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Biological Foundation of Political Behavior: Theoretical and Methodological Frontiers

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The study of political behavior have been focused on two major areas: The psychological and social. The focus of research has been on the pursuit of power by certain individuals. Power is defined as the ability of one who can let somebody do something which they would not otherwise do.¹ In his widely quoted book, Dahl gave the above definition of power and influence. Yet he did not differentiate levels and extent of the pursuit of power. Nor did he developed adequate indicators to measure the extent to power people are after.

I. Developing a Paradigm for “Power” both for Conceptual and Measurement Purposes

As pointed out in the outset of this paper, other than the simple definition of “power,” there has been no paradigm which illustrates the different levels of craving for power, nor was there proper measurement of the extent pursuit of power among each person. Hence we need both a paradigm and indicators to measure the extent of commitment for the pursuit of power.

Figure 1 is an attempt at building model with to serve to clarify the pursuit of power at different levels of pyramid and to develop a model that can be operationalized for the purpose of measurable research. (See Figure 1)

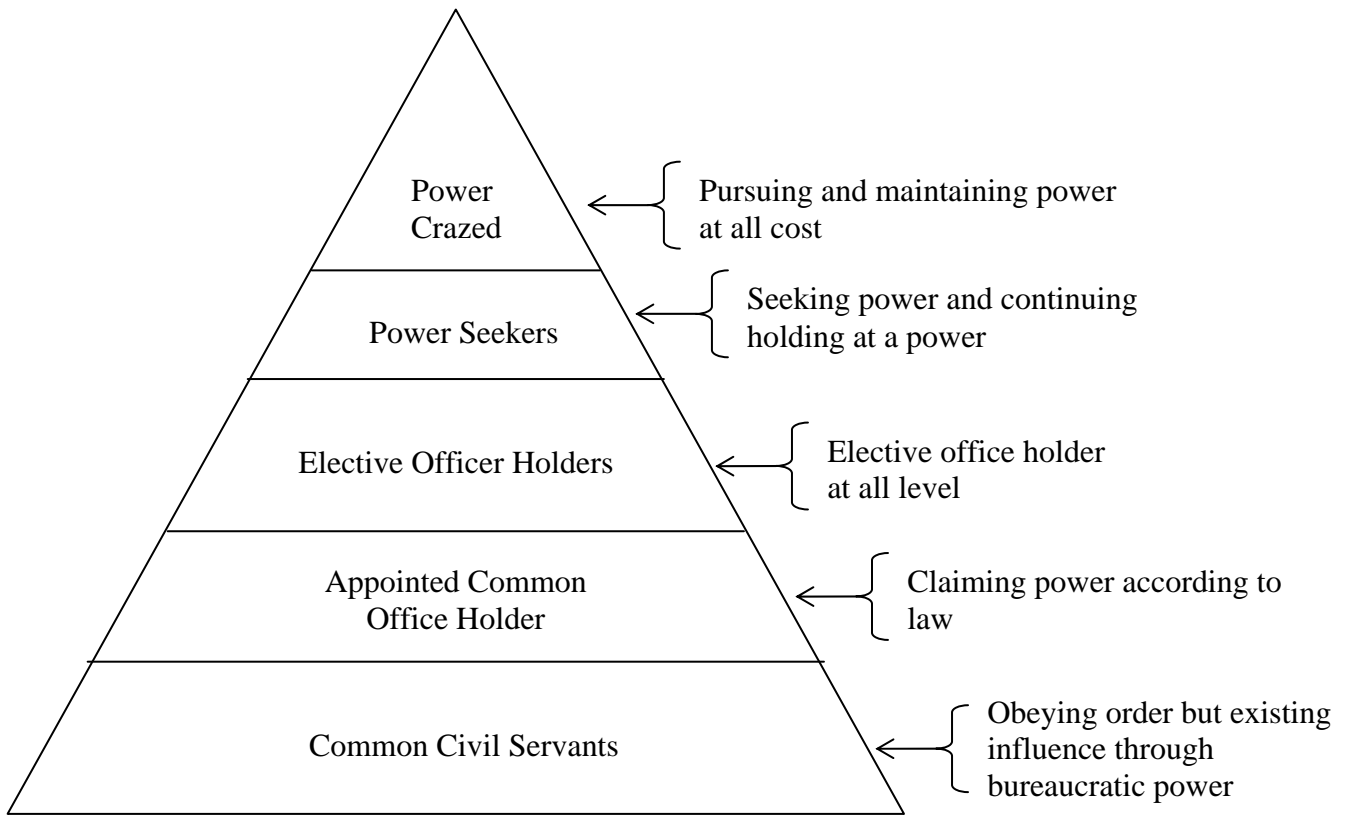
The model first differentiate five levels of craving for power; it also suggests the nature for the pursuit of power at each level. A more systematic measurement through adequate indicators is to be developed with further tests and survey research.

II. The Limit of Sociological and Psychological Research

In addition to the absence of adequate measurements, additional omissions, and almost a critical one, is the almost total lack of biological analyses of human behavior. Yet from the behavior of the primates, we

¹ See Robert A. Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956).

Figure 1
Human Pursue of Power: A Paradigm*



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gradually started to perceived the three are close proximity between the primates and humans in pursuit of power; especially among monkeys, baboons, and human.²

For instance, the dominate primate (e.g. the monkey king) has exclusive control of food, territories, and sex favor of female monkeys. By the same token, successful competitor, such as the emperors of China, or local warlords enjoyed the same privileges. Some even look like the primary purpose of their purpose of pursuing power is to enjoy similar rights like other primates. But human pursuit of power sometimes goes to the extreme such as killing of millions of people, controlling vast territories beyond the domain of one people, and processing innumerable quality and quantity of natural and human resources. The only area wherein human beings seem to exercise some self restrain is the area of sexual domination of the female members of a social group.

III. Sociological Explanation of Human Behavior in Politics

A major portion of literature in political science is the explanation of political behavior of human beings through the theory and sociology. Among the major contributions in this area include voting studies, political culture, and modernization as well as democratization studies. From the studies of Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson and others, we learn a great deal about the behaviors of the American people in the voting booth.³

As studies on political culture, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba and their associates made major contributions by conducting cross-national studies on the formation of political values including that of Chinese political culture.⁴ They have a great following. Although

² For a few examples, see Desmond Morris, *The Naked Ape, A Zoologists Study of the Human Behavior* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co. 1967); Jutuis Fast, *Body Language* (New York: M. Evans, 1970); R. Andre, *The Territorial Imperial* (New York: Atheneum, 1966), R. L. Birdwhistell, "Background to Kinesics," *A Review of General Semantics*, Vol. 13, No. 1, Autumn, 1955.

³ For instance, see Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and William McPhee, *Voting, A Study of Opinion Formation in a Political Campaign* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954).

⁴ Notable examples include: John W. Lewis, "The Study of Chinese Political Culture." *World Politics*, 18 (April 1966), pp. 503-524; Lucian W. Pye, *The Spirit of Chinese Politics: A Psychocultural Study of the Authority Crisis in Political Development* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1968); Richard W. Wilson, *Learning to be Chinese: The Political Socialization of Children in Taiwan* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1970); R. W. Wilson, *The Moral State, A Study of the Political Socialization of Chinese and American Children* (New York: The Free Press, 1974); R. W. Wilson, "The Learning of Political Symbols in Chinese Culture," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 3 (July-October, 1968), pp. 246-254; Robert Jay Lifton, *Thought Reform and Psychology of Totalism: A Study of Brainwashing in China* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1963); R. J. Lifton, *Revolutionary Immortality: Mao Tse-tung and the Chinese Cultural Revolution and the Chinese Political Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); R. H. Solomon, "Mao's Effort to Reintegrate the Chinese

this author has reservation on many of their methodologies.⁵

As for studies on modernization, Seymour Martin Lipset, Alex Inkeles, and Ronald Inglehart's research covered a vast field.⁶ Yet, as the author points out, the modernization studies gradually regressed into a rationalization of Western of development and slowly lost appeals to non-western countries.⁷

IV. Psychological Approach to the Study of Political Behavior

A major figures in promoting and sustaining psychological analysis of political behavior has been Charles Edward Merriam who was the founder of the "Chicago School" of political science. Merriam especially emphasized quantification of his research. He also took special interest in psychology.⁸

If Merriam was pioneer of psychological research to politics. Harold D. Lasswell was the monumental figure who brought many of the theories and method of psychology into facilitation in political science. Among some of the most important of his contribution to political analysis has been the psychopathological study of major political figure in world history, including Lincoln, Napoleon, and Hitler. In Lasswell's opinion, many of the extreme behavior of the political behavior was caused by private frustration which in turn was projected on public object and rationalized in turn of public good produces a political man.⁹

Polity: Problems of Authority and Conflict in Chinese Social Process," in *Chinese Communist Politics in Action*, ed. A. Doak Barnett (Seattle: The University of Washington Press, 1969), pp. 271-351; Sheldon Appleton, "The Political Socialization of College Students on Taiwan," *Asian Survey*, 10 (October 1970), pp. 910-923; S. Appleton, "Regime Support Among Taiwan High School Students," *Asian Survey*, 13 (Aug., 1973), pp. 750-760; and Charles Price Ridley, Paul H. B. Godwin, and Dennis J. Doolin, *The Making of a Model Citizen in Communist China* (Stanford, Calif.: The Hoover Institute Press, 1971). James R. Townsend and Harold C. Hinton have also made succinct observations on the nature of Chinese political culture in their respective introductory texts on Chinese politics; see James R. Townsend, *Politics in China* (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1974), pp. 28-40, 154-156, 177-200; and Harold C. Hinton, *An Introduction to Chinese Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1973), chapter one, *passim*.

⁵ See Yung Wei, "A Methodological Critique of Current Studies on Chinese Political Culture," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (February, 1976), pp. 114-140.

⁶ Seymour M. Lipset, *Political Man* (New York: Doubleday, 1960); Alex Inkeles, and David Smith, *Becoming Modern: Individual Change in Six Developing Countries* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1974); and Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Post-Modernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).

⁷ Yung Wei, "Modernization Process in Taiwan: An Allocative Analysis," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XVI, No. 3 (March, 1976), pp. 249-269.

⁸ See for example, Charles E. Merriam, *The Making of Citizens: A Comparative Study of Civic Training* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1931).

⁹ Harold D. Lasswell, "The Study of the Mentally Ill as a Method of Research into Political Personalities," *American Political Science Review*, 23 (1929), pp. 996-1001; H. D. Lasswell, *Psychopathology in Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930); Lasswell, *Politics, Who*

Despite the enormously amount of influence in political science of his theories and method, Lasswell's thesis with a Freudian tilt gradually lost its appeal among political scientists.

V. The Biological Approach to the Study of Political Behavior: An Appeal and an Agenda for Action

Having pointed out the shortcoming of existing political analysis (See Figure 2), I propose that we take an entirely different approach to the study of political behavior from that of socio-psychological approach to that of biological approach.¹⁰

Central to my new theoretical and methodological approach is the thrust in examination of the influence of the impact of genes on human behavior. My belief is that for ordinary individuals, we may examine their behavior by examining the socio-psychological elements. Yet for exceptional individual, we may have to find the linkage between their genes and behavior. The process is not different from identifying linkages of certain genes (DNAs) and the pathology in an individual. In thinking toward this direction, the author is inspired by the finding that homosexual orientation in males may not be caused by socio-psychological factors, but be an innate biological factor embedded in the genes of an individual.¹¹

If homosexual behavior can be traced to gene defects or variation, the extraordinary behavior of human beings in politics may also be explained by gene's variation or defects. If this can be done, it would be a major breakthrough of our understanding of human behavior in general, and of political behavior in particular.

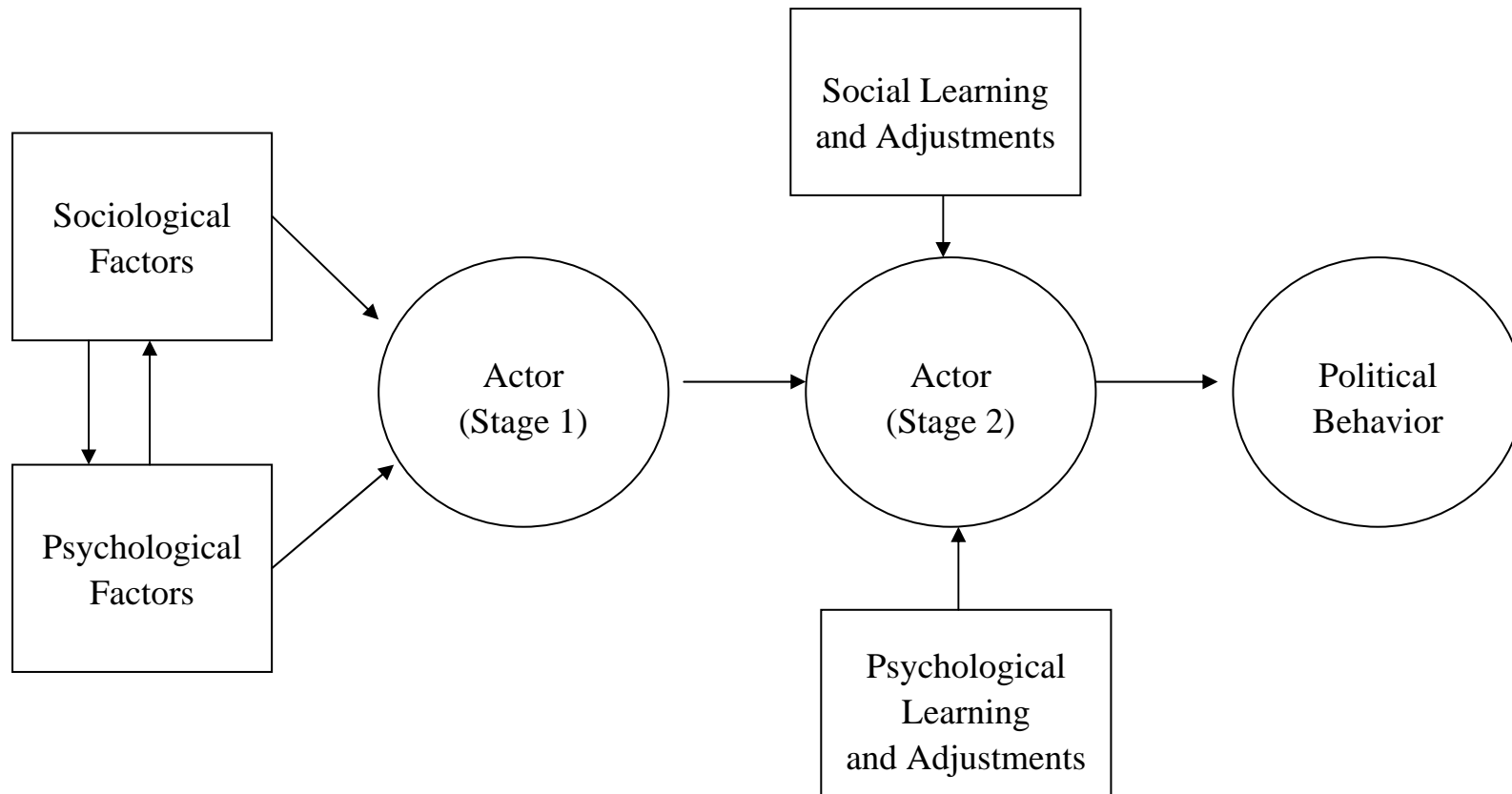
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Gets What, When, How (New York: McGraw Hill, 1936); and Lasswell, *Power and Personality* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1948); Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan and Danial Lerner eds, *The Policy Science* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 1951).

¹⁰ For example, see Irenaus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, *Love and Hate, The Natural History of Behavior Patterns* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972).

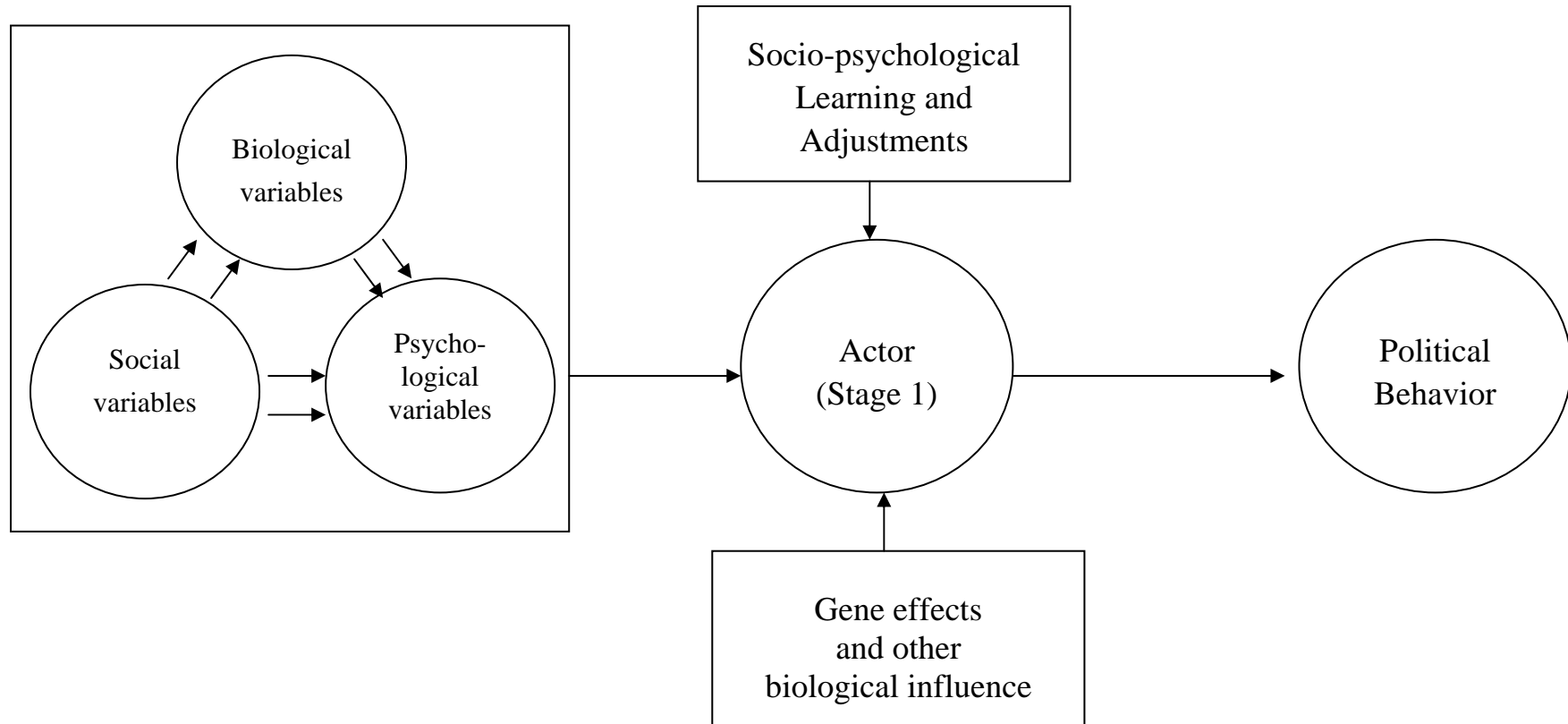
¹¹ Frank Muscarella,1 Bernhard Fink, Karl Grammer and Michael Kirk-Smith, *Homosexual Orientation in Males: Evolutionary and Ethological Aspects*, *Neuroendocrinology Letters* ISSN 0172-780X, 2001.

Figure 2
Political Behavior: A Socio-Psychological Model*



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Figure 3
Political Behavior:
A Biological, Social, and Psychological Model*



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