

# Power, Voting, and Voting Power: 30 Years After

Bearbeitet von  
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1. Auflage 2013. Buch. xvii, 762 S. Hardcover

ISBN 978 3 642 35928 6

Format (B x L): 15,5 x 23,5 cm

Gewicht: 1328 g

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# Social Power and Negative Freedom

Ian Carter

## 1 Introduction

When agent A exercises power over agent B, what is the effect on B's freedom? Is B less free as a result? Does A remove any specific freedoms of B? Most of us feel intuitively that there are many kinds of social power, and that while some of these may affect B's freedom to a great extent, others may affect it less, and others still may leave B's freedom completely intact. It would seem to be important for philosophers and social scientists to provide an explicit and coherent explication of this intuitive relation between the social power of A and the unfreedom of B. Nevertheless, surprisingly little attention has so far been devoted to its analysis.

One reason for the relative lack of interest in the freedom-power relation may lie in the different theoretical outlooks dominant within the disciplinary areas within which these two concepts tend to be examined and applied. The concept of freedom has been analyzed above all by political philosophers interested in its role within normative theories and thus in its relation to concepts like equality, justice, toleration, rights and the rule of law. Power, on the other hand, is a fundamental concept in the social sciences, where little attention has been devoted to the concept of freedom. Political scientists often express the view, shared by a number

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This article was previously published in *Homo Oeconomicus* 24 (2007), pp. 187–229. I am grateful to Francesco Battegazzorre, Giorgio Fedel and Laura Valentini for comments on a previous, Italian version of this article, and to the participants in the Colloquium on Freedom held at the University of Bayreuth in February 2005.

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of influential political philosophers, that freedom is an irreducibly evaluative term, ill-suited to empirical research and theorizing.<sup>1</sup>

This is something of a shame, for there is nevertheless a strong current of thought within contemporary political philosophy according to which we have a theoretical interest in conceiving of freedom in purely empirical terms. Various reasons have been advanced in defence of this stance. One such reason is that our understanding of normative disagreements about freedom is best furthered by our first establishing *agreement* over who is free and who unfree (or who is free to what extent) and then investigating how people disagree in their *evaluations* of these agreed facts about freedom (Oppenheim 1961, 1981; Steiner 1994; Kramer 2003). Another reason, which is more internal to liberal political theory, concerns the role of freedom as a fundamental value: if freedom is a fundamental value, it provides a reason for our wishing to promote certain other, less fundamental values, in which case it will not do to define freedom *in terms of* those other values. Instead, it is argued, freedom should be defined in terms that are independent of those values (Cohen 1991). Yet another reason (again a liberal one) is that freedom has a special kind of value which may be called ‘non-specific’. If freedom is non-specifically valuable, then its value is not wholly constituted by the value of being free to do one or another specific thing or set of things, for freedom also has value *as such*. Elsewhere I have contended that a purely empirical measure of freedom is needed to capture the sense we have of freedom being non-specifically valuable (i.e., valuable as such) (Carter 1999; cf. van Hees 2000).

As a political philosopher, my own reason for taking an interest in the freedom-power relation is that liberals often wish to condemn certain forms of power, or certain distributions of those forms of power, because of their effects on freedom. They also aim, on this basis, to construct normative political theories—including models of political institutions—that limit power or that distribute power in a certain way (or that do both of these things) in the name of freedom. This is especially true of contemporary republican political theory.

While my own reason for investigating the freedom-power relation is a normative one, however, my analysis ought not to be of interest only to normative political theorists. For the kind of relation it will posit between these two phenomena is an empirical relation. If freedom and power are both understood as empirical, explanatory phenomena, a plausible theory about how they are related might well be of interest to social scientists—just as, say, a plausible theory about the relation between electoral systems and political stability ought to be of interest to them.

I shall take as my starting point a particular ‘negative’ conception of freedom that I have already defended elsewhere (Carter 1999), and the formal classification of social power originally set out by Stoppino (2007—see also Table 1). There are at least two good reasons for taking Stoppino’s classification as a fixed point of

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<sup>1</sup> Economists have recently begun to show interest in the concept of freedom—especially in the area of social choice theory—but have yet to turn their attention systematically to its relation to power. An exception is Braham (2006), but this is not concerned with the different forms of power, in the sense of ‘form’ I shall assume in this article.

**Table 1** Stoppino’s formal classification of power

target of intervention  open/hidden intentional/interested		social environment	unconscious psychological processes	factual knowledge and value beliefs	available alternatives
hidden power	intentional and interested	<i>situational manipulation</i>	<i>psychological manipulation</i>	<i>informational manipulation</i>	
open power		<i>conditioning</i>		<i>persuasion</i>	<i>coercion  remuneration</i>
	merely interested	<i>merely interested conditioning</i>		<i>imitation</i>	<i>anticipated reactions</i>

reference for this investigation. First, it is a fine-grained classification, and will therefore allow us to distinguish between the effects on freedom of a suitably large number of forms of power. Secondly, his classification will lend clarity to the freedom-power relation through the implied additional distinction between forms of power and the substantive means by which those forms can be exercised. These substantive means consist in instruments of violence, economic resources, and symbolic resources. Their different effects on freedom will be taken into account in my analysis, but it is important to maintain the distinction between the effects on freedom of the uses of these different substantive means and the effects on freedom of different forms of power like, for example, coercion, remuneration and manipulation. Other typologies of power have involved slippage between the formal and substantive categories, resting on distinctions such as that between coercive power and economic power. For Stoppino, plausibly enough, coercive power and economic power are not mutually exclusive: economic resources are just one of the means by which coercive power, remunerative power, conditioning, and so on, may be exercised. (This said, my analysis of the freedom-power relation will also imply some minor criticisms of Stoppino’s classification, regarding both the definitions of the forms of power and the collocation of some of his examples).

Although I assume a particular negative conception of freedom here, my investigation is not intended primarily as a polemic against those who assume rival conceptions; its central aim is simply to clarify the relation between two concepts. Nevertheless, I hope that the intuitive plausibility of the results of the analysis will serve to strengthen the case for the conception of freedom it assumes.

## 2 Violence, Preclusion and Freedom

A fundamental distinction made by Stoppino is that between power and violence. Although everyday discourse assumes the use of violence to be a form of power, for Stoppino this is not the case. Power, understood as a social relation, consists in the modification by A of B's conduct (or the possibility for A of bringing about that modification) in A's interests, where the expression 'B's conduct' refers to an action or omission (or set of actions or omissions) that is voluntary, at least to a minimal degree. If A exercises power over B, A modifies B's behaviour by means of an intervention on B's *will*, such that, while in the absence of A's intervention B would have done *x*, in the presence of that intervention B decides not to do *x*. Violence, on the other hand, is a physical intervention on the part of one agent directly on the body or the immediate physical environment of another. If A behaves violently towards B, A modifies B's behaviour directly rather than by means of B's will, preventing B's doing *x* by physically removing that option. When A brings about the same behaviour through power over B, on the other hand, A does not remove B's option of doing *x*, but instead brings it about that B decides not to do *x*. Thus, if A holds a gun to B's head and tells B to leave the room, as a result of which B leaves the room under his own steam, then A exercises power over B. But if A physically pushes B out of the room, A is simply engaging in violent behaviour. The agent who exercises power does so through 'persuasion, the threat of punishment, the promise of a reward, the appeal to authority, setting an example, the rule of anticipated reactions, and so on' (Stoppino 2001a, p. 73), whereas the violent agent is one 'who attacks, wounds or kills; who, notwithstanding any resistance, immobilizes or manipulates the body of another; who materially prevents another from performing a certain action' (Stoppino 2001a, p. 70).

In what follows, I shall contrast power relations not only with violent relations but also with the wider category of *preclusive* relations, of which violent relations are a sub-category. To see the difference between violence and mere preclusion, consider the following example in which the Australian government (A), partly determines the behaviour of a permanent resident of Milan (B). Imagine that the Australian government fences off the entire Australian outback, thus precluding entry by the Milan resident. Regardless of whether or not the Milan resident was in fact planning a visit to the Australian outback, the Australian government's intervention physically determines the fact that the Milan resident does not enter the outback. The physical determination of this fact about the Milan resident's behaviour does not constitute an exercise of power over the Milan resident, as the fact of the Milan resident not entering the outback is not (after the erection of the fence) a product of the Milan resident's *will*. But neither is the intervention plausibly described as one of violence, for it is not an intervention on the body or the *immediate* physical environment of the Milan resident. The intervention is simply one of preclusion. Violence is only one kind of preclusion, although the most invasive kind: being an intervention on the agent's body or *immediate* physical environment, it tends to preclude a great deal. The importance of contrasting power

not only with violence but also with preclusion more generally will become clear later on, when we come to examine the relation between freedom and manipulation.

The conception of freedom I shall assume here is often called ‘pure negative’ freedom. (On the distinction between ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ freedom, see Berlin 2002; Carter 2003; Carter et al. 2007). According to this conception, unfreedom is a social relation consisting in the presence of humanly imposed impediments rendering actions *impossible*. Social impediments to action that do not render actions impossible—for example, physical obstacles that can be overcome at great cost or pain—do not render the agent unfree to perform those actions. Instead, what they do is render those actions more costly or painful. Thus, if my neighbour were to erect a three-metre wall around his garden—the kind of wall that I am simply unable to scale, even with the greatest effort—I would be unfree to enter my neighbour’s garden. But if the wall were only two metres high, and I were able to scale it with a huge amount of effort, then I would be free to enter the garden.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, when an agent is deterred from doing *x* by the prospect of costs that would be incurred subsequent to her doing *x*, that agent is nevertheless free to do *x*. Thus, I would be free to enter the garden if (a) my neighbour offered to open a door in the wall but only on condition that I sign over to him my entire salary for the next three years, or (b) my neighbour opened the door but issued a credible threat to kill me should I ever pass through it.

There are various reasons for assuming this conception of freedom (Taylor 1982; Gorr 1989; Steiner 1994; Carter 1999; Kramer 2003), despite the initial doubts that are often provoked by examples like those I have just cited. Here, I shall mention one such reason that is particularly salient in the context of the freedom-power relation: the threat to punish agent B for doing *x* does not remove B’s freedom to do *x* for the same reason that the offer to reward B for doing not-*x* does not remove B’s freedom to do *x*. As Hillel Steiner has argued (and as Stoppino implicitly agrees), the *modus operandi* of an offer is not different from that of a threat: both interventions invert the preference order of the agent with respect to the alternatives of doing *x* and not doing *x* (Steiner 1994, Chap. 2). The fact that a threat works by reducing the desirability of *x*, whereas an offer works by increasing the desirability of not-*x*, is not a relevant difference when it comes to estimating the degree of *effectiveness* of an intervention in bringing it about that the agent does not-*x*. That degree of effectiveness depends only on the size of *the difference in desirability* (for B) between *x* and not-*x* that the intervention is able to bring about. For example, the offer to reward B with \$10,000 for forbearing from parking her car in a certain space will normally be a much more powerful intervention than the threat to fine B \$10 for parking there. It will be more likely to succeed in inverting the preference order of B with respect to parking and not parking, because it raises the value of not-*x* much more than the threat lowers the value of *x*.

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<sup>2</sup> For the sake of simplicity, I here assume that freedom is the absence of unfreedom, so that ‘not unfree’ entails ‘free’ (and ‘not free’ entails ‘unfree’). This bivalence assumption is not unproblematic, but I shall not discuss the issue here. For a critique, see Kramer 2003, pp. 41–60.

Were we to say that a threat against doing  $x$  removes the agent's freedom to do  $x$ , then, we should have to say the same of an equally powerful offer (and, *a fortiori*, of a more powerful offer) to reward the agent for doing not- $x$ . Yet it is highly counterintuitive, from the liberal point of view that favours a so-called 'negative' conception of freedom, to say that offers restrict freedom, for in order to say this we should have to make certain assumptions about freedom that are more characteristic of so-called 'positive' conceptions—for example, that freedom consists, at least in part, in self-direction, or in autonomy of the will.<sup>3</sup> It is for this reason that the conception that rules out threats and offers as sources of unfreedom is called the 'pure' negative conception.

Now, from the pure negative conception of freedom it follows that there is no connection between an agent's negative freedom and her *will* (even though, of course, her freedom depends on the wills of *other* agents to act in certain ways rather than others). Only positive or 'impure' negative conceptions of freedom allow the state of B's will to affect the question of whether or how far B is free. On the pure negative conception, I am unfree to do  $x$  if and only if someone else has rendered  $x$  impossible for me, regardless of whether or not I want to do  $x$ . This fact, however, might be thought to give rise to a problem: the lack of connection between B's freedom and B's will, in conjunction with Stoppino's insistence on the nature of power as mediated by B's will, would seem to suggest that A's power over B *never* affects the freedom of B. We have seen that power exercised by A over B necessarily presupposes a minimum of voluntariness on the part of B. It presupposes B's possibility of doing otherwise. Rendering an action impossible, on the other hand, removes that minimum of voluntariness, and is therefore at most an instance of *preclusion*. Thus, all instances of A restricting B's freedom would appear to fail to qualify as instances of A exercising power over B. Is it not sheer common sense, however, to say that the freedom of one agent depends on an absence of at least certain kinds of power on the part of other agents? Are not the power of A and the unfreedom of B, at least to some extent, two sides of the same coin?

The analysis presented in this article will show the above dilemma to be illusory: we need not choose between the pure negative conception of freedom and the tendency to associate the power of A with the unfreedom of B. Indeed, one of my central aims is to show how, even on the pure negative conception of freedom, B's freedom is restricted by a number of different forms of power on the part of A. Two distinctions within the concept of freedom will be central to the pursuit of this aim. The first is the distinction between 'the freedom to act' and 'acting freely', and will be applied in the next section. The second is the distinction between specific freedoms and overall freedom, and will be applied in the subsequent section.

Before starting, two preliminary points should be made. First, I shall take for granted that there are cases of 'power without unfreedom'. No one who endorses a

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<sup>3</sup> In Carter 2008, I apply this observation to an analysis of Philip Pettit's notion of freedom as "discursive control" (Pettit 2001), arguing that freedom as discursive control is limited by offers, no less than by threats.

negative conception of freedom (whether pure or ‘impure’) claims that freedom depends on the absence of power *tout court*, unless the notion of power is understood in a much narrower sense than that of Stoppino. For example, while rational persuasion is a form of power on Stoppino’s analysis, no supporter of a negative conception of freedom would say that when A rationally persuades B to do *x*, A somehow renders B socially unfree.

Secondly, I shall similarly take for granted that there are cases of ‘unfreedom without power’. Thus, while on the first assumption I have just mentioned A’s power is not a sufficient condition for B’s unfreedom, on this second assumption it is not a necessary condition either. The question I am asking myself in this article is not whether, or how far, restrictions of freedom are the result of power relations, but whether, or how far, power relations result in restrictions of freedom. In other words, I am not asking whether unfreedom implies power, but whether power implies unfreedom. We have already seen that there are cases of unfreedom that are caused not by power relations but by intentional or interested preclusion (including violence). Virtually no one would deny that there are *some* such cases. In addition to these cases, we should also count as ones of ‘unfreedom without power’ those in which A’s behaviour precludes B’s doing *x* but in a way that is neither violent nor intentional nor in A’s interests. As Stoppino would put it, in the latter cases the relation between A and B is neither of violence nor of power, because each of these two kinds of relation necessarily involves A’s ‘interested’ modification of B’s behaviour. Many theorists of negative freedom—among whom the supporters of the pure negative conception—would nevertheless say that in all such cases of preclusion, A restricts B’s freedom. Pure negative unfreedom is normally conceived as the result of obstruction by other agents, regardless of whether that obstruction is intentional or unintentional, interested or disinterested. Power and unfreedom are therefore asymmetrical in this respect: while A’s power over B depends on a furthering of A’s interests, A’s restriction of B’s freedom does not.

### 3 Power and Acting Freely

The freedom *to act*, understood in the negative sense outlined above, consists in the absence of constraints on an agent’s possible actions. One’s freedom to act is, to use Isaiah Berlin’s metaphor, a matter of how many doors are open to one (Berlin 2002, pp. 32, 35), and one’s particular conception of the freedom to act will depend, among other things, on how one defines the closing of a door. The freedom *of an action*, on the other hand, is to be found in the *performance* of that action. The freedom of one’s actions—i.e., whether or how far one *acts freely* when one does act—is therefore a question not so much of how many doors are open as of how and why one goes through one door rather than another. Appropriating (and slightly modifying) a distinction introduced by Charles Taylor, we can say that whereas the concept of freedom to act is an ‘opportunity concept’, the concept of acting freely is an ‘exercise concept’, given that the latter concerns the way in which a certain possibility is realized or exercised (Taylor 1979). Oppenheim has clarified this



distinction by noting that while in the first case (the freedom to act) freedom is a *property of an agent*, in the second case (free action or acting freely) freedom is a *property of an action* (Oppenheim 1981, Sect. 5.2).<sup>4</sup> Oppenheim himself stipulates that an action is performed unfreely if it is performed out of fear of a sanction. Others have suggested broader definitions of acting unfreely. According to Serena Olsaretti, for example, an action is performed unfreely if the reason for its performance is that the agent has no acceptable alternative (Olsaretti 2004, Chap.6).

Like the concept of freedom, the concept of social power can be interpreted either as an opportunity concept or as an exercise concept.<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, one can *have* power, in the sense of having the option of modifying the conduct of another in one's own interests. Here, power is an opportunity concept, which Stoppino calls 'potential power'. On the other hand, one can *exercise* power, in the sense of bringing about that modification in the conduct of another. Here, power is an exercise concept, which Stoppino calls 'actual power'. In this section and the next, I shall assume that the kind of power of A we are concerned with, in discussing the implications for B's freedom, is A's actual power—power A *exercises* over B. It is also true, however, that the potential power of A can limit B's freedom even without A exercising that power, as long as there is some probability of A exercising it (Carter 2008). I shall come to the role of probabilities in the next section.

The distinction between the freedom to act and acting freely is present in Stoppino's analysis of power. We have seen that for Stoppino, when A exercises power over B, B's behaviour is always characterized by a minimum degree of voluntariness, such that B could have done otherwise. However, Stoppino does not believe that B's action is for this reason 'free' (Stoppino 2001a, p. 6, 73). If a bandit says to me 'Your money or your life', and I hand over my money for fear of being killed, I do so voluntarily in the sense that I could have refused to hand over the money and borne the consequences of the bandit's subsequent violent intervention. Nevertheless, we tend to think that my choice to hand over the money is nevertheless not a 'free' choice, because the reason behind the choice consists in fear of a severe sanction. These two views are not mutually exclusive. While my choice is not 'freely taken', it remains the case that I could have done otherwise, had I so desired: my behaviour is voluntary in the minimal sense of having my own will as its proximate cause.

This voluntariness, in Stoppino's sense of the term 'voluntariness', stands for what I would call a freedom of the agent *to act*: the agent who is subject to coercive power is free not only to comply with the threat but also to refuse compliance. As long as we bear in mind the distinction between the freedom to act and acting freely, then, we can reasonably attribute to Stoppino not only the view that those who are coerced into doing *x* remain *free* not to do *x*, but also the view

<sup>4</sup> It should be added, however, that one may also go on to predicate freedom of agents (in the exercise sense) on the basis of the fact that they perform their actions freely.

<sup>5</sup> Unlike the exercise concept of power, the exercise concept of acting freely is not necessarily a concept of *social* freedom. For example, of the two definitions just mentioned, Oppenheim's concept of acting freely is a social concept, but Olsaretti's is not.

that A's exercising power over B often brings about a *certain* kind of *unfreedom*, namely the unfreedom with which B actually does *x*.

There is indeed a difference between the freedom to act and acting freely that makes the connection with social power much more immediate and obvious in the case of the latter concept than in that of the former. This difference lies in the fact that my acting freely or unfreely in doing *x* depends on my *motivation* for doing *x*—for Oppenheim, it depends on whether I act out of fear of a sanction; for Olsaretti, it depends on whether my reason for doing *x* is that I lack any acceptable alternative. On the other hand, it is plausible to claim (and we have seen that defenders of the pure negative conception do indeed claim) that the question of whether I am free *to* do *x* does *not* depend in any way on my motivational state. In this sense, the presence of A's coercive power over B points much more obviously to the fact of B *acting unfreely* than to any unfreedom of B *to act*. The fact of my being subject to the power of another clearly *depends on me*, in the sense of depending on *how my own will reacts* to that of another, whereas the same is not true of my being subject to a social unfreedom to act.

It is easy enough to confuse acting freely with the freedom to act. Joseph Goebbels confused them when he claimed, ironically, that 'anyone is free to write what he likes as long as he is not afraid of the concentration camp' (cited in Gabor and Gabor 1979, p. 346). This claim is not literally false, but it is confused, or at least confusing, because it can reasonably be taken to imply the further claim that anyone who *is* afraid of the concentration camp is *not* free to write what he likes, and the latter claim *is* false. In Nazi Germany, the freedom to write what one likes (up until the moment of arrest) was possessed both by those who were not afraid of the concentration camp and by those who were afraid of the concentration camp. On the other hand, there is a difference between these two classes of people in terms of how freely they chose *not* to express their views in writing (where they did so choose). Assuming Oppenheim's definition of free action, we should say that those who were afraid of the concentration camp chose unfreely to avoid expressing their views in writing, whereas those who were not afraid of the concentration camp suffered no restriction on the freedom with which they chose not to express their views in writing (they would have chosen not to do so even in the absence of Goebbels' threat).

One reason for the ease of slippage between the concepts of freedom to act and acting freely lies in an ambiguity in the term *voluntariness*. This ambiguity is mirrored by the different technical meanings attributed to the term in the literature, some authors taking it to signify the presence of a freedom to act, others the fact of acting freely. For Stoppino, as well as for Oppenheim (1981, Sect. 5.2), those who comply with a coercive threat act 'voluntarily', in the sense of having been *free to act differently*. Here, the voluntariness of an action signifies no more than that its proximate cause is the will of the agent.<sup>6</sup> For some theorists of freedom, however,

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<sup>6</sup> The English terms 'will' and 'voluntariness' have different etymological roots. The connection between them is much clearer in Latin languages (their respective equivalents in Stoppino's native tongue are *volontà* and *volontarietà*).

those who comply with a coercive threat act in a non-voluntary way, because voluntary action is conceived by them as identical to what I have so far referred to as the fact of *acting freely* (this is the case, for example, in Olsaretti 2004, and in van Hees 2003). The difference between these two sets of authors is clearly terminological rather than substantive. The important point to bear in mind, for present purposes, is that the pure negative conception of freedom is a conception of freedom to act, not of acting freely, and that it does not conflict at all with the claim that power creates unfreedom in the sense of leading people to act unfreely.

## 4 Power and the Freedom to Act

Admitting that power restricts the freedom with which people act will not, however, be sufficient to allay the worries of those who initially see the pure negative conception of freedom as unable to capture the freedom-restricting effects of power. For among the sources of such worries one must certainly count the intuition that when A exercises power over B, A limits B's *freedom to act*. Is it possible for the supporter of the pure negative conception to accommodate this intuition too? I believe that it is. In order to show how, we shall need now to make a distinction within the concept of the freedom to act: that between a specific freedom and overall freedom (Carter 1999, Chap. 1).

A specific freedom is the freedom of an agent to perform a specific action—for example, my freedom to leave this room in ten minutes' time (a freedom that I shall lose if, during the next ten minutes, someone locks the door). I shall assume here that by 'specific freedom' we mean the freedom to perform a *spatio-temporally* specific action—not a specific *type* of action (such as walking or talking), but a *concrete particular*, unrepeatable both in time and in space (like the freedom to move out of *this* room in exactly *ten minutes' time*). Overall freedom, on the other hand, is a quantitative attribute of an agent. It is the freedom the agent possesses *in a certain degree*. Overall freedom is still the freedom *to act*, but it is not the freedom to perform some *specific* action. Instead, it consists in an aggregation of all the agent's freedoms and unfreedoms, so providing us with an overall quantitative judgement about the extent to which the agent is free to act (be this in absolute terms or only relative to the extents of freedom of other agents). The possibility of forming coherent quantitative judgements about overall freedom is presupposed whenever one agent, group or society is described as 'more free' than another, whenever it is claimed that citizens have a right to 'equal freedom', and whenever theorists or politicians prescribe that freedom in society, or freedom for certain groups, be 'increased', 'augmented', 'maximized', or maintained above 'a certain minimum'.

### 4.1 *The Non-Specific Values of Freedom and Power*

Before turning to the effect of power on overall freedom, it is worth noting a parallel between the kinds of value attributed to power and freedom that motivate an interest not only in the concept of overall freedom but also in that of overall power.

The normative importance of the concept of overall freedom derives from a premise about the value of freedom that I mentioned earlier: that freedom has ‘non-specific value’, or value as such—in other words, that freedom has value independently of the value of being free to do one or another specific thing. This non-specific value of freedom can be either intrinsic or instrumental. It is perfectly consistent to affirm that freedom has only instrumental value—that freedom is only a means to an end—while also claiming that this instrumental value is of a non-specific kind (Carter 1999, Chap. 2). This will be so where the content of the end in question is unknown. One might know, for example, that freedom is the best means to economic or social progress, yet not know what this progress will consist in. One might affirm, indeed, that it is this very lack of knowledge that makes freedom the best means to progress, given that freedom allows us to experiment, to compare ideas, to make mistakes and to learn from them. In this case, our ignorance about the direction in which progress will take us makes it impossible for us to know which specific freedoms have value as a means to its realization. All we know is that freedom is a means to progress. Freedom is valuable as such, but only instrumentally valuable. This line of reasoning can apply to individuals as well as to aggregates of individuals, and from a purely prudential point of view rather than by reference to morally good ends. For example, an individual might see her own freedom as non-specifically instrumentally valuable in prudential terms because she is unable to predict her own future desires and beliefs.

Stoppino makes a very similar claim about power, implicitly interpreting A’s power over B as having (prudential) non-specific instrumental value for A. According to Stoppino, A’s power over B has instrumental value for A because it is a means to obtaining the conformity of B’s conduct to A’s preferences, which in turn is a means to the realization of A’s ultimate goals. Now, in political life it might seem that such conformity becomes, for A, an end in itself, because A, as a political actor, typically attempts to achieve conformity not only ‘here and now’ (the conformity of some specific piece of behaviour of B) but also conformity that is ‘generalized over space’ (and therefore applies to a wide range of actors) and ‘stabilized over time’. When conformity displays these two properties (of being generalized and stabilized), Stoppino calls it ‘guaranteed conformity’. And the pursuit of guaranteed conformity is, for Stoppino, just what political activity consists in (Stoppino 2001b, Chap. 8). This is *not* to say, however, that political actors necessarily see power as *intrinsically* valuable, as if power in this generalized and stabilized sense were necessarily something that is pursued for its own sake. It is only to say that power is valuable *as such* for political actors, given its non-specific value as a means to the realization of those political actors’ ultimate goals, whatever those goals might turn out to be. Power has specific instrumental

value for A to the extent that it is instrumentally rational for A to pursue conformity 'here and now'; it has non-specific instrumental value for A to the extent that it is instrumentally rational for A to pursue conformity that is 'guaranteed as such' (Stoppino 2001a, p. 234)—to pursue it, one might say, *as if* it were an end. Thus, in the same way as the social freedom of B has non-specific value for B, the power of A has non-specific value for A.

In the light of this fact, it becomes interesting to ask how A's overall power is related to B's overall freedom. How far is it true that the growth of A's overall power over B (which, given the non-specific value A attaches to her power, increases (*ceteris paribus*) the subjective value of A's situation) implies a diminution of B's overall freedom to act (which, given the non-specific value B attaches to her freedom, decreases (*ceteris paribus*) the subjective value of B's situation)? In order to answer this question fully, we should need to be able to measure overall social power as well as overall social freedom, and that is not something that I feel warranted in assuming. One necessary step in the right direction, however, will consist in rendering explicit the effect on B's degree of overall freedom of each of the forms of power A might exercise over B.

## 4.2 Threats and Anticipations of Violent Sanctions

I shall begin by looking at the case of power that is exercised through the threat of violence. As I have argued elsewhere (Carter 1999, Chap. 8), the distinction between specific freedoms and overall freedom allows us to say that as well as limiting the freedom with which B acts, A's threat of violence limits B's freedom to act. When A threatens violence against B in order to induce B to do *x*, A does not remove B's freedom either to do *x* or not to do *x*. Nevertheless, A does typically reduce B's *degree of overall freedom* (to act).

To see this, we need to note that an agent's overall degree of freedom is not a function simply of how many members of a set of specific actions that agent is free to perform. In the first place, the sum of the courses of action one has available is not a sum of single actions, but a sum of various possible combinations of actions. I am probably free at this moment to shoot a policeman on Tuesday, free to shoot one on Wednesday, and free to shoot one on Thursday, but I am probably unfree to shoot three policemen (one on each of these days), given that I would probably be locked up after the first shooting. We need, then, to take into account not simply the possibilities of single actions (and the sum of these) but the *compossibility* of those actions for the agent: if P is free only to do *x*, *y* or *z*, while Q is free to do any combination of *x*, *y* and *z*, it is clear that Q is, *ceteris paribus*, the freer of the two. More generally, we should say that an agent's overall freedom is a function of the agent's set of sets of compossible actions. In the example just given, P has available the set of sets of actions [{*x*}, {*y*}, {*z*}] while Q has available the set of sets of actions [{*x*}, {*y*}, {*z*}, {*x, y*}, {*x, z*}, {*y, z*}, {*x, y, z*}]. In the second place, we need to take into account, for each set of actions, not simply the availability or

non-availability of that set, but the *probability* of that set being rendered impossible by some other agent. All judgements about freedom regard the possibility of actions that occur subsequent to the time of the freedom being predicated of the agent, and all such judgements are therefore most appropriately understood as probabilistic. And it would surely be grossly counterintuitive to describe as equally free, *ceteris paribus*, agent R, who is (at time *t*) 99 % certain to be prevented from performing a given set of actions, and agent S, who is (at time *t*) 1 % certain to be so prevented (Carter 1999, Sects. 7.5 and 8.4).

Bearing in mind these two factors of compossibility and probability, we can see that B's overall freedom should be understood as depending on the sum of all the sets of theoretically compossible actions for B, each one multiplied by the probability (between 0 and 1) of that set being rendered impossible by the actions of some agent, A (in the event of B attempting to perform that set of actions).<sup>7</sup> Given that we are talking of the prediction of the preclusion of a given set of actions (given certain conditions), and given that that prediction takes account of the probability of the preclusion, we may call the fundamental quantity determining B's level of overall freedom *B's overall degree of expected preclusion*.

It should already be clear at this point how B's overall degree of expected preclusion will, in the vast majority of cases, increase as a result of A's coercing B by threatening violent sanctions. The exercise of this form of power by these violent means generally implies, with a certain probability, that two or more actions that were compossible for B before the threat are now no longer compossible for B. Indeed, while A does not remove *any* specific freedom of B, B nevertheless suffers an increase in her overall degree of expected preclusion. Assume that A, in threatening B, does so with a minimum of determination and is minimally competent in carrying out the sanction. (These two requirements can be called the requirements of determination and competence, and we may call a threat that satisfies these requirements a 'true' threat.) In this case, at the moment at which the threat is issued (and indeed, even at the earlier moment at which A forms a resolute conditional disposition to impose the sanction (should B fail to comply)), A is *actually* (and with a certain probability) physically preventing B from performing at least one *set* of actions. A is actually precluding this set of actions to the extent that the counterfactual 'if B did *x*, A would do *y*' is true (where '*y*' is an action that prevents B from doing something). For an agent is

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<sup>7</sup> What is the exact meaning of 'theoretical compossibility' in this context? This issue is problematic and has given rise to some debate in the literature. For Steiner (1994, Chap. 2), it means 'logically compossible'. In *A Measure of Freedom* I tentatively suggest that it might mean either 'logically compossible' or 'technologically compossible' or 'possible according to laws of nature' (Carter 1999, p. 173). For discussion, see van Hees (2000, pp. 131–133). Kramer (2003, Chap. 2) defines theoretical possibility, in this context, in terms of the agent's abilities, identifying freedom with ability and unfreedom with the prevention of that which the agent would otherwise be able to do. On this view, those actions the agent would be unable to perform even in the absence of prevention on the part of others, are classified as actions the agent is neither free nor unfree to perform: if I am unprevented from doing *x* but am nevertheless unable to do *x*, then I am neither free nor unfree to do *x*.

*actually* unfree to do something if it is true that, were that agent to attempt to do that thing, some other agent would intervene so as to render it impossible.

The truth of the counterfactual ‘if B did *x*, A would do *y*’ depends on A’s dispositions to act, of which the communication of the threat is in fact only an indicator. Nevertheless, since this indicator is a fairly reliable one,<sup>8</sup> we can conclude that while the mere *threat* of a particular violent act is certainly distinct from the *actual* performance of that same violent act, the threat of that violent act is nevertheless generally accompanied by an *actual* increase in expected preclusion. When A truly threatens B with violence, A is (generally, and with a certain probability) *actually* preventing certain courses of action for B (i.e., certain sets of specific actions), regardless of whether B will comply with A’s will or refuse so to comply.

To illustrate this point, let us return to the example of the bandit who says ‘Your money or your life’. Assuming that the bandit is making a true threat (i.e., his threat satisfies the requirements of determination and competence), he is (at the time of the threat, and with a certain probability) physically preventing the respondent from holding on to her money *and* walking away, even though he is not preventing either the first or the second of these actions considered on its own. This follows from the truth (which is more or less probable at the time of the threat) of the counterfactual according to which, if the respondent chose to hold onto her money, the bandit would kill her. Similarly, in the case cited earlier of the oblique threat issued by Goebbels, the Nazi Government was (at the time of Goebbels’ threat, and with a certain probability) physically preventing German citizens from writing certain things at time *t* *and* writing similar things at time *t* + 1 (*and* walking down the road unharmed at time *t* + 2, and so on), even though it was not preventing any of these actions considered in isolation from the rest. This reasoning shows how, even though there is no correlation between the threat of violence and *specific* unfreedoms, there is nevertheless a strong correlation between the threat of violence and *overall* unfreedom.

To be more precise about the difference between the effects of actual violence and the threat of violence, we need to note that each specific freedom is a member of *a certain number* of sets of actions that are compossible for the agent. Assuming, for simplicity, that the probability of prevention or non-prevention is always 100 %, the effect of A’s *actual* violence is such that a certain specific action which was previously a member of at least one set of actions B was free to perform, is now no longer a member of *any* such set. The effect of A’s *threat* of violence, on the other hand, is such that, while the number of sets of actions that B is free to perform diminishes, each of the specific actions that B was previously free to perform nevertheless remains a member of *at least one* of these sets. In other words, while actual violence removes *all* of the sets of which a given specific

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<sup>8</sup> If it were not a fairly reliable indicator, then threats would fail as instruments of generalized and stabilized power. I return to this point at the end of the present subsection.



action is a member (from the list of sets the agent is free to perform), the threat of violence removes only some of these sets.

It is worth noting two consequences of this last point for the relation between degrees of violent coercive power and overall social freedom—consequences which largely reflect our pre-theoretical intuitions about that relation. First, the realization of an act of violence restricts freedom to a greater extent than the mere threat of that same act. Secondly, the more severe the act of violence threatened, the greater the power being wielded and the greater the reduction in the overall freedom of the agent who is subjected to that power.

Let us now continue to examine the case of violence (or of preclusion more generally), but in connection with another form of power identified by Stoppino: that of anticipated reactions. Here, although A does not issue a threat to B, the latter anticipates that were her own behaviour not to conform to A's interests a preclusive sanction would nevertheless be forthcoming. It should be clear that in such a case A limits B's freedom no less than where A issues a threat, for we have seen that the factor ultimately determining the restriction of B's overall freedom is the truth of the counterfactual 'if B did *x*, A would do *y*', and not the fact of A communicating this truth to B. The difference between A's threat of a sanction and B's correct anticipation of a sanction by A is not relevant, then, to the question of their effects on B's overall freedom. In Stoppino's formal classification, indeed, the essential difference between these two forms of power is that anticipated reactions represent a non-intentional (i.e., 'merely interested') exercise of power (See Table 1). And we have seen that the intentions of A, in precluding certain actions of B, are not relevant to questions about B's pure negative freedom (to act).

The correlation I have hypothesized between overall freedom and the threat or anticipation of preclusion is, in a sense, weaker than the correlation stipulated by those 'impure' negative theorists who simply define freedom as the absence not only of preclusion but also of punishability. The connection implied by my own analysis between these forms of power and overall freedom is not a logical, stipulative relation, but an empirical generalization. And, as in the case of all empirical generalizations, there will be exceptions to the rule. A first exception is where the requirements of determination or competence are not met: A either does not intend to carry out the threatened sanction (A is in fact bluffing) or is unable to do so (A overestimates A's own capacities), yet, since B is unaware of this, A's threat or B's anticipation of A's reaction still represents a successful exercise of power by A (i.e., B's choice still conforms to A's will in a way that it would not have done had B been fully informed). A second possibility is that the threatened or anticipated sanction would consist in A's inflicting harm on some third party, C, whom B cares about (hence the success of the threat), rather than on B herself.

These counterexamples are of limited relevance, however, for the study of political power relations and of their implications for political and social freedom (Carter 2008). As we have seen, in political life agents seek what Stoppino calls the 'guaranteed conformity' of the behaviour of others, and this implies conformity that is both *generalized* (over a large number of other agents) and *stabilized*



(over time). The role of bluffs or incompetent threats in the pursuit of this guaranteed conformity cannot be anything but trivial, for it is clear that agents who fail to carry out sanctions fail to exercise generalized and stabilized coercive power. The counterexample of sanctions aimed at third parties is not answerable in the same way. Nevertheless, such sanctions are very rarely found in legal systems, and the reasons again have to do with the nature of political power relations. One such reason is that such sanctions are difficult to *generalize* as an effective instrument of power over many agents: different agents would react to them in more varied and unpredictable ways than they do to the threat of sanctions against themselves, and it is difficult to formulate general laws specifying the identities of the relevant third parties. But the most important reason is that coercive power exercised through the threat of sanctions against third parties would be difficult to *stabilize*, given the resentment and sense of injustice to which they would give rise. This resentment and sense of injustice would provoke a reaction on the part of the governed, and governments generally anticipate this reaction. This is itself an exercise of power by the governed over the government.<sup>9</sup>

### 4.3 Threats and Anticipations of Economic Sanctions

Let us now extend our analysis, within the forms of power consisting in coercion and anticipated reactions (understood as anticipated sanctions), beyond those cases where the relevant resources used by A are resources of violence (or more generally, resources permitting A directly to preclude certain act-combinations of B). Threatened or anticipated sanctions can also make use of economic or symbolic resources. In these cases, the application of the sanctions would not directly modify B's body or physical environment, but their conditional imposition by A nevertheless amounts to coercive power over B, as long as it is actually sufficient to induce B to modify her behaviour in A's interests. Examples of economic sanctions include fines imposed by the state, firings by employers, and industrial action on the part of unions. Examples of symbolic sanctions include stigmatization, exclusion from the community of the faithful, and eternal damnation.

Consider first the case of an economic sanction. A's firing B (where B is the employee), or A's going on strike (where B is the employer) brings with it a reduction in the economic resources available to B, which in turn would have constituted means by which B might have convinced other agents not to prevent B from performing certain actions. Economic sanctions imposed on B logically entail reductions in B's economic resources; the possession of economic resources logically entails the possession of economic *power*; and one's possession of economic

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<sup>9</sup> For a more direct attempt to rebut this second counterexample, by showing that it fails to identify a threat that has no effect on B's set of sets of available options, see Kramer (2003, pp. 195–204).

power contingently (but nevertheless very strongly) affects one's degree of pure negative freedom. For example, when I buy an airline ticket I obtain, in exchange for a certain sum of money, a vast increase in the probability that I will not be prevented from boarding a certain aeroplane at a certain time. In the absence of this payment, I would very probably be prevented from boarding the aeroplane were I to attempt to do so (moreover, were I to succeed in boarding it on attempting to do so, I would very probably be punished afterwards). Therefore, if I do not possess the resources necessary to buy the airline ticket, my boarding the aeroplane (and my moving my body from Italy to the USA, and my visiting the Metropolitan Museum in New York, and so on) is something I am unfree to do. If I then acquire just enough resources needed to buy the ticket, I acquire that freedom to perform that action (and to visit the museum, and so on)—although it remains true that none of my sets of compossible actions contain the boarding of the plane without also containing the handing over of the money, and that none of my sets of compossible actions therefore contain the boarding of the plane, the handing over of the money, and some third action, *x*, the freedom to perform which would similarly depend on the handing over of the money. My boarding the plane will only become compossible with my doing *x* when I have doubled my money. And so on. (For an argument along these lines about the relation between freedom and money, see Cohen 2001).

It is therefore reasonable to say that in a market society characterized by well enforced rules of private property, there is a very strong causal link between a reduction in the market value of the resources at my disposal and an increase in my degree of expected preclusion. This is not to say, of course, that economic power is *essentially* the possibility of bringing it about that other people do not prevent one from doing certain things. But economic power does include that power among others. To possess economic power is to have the possibility of exercising (economic) coercion or remuneration; an exercise of coercion and remuneration is the bringing about of behaviour on the part of others; and that behaviour on the part of others often includes a series of door-openings. Moreover, it is enough for the agent to *possess* such power (without necessarily *exercising* it) in order to *possess* (with a certain probability) the set of sets of pure negative freedoms that would be brought into existence through those door-openings. After all, the relation we are examining here is that between A's power considered as an *exercise* concept and B's freedom considered as an *opportunity* concept—i.e., the effect of A's exercise of power on B's freedom to act. B *has* freedom (to act) as a result (*inter alia*) of B's *having* economic power (opportunity concept), given A's forbearance from *exercising* economic power over B.

#### 4.4 Threats and Anticipations of Symbolic Sanctions

The limitation of pure negative freedom accompanying the threat or anticipation of *symbolic* sanctions is less immediately obvious. Nevertheless, its occurrence in political and social life is widespread and may be significant in terms of the

degrees to which freedom is limited. Take, for example, the sanction consisting in exclusion from the community of the faithful. This sanction is likely to imply, indirectly and in the long term, the preclusion of a large number of options as a result of the future lack of collaboration (with B's endeavours) on the part of the faithful. A similar point will apply to most other cases of stigmatization and social exclusion.

This consideration does not, of course, apply to *all* symbolic sanctions. It does not apply, for example, to the sanction consisting in eternal damnation, *if* (and this may be a big 'if') that sanction is to be understood in the narrow sense of an event of disvalue that occurs only in the hereafter. It might be, that is, that a priest can exercise power over an individual by means of the threat of eternal damnation, even though no one in this world would have been any the wiser if, counterfactually, the individual had sinned and incurred eternal damnation. Such an individual does not incur a loss of freedom in *this* world as a result of the priest's exercise of power, for the requirement of competence has not been met. However, it does not seem to me counterintuitive, from the point of view of the theorist of negative freedom, to classify such a case as one of 'power without unfreedom', for in this example eternal damnation is not a punishment imposed by another agent or agents. The threat takes place in this world, but the threatened sanction (if it occurs) does not, and so does not involve the prevention of any actions. I shall call symbolic sanctions of this kind 'purely symbolic' sanctions. A purely symbolic sanction is one the realization of which would not be accompanied by any increase in preclusive behaviour either by the agent dispensing the sanction or by any third parties. Most symbolic sanctions, however, are not 'purely symbolic' in this sense.

One reason why the limitation of overall freedom is often less obvious where the threatened sanction is symbolic than where it is economic or violent, lies in the greater length of the causal chain of events linking A's intervention and the set of hypothetical actions (of third parties) which, at the moment of the threat, preclude certain acts or act-combinations of B. For example, a symbolic sanction imposed by A on B might bring it about that C imposes on B some economic harm, and only as a result of this that D (together with E, F ...) physically prevent B from performing some act or act-combination (without preventing any specific actions). Presumably, it is correct to say that the length of the causal chain should influence our probability judgements about the likelihood of the actions of third parties that would prevent certain acts or act-combinations of B, and with these our judgements about B's degree of overall freedom at the time of the threat. Naturally, it is also possible that in the case of a symbolic sanction the causal chain is *shorter* than in the economic case. For example, it is possible that the fact of publicly labelling B as belonging to a certain race would straightforwardly induce C to act violently towards B.

It is certainly true that violent sanctions are more likely (than are symbolic sanctions) to be *disvalued* by B *because of* the increase in expected preclusion accompanying them. In threatening a violent sanction, A tends to be playing directly on B's desire not to have options closed off (along with other desires of B, such as that of avoiding pain). In threatening a symbolic sanction, on the other hand, A may only be playing on the intrinsic value B attaches to the symbol in

question, or on its instrumental value for B in achieving other symbolic goods (such as recognition or self esteem). But this fact does not constitute an objection to my analysis. First, we should bear in mind that B's reason for disvaluing the threatened sanction (i.e., what makes the sanction count *as* a sanction, and therefore what makes A's intervention count as an exercise of *power*) is not in itself relevant to the question of whether and how far A is restricting B's *freedom*. For the desires of B, like the intentions of A, are not relevant to questions about B's freedom. Secondly, I would submit that the increases in expected preclusion generally accompanying a symbolic sanction *do* often contribute significantly to the disvalue B attaches to the sanction (and therefore to its counting *as* a sanction). B's stigmatization or social exclusion will no doubt have disvalue for B in terms of a reduction in self-esteem, but only in rare cases will its disvalue not be contributed to in some measure also by an accompanying non-trivial increase in B's degree of expected preclusion. Given this last fact, the connection between symbolic sanctions and restrictions of freedom is a less contingent one than might at first have been expected.

#### ***4.5 Direct and Indirect Restrictions of Freedom***

Apart from the above-mentioned differences between different threats (or anticipations) in terms of the degree of restriction of B's overall freedom, we should also note a difference between threats (or anticipations) that involve A *directly* restricting B's freedom and threats (or anticipations) that involve A doing so *indirectly*. If A's power over B involves a *direct* restriction of B's freedom, this is because A is not only the threatener but also the agent of the counterfactual preventive actions that ultimately preclude certain acts or act-combinations of B. If A's power over B involves an *indirect* restriction of B's freedom, on the other hand, this is because those counterfactual preventive actions are actions of third parties (C, D, E ...). In the case of a direct restriction of B's overall freedom, A's disposition to act (more precisely, A's conditional disposition to impose the sanction) is sufficient to determine that restriction. In the case of an indirect restriction of B's overall freedom, A's disposition is no longer sufficient to determine that restriction, which depends in addition on the conditional dispositions of C (D, E ...).

In the case of violent threats (and anticipated reactions), A may be restricting B's overall freedom directly. Even violent threats, however, can be cases in which A is only restricting B's overall freedom indirectly. For example, A might threaten to order C (over whom A has power) to assault B physically. In the case of economic and symbolic threats (and anticipated reactions), on the other hand, A's restriction of B's overall freedom is never more than indirect. Where the threatened sanction is economic or symbolic, although the ultimate preclusion of certain acts or act-combinations of B would occur only if A imposed the sanction, that ultimate counterfactual preclusion is not itself brought about by A.

Now it might be objected that what I have called A's *indirect* restriction of B's freedom is not really a restriction of B's freedom at all. For in such a case, the counterfactual preventive actions of C (D, E ...) are voluntary, at least in the minimal sense mentioned earlier, and often in the more demanding sense of being 'freely performed' (for it need not be the case that A, or indeed anyone else, is exercising power over C (D, E ...) in this respect). Given this, it might seem that the most we can ever say, in the case of A's economic or symbolic power over B, is that C (D, E ...) *would themselves* restrict B's freedom *were* A to carry out the sanction. And since A *does not* actually carry out the sanction (for we are assuming that B complies and A's exercise of power is therefore successful), no such restriction of B's freedom actually occurs.

This objection assumes that in order for us to *impute to A* a restriction of B's freedom that depends on the hypothetical actions of C (D, E ...), A must somehow *cause* those actions of C (D, E ...), in such a way as to deny the free agency of C (D, E ...). It does not seem to me, however, that A must be (counterfactually) the cause of the preventive actions of C (D, E ...) in order to be one of the actual causes of an increase in B's overall degree of expected preclusion—an increase that in fact takes place when A forms the resolute disposition to carry out the sanction should B not comply. Although the actions of C (D, E ...) are voluntary, it remains true that these actions would take place *if and only if A imposed the sanction*. The increase in B's overall degree of expected preclusion therefore depends on A, and this fact is sufficient to motivate the claim that the disposition of A contributes to that increase.

This point can be argued more technically by assuming the analysis of 'sources of unfreedom' recently presented by Kramer (2003, Chap. 4). A human action is a source of an agent's unfreedom to do *x* if it contributes causally to the state of affairs in which it is impossible for the agent to do *x*. What is the relevant meaning of 'contributes causally' in this context? The answer is that an event or state of affairs *X* contributes causally to the occurrence of another event or state of affairs *Y* if and only if *X* passes the so-called NESS test—i.e., the test of whether *X* is a 'necessary element of a sufficient set' of conditions for *Y*.<sup>10</sup> To pass this test, *X* must be a member of a set of minimally sufficient conditions for *Y*. The fact that the set is 'minimally' sufficient implies the necessity of each and every member of the set for the realization of *Y*, in the sense that if any one such member were not to be realized, *Y* would not be realized either. Kramer rightly sees this causal criterion as implied by any attempt to distinguish clearly and plausibly between obstacles that are sources of *social* unfreedom (because they are contributed to by human agency), and other obstacles that are instead to be classed as being of purely natural origin, or else as self-inflicted. Moreover, and more relevantly for our purposes, the same causal criterion also serves to single out *which* of various human agents are contributing to a given social obstacle, where more than one such agent appears to be doing so. In the example just discussed, the actual

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<sup>10</sup> A useful account of this test is given in Braham and Holler (2009).

(conditional) disposition of A, to impose a sanction on B should B not comply, is certainly a necessary member of a set of minimally sufficient conditions for an increase in B's degree of expected preclusion to occur, no less than is the actual (conditional) disposition of C (D, E ...) to act in certain ways should A impose the sanction. The set of dispositions of A and C (D, E ...) is a set of minimally sufficient conditions for B's increase in expected preclusion. And since that set of dispositions is *actually* realized, so is B's increase in expected preclusion.

It should be noted that the kind of causation Kramer is talking of is *physical causation*, which takes into account, as variables, *all* the physical events and states of affairs that are relevant to determining the range of options physically available to B—among which, for example, the presence of oxygen in the air. Stoppino, on the other hand, talks of power as a causal relation between the conduct of A and that of B. When Stoppino talks of causation, then, he has in mind *social causation*, which assumes B's physical environment (as well as B's utility functions) to be fixed, and takes account, as variables, only of the conduct of A, C, D, E .... This allows Stoppino to state that, when A exercises power over B, A's conduct is in itself a *sufficient cause* of B's conduct (Stoppino 2001a, pp. 8–11). (This would certainly be false if among the necessary conditions of B's conduct we were to include the oxygen surrounding B, B's utility function, and so on). But this difference—between physical causation and social causation—is not relevant to the thesis I am defending, according to which A limits B's freedom when A (determinedly and competently) threatens B with an economic or symbolic sanction that would induce C (D, E ...) to prevent B from performing certain sets of actions. For the same conclusion about B's unfreedom that follows from Kramer's causal criterion also follows from Stoppino's. Indeed, when I stated earlier (in defining direct versus indirect restrictions of freedom), that in the case of A's restricting B's freedom *directly*, A's disposition to act is *sufficient* to determine that restriction, I was assuming the *social* concept of causation. A's disposition is sufficient to determine that direct restriction of freedom if (and only if) we treat as variables only the behaviours and dispositions of A, C, D, E .... Where A limits B's freedom *indirectly*, on the other hand, what matters is that A's disposition be a necessary element of a set of behaviours and dispositions that is minimally sufficient to determine the restriction of B's freedom. And this *is* a feature of A's disposition in the case of indirect restrictions of freedom, on Stoppino's causal criterion no less than on Kramer's.

#### 4.6 The Counterfactuals of Indirect Restrictions of Freedom

It is worth pausing at this stage to make explicit the nature of the counterfactuals in play in the case of the indirect restrictions of freedom accompanying coercive power. The first thing to note is that, while A's direct restriction of B's freedom (accompanying A's coercive power) is entailed by the truth of a single counterfactual (if B did *x*, A would do *y*), A's indirect restriction of B's freedom (accompanying A's coercive power) depends on the truth of the conjunction of

*several* counterfactuals ordered in a chain, such that with each successive link in the chain we progressively distance ourselves from the actual world (in which B conforms to A's will by refraining from doing *x*).

In the case of any one concrete example of such an indirect restriction of freedom, the composition of the relevant chain of counterfactuals can be built up from one or more chain segments. I suggest we think of these chain segments as coming in two standard forms. The first and simpler form is a segment made up of two elements, which consist in the following two counterfactuals:

- if B did *x*, A would do *y*;
- if A did *y*, C (D, E...) would prevent B from doing *a*.

This chain segment renders explicit the sense in which A indirectly restricts B's overall freedom in the simple example where A threatens to stigmatize B, and as a result of that stigmatization C (D, E ...) would act violently towards B.

The second form of chain segment is made up of three elements, where the ultimate preventive actions of C (D, E ...) depend on further actions or omissions by B (made inevitable by A's sanction):

- if B did *x*, A would do *y*;
- if A did *y*, B would be incapable of doing *r*;
- if B did not-*r*, C (D, E ...) would prevent B from doing *a*.

This chain segment renders explicit the sense in which A indirectly restricts B's overall freedom in the case where A exercises coercive economic power over B. For example, where A threatens to fire B (and thus to harm B economically), A's carrying out of the sanction would diminish B's capacity to continue to exercise remunerative power over C (D, E ...) in such a way as to bring it about that C (D, E ...) do not prevent B from doing certain things. (Typically, in this chain segment '*r*' is a *set* of remunerative acts by B and '*a*' is some further *act-combination* for B.) The actual preventive dispositions of C (D, E ...) are here conditional in two senses: first, they are directly conditional on B failing to make certain payments; secondly, because B's failing to make certain payments is conditional on A's economic sanction, they are indirectly conditional on that economic sanction. The conditionality is two-fold because the chain segment has three elements instead of two.

Where the chain of counterfactuals needed to render explicit an indirect restriction of freedom is longer still, it can be reconstructed by assembling instances of the two forms of chain segments just set out. We might, of course, need a very long chain made up of very many segments. But to illustrate, take the relatively simple case of A threatening to impose on B a symbolic sanction (for example, exclusion from the community of the faithful) which would result in a third party imposing an economic cost on B (for example, in B losing her job). To account for A's indirect restriction of B's freedom in this case, we shall need one of each of the two forms of segment described above—a two-piece segment followed by a three-piece segment. In the following list of counterfactuals, the second counterfactual constitutes both the final link in the first segment and the first link in the second segment:

- if B did  $x$ , A would do  $y$ ;
- if A did  $y$ , C would do  $w$ ;
- if C did  $w$ , B would be incapable of doing  $r$ ;
- if B did not- $r$ , D (E, F ...) would prevent B from doing  $a$ .

It should be emphasized once more that in none of these examples of coercion is an actual chain of events being described. *Ex hypothesi*, A succeeds in exercising power over B, so that in the actual world B does not do  $x$  and the chain is cut off at the first link. A's restriction of B's overall freedom does not depend on the realization of any of the events referred to in the consequents of the above conditionals, but only on the truth of the conditionals themselves.

## 4.7 Remuneration Versus Coercion

Stoppino classes coercion (the threat of sanctions, both violent and non-violent) and anticipated reactions (the anticipation of sanctions, both violent and non-violent) as forms of power that work through direct interventions on B's 'available alternatives'. ('Available alternatives' should be understood here not in the objective sense of unprevented courses of action—the sense that the theorist of pure negative freedom would have in mind in using the term—but in the subjective sense of 'the various courses of action that B takes into consideration' (Stoppino 2007). They are B's available courses of action weighted according to their degree of eligibility in B's eyes).

A third form of power that fits into this same category is that of 'remuneration'—that is, the promise on the part of A to reward B should B perform a certain action. Moreover, although the anticipated reactions discussed so far have all been anticipated sanctions, we should not forget that anticipated reactions can also be anticipated rewards.

It follows that, even leaving aside the exceptions mentioned above, not all of the forms of power whose 'target of intervention' consists in B's 'available alternatives' are forms of power that result in restrictions of B's overall freedom. For where A exercises power over B by promising a reward, A is generally *increasing* B's set of sets of compossible actions, and thus B's overall freedom. This result reflects the pre-theoretical intuition of most liberals, assuming a broad sense of 'liberal'. Indeed, the implication that A could restrict B's freedom by actually *increasing* B's set of available actions (and vice versa) ought to sound alarm bells in the mind of any liberal political theorist.

There can of course be offers that B *accepts unfreely*, given a certain definition of acting freely. This might be said, for example, of the offer made in the film *Indecent Proposal*, where a millionaire offers an enormous sum of money to a married couple on condition that the woman spends the night with him. Even in such cases, however, A is generally increasing B's overall pure negative freedom (to act), even if B complies unfreely.



It must again be emphasized, however, that the claim that remuneration increases B's freedom, like the claim that coercion limits it, is a contingent one. There are offers that are not accompanied by any change in B's degree of overall freedom, for reasons that exactly mirror those mentioned in the case of threats: A might not be determined or competent to keep the promise, or the benefit offered by A might not in any case be such as to reduce, directly or indirectly, B's degree of expected preclusion, consisting instead in some other event that B values, such as a benefit to a third party about whom B cares.

As a final observation on coercion and remuneration, we should note the possibility not only of A's leaving B's freedom unaffected (in the case both of A's threatening a sanction and of A's promising a reward), but also the possibility of A's increasing B's overall freedom through a threat and of A's reducing it through an offer. Coercion counts as such if the behaviour threatened by A is seen by B as contrary to B's own interests. And it is always possible for B to judge an increase in her own degree of expected preclusion to be in her own interests. This will be so where B desires to have her own choices restricted for her own good. In this case, A's freedom-restricting intervention will count not as a sanction, but as a reward. Similarly, A's posing the condition that if B does *x*, A will cease preventing a certain course of action, will in this case count as coercion. It is important for my general thesis about the correlation between A's coercion and B's unfreedom that such preferences on the part of B be exceptional. Most of us find this a reasonable assumption, and I think that the explanation lies in our assumption that the rationality of preferring more freedom to less tends to be overturned only in limited circumstances. Two such circumstances are worth mentioning here. First, B might prefer being prevented from doing certain things because B wishes to be protected against her own weak-willed desires. Such a preference, however, generally occurs only with respect to a very limited number of pursuits. Secondly, B might find that an abundance of available alternatives negatively affects her capacity to make a rational choice, within given time-constraints, between the specific alternatives open to her (Dworkin 1988, pp. 66–67). The most widely cited example is that of a choice between products in a supermarket: it might be rational for the agent to prefer having a choice between six decent brands of toothpaste to having a choice between sixty-six. Nevertheless, this preference of B only kicks in when her level of freedom is above a certain threshold. Moreover, the preference is only likely to apply to certain kinds of freedom. The claim that such preferences exist is plausible when applied to those freedoms that necessitate the exercise of our faculty of rational choice within strict temporal constraints, such as the choice of a toothpaste in a supermarket. But it is much more difficult to find similar examples in areas where a time-constraint is neither objectively present nor self-imposed. In considering the traditional liberal freedoms of worship, of association or of movement, for example, we do not tend to think that there is a threshold above which increases in the number of options take on a negative value for the agent.

#### ***4.8 Informational and Psychological Manipulation***

In Stoppino's classification, there are three other categories of power (each comprising one or more particular forms of power) where the target of A's intervention is something other than B's 'available alternatives' (see Table 1). These three other possible targets of A's intervention are as follows.

First, A might intervene on B's 'factual knowledge and value beliefs'. In this first category we find the forms of power that Stoppino calls 'informational manipulation', 'persuasion', and 'imitation'. For example, A might induce B to engage in certain forms of behaviour by indoctrinating B ideologically or by convincing B of the validity of certain beliefs by means of rational argument.

Secondly, A might intervene on B's 'unconscious psychological processes'. In this category we find the form of power called 'psychological manipulation'. Examples cited by Stoppino are subliminal advertising and brainwashing.

Thirdly, A might intervene on B's 'social environment', either by modifying the dispositions-to-act of third parties, so as to induce them to change the behaviour of B in A's interests, or by modifying the distribution of resources, so as to modify B's preferences in line with A's interests. An example Stoppino gives of a modification of third parties' dispositions-to-act is that of a couple that finds itself unable directly to influence the behaviour of their rebellious son. As a result, the couple adopts the alternative strategy of somehow convincing a third party (friends or family) to change the son's behaviour in line with the couple's wishes. An example Stoppino gives of a modification of the distribution of resources is that of the acquisition by A (by means of purchases from C, D, E ...) of a monopoly of a certain kind of resource that B needs. As a result of this acquisition, B modifies her behaviour in line with A's interests in order to guarantee the availability of this resource. Power that is exercised through an intervention on B's social environment can be called 'indirect' power, since the causal relation between A's conduct and B's will is mediated by an intervention on some outside factor that in turn modifies B's beliefs and desires and/or B's perception of her available alternatives.

In this third and last category—the category of power that works through an intervention on B's social environment—we find the forms of power called 'situational manipulation' and 'conditioning' (where the latter can be either intentional or merely interested). Manipulation being a 'hidden' form of power (where A keeps B unaware of the power relation or its nature), situational manipulation represents the 'hidden' version of power that is exercised through an intervention on B's social environment, whereas conditioning represents the 'open' version (where A does not hide the power relation or its nature). Because of its hidden nature, the occurrence of situational manipulation tends to be limited to small groups of agents. (These, however, might be very powerful groups, such as a government executive, in which case the consequences of situational manipulation can still be far-reaching). Conditioning, on the other hand, can play a more direct role in the successful implementation of public policies.

Of these three additional targets of A's intervention (B's factual knowledge and value beliefs, B's unconscious psychological processes and B's social environment), the one that most obviously identifies a category of power where A restricts B's freedom is the third: the intervention on B's social environment. I shall turn to this category in the next sub-section.

As I stated at the outset, there are some forms of power, such as rational persuasion and imitation, that no theorist of negative freedom would see as a restriction of B's freedom. More controversial is the question of whether A can restrict B's freedom by withholding information from B, or by the strongest forms of psychological manipulation. For the theorist of pure negative freedom, this question will turn on whether such conduct on the part of A really makes certain actions of B *impossible* (Carter 1999, p. 206; Kramer 2003, pp. 82–83, 255–271).

On the basis of Stoppino's classification, it is reasonable to say that there are some forms of informational or psychological manipulation by means of which A restricts B's pure negative freedom, and others by means of which A does not do so. As far as information is concerned, it is important to distinguish between 'knowing how' to do something and 'knowing that' something is the case. B's freedom to do *x* at time *t* will be removed by A if A withholds from B information without which B cannot possibly *know how* to do *x*. In an example given by Kramer (2003, pp. 82–83), B is locked in a room and told that the door will open only if she punches 200 digits on a keyboard in exactly the right order. In this case, B's ignorance of the code makes her unfree to exit within a certain time limit (or more precisely, very probably unfree to do so). Consider, on the other hand, a case in which A leads B to believe that she has been locked in a room by A when in fact the key has not been turned. In this case, what B lacks is not knowledge about *how* to exit, but knowledge *that* she is unprevented from exiting. This last kind of ignorance is not a source of pure negative unfreedom. For consider the test we must apply in order to see whether (or better, with what probability) others have made it impossible for B to do *x*. This test consists in asking, 'Were B to try her best to do *x*, would B fail to do *x* as a result of the actions of others?'. In the case of B's ignorance of the code needed to exit the room, the answer to this question is 'yes' (or better, 'very probably'), whereas in the case of B's ignorance of the door being unlocked, the answer is 'no' (or better, 'very probably not, and in any case with no higher a probability than had B known of the door being unlocked). It seems reasonable to say, then, that being prevented from 'knowing how' to avail oneself of an option is a source of unfreedom, whereas being prevented only from 'knowing that' one has the option is not a source of unfreedom. A more realistic and politically relevant example of people being rendered unfree to do certain things through a denial of 'know-how' would be where a government denies to certain classes of people—for example, to women or to certain races—the possibility of frequenting certain university courses. If a 20 year-old is prevented from studying medicine for the next 10 years, she is, at the moment of that prevention, rendered unfree to carry out a certain medical operation at the age of 30.

Many instances of 'knowing that' something is the case will be instrumental to 'knowing how' to perform a particular action, and thus to increasing the

probability of one's succeeding in performing that action should one try. For example, it may be that in order to take the train from *a* to *b*, I need to 'know that' the train to *b* is the one whose eventual destination is *c*. Knowing that this is the case is an example of 'knowing how' to take the train to *b*, even though it is formulated in the language of 'knowing that'. Similarly, our medical student will know how to carry out a heart operation successfully only if she knows that the heart is structured in a certain way, and the person locked in the room in Kramer's example will know how to exit only if she knows that that code consists in a certain sequence of numbers. When a statement about 'knowing that' can be reformulated as a statement about 'knowing how' to perform a certain action, then the prevention of the knowledge referred to can constitute a restriction of one's freedom. The claim that one 'knows that' *one has a certain option*, however, cannot be reformulated as the claim that one 'knows how' to avail oneself *of that option*. It is for this reason that ignorance about the existence of available options does not make one unfree to avail oneself of those same options.

But while it is true that the withholding of know-how restricts the freedom of those who are thereby kept in the dark, it is not clear that this activity qualifies as a form of *power*. The reason for this is that A's withholding of information about how to do *x* simply renders B unfree to do *x*. Where A exercises *power* over B, on the other hand, A brings it about that B does not-*x* while nevertheless leaving B free to do *x*. The withholding of know-how, then, is a case of preclusion, not of power. Informational manipulation will count as an exercise of power only when it is a withholding of factual information the effectiveness of which (in making B refrain from doing *x*) does not depend on its usefulness to B in understanding how to do *x*. Lying, suppressing information, and providing excessive information—all examples provided by Stoppino—*may* still count as power on this view, but in many concrete instances they will not.

Since it is reasonable to call manipulation a form of power, I shall call the cases just cited, in which A restricts B's freedom by withholding information, cases of 'informational preclusion' rather than of 'manipulation'. A's use of information to modify B's behaviour can be an exercise of power or a case of preclusion. Where it is an exercise of power, it will not constitute a restriction of freedom. Where it does constitute a restriction of freedom, on the other hand, it will not qualify as power (being informational preclusion). The fundamental reason for this is that *if* A restricts B's freedom by means of informational preclusion, A precludes *certain specific freedoms of B*, whereas when A exercises *power* over B, A necessarily precludes at most certain *act-combinations* of B.

The case of psychological manipulation is identical to that of informational manipulation in this respect. There are clearly extreme cases of intervention on B's unconscious psychological processes—for example, brainwashing as described by Stoppino—in which A renders B's performance of certain actions impossible by making certain psychological processes impossible for B. However, in these extreme cases what happens is that A precludes certain actions of B. A does not leave B free to do otherwise, and as a consequence A cannot be said to be exercising power over B. Therefore, if Stoppino is right to assume that in cases of power B is

necessarily free to do otherwise, then he is wrong to class brainwashing as an exercise of power. This is a form of psychological preclusion, not of psychological manipulation. Less extreme kinds of intervention on B's unconscious psychological processes, on the other hand, do qualify as power, but they do not restrict B's freedom. For they neither remove any specific freedoms of B nor (in themselves) reduce B's level of overall freedom. Thus, theorists of negative freedom are not amenable to the suggestion that advertising or emotive religious or political propaganda (the use of symbols such as flags or prayers or anthems) renders people unfree to perform any specific actions or act-combinations. These latter kinds of intervention—advertising or emotive propaganda—affect people's inclinations, but it is essential to any negative conception of freedom that one make a clear distinction between being inclined not to do *x* and being unfree to do *x*.

It seems to me that Stoppino was led to classify brainwashing and the withholding of know-how as examples of power because he lacked the category of (intentional and interested) *preclusive* behaviour (which includes, but is not limited to, violence). Faced with the choice of classifying them either as power or as violence, it will have seemed more natural to place them in the former category. After all, neither can be easily qualified as an intervention on the agent's body or immediate physical environment (although brainwashing tends to be accompanied by such an intervention). We have seen, however, that it is difficult on reflection to justify classing them as examples of power. Instead, they should be seen as lying outside either category, but within the wider category of intentional and interested preclusion.

It should be noted that in cases of informational or psychological preclusion, A restricts B's freedom *directly*. A can, of course, bring it about that third parties engage in similar acts towards B, withholding know-how from B or engaging in brainwashing or hypnosis. In this case, A is restricting B's freedom indirectly. Where A does so, however, A is exercising power by intervening on B's social environment (i.e., on third parties' dispositions to act), and the form of power is therefore situational manipulation or conditioning. While the restrictions of freedom involved in informational and psychological preclusion are always direct, the restrictions of freedom involved in situational manipulation and conditioning are always indirect. (The only target of intervention that admits cases both of direct and indirect restrictions of B's freedom is that of B's 'available alternatives'. Coercion and anticipated reactions can involve A *indirectly* restricting B's freedom without actually engaging in conditioning, because they do not involve A *actually* modifying third parties' dispositions-to-act.)

Finally, we should note that, like interventions on B's available alternatives, interventions on B's factual knowledge or unconscious psychological processes can involve increases in B's overall freedom as well as decreases (one might call these cases of informational or psychological 'enablement', as opposed to informational or psychological preclusion). The positive counterpart of A's depriving B of knowledge about how to avail herself of certain options is, clearly enough, A's supplying B with that knowledge. The positive counterpart of brainwashing is probably psychotherapy. (Stoppino mentions this as a rare example of open (i.e., non-manipulative) power that nevertheless has unconscious psychological

processes as its target of intervention.) For example, if brainwashing can make B unfree to do  $x$  by inducing in B a particular phobia, and psychotherapy can remove that phobia, then A's acting as B's psychotherapist can result in A's directly increasing B's freedom. Even assuming B's consequent behaviour to conform to A's interests, however, A's increasing B's freedom through psychotherapeutic activity is no more an exercise of power by A over B than is A's restricting B's freedom through brainwashing.

#### 4.9 *Situational Manipulation and Conditioning*

As I have suggested, B's pure negative freedom is certainly restricted by A in many cases in which A exercises power over B by intervening on B's *social environment* (i.e., cases of situational manipulation and conditioning). The way in which this comes about is particularly clear where A's intervention on B's environment is an intervention on third parties' dispositions-to-act. Such an intervention will constitute a restriction of B's overall freedom whenever the conduct of C (D, E ...) produced by that of A is itself a restriction of B's freedom in one of the ways already discussed. For example, if A modifies B's behaviour (in A's interests) by persuading C to threaten B with an economic sanction, A contributes to the resulting reduction in B's freedom because, as in the earlier cases examined, A's intervention, no less than C's, is a necessary element of a set of minimally sufficient conditions for B's suffering an increase in her degree of expected preclusion. If, on the other hand, A modifies B's behaviour by *coercing* C into to *persuading* B, A may thereby be reducing C's overall freedom, but A is not thereby reducing B's overall freedom.

It should be noted that in these cases of power (both where A restricts B's freedom and where A does not), the conduct of C is not necessarily in C's interests, and therefore does not necessarily constitute an exercise of power by C. Nevertheless, the behaviour of C will always be *equivalent* to the exercise of one of the more direct forms of power (forms of power where the target of intervention is B's available alternatives or B's factual knowledge and value beliefs or B's unconscious psychological processes), where by its being 'equivalent' I mean that it consists in the same physical behaviour on the part of C, even though the behaviour C induces in B might not be one that conforms to C's interests. For example, a politician (A) might coerce an employer (C) into threatening to fire his employee (B) unless the employee gives his support to the politician in an election, even though the politician's being elected is not in the employer's interests. In this case, the politician is exercising power over the employee (here, via an exercise of power over the employer), but the employer's threat is not itself an exercise of power over the employee. The employer is instead engaging in behaviour that I am calling 'equivalent' to an exercise of (economic, coercive) power, as well as being a necessary link in A's indirect power over B.

Stoppino mentions the redistribution of resources as a method of situational manipulation or conditioning, in addition to the modification of third parties'

dispositions to act. It is not clear, however, that A's effecting a redistribution of resources represents a genuinely distinct form of intervention on B's social environment—an intervention that is somehow an *alternative* method, for A, to that of effecting a change in third parties' dispositions-to-act. After all, *every* restriction of a person's freedom depends ultimately on the actions of others and thus on their dispositions to act. This point leads me to doubt the status of 'redistribution of resources' as an independent way of exercising situational manipulation or conditioning. It seems to me, indeed, that this type of intervention can always be categorized in one of the following two ways.

First, it might be categorized as a redistribution of resources that *brings about* a subsequent modification of *third parties' dispositions-to-act*. An example might be where A redistributes a certain resource that B needs from one third party to another—i.e., transferring the property rights in that resource from D to C—with the consequence that B's behaviour is modified in line with C's interests (which, unlike D's interests, happen to coincide with those of A). Here, the change in B's behaviour takes place because, thanks to the redistribution of resources in question, C is given the opportunity to prevent B from performing certain sets of actions (in the way already illustrated in connection with the threat and anticipation of economic sanctions), and then develops the disposition to do so should B not conform to her interests. This is certainly a case in which A exercises power (indirectly) over B. However, it is an exercise of power that works, ultimately, by means of a modification of *third parties' dispositions-to-act*. In this case, then, we do not seem to be justified in calling the redistribution of resources an *alternative* method with respect to the method of modifying third parties' dispositions to act. Rather, such redistribution is just one of the *means* by which A might conceivably bring about a change in third parties' dispositions-to-act.

A useful clarificatory example of a redistribution of resources (resulting in a modification of third parties' dispositions to act) is that of an *actual economic sanction* imposed by A on B. This actual sanction is a sign that A has attempted and failed to *coerce* B into acting in a certain way. Despite indicating a failure of A to coerce B, however, the sanction may also turn out to be a means by which A, intentionally or unintentionally, *conditions* B, given the expected behaviour of C (D, E ...) consequent upon A's sanction, as already illustrated in the previous analysis of economic coercion—except that in the case of the *actual* economic sanction, C's (D's, E's ...) behaviour is *actual* (because consequent upon an actual sanction by A), as opposed to *counterfactual* (because consequent upon a counterfactual sanction by A). In the case of the actual economic sanction, A redistributes resources from B to C (D, E ...) and in so doing modifies C's (D's, E's ...) *dispositions to act* towards B.

The second way of categorizing a change in the distribution of resources is as a redistribution of resources *without* any consequent modification in third parties' dispositions-to-act. In such cases, however, the power exercised by A over B should not be classed as situational manipulation or conditioning, but as one of the direct forms of power previously discussed. Here too, then, A's redistribution of resources

**Table 2** The relation between social power and overall freedom

target of intervention effect on overall freedom	social environment	unconscious psychological processes	factual knowledge and value beliefs	available alternatives
direct restriction				[h] <i>coercion</i> ; <i>anticipated reaction</i> (true threat or correct anticipation of physical removal of options, i.e. of violence)
indirect restriction	[a] <i>situational manipulation</i> ; <i>conditioning</i> (intervention inducing in third parties behaviour identical or equivalent to [h] or [i])			[i] <i>coercion</i> ; <i>anticipated reaction</i> (true threat or correct anticipation of economic or symbolic sanction)
no effect	[b] <i>situational manipulation</i> ; <i>conditioning</i> (intervention inducing in third parties behaviour identical or equivalent to [d], [e], [f], [g], [j] or [k])	[d] <i>psychological manipulation</i> (including use of emotive symbols, but not including brainwashing or hypnosis)	[e] <i>informational manipulation</i> (including withholding of information about available options, but not including withholding of know- how)  [f] <i>persuasion</i>  [g] <i>imitation</i>	[j] <i>coercion</i> ; <i>anticipated reaction</i> (false threat or incorrect anticipation; true/false threat or correct/incorrect anticipation of 'purely symbolic' sanction or of harm only to third party)  [k] <i>remuneration</i> ; <i>anticipated reaction</i> (false promise or incorrect anticipation; true/false promise or correct/incorrect anticipation of 'purely symbolic' benefit or of benefit only to third party)
indirect increase	[c] <i>situational manipulation</i> ; <i>conditioning</i> (intervention inducing in third parties behaviour identical or equivalent to [l], [m])			[l] <i>remuneration</i> ; <i>anticipated reaction</i> (true promise or correct anticipation of economic or symbolic benefit)
direct increase				[m] <i>remuneration</i> ; <i>anticipated reaction</i> (true promise or correct anticipation of removal of humanly imposed physical constraints)

fails to qualify as an independent form of situational manipulation or conditioning—in this case, because it fails to qualify as a form of situational manipulation or conditioning. Imagine, for example, that A succeeds in acquiring a monopoly over a certain kind of resource that B needs (this is Stoppino's example). Here, A redistributes resources (by acquiring them from C (D, E ...)) but does not rely on any modification of third parties' dispositions-to-act in order to modify the behaviour of



B in conformity with A's interests. Nevertheless, in such a case it seems correct to classify the power exercised by A over B not as situational manipulation or conditioning, but as the direct threat (by A) or anticipation (by B) of a sanction—that is, as coercion or anticipated reaction. This exercise of power depends on A's disposition to impose economic sanctions on B should B engage in certain forms of behaviour—sanctions which, before acquiring the monopoly in question, A was unable to impose, and which A is enabled to impose as a result of the monopoly. Therefore, the exercise of power that takes place in this example is not itself exemplified by the acquisition of the monopoly (the redistribution *without* a consequent modification in third parties' dispositions-to-act). Rather, the acquisition of the monopoly is *previous* to A's exercise of *coercive* power (or B's anticipation of A's reaction). The acquisition is *preparatory* (be it intentionally or unintentionally) to A's exercise of coercive power over B (or B's anticipating A's reaction), since that exercise of coercive power requires *further* conduct on the part of A (or anticipation on the part of B). The acquisition itself is an act that creates *potential* power (an act that *gives* A power), by supplying A with new resources and hence new opportunities for imposing sanctions.

(In his discussion of situational manipulation, Stoppino says that, by secretly acquiring a monopoly of a given resource, A can 'just as secretly dictate his demands' on B (Stoppino 2007). To the extent that this is so, however, it suggests, *pace* Stoppino, that there are forms of coercion and remuneration that can be 'hidden' in Stoppino's sense, rather than that the secret acquisition of a monopoly is itself a separate form of hidden power working through an intervention on B's social environment. A's power is exercised through the secret dictation of his demands, which happens to follow his secret acquisition of the monopoly.)

Thus, although my analysis of the freedom-power relation has generally taken Stoppino's formal classification as given, I am nevertheless moved, in the light of that same analysis, to challenge two aspects of that classification. First, as we saw in the previous subsection, a number of cases that Stoppino would classify as ones of informational or psychological manipulation should not, after all, be classed as examples of power—even though, as we also saw, our very reason for not classing them as examples of power is also a reason for classing them as restrictions of freedom. Secondly, the kind of power that Stoppino calls situational manipulation or conditioning operating by means of a redistribution of resources (*rather than* by means of a modification of third parties' dispositions-to-act) is not, in reality, a separate form of power, but is more properly classed as the *creation of potential power*.

## 5 Conclusion

We have seen that there is a complex relation between A's social power and B's overall negative freedom, depending both on the form and the substance of the power relation. This complex relation is set out schematically in Table 2.

In line with the criticism of Stoppino presented at the end of [Sect. 4.9](#), I have omitted from [Table 2](#) those cases of situational manipulation or conditioning that Stoppino would class as operating by means of a redistribution of resources. I have also omitted cases of psychological or informational preclusion (in line with the criticism presented in [Sect. 4.8](#)), given that [Table 2](#) concerns the relation between B's overall freedom and A's *power*, in the strict sense assumed by Stoppino. It should not be forgotten, however, that psychological and informational preclusion nevertheless represent restrictions of freedom, even though (and in a sense, because) they lie outside [Table 2](#). These exceptions aside, [Table 2](#) reproduces all the forms of power identified in Stoppino's classification (see [Table 1](#)), and similarly groups them according to the relevant target of intervention. [Table 2](#) also contains two minor simplifications: first, in order to avoid overcrowding, the table omits cases of coercion that increase overall freedom and cases of remuneration that reduce it; secondly, in the case of threats (or offers, or anticipations) that are 'true' (i.e., that satisfy the requirements of determination and competence) but nevertheless have no effect on B's overall freedom, the table refers only to cases of sanctions (or benefits) affecting a third party.

Overall, the above analysis seems to me to provide a plausible account of the relation between social power and negative freedom. It shows how negative freedom is restricted not only by the most obvious relations of preclusion—in particular, violent relations of preclusion—but also by the less evident forms of preclusion that accompany a number of different forms of power, including coercion, anticipated reactions and many instances of situational manipulation and conditioning, as well as by informational and manipulative forms of preclusion. Thus, it is misguided to depict the pure negative conception of freedom as entailing a particularly 'narrow' or 'restrictive' view of the relation between power and freedom, as if A only limited B's freedom through violence or the physical prevention of specific actions. This, despite the fact that the pure negative conception does indeed entail that, ultimately, freedom is restricted only through the social preclusion of acts or act-combinations.

I would suggest, further, that the above analysis gains appeal from the fact that it lays down the basis for some potentially fruitful interaction between political scientists and normative political theorists. Any adequate normative political theory endorsing the aim of limiting, controlling or distributing certain forms of social power in certain ways must give a plausible account of the reasons for pursuing such an aim. It must ground that aim in a normative sense, by referring to the values that the control, limitation or distribution of power will ultimately promote. An important value commonly cited by liberal and republican theorists as a justification for the limitation of political power is the value of freedom. Such theorists believe that a measure of freedom, or equal freedom, or maximal equal freedom, is owed to individuals as a matter of right—either because our moral obligations include a fundamental obligation to respect other moral agents as such, or because they believe that we are obliged to respect or promote the interests of other persons, where one such interest is an interest in freedom. In either case,

freedom is a fundamental value that provides liberal theorists with a reason for aiming to limit, control or distribute certain forms of power in certain ways. Thus, it provides a normative grounding for liberal constitutional provisions, including limited government and the separation of powers, as well as for certain economic and social policies.

The above analysis suggests the existence of a particularly strong empirical correlation between restrictions of negative freedom and those forms of social power that political liberals and republicans have traditionally been concerned to limit, control or distribute in certain ways—above all, coercion, anticipated reaction, and certain forms of conditioning and situational manipulation. Political science has it within its power to confirm or deny this correlation, and normative political theorists ought therefore to take an interest in its findings in this area.

Some republican theorists have shied away from such a reliance on falsifiable empirical correlations, preferring to establish a *logical* connection between freedom and the absence of the relevant forms of power. I do not find it helpful, however, to *define* freedom, either partly or wholly, as the absence of those forms of power with which republicans are particularly concerned (this has been the argumentative strategy adopted by Pettit (1997, 2001), and Skinner (1997, 2002). Instead, I believe it most useful to define social freedom independently of the concept of social power and then to explain why, as a matter of contingent fact, freedom (or its fair distribution) is best preserved by limiting certain forms of power or by distributing them in a certain way. For it is only on this basis that the liberal (or republican) condemnation of power as inimical to freedom will have normative force, rather than simply amounting to an analytic truth.<sup>11</sup> Those for whom the freedom-restricting effects of power are a logical entailment of the definition of freedom cannot cite freedom as a *reason* for wishing to control, limit or distribute power in certain ways. Defining freedom as the absence of certain forms of power wrongly assumes that the singling out of such forms of power is logically prior to an understanding of the nature of freedom. On the contrary, the logical priority should lie with our understanding of the nature of freedom.

Sometimes it is simply misguided to take refuge in the certainties of logic, when contingent empirical facts will better serve to confirm the particular structure of values we endorse. The relation between power and freedom is a case in point, and serves well to illustrate the way in which political science can help in grounding the prescriptions of political morality. In asserting a relation between certain forms of power and the unfreedom of those subject to them, liberal and republican theorists implicitly endorse a structure of values according to which an interest in limiting or redistributing power is grounded in an interest in promoting or redistributing freedom. For this reason, my own analysis of the freedom-power relation recognizes freedom as one of the fundamental, independent values in

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<sup>11</sup> I present a critique of Skinner and Pettit along these lines, in part applying the analysis of the freedom-power relation contained in the present article, in Carter 2008. An earlier version of this critique can be found in Chap. 8 of Carter 1999. See also the writings of Matthew Kramer on the concept of freedom, in particular Chap. 1 of Kramer 2003, 2008.

terms of which we desire to evaluate various forms of possible social and political relation: it assumes an independently coherent conception of freedom, and then asks on this basis which of the various forms of power are accompanied by limitations of freedom. It aims to answer this last question by rendering explicit the preventive mechanisms that constantly accompany certain forms of power and not others. This constant accompaniment serves not only to explain why the liberal mind has tended, intuitively, to focus its attention on certain forms of power rather than others, but also to justify that focus in normative terms.

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