result in power losses for them. First, Fehr and colleagues (2010) showed that powerholders overvalue authority. This was shown as they did not delegate their authority even when it would be advisable and provided more effort in tasks. This effect was independent of endowment effects that could otherwise explain the unwillingness of powerholders to delegate authority. Second, Brion & Anderson (2013) demonstrate that people in power hold overly positive assessments of their alliances within a social group. As a consequence, the objective strength of those alliances decreased and eventually led to a drop in the group's hierarchy for the powerholder (Brion & Anderson, 2013). Although these results give a first indication that biased perceptions and valuations may lead to power loss, some caution is warranted.

On the one hand, the resource losses in the study by Fehr and colleagues (2010) were compared to the maximum achievable resources or the Nash equilibrium. This is a different reference point than comparing the amount of resources that someone presently possesses with those he possessed at a previous time. Usually, if an individual has more resources than before, we speak of resource gain, and we speak of resource loss when the current amount of resources is less than it used to be. However, it also must be mentioned that as subordinates underprovided effort and powerholders over-provided effort, a shift in the asymmetry of resource control can still be assumed, thereby fitting our definition of power loss. For the article of Brion and Anderson (2013), there is a different issue. Although they showed that illusions of alliance could lead to a drop in position through the degradation of real alliances, the way they operationalized this position is not in line with our conceptualization. To be specific, Brion and Anderson (2013) operationalized someone's position of power as the rank

they had in a group without a formal leader. This means that the rank was mainly based on the liking of different team members and to what extent they showed the behaviors typical for a leader. However, this position was not formally set, and it does not involve specific rights or obligations that come with it. This is representative of some groups in real life (such as the student project group used in the study), but many positions of power or leadership, especially in organizations, are more formal than that, like manager or CEO. Based on the current results, it is unclear whether the discussed effects on power and position loss may also hold for these formal leadership positions.

Qualitative differences between power levels. Two studies that we found suggest that there might be a qualitative difference between different power levels. While Nesler and colleagues (1993) found that low credibility reduces the power of low-level managers but not high-level managers, Van Dijke and associates (2010) found that procedural fairness only affects high-level managers' power and is less relevant for managers with lower objective power. Thus, both studies found that the level of power moderates the relationship between credibility or procedural fairness and power. These moderations have different directions; for credibility, the effect is strongest at the lower end of power, while procedural fairness has the strongest effects at the higher end of the power spectrum. One explanation is that there are different expectancies for individuals at different power levels, with credibility being more critical at the lower end and procedural fairness being more important at the higher end. This could mean that there are qualitative differences between medium and very high power levels. Another explanation was offered by Van Dijk and colleagues (2010), who found trust as a potential mediator. They argue that subordinates need to trust in authority to accept their own vulnerability, which can be interpreted as the dependence of power on its target, as discussed in the introduction. If a subordinate does not trust in the ability of a powerholder to affect valued outcomes, power can not materialize (Raven et al., 1998). This essential trust may have different sources for powerholders at different levels. As Van Dijke and colleagues

(2010) argue, how much trust high-level managers receive depends more on the extent to which procedures are perceived as fair by subordinates. According to the authors, managers with high power are seen as being able to influence these procedures, whereas low-power managers do not have this ability. It is conceivable that low-power managers' credibility is a better predictor of subordinates' trust in them as lower-level managers are more likely to interact with their subordinates directly compared with high-level managers.

Unfortunately, there are currently only few studies assessing qualitative differences at the higher end of the power spectrum. However, some research suggests that powerlessness and low power are different and produce different effects (Handgraaf et al., 2008). Thus, in combination with the two studies included in this review, this gives a promising starting point for further research in this regard, with a stronger focus on the higher end of the power spectrum.

The Special Interest in Power-Threats. We also want to discuss some findings concerning the role of power threats in predicting power loss. In the articles identified in this review, we found some initial support for our expectation that power loss and power threats might be connected. Interestingly, although only two papers dealt with commonly discussed threats to power, this fits with the two ways we believed these threats might lead to power loss.

Our first proposal was that threats might directly lead to power loss if they are not resolved. Supporting this idea, (Ratcliff & Vescio, 2018) found that illegitimate leaders felt less leadership belonging and were more willing to give up parts of their power or even give up their position entirely (Ratcliff & Vescio, 2018). Our second suggestion was that threats might act as a moderator by increasing already existing effects of variables on power loss or by interacting with a second variable to create a situation in which an effect on power loss emerges. Support for this was also found in an article by (Sligte et al., 2011). They showed that when powerholders in a position requiring creativity experience the threat of unstable

power, their ability to perform creatively reduces, thereby also reducing their power (Sligte et al., 2011). As described in the introduction, we also found that a change in the social context may lead to power loss and can therefore be seen as a power threat. Specifically, Gleibs and Haslam (2016) found that when the stability of the groups' intergroup status changes, this, in combination with the group's current status, also impacts how much support competitive leaders receive. For competitive leaders of high-status groups, it is, therefore, a threat when intergroup status relations stabilize, whereas, for leaders of low-status groups, it is a threat when intergroup status stability decreases.

When discussing threats to power, it may also be useful to mention the result of the second review written in this research group, which deals with powerholders' reactions to power threats. This review found that many power-holders react to threats in ways intended to protect their own power, either by weakening others (Michener & Burt, 1975; Wisse et al., 2019) or by strengthening their own position (Hays & Goldstein, 2015; Rabbie & Bekkers, 1978). It must be said, however, that although the intention of powerholders' behavioral responses to power threats seems clear, due to the lack of longitudinal data, it is unclear if these behaviors have the effect intended by powerholders. In fact, Anderson and Brion (2014) even suggest that these not rarely immoral behaviors might be one prominent cause of power loss instead of fulfilling their intended purpose. With these contradicting perspectives, it might be of value to look at potential moderators for the relationship between power threats and power loss.

From a practical perspective, there are two obvious moderators: the salience of the threat and the options for influencing the threat. Regarding the salience of power threats, it is self-explaining that powerholders can only deal with a potential threat if they are aware of that. For example, the study by Brion and Anderson (2013) shows that when powerholders are not aware of their degrading alliances, this further decreases the strength of those alliances and eventually leads to the loss of power. Regarding the second moderator, there seems to be

a difference between different threats in the extent to which the power holder can eliminate them. For example, it might be a lot easier for a female powerholder to influence the threat of a direct competitor (Mead & Maner, 2012) than to change proscriptive gender norms. Lastly, as Anderson and Brion (2014) remark, how power holders react to power threats may also vary in their effectiveness in protecting power, and some may even directly jeopardize it.

Strengths and Limitations

In this section, we will discuss the strengths and limitations of our study. Starting with the strengths, we would like to point out that this study is, to our knowledge, the first semi-systematic review explicitly focusing on the causes of power loss. As such, this study's results can inform future research on power loss and act as a starting point for this research. A second strength of the present review lies in the fact that we followed the PRISMA guidelines for systematic reviews (Fleming et al., 2014). This improves the scientific quality of the methodology of this review and allows it to be replicated by future researchers. An additional strength of our research is that we used multiple people to code articles according to their relevance to the research question. Adequate interrater reliability could be ensured using agreed-upon criteria for the review process. Furthermore, by using multiple raters, potential biases in the selection of articles could be reduced. Lastly, we had multiple deduplication steps, resulting in higher accuracy of the reported numbers of papers compared to only using automatic deduplication procedures. All in all, multiple methodological strengths ensure the quality of the present study. However, some important limitations need to be discussed.

Firstly, it must be mentioned that this review was written as part of a master thesis project, resulting in some critical drawbacks. As master students, we do not have much experience writing systematic reviews and may not have done everything in the best or most efficient way. In combination with the time constraints inherent in these types of projects, this resulted in a focus that was not as broad as it could have been, specifically concerning the number of included databases. Some databases had to be excluded because they contained

more results than would have been possible to process, which may have led to a systematic bias in the review (Drucker et al., 2016). Secondly, it is possible that our final search string can be further improved despite the measures taken to ensure a good combination of keywords. This assumption comes from the high number of irrelevant articles found with this search string. However, it must be mentioned that this may also be due to this research topic. For example, some studies we discussed describe power loss in terms of losing a leadership position (Ratcliff & Vescio, 2018) without explicitly measuring power. Others may use the terms status and power interchangeably. Thus, many different terms must be included to capture all relevant papers, resulting in a broader search string and more irrelevant results.

Thirdly, additional limitations of this review stem from the pre-determined exclusion criteria used. Namely, we included only quantitative studies published in peer-reviewed journals and written in English. Excluding qualitative studies limits the present review, as they may add relevant perspectives and are especially useful at the beginning of a new research topic (Graebner et al., 2012). The practical limitation on papers published in English may have added to the lack of intercultural perspectives within the found studies and may have contributed to the finding of exclusively WEIRD samples. Lastly, excluding gray literature is especially regrettable in a field of research that is known to have little published research (Anderson & Brion, 2013), where the inclusion of information outside of the traditional publishing channels may result in a significant increase in the number of papers giving us a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to power loss.

Overall, it can be said that the present review has some important strengths that ensure its methodological quality. Nevertheless, there are also limitations, especially concerning the breadth of the included literature in terms of methodology, language, and publishing channel. These limitations are mainly a result of time constraints and can easily be addressed in future research, recommendations for which will be outlined in the next section.

Recommendations for Further Research

In this last section, we will give recommendations for future research on the causes of power loss. Thereby, we will start with methodological recommendations for future research, both for primary research and reviews on the topic. Following, we will propose some promising and exciting questions that future studies should address.

Regarding the methodological recommendations, we start with our suggestions for primary research studies. First, we believe that the best way to study power loss is with longitudinal designs, as they are the most appropriate way to assess changes in power over time. Further, we suggest that conducting these studies in the field is especially beneficial in capturing the multifaceted nature of power. For that, we also advise that future researchers use measures that can at least assess the five power bases according to French and Raven (1959), if not even more detailed taxonomies. This is the only way to draw strong and reliable conclusions concerning the affected power bases. Additionally, it allows one to account for the possibility that positive effects on other bases may compensate some negative effects on one power base. With a compound measure, such an effect could not be detected, whereas measuring only one power base would show only one of the two effects and, thus, paint a misleading picture. Therefore, we can only make strong claims about which factors really lead to power loss by measuring multiple power bases. Lastly, it is essential to use samples with individuals from different cultural backgrounds to gain generalizable results across different contexts.

While primary studies on the antecedents of power loss are severely needed, we also believe that other reviews on this topic can be of value. Learning from the strengths and limitations of this review and with more time available for conducting it could give a more informed starting point for the mentioned primary studies. To be precise, we recommend that future reviews include more databases than we could, that they make more use of gray literature, and, lastly, include qualitative research. Especially to create a starting point for

future primary studies, qualitative data may hold valuable insights on potential factors that warrant further investigation. As the last point, we also recommend that further reviews use the PRISMA guidelines, which will increase replicability and make it easier to compare different reviews.

To conclude this section, we will propose three questions relating to power loss that we think are interesting and promise to further our understanding of power loss. The first question relates to the most extreme cases of power loss: being demoted or fired. Although none of the studies we identified in this review were concerned with either of these topics, we believe they are essential to investigate. Specifically, research should address if these losses of position result from a culmination of more minor power losses over time or if they more often are the consequence of some extreme event or circumstance.

The second question concerns the relationship between power threats and power dynamics, as discussed in previous sections. There seems to be contradicting evidence on whether power threats lead to power loss (Ratcliff & Vescio, 2018; Sligte et al., 2011) or power maintenance/gain (Hays & Goldstein, 2015; Rabbie & Bekkers, 1978). Potentially, some variables moderate the effect of power threats on specific power dynamics, and we suggest that future research investigates these moderators. The last question also deals with potential moderation effects, namely differences between different levels of power. Research suggests that the effects *of* power often are stronger for higher-power individuals. However, as some of our results suggest, the same may not be the case for effects *on* power. Instead, our results suggest that some factors may be only relevant at medium power levels (Nesler et al., 1993) and others only at high power levels (Van Dijke et al., 2010). We believe this warrants further investigation, as it may reveal important qualitative differences between power at different levels.

Conclusion

Our review of the literature addressing antecedents to power loss provides guidance as well as a promising starting point for future research on this topic. This research is needed as the research on power loss, to date, is extremely limited and would provide crucial insights both for researchers and practitioners in organizations. We provided a model which can be used to classify research on power loss, by distinguishing between exogenous and endogenous antecedents and by whether they affect personal or positional power bases. Using this approach, we found three papers on endogenous factors, one paper on exogenous factors, and five articles on interactions between these two kinds of antecedents. Our analysis revealed that gender seems to be related to power loss and that biased perceptions and valuations by powerholders might also lead to them losing their power. Further, we found some evidence that the factors contributing to power loss may not be the same at all levels of power. We suggest that these themes should guide future research on power loss. Further, the analysis of the articles' methodologies also revealed important issues concerning the selection of samples, the measurement of power, and the research design used, whereby a lack of longitudinal- and field studies is especially concerning. We are hopeful, that despite the limitations of the present study it will spark further research in the field of power loss and especially its antecedents which is essential for our understanding of power.

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