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Overview

‘Power relations must figure significantly in explanations of poverty and inequality.’ This paper examines that statement and concludes that relations of power underpin inequality and are among the critical variables that cause and keep people in poverty. It, therefore, underscores the importance of integrating ‘power’ into analyses of inequality and poverty.

The paper’s main objectives are to:
(a) Highlight some of the key ways in which power influences inequality and poverty;
and
(b) Provide guiding principles and early directions for future longitudinal research on the relationship between power and poverty. Correspondingly, it will:

- Synthesize arguments on the relations between power, vertical and horizontal inequalities, and poverty;
- Use theoretical and empirical data to provide explanations of the links between power, inequalities/disparities and poverty – emphasizing crucial factors such as the role of history, institutions, economic opportunities, factor endowments and ideology – and to identify critical areas for data collection; and
- Suggest subjects for future research.

The paper is not intended as a theoretical treatise on power. Instead, it uses case examples to highlight key features and to emphasize the role of power in inequality and poverty.

OUTLINE

The paper draws substantially on selected major publications. Section 1 outlines the case for focusing on power. It suggests that there is a relationship between power, poverty and inequality; that by not focusing explicitly on power, dominant methodological approaches fail to analyze one of the critical variables that both keep people poor and undermine development initiatives; and that poverty analysis would profit from combined methodological approaches and an explicit focus on power. Section 2 reviews some of the major approaches to poverty and inequality. It then uses debates on the policymaking process to (a) identify key dimensions and features of power and (b) emphasize that empowerment of the poor also depends on external accountabilities. Section 3 uses a case study of Ceres, South Africa to focus on how power performs in the domestic arena. It expands on the themes outlined in Section 2. Section 4 summarizes the main arguments and highlights key areas for future research.

The Annexes focus on the cultivation of inequalities and unequal power relations in Uganda, the misuse of power and the consequences for the poor, the legacies of power, and the prospects for change. They highlight the following themes: identities, power and poverty; power, poverty and gender disparities; economic power, politics and class formation; historical legacies and the consequences for empowerment.

Annex 1 provides a historical account of the development of social and economic
inequalities in Uganda. It describes social relations in the pre-colonial period and highlights the ways in which colonial administrators manipulated existing tensions and provoked new inequalities. Milton Obote and Idi Amin used power repressively and this resulted in widespread destruction and dislocation. The Movement system has managed to secure peace and stability but there are longstanding power structures and relations that continue to impair poor people’s capacity to improve their welfare.

Annex 2 expands on the themes raised in Section 3 of the main text. It contends that the quality of the institutions and regime type influence power distribution and relations. However, its assessment of post-1986 institutional developments in Uganda also shows that power structures and relations shape institutional development. Not all of these structures of power are historical and ingrained. New relations of power are formed during processes of transition and these can both empower and disempower the poor.

Annex 3 continues to investigate how power relations can affect change processes. Uganda is in a process of transition to multiparty democracy, which many analysts believe will open political space and empower the poor. Yet, there are enduring challenges that are likely to affect political development, including unequal gender relations; social stratification; deep horizontal disparities; and conflict. Factors such as these have helped to keep people poor.

Annex 4 reviews Uganda’s economic development. It suggests that donor financed programmes have benefited some but not all the poor. Chronic poor groups remain marginalised. It comments on decentralisation and participation programmes and discusses their limitations. The annex emphasizes that policymakers have not paid sufficient attention to how power structures and relations affect programme implementation and outcomes.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** Ruth Alsop and Bryan Kurey (The World Bank), Caroline Moser (Overseas Development Institute) and Rosalind Eyben (Institute of Development Studies, Sussex) provided very helpful comments on the drafts.
1 WHY FOCUS ON POWER?

This concept paper seeks to understand how power relations---within the household, at the local level, between individuals/groups and the state, between the state and external agents---affect the mobility and immobility of the poor. The paper argues that:

- Power dynamics and power relations at multiple and interconnected (that is, from intra-household to global) levels are among the factors that underpin inequality and that cause and keep people in poverty.
- A comprehensive attack on poverty and inequality requires understanding of the sources and ‘performance’ of power, including its constructive and destructive roles and its more and less visible features. Therefore, power must figure in poverty analyses.

The following subsection starts with a personal account of a family’s decline into poverty. It uses this life-story to demonstrate some of the ways in which power influences poverty processes. The section then compares the findings from this qualitative study with those from a quantitative and more large-scale methodological approach and shows that the latter does not adequately emphasize the role of power in producing and sustaining unequal relations and poverty. It uses this comparison to reinforce the following points:

- Inequality and poverty can be understood as relational as well as categorical.
- Quantitative measures alone are inadequate for understanding ‘relational’ forms of poverty and inequality.
- By combining qualitative and quantitative methods (particularly those explicitly designed to understand power relations), analysts can gain a better understanding of the processes underlying poverty and inequality.

1.1 Approaches to Understanding Poverty: Two Examples

David Hulme (2003) reminds us that large–scale theoretical generalisations on the nature of poverty and extensive national and global policy responses are good for highlighting the vast scale of deprivation that exists but can also divert attention from the people—as opposed to the countries or regions—that experience it. He recounts the life histories of one mother (Maymana) and her son (Moziful) who live in a village just outside Mymensingh in central Bangladesh. Maymana and Moziful’s story provides a lucid picture of how power relations can influence people’s poverty status and experience. As Text Box 1.1 shows, the family lost much of its asset base and economic

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1 A term borrowed from Rosalind’s Eyben’s ‘Why is Bolivia Different from India”
2 We add this qualification since it should not be assumed that all qualitative methodologies are good at analyzing how power performs. Much depends on the extent to which the study includes power analysis. Further, we should not claim that quantitative methods have nothing to say about power. The important point that this section raises is that quantitative categorical studies (such as those that focus on the chronic poor or households) are often incapable of conducting the deep analysis that is required for understanding power. Qualitative studies also use categories, which may be useful in some contexts but also risk generalisations that may not obtain, resulting in erroneous or inadequate conclusions about power (See, for example, the discussion of the social exclusion approach in Section 2).
power when the main breadwinner died. However, there were other factors that precipitated their decline into poverty and blocked their escape.

**Text Box 1.1: Maymana and Moziful’s Story**

Maymana and Moziful live in a village, which is located just outside central Bangladesh. By Maymana’s account, up to the early 1990s, the family (then comprised of Maymana, her husband, Hafeez, and three children) was only ‘occasionally poor, with a modest income and few assets (including three rickshaws and an acre of paddy land). However, Hafeez fell ill. He visited the local ‘pharmacist, who provided medicines but was not equipped to diagnose the problem, and attended the government health centre, where staff requested bribes but did not treat him. He then visited another local doctor who informed him that he needed special medicines. The rickshaws had to be sold to meet the medical expenses, while the family reduced consumption and stopped purchasing small amenities.

Hafeez got progressively worse and later died, leaving Maymana and Moziful (by now both daughters were married), who was then 12 years. Following local custom, Maymana’s father-in-law took control of the plot of land, which meant that she had to resort to borrowing and begging for food. Moziful managed to secure casual employment. However, as he had a disability, he was stigmatized within the community. Despite the warnings and threats from her extended family, Maymana decided to seek legal redress and brought her case against her father-in-law to the local village court. Though, according to Bangladeshi law, she had rights to the land, her claim was, predictably, unsuccessful. Again, consistent with the traditional practice of ruling against women, the court allowed her father-in-law to retain ownership. Consequently, Maymana and Moziful rely on social networks and ‘constrained human capital (both are illiterate and ill) for survival. The community regards Maymana as a ‘deserving poor’ (a distressed woman) who, though in need of charity, was not entitled to full membership of the women’s group. Charity, loans and Moziful’s meagre earnings have allowed them to avoid destitution, though they subsist in a condition of chronic poverty. Further, socially ascribed identities—as reflected in attitudes to disability, old age, women, illness and misfortune—have entitled them to some assistance but these categorizations and constructions of identity have also blocked possible escape routes.


Hulme describes some of the adverse consequences of patriarchal traditions, of social norms that discriminate against persons with disabilities (such as Moziful), widows (like Maymana), and that exclude the ‘unworthy poor’ from social networks; lack of access to justice and official discrimination. Therefore, Hulme’s account underscores the relational dimension of poverty: People can become and remain poor because of the deliberate actions and the inaction of others. More dominant groups influence poverty processes and outcomes either by preventing or helping the poor to improve their ‘capacity to make purposive choice’/ exercise agency. Poverty is likely to deepen when people are trapped in arrangements that limit their power, which the World Bank defines as their ‘capacity to make choice effective’.

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3 Here, we use the World Bank’s succinct definition of power in its positive sense. This definition of power—the capacity to make choice effective—also applies to the negative uses/abuses of power. (One may well contend that in some circumstances, the capacity to choose is itself a measure of power). However, it is important to qualify the definition. This view of power maps quite easily with the concept of agency, which the Bank defines as the capacity to make purposive choice. In much of the literature, ‘agency’ assumes that people who are adequately empowered will act to improve their welfare. However, people need not use power in this ‘rational’ way, which means that power need not produce agency and agency need not result in poverty reduction.
In contrast to Hulme’s qualitative and micro-analytic study, Binayak Sen (2003) uses a larger quantitative approach to study ‘drivers of escape and descent’ in rural Bangladesh. The author uses a panel dataset of 379 households in 21 villages to analyze ‘changing household fortunes’. He observes that between 1991/92 and 2000, income poverty declined from 50% to 40%, though with faster progress in the 1990s than the 1980s. The pace of poverty reduction differed across urban and rural areas and regionally. In the rural areas, poverty reduction was slow in the 1980s but accelerated in the 1990s; however, in the urban areas, there was only slight improvement in poverty reduction in the 1990s. Further, while there was substantial poverty reduction in Dhaka, there was very little gain in the Chittagong area; the Chittagong Hill tracts region remains the most deprived. Inequality had increased over the period, which, Sen feared, could impair economic growth and obstruct future poverty reduction policies.

Of his sample, 119 households (31%) remained poor in both periods; 95 households (25%) are classified as ‘never poor’; 98 households (26%) ascended from poverty and 65 households (18%) descended into poverty. Sen explains how changes in assets (human, physical, natural and financial) contributed to changing fortunes. The analysis shows that the likelihood of escape from or descent into poverty depends on initial asset position, particularly landownership. Not unexpectedly, the ‘never poor’ category had the ‘highest mean value of assets’, followed by the ascending, descending and chronic poor. Chronic poor households had made marginal progress, though the average number of wage earners had increased; there was less dependence on agricultural wage labour; and non-agricultural incomes had increased. Non-agricultural employment provided minimal benefits, as chronic poor households were relegated to the lowest level occupations. There was modest achievement in human capital, with average school years increasing from three to six. Overall, chronic poor households had limited access to credit, though more NGOs were providing access. In contrast, those who ascended from poverty were able to accumulate assets faster and to take advantage of non-agricultural opportunities. Additionally, these households had greater access to institutional credit.

Sen’s work puts Maymana and Moziful’s story into a broader context. It makes an important distinction between categories of the poor and emphasizes specific traits:

- Those who experience poverty over long periods have lower initial asset levels than groups who are able to move out of poverty; and
- Chronic/long term poor groups do not have or are denied the financial resources (such as credit) and opportunities (including agricultural and non-agricultural employment) to transform the few assets they possess into better life chances.

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**Text Box 1.2**

**The Distinction between Relational and Categorical Forms of Inequality and Poverty**

**Categorical approaches** to inequality and poverty focus on understanding and addressing the disparities that exist between different classifications of people, such as ‘the chronic poor’ and ‘the transient poor’.

**Relational explanations** recognise that inequality and poverty can result from the exercise of power: people can become and remain poor because of the deliberate actions and inaction of others. Therefore, relational explanations focus on the processes and power relations that produce and sustain poverty and inequality, even within defined categories.
Both accounts (Hulme and Sen) show that power is critical to poverty outcomes. However, while Sen makes broad observations about categories of the poor, Hulme personalizes poverty and describes the processes and relations of power that underpin the trends than Sen observes. Sen shows that long term poor groups are distinct from other categories of the poor. Hulme shows that even within these categorizations, people experience poverty in substantially different ways. People’s power depends on variables as diverse as socially ascribed identities, conventional norms, intra-household relations and personal beliefs. Both approaches are important for understanding power relations and poverty processes.

Table 1.1 Quantitative, Qualitative, and Combined Methodological Approaches: Some Advantages and Disadvantages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methodological Approaches</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quantitative Approaches</strong></td>
<td>Large-scale quantitative approaches are good for making broad observations about different categories/groups of the poor. As political tools, they can highlight the vast scale of deprivation that exists.</td>
<td>However, one danger of constructing categories is that they tend to assume social collectives that may not exist. Such ‘imagined’ collectives can mask inequalities and the processes of exclusion and power relations that support them. For example, among broad categories of chronic poor groups, a child with a disability who belongs to a particular caste or ethnic group may suffer multiple forms of injustice. Therefore, policies that are broadly geared to reach ‘the chronic poor’ or ‘people with disabilities’ may have little effect. Further, categorization can miss the ways in which groups and identities change/shift/overlap. Quantitative approaches assume that classifications and measurement provide ‘objective’ evidence. However, classifications and measurements can generate unintended changes in social relations (such as provoking dissent among those labelled ‘progressive’/deserving and non-progressive poor), which may hamper efforts to promote peaceful social transitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualitative Approaches</strong></td>
<td>Where they are well designed and executed (and particularly where they focus explicitly on analyzing power), qualitative approaches can highlight the relational dimensions of poverty. For example, as Hulme demonstrates, life stories can be particularly useful for personalizing poverty and describing the processes and relations of power than underpin broadly observed trends. Qualitative approaches also use categories. As noted above, categories provide the basis for making statements about sets of people; however, there are disadvantages to categorization. However, qualitative approaches are largely inappropriate for making broad generalizations or observations. Further, qualitative approaches tend to rely on personal/subjective interpretations of contexts, which often raises concerns about data quality, reliability and wider applicability.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Combined Methodological Approaches</strong></td>
<td>By combining methodological approaches, researchers can use qualitative and quantitative data in ways that explain important issues such as how exclusion, adverse incorporation, discrimination, and the underlying power relations, influence poverty trends. Not all qualitative and quantitative approaches can be combined. In some cases, the ideas, motives and goals that underpin different approaches are vastly inconsistent and incompatible. Not all qualitative methodologies are good at analyzing how power performs. Much depends on the extent to which the study includes power analysis. Further, we should not assume that quantitative methods have nothing to say about power. However, quantitative categorical studies (such as those that focus on the chronic poor or households) are often by themselves incapable of conducting the deep analysis that is required for understanding power.</td>
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1.1.1 Power Relations and Poverty Processes
As noted, both Hulme and Sen conclude that different forms of poverty require different policy measures. Broad approaches to poverty reduction will likely miss those people
who have particular needs and underestimate or ignore the power relations that keep people poor. For example, Hulme and Shepherd (2003: 404) are concerned that the neo-liberal approach defines the ‘poor’ as those persons and groups who are not well integrated into the market, and that the corresponding policy response is to develop ‘pro-poor’ market solutions. While such policies may be helpful for many people, they are likely to overlook those ‘who need different forms of support, policy changes, or broader changes within society’. There are whole groups of persons who will fall into poverty and remain poor unless there are definite strategies to empower them; that is, to develop their capacity to make effective choice.

Wood (2003:456) expands on this issue. He argues for ‘anthropological insight into capacities for social action’, which means a study of the conditions under which different categories of the poor and, indeed, different individuals are able to develop their capacity for social action and exercise agency. Among the most neglected groups are the elderly, orphans, and widows in patriarchal societies, people with long-term illnesses and people with disabilities. Harriss-White (2003) shows that people with disabilities receive very low priority in almost countries. Disability lacks the political influence that paradigms such as gender and environment occupy. Consequently, a low level of resources is committed and there is inadequate data analysis. It is important to disaggregate within categories. Among people with disabilities, for example, women – Harriss-White notes that in India, particularly those from the scheduled castes – are the least likely to receive treatment. This is because society expects the incapacitated woman to still fulfill household responsibilities. All these examples describe people who lack power in relation to others.

1.1.2 The Value of Combined Methodologies

Our analysis suggests that there is a strong case for combining methodological approaches and for more critical analysis of existing frameworks for poverty analysis. For example, while they do not discount the importance of household level analysis, Hulme and Shepherd (2003:405) argue for a more ‘individual’ approach to understanding poverty, maintaining that data collected at the household level can easily hide differences in intra-household poverty levels: ‘It is quite feasible that in non-poor households certain members may suffer chronic poverty because of their gender, age or social status and, conversely, that specific individuals in chronically poor households may not be persistently deprived’. Gender analysts emphasize that these types of variations in poverty outcomes normally belie intra-household power relations.

One further comment on Sen’s analysis is that while it is not designed to analyze the political and social processes underlying ‘changing household fortunes’, this is especially important for explaining and addressing poverty, particularly in persistently depressed areas. Indeed, the author emphasizes that the existing poverty literature on Bangladesh does not provide adequate analysis of geographical and social disadvantage. Geographically disadvantaged peoples may live in remote, unproductive and rural areas.

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and do not profit from economic growth. The socially disadvantaged, he explains, comprises ‘specific groups of the chronic poor embedded in minoritarian social formations, across dimensions of caste, class, ethnicity and religion.’ (Sen 2003:515) This suggests that poverty analysis and policy need to better integrate and/or seek qualitative data that explains how exclusion, adverse incorporation, discrimination, and the power relations that underpin these, influence poverty trends.

For example, one can reasonably conclude that much of the poverty in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region (which Sen identifies as persistently deprived) is relational; that is, it is caused by the actions of the more dominant groups. As Text Box 1.3 shows, successive governments have attempted to solidify a power structure through the formal institutions—including the clauses they choose to omit from the constitution and vague rules that ‘inadvertently’ facilitate infringement of human rights—and by engaging in and/or overlooking abusive ‘informal’ practices. However, the relations of power are not entirely of dominance versus subjugation; people have capitalized on available spaces for resistance (Arguably, this may apply only to particular segments among them. For example, women, who may be subject to both state persecution and gender discrimination, may have less capacity to resist), and the Bangladeshi government is being pressured by domestic and external human rights activists and organizations.

Text Box 1.3: Power Relations and Poverty in the Chittagong Hill Tracts Region

A long history of discrimination and human rights abuses is among the root causes of the persistent deprivation that Sen observes in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region. Thirteen indigenous groups, who identify themselves collectively as the Jummas, originally inhabited this area of southeastern Bangladesh. The Jummas speak a variety of languages and are distinct—and desire to remain so—from the majority of the Bangladeshi population in terms of customs, religion, race and ethnicity. In 1860, the British annexed the region and created an autonomous administrative district. Under the 1900 Act, the colonialists made a special effort to protect the Jummas from economic exploitation and to preserve their socio-cultural and political institutions. However, in 1947, when the Indian state was partitioned, with Pakistan exclusively for Muslims, the Chittagong Hill Tracts region was ceded to East Pakistan (which later became Bangladesh), despite strong protests from the (non Muslim) Jummas. Under Pakistani rule, the Jummas were subjected to discrimination in jobs, education and business opportunities. A hydroelectric dam was built in the 1960s, which flooded 40% of the best arable land and displaced 100,000 from their homes. Under Bangladeshi administration, the Jummas have been systematically punished, allegedly for their ‘indifference’ to the war with Pakistan. In the 1970s, government sponsored migration into the area resulted in widespread capture of Jumma lands and massive displacement. In addition, there have been reports of illegal detention by the army, tortures, massacres, kidnappings and rape, forced conversion to Islam and religious persecution. In 1997, the Jana Samhati Samiti (the party representing the Jummas) signed a peace accord with the government of Bangladesh. However, conflicts and human rights violations continue. Accordingly, in 2001, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed its concern that state security forces were still involved in human rights violations; that there had been slow progress in implementing the accord; and that though the constitution prohibited racial discrimination, this was ‘not explicitly and adequately prohibited and penalized in criminal law’.

Inequality, Destitution and Power

The preceding example (in Text Box 1.3) reminds us that the poor can suffer from multiple interlocking causes of poverty, including various forms of economic, political and social marginalization. Harris-White’s (2002) note on destitution provides a clear statement on how power relations can lead to the most severe forms of poverty. Her
studies of beggars in Chhattisgarh and homeless people on the streets on New Delhi reveal that while destitution comprises income or monetary deprivation, it also entails loss of entitlements and social support, loss of access to common property resources, social expulsion and infringement of political rights. Harris-White argues that destitution is not merely the unfortunate by-product of technical developments and ‘labour-displacing growth; instead, groups that exclude and violate the human rights of others often accumulate the resources for themselves. Furthermore, laws that criminalize poverty and state policies that ignore the poorest legitimize processes of exclusion or adverse differential incorporation. Jean Dreze’s (2002) work in India supports Harris-White’s observations:

[There are] millions of households in rural India that might be described as ‘destitute.’ These households typically have no able-bodied adult member and no regular source of income. They survive by doing a variety of informal activities such as gathering food from the village commons, making baskets, selling minor forest produce and keeping the odd goat…We were shocked to find that even in prosperous villages some households lived in conditions of extreme poverty and hunger. A casual visitor is unlikely to notice them, as destitute households keep a low profile and are often socially invisible. But if you look for them, you will find them, quietly struggling to earn their next meal or patiently starving in a dark mud hut. From this, one point is clear: destitute households cannot rely on spontaneous community support. Social security arrangements are needed. As things stand, however, destitute households are beyond the pale of most development programmes and welfare schemes. They are unable to participate in rural employment programmes, if available. Getting a bank loan is for most of them beyond the realm of possibility. Even ‘self-help groups’ tend to shun them. (Quoted in S. Devereux, Conceptualising destitution, IDS Working Paper 216.)

In these two examples, destitution exists in conditions of vast social inequalities, exclusion or adverse incorporation, human rights infringement and official neglect. Inequality (social, political and economic) is a critical dimension of poverty and power analyses and must feature in evaluations of pro-poor growth strategies. There is ample evidence that where economic and social power is concentrated in one group, the dominant and prominent can use their influence to entrench their positions, at the expense of the poor, and/or to displace poverty from the policy agenda. Of course, elites need not use their influence and resources in this way. Much depends on how they understand poverty and on whether or not they are persuaded that poverty alleviation is also within their own interest (Moore and Hossain 2002). With respect to Bangladesh, Hossain (1999) reports that elites consider poverty an important but not urgent issue and that the language of international development agencies frames their understanding of poverty, particularly the priority given to facilitating ‘enabling environments’ at the expense of redistribution. Bangladeshi elites distinguish between productive (‘marginal farmers, landless labourers, rickshaw pullers’) and non-productive groups (‘widows, other female household heads, the ‘disabled’, the elderly, prostitutes, beggars, children’) and, in the name of pragmatism, prioritise the former for income assistance. In a context where elites are tightly knit and influential in policy, these ‘ideas’ on poverty do not bode well for the destitute. Further, elite attitudes can undermine a national commitment to poverty reduction, particularly where there is marked political inequality. It is important to note how Bangladeshi elites have adopted and used the ‘poverty language’, suggesting the need for inquiry into the ways in which poverty discourses disempower.
If power were all about visible domination, it would be easier to understand and confront. Power is much more complex. As the examples cited demonstrate:

- Power is embedded in institutions, policies and social norms, and is especially difficult to transform when those whom outsiders regard as victims seem to be complicit in its exercise.
- Power analysis cannot be restricted to national boundaries, particularly as these become submerged in global arrangements and relationships. Power – sometimes considerable – also resides in external circles and pervades domestic areas via avenues such as shared knowledge networks, development policies, and loan conditionalities.

All these factors are consequential for poverty.

### 1.2 Summary: Key Messages

This introductory section used a life-story to demonstrate how power relations (within households and communities; within the market domain; between individuals, groups and state institutions) both cause poverty and help to alleviate it. It compared these findings with those from a broader quantitative approach to poverty analysis and argued that while large-scale methodologies provide important information on poverty trends and on different categories of the poor, qualitative approaches are useful for understanding the relational dimension of poverty. The section emphasized the importance of combining methodological approaches for more comprehensive poverty analysis.

The three key messages are:

- Inequality and poverty can be understood as relational as well as categorical.
- Quantitative measures alone are inadequate for understanding ‘relational’ forms of poverty and inequality.
- By combining qualitative and quantitative methods (particularly those explicitly designed to understand power relations), analysts can gain a better understanding of the processes underlying poverty and inequality.

The following section reviews a selection of major perspectives on inequality and poverty. It describes how power relations affect poverty discourses and uses a synopsis of the transition in development orthodoxy to highlight some of the key features of power.
2 Power, Knowledge and ‘Framing’ Poverty

This section has four principal objectives: to outline concepts of poverty and inequality; to portray some of the key features of power, focusing especially on the relationship between power and knowledge; and to emphasize how power in the wider, supranational domain affects poverty outcomes. To achieve these, we first review some of the more influential concepts of poverty and inequality. We then examine how power relations influence how differing approaches to understanding poverty are incorporated in the policy process. We use this assessment of policy-making to highlight some of the major thoughts on the nature and performance of power.

2.1 Conceptions of Poverty and Inequality

Subsection 2.1.1 argues that despite the marked progression in economic understandings of poverty, current frameworks do not pay sufficient attention to the relational dimension of poverty. Economic approaches are still the most influential in poverty analyses, which in large part explains the inadequate emphasis on power.

2.1.1 Economic Understandings of Poverty and Inequality

It is now fairly common to speak of the ‘multidimensional nature’ of poverty and inequality, though among development theorists and practitioners, ‘multidimensionality’ has varied meanings, applications and policy implications. One point of agreement is that the ‘multidimensional’ approach moves beyond the classic utilitarian position, which, rooted as it is in rational choice theory, assumes that an individual’s primary objective is to maximise his utility; that utility is, therefore, a sound indicator of well-being; and that a fall in monetary expenditure can provide a sufficient indicator of poverty. Correspondingly, inequality signifies differences in income and consumption, which can be measured through technical instruments, such as the gini coefficient. It is a distinctly apolitical approach and, accordingly, does not concentrate on the structures and processes that produce disparities. Formerly, high levels of inequality were considered good for growth. Following Kaldor (1978), some economists argued that a high level of savings is necessary for growth in developing countries. This was best achieved where income was concentrated, as the wealthy was more likely to save than the poor. Those following Kuznets (1955) explained that growth would, necessarily, increase income equality: as labour shifts from low productivity to high productivity sectors in the course of development, income gaps inevitably widen (Birdsall and Graham 2000). For both Kaldor and Kuznets, then, inequality had a ‘constructive’ role. While more recent research does not dispute that some level of inequality may, indeed, be constructive—by rewarding differing levels of productivity—economists are also highlighting the ‘destructive’ dimensions of inequality. Contrary to Kaldor and Kuznet’s earlier theses,

there is now some agreement that high levels of inequality can impair growth since highly unequal societies are more susceptible to political instability, problems with collective action, policy volatility and populist policy-making. All these features contribute to low growth or stagnation (Maxwell 2001; World Bank 2001). Further, there is evidence that high levels of inequality can curtail the potential poverty-reducing impact of growth. Conversely, where there is low or falling inequality, lower income groups will have a larger share of any increases in national income (Naschold 2002).

Amartya Sen has been instrumental in broadening and deepening economic understandings of inequality. Sen contends that poverty reflects deprivation in income and consumption, as well as in capabilities, such as health, education and civil liberties. Capabilities such as these allow persons to convert their incomes into well-being; that is, to establish personal goals and have realistic means of attaining them. Capabilities also have instrumental worth, since they contribute to economic growth and enhanced incomes (Sen 1993; 1999). While monetary resources are important for improving capabilities, there are other factors that are influential, including age, gender, physical capacities and the social context. (Ruggeri Laderchi et al, 2003). Nussbaum (1995) agrees that public policy should be geared at securing and protecting certain capabilities. She outlines core functional capabilities and notes that the state has the responsibility of ensuring that these are provided. Though the capability approach defends principles of justice and freedom, it retains the individualistic approach to poverty. The principal objective is to develop a measure of ‘advantage’ and ‘well-being’, which can be used as an indicator or poverty and development (Fabre and Miller, 2003). The emphasis, as Eyben (2004: 15-16) explains, is on ‘equality of what, not equality between whom.’

Currently, livelihoods frameworks are popular tools for poverty analysis. These frameworks concentrate on people in conditions of vulnerability. They evaluate the assets that people have access to within these contexts and study how the social, institutional and organizational environment mediates asset accumulation. Livelihoods approaches are, therefore, historical, multilevel and multisectoral; they are widely commended for their broad approach to understanding poverty. However, the most important critique of these approaches is that they do not focus on relations of power. Asset accumulation processes seem to progress or depreciate without due regard to how these result from the relations between people. There is need for ‘detailed qualitative and relational understanding of social processes’ (DuToit, 2003:8)

Therefore:

- Economic understandings of poverty and inequality have progressed beyond the classic monetary approach.
- Theorists now stress the multidimensional nature of poverty, including the importance of capabilities such as health, education and civil liberties.
- Livelihoods frameworks improve poverty analysis, as they provide a historical, multilevel and multi-sectoral approach to understanding poverty.
- However, economic approaches do not focus sufficiently on how relations between people affect poverty outcomes.
### Table 2.1 Selection of Major (Economic) Approaches to Understanding Poverty and Inequality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Approaches</th>
<th>Main Arguments</th>
<th>Major (‘Power’) Critique(s)</th>
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</table>
| Classic Utilitarian | - Individual’s primary objective is to maximize his utility; utility is, therefore, a sound indicator of well-being; a fall in monetary expenditure can provide a sufficient indicator of poverty.  
- Inequality signifies differences in income and consumption, which can be measured through technical instruments, such as the gini coefficient. | Apolitical approach, which does not concentrate on the structures and processes that produce disparities. |
| Capabilities | - Poverty reflects deprivation in income and consumption, as well as in capabilities, such as health, education and civil liberties.  
- Capabilities such as these allow persons to convert their incomes into well-being; that is, to establish personal goals and have realistic means of attaining them.  
- Capabilities also have instrumental worth, since they contribute to economic growth and enhanced incomes. | The emphasis is ‘equality of what, not equality between whom’ (See Eyben 2004: 15-16) |
| Livelihoods | - A historical, multilevel and multi-sectoral approach is important for understanding poverty. Therefore, livelihoods frameworks evaluate the assets that people have access to and how the social, institutional and organizational environment mediates asset accumulation. | Livelihoods approaches do not focus sufficiently on relations of power. Asset accumulation processes seem to progress or depreciate without due regard to how these result from relations between people (See DuToit, 2003:8) |

Poverty and inequality are still largely understood and evaluated in economic terms, though there is now more, though still insufficient, attention to their social and political dimensions. The following subsection provides a synopsis of Marx and Weber’s theories on class and status, respectively, as these continue to influence approaches to social inequality and power. It then summarizes the main tenets of the social exclusion approach, rights based approaches and the horizontal inequality thesis, which includes elements of the economic, social and political approaches. The section highlights the merits and limits of each approach and suggests that while they accentuates the importance of integrating power into poverty analyses, there are gaps which must be recognized and addressed in any good poverty/power analysis.

### 2.1.2 Social Inequality and Poverty

For Marx, inequality was a key feature of the capitalist structured society, in which one class dominated the means of production. This unequal distribution of power produces a proletariat/poor class, which, until it is sufficiently conscious and able to challenge the system, will need to have its interests represented by those more capable. Weber, in contrast, did not agree that political action would necessarily follow from class divisions. In his view, there were other variables, such as status and prestige, which influenced group formation; these could temper class-based organization. Eyben (2004) identifies two important legacies of Marx and Weber’s approaches to social inequality. First, following Marx, development activists have, in principle, committed to representing the interests of the poor and, more recently, to engaging local elites in supporting poverty
reduction. Second, following Weber, development theorists focus on status and rank in social structures and seek to address inequality by improving access to resources and opportunities for advancement. A structural view of society underpins these views: the social system is unequal and equality of opportunities and of access are the best means of improving life chances.

The social exclusion approach, which is rooted in principles of social solidarity (Durkheim), has a number of different strands and applications. For example, the European Commission, which has been instrumental in popularizing the approach, is primarily concerned with analyzing how and why select groups are systematically denied the rights, livelihoods and sources of well-being, which they should properly enjoy. However, in addition to this focus on inequality of access to goods, services and basic needs, the approach also refers to exclusion from security, justice, representation and citizenship. As Fraser (1997) observes, social exclusion has been used to explain different forms of injustice, from economic to cultural. Further, there are groups that are subject to multiple forms of injustice, such as economic and cultural-valuation disadvantage. For example, ‘minority’ groups may be forced to accept the most menial employment and, at the same time, be subjected to cultural devaluation; often, the one is used to reinforce or justify the other. Where cultural devaluation/misrecognition occurs, persons or groups can internalize the negative images that society holds and projects. Taylor (1992) proposes that ‘a person or group can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Therefore, poverty can have a psychological component, which may help to perpetuate it.

Gore (1995) argues that the social exclusion approach encourages an understanding of poverty as relative deprivation; poverty is regarded as multidimensional – incorporating political and social considerations – and not merely interpreted in terms of income and expenditure. Social exclusion is concerned with agency and, to that extent, ‘goes beyond entitlement analysis by looking more deeply at the processes behind entitlement failure’. Maxwell and de Haan (1998) agree that the social exclusion approach encourages us to

Text Box 2.1: Multiple Forms of Injustice and Consequences for the Batwa in Uganda

Batwa are a small group of former hunter-gatherers who live on the outskirts of the Echuya Forest and the Mgahinga and Bwindi National Parks in southwest Uganda. There are no prominent historical monuments here and there is little written history. Batwa in Uganda live in conditions not dissimilar to their kin in Rwanda and to many within the Democratic Republic of Congo. In these places, Batwa, the original inhabitants of the forests, have been displaced, denied access and are subject to persistent discrimination and marginalisation at both the local and national levels. Batwa history is devalued; it has been re-constructed in demeaning and derogatory ways and many have internalized the negative perceptions. Playing the part/reflecting the stereotype is also a key survival strategy. It is estimated that up to 80% of Batwa in Uganda earn their living from begging. By remaining docile and submissive, Batwa evoke pity but also ‘reaffirm the social hierarchies to which other groups have assigned them’ and ‘concretize their marginalized status’ (Golden and Edgerton, 2003). There are few budding organizations, some externally supported, which allow Batwa to present claims. However, Batwa representatives are easily disregarded in policymaking circles and lack the numbers, education and capacity to present a credible political challenge.

Source: J. Moncrieffe, Identities, Politics and Poverty Reduction: Batwa and Baganda in Uganda (Forthcoming)
focus on institutions, actors and processes of deprivation, including the underlying relations of power.

However, is the social exclusion approach itself an example of the ways in which the more developed countries are able to define policy agendas and exercise power? ‘Social Exclusion’ is a ‘European’ concept, which, critics claim, largely reconceptualizes problems of ‘marginalization’ that were long identified, particularly in Latin America. Kabeer (2000:83) discourages this developed world tendency to ‘relabel long-standing and locally developed approaches to social problems or, alternatively…promote a tendency to assess southern realities in terms of the extent to which they converge, or diverge from some standard northern model’. Common objections to the social exclusion approach include:

- The specific priorities that the approach now identifies may represent the needs in France and the United Kingdom but may not be applicable to differing developing country contexts.
- Social exclusion models tend to polarize exclusion and inclusion, depicting relations between the powerless (the excluded) and the powerful (the included); however, this overlooks one significant feature of the performance of power: adverse terms of incorporation. For example, consistent with some of the current concerns about globalization and its ill effects, Wolfe (1995) contends that ‘the style of development that has come to dominate the world since the 1980s…lures and forces the whole of the world’s population toward inclusion in a global system of production, consumption, expectations, political and cultural norms, while at the same time barring out the majority in many different ways and degrees and continually changing the rules of the game’. Others suggest that the globalized system tends to enforce an interpretation of ‘social inclusion that is inconsistent with the ideals of social justice and that, instead, bolsters a social order that is conducive to the market (Harris 2004).
- The approach integrates various forms of exclusion and does not attend sufficiently to ‘the distinctiveness of different axes of exclusion’, such as is represented in social identities of race, gender and disability.
- Correspondingly, social exclusion offers the uniform remedy of integration/inclusion but inclusion is not necessarily advantageous and can have problematic consequences. For example, providing women with employment may result in greater exploitation if the power relations that contribute to subordination are not addressed. Therefore, there may be value in differentiation. Further, as Sayed and Soudien (2003:11) argue, ‘citizens are not located in homogenous, symmetrical and stable social, economic and political positions. The difficulties they encounter as gendered, raced or classed subjects are neither equivalent nor interchangeable and the solutions that are generated in response to these individually are not transposable to one another. One cannot, therefore, lump the inequalities together so that one prescription is assumed to cure all problems’.
- Social exclusion can support the status quo by encouraging inclusion into the existing social system, without implementing the radical reforms that may be necessary to address long-standing inequalities (Eyben 2004, Sayed and Soudien, 2003).
- Further, inclusion often aims at improving outcomes; however, the focus on outcomes can divert attention from the processes of inclusion. Processes of inclusion can produce new exclusions. Much depends on who classifies the
excluded and defines the terms on which people are included. In terms of the latter, for example, Jansen (1998)\(^6\) has found that while black students are being ‘included’ in traditional white schools in South Africa, they are being integrated into a ‘hostile, anti-cultural environment’ that elevates white role models and values and discounts black traditions. In such a context, ‘inclusion’ is damaging the black students’ self-esteem.

Therefore, while the social exclusion approach usefully integrates power into poverty analysis, it has notable limitations and does not provide a complete picture of how power performs. Analysts have highlighted the danger of making broad categorizations of exclusion and of proposing a standard policy response: inclusion. Furthermore, they advise that it is important to investigate who defines exclusion and inclusion and how ‘discourses of inclusion and exclusion obscure or mask the agendas of cooperation and control’ (Subrahmanian, 2003:11).

### 2.1.3 Rights-Based Approaches and Political Equality

Rights based approaches to development utilize different frameworks and theories but provide another standard for understanding and evaluating inequality and poverty, for these show that certain aspects of deprivation result from lack of rights and/or from the failure or inability to claim rights. This failure or inability is rooted in power relations.

Rights are described as ‘legitimate claims that give rise to correlative obligations’ (Moser, 2004:1). Accordingly, persons, groups and organizations have responsibilities/duties to the rights-bearer to ensure that the designated right is secured. The United Nations human rights framework provides a legal basis for protecting human rights, through international treaties, international customs and general principles of international law. In addition, there are ethical obligations that are morally binding on signatory states. The core principles underlying the human rights framework are universality and indivisibility, equality and non-discrimination, participation and inclusion, and accountability and the rule of law. Currently, all members of the United Nations have adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and 80% have ratified at least four of the human rights conventions. Yet, these international legal instruments have been criticized by a number of developing country governments, who contend that ‘rights’ are a Western creation that lack universal application, and that the language of ‘rights’ has long been part of the Western project of domination. (It is important to recall the history and use/abuse of rights in developing countries, and to use these lessons to inform how rights based approaches are promoted.) Among analysts, there is still scepticism about the pertinence of the rights framework to the poorest groups and about the need to understand the informal norms and rights that govern relationships.

Rights approaches emphasize the importance of political equality and social action. They recognize that power relations are key to securing rights and that access to and participation in the political process are prerequisites for making claims and ensuring that these are heard and understood. This has influenced actor-oriented approaches, including the emphasis on agency; that is, the capacity of actors to ‘contest, challenge, negotiate and capture’ (Eyben 2004). While rights approaches recognize the importance

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\(^6\) Cited in Sayed and Soudien (2003), p. 11.
of political power, the concept of ‘agency’ can have both positive and negative consequences for poverty. Agency can empower in its own right, as it refutes perceptions that the poor are incapable and must be represented. However, ‘agency’ can also overlook varying capacity levels among the poor and the deep structures and adverse relations of power than constrain some groups more than others. Thus, the division between rights entitlements and rights realization. Arguably, agency also makes ‘rational’ assumptions about human behaviour. Is it feasible that people who have opportunities and capacity may opt not to improve their welfare?

2.1.4 Horizontal Inequality

Stewart’s (2002) thesis on ‘horizontal inequalities’ incorporates elements of the social exclusion and rights-based approaches. ‘Horizontal inequalities’ denote disparities between groups; these may have social, political and economic dimensions. Stewart presents a range of cases that demonstrate that power relations are the root of these disparities and of the resulting conflict. She contends that ‘horizontal inequalities’ – perceived and real – are among the fundamental causes of conflict. The author suggests that comprehensive/large scale economic, social and political strategies are required in order to address these inequalities. Policies include substantial public investments, land reform, redistribution, policies to address discrimination and political inclusion.

Text Box 2.2: Group-based identities and the incidence of poverty

- In all countries and across all income categories, minority and indigenous groups are more likely to be income poor than the rest of the population. They are more likely to have poorer living conditions, less valuable assets, less and poorer access to education, healthcare and access to a range of services
- In China, ethnic minorities constitute 40% of the poor, despite making up only 8% of the population
- Unemployment rates for Romas in Bulgaria can be as high as 90%, in contrast to the national average of just 3%.
- The life expectancy of ‘untouchables’ in Nepal is 15 years less than that of Brahmins.
- In Pakistan, women’s share of total earned income in 1994 was just 20%
- White men earn 250% more than black men in Brazil and 400% more than black women

Source: Justino and Litchfield (2003). Quoted in Anderson et al, Inequality in Middle Income Countries: Key Conceptual Issues, ODI, December 2003

Therefore, Stewart demonstrates that income quintiles are inadequate for understanding inequality. She presents other – identity-based – categories and suggests policy responses for achieving fairer economic, political and social outcomes. The overarching policy objective is to prevent cross-group conflicts.

However, there is a debate about whether the horizontal inequality approach prioritizes a categorical or relational understanding of poverty. Eyben describes the distinction: ‘Categorical group inequalities would, for example, show that fewer Moslems than Hindus have bank accounts. Relational group inequalities would indicate that many

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7 The World Bank defines agency as the capacity to make purposive choice.
8 Rosalind Eyben (2004) Personal communication
young men raised as Moslems are experiencing discrimination in access to jobs in the formal sector and are joining extremist organizations in which their identity as Moslems is the basis for group allegiance to achieve the goal of independent Kashmir.’ This reinforces the views that:

- Categorical and relational interpretations of inequality and poverty may offer differing lessons about how power performs.
- Categorical and relational interpretations of inequality and poverty have different policy implications. Categorical interpretations tend to result in more broad-based policies. Relational interpretations focus on deeper/underlying experiences of the mal-distribution of power.

Analysts also note that there is not sufficient clarity on why inequalities among groups cannot also be conceived as vertical, rather than horizontal. They contend that vertical group inequalities can, in cases, provide a better picture of the power structure. Further, there is some contention that while the emphasis on horizontal inequalities draws attention to group identities and portrays these as crucial for individual welfare, it is important to remember that groups have their own informal norms, by which sub-groups can remain persistently disadvantaged (Thorp 2003). Therefore, the challenge is to combine group and individual empowerment policies in ways that recognize and address the needs of the most disadvantaged.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2.2 SELECTION OF MAJOR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING POVERTY AND INEQUALITY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social and Political Approaches</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Social Exclusion (S.E.)** | - Poverty is multi-dimensional; it incorporates social and political considerations.  
- There are certain groups and individuals who are systematically denied the rights, livelihoods, security, justice, representation and citizenship, which they should enjoy. It is important to analyze how institutions, actors and power relations influence these processes of deprivation. | - S.E. may not be applicable to differing developing country contexts.  
- The approach polarizes exclusion and inclusion; it does not focus sufficiently on adverse terms of incorporation.  
- S.E. integrates various forms of exclusion; there is need for more distinct analysis of different ‘axes of exclusion, such as race, gender, disability.  
- Inclusion (such as of women in the labour market) is not necessarily advantageous, particularly where power relations are not changed.  
- Inclusion often aims at improving outcomes; however, the focus on outcomes can divert attention from the processes of inclusion, which can be exclusionary. |
| **Rights-Based Approaches (RBA)** | - Certain aspects of deprivation result from lack of rights and/or from the failure or inability to claim rights.  
- Access to and participation in the political process are important for making claims and ensuring that these are heard and understood. | - RBAs recognize the importance of political power; however, the emphasis on agency (which Eyben (2004) defines as ‘the capacity to contest, challenge, negotiate and capture’) can have both positive and negative consequences. Agency refutes the view that poor people are incapable. However, it also tends to overlook varying capacity levels among the poor and the deep structures and adverse relations of power that constrain some groups more than others. |
| **Horizontal Inequality (H.I.)** | - Much of economics focus on vertical inequalities among individuals. However, there are significant disparities across groups, which may have social political and economic dimensions. Comprehensive economic, social and political strategies are required. | - H.I. still prioritizes categorical rather than relational forms of poverty.  
- It is not clear why inequalities among groups are not portrayed as vertical.  
- H.I. draws attention to group inequalities; however, groups have their own informal norms, by which sub-groups and individuals can remain persistently disadvantaged. |
Summary
This section reviewed select economic, social and rights-based approaches to poverty. It showed that the dominant economic approaches do not focus sufficiently (some not at all) on how relations of power influence poverty outcomes. The ‘horizontal inequality approach’ highlights group disparities, as opposed to the conventional emphasis on individual welfare. However, commentators suggest that there is need for more analysis of relational inequality, including those within groups. The social exclusion approach successfully integrates power into analyses of poverty. However, it offers a limited account of how power performs. Analyses of adverse terms of incorporation as opposed to mere exclusion would, for example, strengthen the explanatory power of the approach and deepen understanding of how power relations influence inequality and poverty. In addition, broad definitions of exclusion and the generalized policy response of inclusion are inadequate for understanding (and addressing) how power performs in different domains; Context specific rather than general approaches are required. The goal of inclusion itself can lead to an instrumental focus on outcomes and overlook processes, which may both disempower and exclude. Rights approaches emphasize the importance of political power and agency, which are considered crucial for claiming rights. However, there is concern that the emphasis on agency can divert attention from those who lack the capacity to contest and to make claims. In some circles, the social exclusion and rights-based approaches are seen as expressions of power in their own right; that is, as part of a project of domination, in which developing country problems are reframed in ways that suit Western priorities and discourses.

2.2 Power, Discourse and Poverty
These approaches to poverty and inequality reflect distinct theoretical traditions, which are rooted in particular social and historical contexts. The ideas that inform these disciplinary perspectives provide the frames of reference/tools for interpretation; they are highly consequential to how poverty and inequality are conceptualized, framed and addressed. Often schools of thought overlap. There is, for example, much correspondence between certain rights based and social exclusion approaches. People can build useful and balanced assessments from combining approaches (or elements of them); indeed, this may be important for ‘selling’ policies or, according to current dictum, for ‘broadening policy ownership’. However, problems may arise when people combine approaches uncritically, when they are unaware of the roots to differing ideas, and of areas of fundamental discord (Eyben 2004). Arguably, it is more problematic and even dangerous for policy when groups are inflexible, and when the most inflexible are also the most powerful.

2.2.1 A Synopsis of the Transition in Development Orthodoxy
There is much to be learnt about the nature and performance of power from analyses of how ideas are transmitted and received as discourses, and how discourses inform policy. As Brock et al (2001:1) show, the policymaking process is not linear; it does not necessarily rely on good research and information or on fair bargaining among persons of different persuasions. Instead, it is a ‘more complex process through which particular versions of poverty come to frame what counts as knowledge and whose voice counts in policy deliberations in particular political and institutional contexts’. The authors describe the process as a ‘complex interplay of power, knowledge and agency’. The following subsection outlines key features in the transition in development orthodoxy. It then uses
a selection of the major theoretical contributions on power to emphasize what the findings suggest about the relationship between poverty, inequality and power.

The Transition in Development Orthodoxy: Key Points

• **1940s – 1950s:** In the 1940s and 1950s, the emphasis was on modernization. This entailed propelling developing countries from their early stages of development to a more satisfactory and modern stage of material prosperity. Poverty, then, was regarded as largely an economic problem, which could be solved through capital investments and growth. In the developing, particularly colonial, countries by contrast, poverty was defined in more relational terms; that is, as the outgrowth of a ‘systematic denial of rights’. Consequently, in many colonial states, demands for Independence also meant demands for equal social and economic rights, for political representation and tangible social gains (Manji 2000).

• **1970s:** By the 1970s, developing countries were protesting what had amounted to growth without development or redistribution, and prominent agencies, such as the World Bank, now defined ‘poverty reduction’ as their mission. Poverty reduction was, then, critical to post-war geopolitics. It was a means of preventing poor countries from embracing communism (Cornwall and Brock, draft). Under then president Macnamara’s leadership, the World Bank focused on rural development and on providing social services to the poor. Meanwhile, the United Nations promoted the basic needs approach and encouraged policymakers to concentrate on human development rather than capital investments. Notably, both versions of ‘poverty reduction’ focused on categorical rather than relational poverty. However, radical notions of participation and empowerment were common in the 1970s. For the social movements that advanced them, participation and empowerment necessitated the transformation of power. Cornwall and Brock note that these radical ideas pervaded organizations such as UNRISD, for whom participation equated the redistribution of power. Manji explains that in a number of postcolonial African countries, governments used the new language of ‘poverty’ to reframe issues and problems and to justify their reluctance to extend the rights and privileges they had promised prior to Independence. Rights, then, were divorced from ‘poverty’; they were now distant objectives to which poor countries should strive but given existing poverty conditions, were not yet prepared to attain.

• **1980s:** With the 1980s oil crisis and the election of conservative governments in the more dominant Western countries, the major lending agencies adopted a more coordinated and coercive neoliberal agenda. The poor were again categorized as ‘rational economic agents, taking reasoned decisions based on economic criteria, which could be adjusted through structural and macroeconomic reforms’ (Brock et al: 2001:13) People centered participation now gave way to participation as beneficiaries and clients. This version of participation would ensure project efficiency and sustainability; it was an instrumental adaptation of a hitherto radical concept that modified but did not challenge the core economic agenda. Structural adjustment required austere conditionalities, which allowed lending agencies close supervision of financial expenditure and management and denied country governments much flexibility. Within many developing countries, structural adjustment drastically compromised essential social services. Widespread protests ensued and there was a distinct, perhaps unprecedented, division across the major international development agencies. This opened space for contestation on the social dimensions of poverty, the need for developing country participation in designing policy responses, the importance of a sufficiently comprehensive concept of poverty to reflect the diversity of the poverty condition.
• **1990s:** The 1990s World Development Report seemed to integrate the UN’s concerns about investing in human capital and providing social safety nets. Yet, these were combined with the conventional policy priorities of reducing income poverty and securing economic growth. Further, there was firm emphasis on building systems of governance that would facilitate macroeconomic stability, liberalization, privatization and deregulation. In the 1990s, the poverty discourse also incorporated concerns about participatory development and the need for incisive, as well more comprehensive (rather than strictly economic), poverty assessments (PPAs). Participatory poverty assessments (PPAs) were intended to include poor people’s voices in conceptualizing poverty and in designing poverty solutions. However, Brock et al emphasize that unlike the more quantitative poverty assessments, PPAs were not mandatory, though many were completed and considered useful, particularly by those eager to temper the more orthodox approach. Many commentators suggest that PPAs have never been the inclusive or influential tools envisioned. First, these are largely fleeting exercises; this immediately compromises the quality of engagement with the poor. Second, findings from the PPAs do not necessarily influence subsequent policy. Brock et al note (2002:17) that the ‘difficulties evoked by trying to influence PAs with PPAs can be read as the difficulties of influencing hegemonic discourses and entrenched institutions with alternate agendas.’

• **1990s – Current period:** Recent PPAs have involved a number of key ‘stakeholders’. This reflects an evolving approach to policymaking that, in principle, aims to transform power relations between the donors and recipients (now partners in development) and broaden ownership. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers should provide such a medium. While some commentators are optimistic and consider PRSPs a welcome revolution in development practice, others are more guarded. Casson and Grindle (2001) note, for example, that PRSPs continue to concentrate on the conventional goals of macroeconomic management, liberalisation and public expenditure management and that they tend to ignore the relational dimension of poverty. Other commentators note that there is also no attention to how unequal power relations at the international level affect poverty outcomes (Knoke and Morazan 2002).

This synopsis shows:

- Major lending agencies, such as the World Bank, have significant influence on shaping the poverty discourse. Therefore, the economic approaches to understanding poverty, which are dominant within the Bank, pervade development thought and practice.
- The economic/neoliberal orthodoxy propounds a categorical interpretation of poverty and does not focus on how power relations affect poverty outcomes.
- The neoliberal orthodoxy has dominated development thought and practice through coercive measures (such as conditionalities) and less forceful and visible means (such as adopting and adapting radical ideologies).
- The alternative/radical school has been instrumental in contesting and modifying the poverty discourse. However, change has been gradual; political and social understandings of poverty still have comparably modest influence.

What does this synopsis suggest for analyses of power and poverty? The following section combines the key findings from the synopsis with select theoretical contributions on power. It then highlights some of the key features that are important for understanding the ways in which power relations affect poverty.
2.3 Implications for Power and Poverty Analysis

Power is, demonstrably, complex and, as Eyben (2004) points out, our own ‘positionality – meaning our socialisation, education, life experiences – influences they way we understand and define it. (Therefore, researchers and policymakers must be alert to how their own knowledge/power base can affect their interpretation of different situations and contexts.) Similarly, Haugaard (2002) concludes that the wide array of perspectives on power reflect different disciplinary perspectives (including normative and conceptual/analytical political theory, non-conceptual political theory, modern and post-modern social theory), context-specific experiences and understandings and distinct ideological persuasions. Parsons (1963) explains that power describes the ‘capacity of persons or collectivities to get things done effectively, particularly when their goals are obstructed by some kind of human [we could include institutional] resistance or opposition’. His, is a consensual view of power. Other theorists have emphasized a more conflictual perspective of power, which demonstrates the capacity of one actor to compel another to act in ways that he or she would choose not to (Haugaard 2002; Lukes, 1974; Bachrach and Baratz 1962,1970; Bordieu 1989). This opposition between consensual and conflictual understandings of power is at the heart of some of the longstanding debates in the literature. The more common perception of power is that it is essentially negative: power compels people to do what they would not choose to, distorts knowledge and truth, and relies on repression and violence. While it is important not to underestimate the repressive ‘dimension’ of power, the analysis of the policymaking process (above) indicates:

- Power can be overtly conflictual and coercive (such as the use of SAPs in the 1980s). However, it is also instrumental in covertly building consensus and acquiring legitimacy.

In a critique of American democracy in the 1950s, community power theorists (Hunter 1953, Mills 1956) argued that power was highly unequal in distribution and – following Max Weber – controlled by a small group of interdependent local elites. These elites influenced the significant decisions. Dahl objected to this description of American democracy, contending that:

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**Text Box 2.3: The Development of American Attitudes to Wealth Creation**

In the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville described the development of American attitudes to democracy and wealth creation and contrasted these with the French and English societies. He noted that the immigrants to the northern sections of the United States were, in large measure, of similar economic backgrounds. Unlike many European societies, there was easier access to resources, particularly land, which allowed the emergence of powerful economic groups. America's belief in meritocracy had its roots in this history. Sawhill (2000: 27) notes that despite the high levels of inequality that currently exists, many Americans still adhere to the view that ‘success is the result of a person's own efforts and talents rather than the social class into which that person was born’. This belief, which is embedded in many of the prominent organizations, has ‘undermined public support for a more radical politics [particularly redistribution] and inhibited the growth of the labor movement’. The belief holds despite the history of disadvantage to which ‘African Americans’, ‘Native Americans’ and ‘Hispanic Americans’ have been subjected. These groups are lumped within the ‘other’ category: persons who because of specific traits are unable to take advantage of the American dream. The same principle of meritocracy seeps into categorizations of the more and less deserving poor and into developing country assistance programmes that concentrate, almost exclusively, on the productive poor.
Resources should be distinguished from power; while resources are potential sources of power, the manner in which they are used depends on their possessors’ skill and motivation, as well as the opportunity costs of certain actions.

Though there is inequality of power, the scope of power across individuals and elite groups differs considerably. Those who are powerful in one respect may be relatively weak in another.

Power must be analyzed by examining behaviour, both of those who hold resources and those affected by its exercise.

Bachrach and Baratz (1962,1970) did not object to Dahl’s thesis that resource allocation need not signify the use of power but contends that power is not only displayed in open decision-making circles; the powerful may exert influence behind the scenes, preventing ‘unfavourable issues from even reaching the agenda. They contend that this second dimension of power is equally potent and often under-investigated.

Those with the most resources (economic and political) have – and exercise – the most power to influence the policy agenda. In order to gain space, those with alternate positions organized and exploited the resources at their disposal – protests, academic publications, symposiums, lobbying.

Dahl’s observation is important. It suggests that access to resources is not a sufficient predictor of power. This corresponds with recent research, which claims that elites can be persuaded to work in the interests of the poor (Hossain and Moore, 2002). However, as Giddens (1984) suggests and the review demonstrates, unequal access to resources is correlated to the use of ‘authoritative resources’. Therefore, inequality can undermine agency, and redistribution of resources is crucial to empowerment.

Power does not simply exist; it is cultivated. The review demonstrates that both the more and less powerful used varying tactics to influence the agenda.

Parsons (1963), who was especially influential in advancing a structural functionalist view of society, challenged the position that power is zero-sum; that is, the more one party has, the less that is available for the other. He notes that power is created by society; it is not fixed and predetermined. Therefore, one’s gain does not have to entail another’s loss. These positions have varying policy implications. For example, Parsons offers a dynamic perspective of power (power is created by society), which suggests that there is space for contestation; yet, he also tends to downplay conflict and the potential adverse outcomes of unequal power distribution. It is important to remember that theoretical explanations do not only reflect differing intellectual traditions; they are also used to support political motives, which, in this case is the promotion of a consensual view of power and the social order.

Power derives its authority from sustaining belief in its legitimacy. However, gaining legitimacy may entail co-opting and adapting alternate views. It may also entail categorizing people and problems in ways that suit the interpretation of the dominant party, which minimizes contestation.

Foucault (1979) has contributed substantially to our understanding of the relation between power and knowledge. He disagrees with views of the objective truth and suggests, instead, that knowledge and truth reflect ‘particular existences and social
relations’. People derive meaning from classifying objects and persons in ways that reflect their own interpretation of the truth. The objects of these categorizations may come to believe these external perceptions of themselves. This is not only important for understanding policy-making processes; it explains, for example, how discriminatory discourses are developed, transmitted and take root. The power to classify is at the root of horizontal inequalities; it can have disastrous psychological and social consequences, with long-term implications for development.

Foucault’s Discipline and Punish provides a good analogy. In this text, the author presents Damines, who is sentenced to be hanged and quartered, a vivid reminder of the repressive potential of power. However, is there such an advantage to the person who is imprisoned for a very lengthy period of time? Foucault suggests that while imprisonment may appear to be the more civilized method, it involves a more torturous and deliberate use of power: one which slowly disciplines/transforms the soul rather than punish the body. Prisoners are taught to see themselves in the way they are categorized by the dominant discourse or system; that is, as miscreants and deviants. To what extent do such categorizations contribute to high rates of recidivism? There are wider inferences. For example, how do the meanings and behaviours assigned to those we classify as ‘poor’ eventually shape self-perceptions and affect individual capacity? What are the implications for empowerment? The discussion indicates:

- The prevailing poverty language may be entirely inconsistent with people’s own experiences and self-conceptions;
- The language used to ‘sell’ poverty may have adverse consequences for the poor;
- The poverty discourse can be used to suit political objectives and/or to exclude various categories of the poor;
- The ideas and assumptions underlying different frameworks influence how the poor – and various categories among them – are perceived, including views on how the interests of the poor are best represented, and on which groups have ‘credible’ voice and which are undeserving.
- Knowledge is a source of power, which may eventually define both formal and informal institutions and characterize organizational cultures.

Poverty discourses depend on the outcomes of inter-institutional contestations, such as those over structural adjustment in the 1980s. They also depend on intra-institutional debates between the more and less dominant positions. In order to place certain issues on the agenda, the less dominant might need to compromise/soften a radical stance. However, this may also have consequences for how inequality and poverty are perceived and addressed. Knowledge/power may be so embedded in institutions that they preclude (at least publicly) alternate options. In principle, the Bank is required to avoid involvement in politics; however, an apolitical stance may itself cause and/or sustain poverty and inequality.

Maxwell (2001) is concerned about the ways in which such traditions restrict the range of useful policy choices. For example, while he commends the new World Bank focus on inequality and its acknowledgment of the need for redistribution, he notes that redistribution is recommended for instrumental reasons; that is, for promoting long-term growth. The author notes that the Bank does not wish to redistribute in ways that ‘affect incentives or cause conflicts’, particularly with the non-poor whose resources are critical for future investments. Further, policies for redistribution are not aimed at addressing
social exclusion or rights, despite the Bank’s stated commitment to a multidimensional view of poverty. Insistence on tradition seems to mask the new forms of poverty and inequality that favoured policies, such as liberalization and privatization, bring and prevent serious consideration of the policies required to tackle discrimination.

- **Contestation is important for influencing and changing agendas. By inference, tacit consensus has a significant role in sustaining power relations.**

Lukes (1974:21) proposes that power relations and biases are inherited from the past and ingrained in social structures and knowledge: ‘decisions are choices consciously and intentionally made by individuals between alternatives, whereas the bias of the system can be mobilized, recreated and reinforced in ways that are neither consciously

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**Figure 2.1 MULTIPLE FEATURES OF POWER**

**Overt and Coercive:**
- The more powerful can use their positions to compel others to act in ways they would prefer not to. For example, under Apartheid, the dominant white minority forcefully repressed the black majority.
- Coercion can entail the use of force. It may also rely on subtle but no less effective strategies, such as categorizing people and problems in ways that suit the more dominant. Categorization was a potent colonial technique. Racial and ethnic groups were stratified and labelled as superior, inferior, more or less competent etc. One of the more harmful legacies of colonialism is that some groups continue to believe in their assigned superiority and inferiority, and use these beliefs to perpetuate old relations of power.

**Hidden and Coercive:**
- The more powerful can operate effectively from behind-the-scenes, influencing agendas and discourses.
- Coercive power can be embedded in formal and informal institutions, remaining hidden but effective. For example, Maymana and Moziful’s story describe how local legal institutions enforced social norms that discriminated against women and compelled them to conform.

**Overt and Non-Coercive:**
- Power is not only coercive; it can also be (visibly) instrumental in building consensus. As Parsons explains, people may use power in non-conflictual and non-coercive ways, building agreements in order to achieve desired outcomes.

**Hidden and Non-Coercive:**
- Where there is ‘tacit consensus’, power relations are upheld unintentionally and even unconsciously. For example, there are groups who not only come to accept disadvantageous hierarchical arrangements but actively defend and uphold them. Here, power relations are so ingrained that there is little need for overt coercive demonstrations.

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chosen nor the intended result of particular individuals choices.

2.4 Summary

Analyses of how power relations affect poverty and inequality within developing countries must account for:

- the context within which developing country governments operate;
- the ways in which the history of inequality between the ‘North’ and ‘South’ continues to shape policy choices; and
- the important roles of power and knowledge in influencing how poverty and inequality are perceived and in determining which strategies are more and less desirable.

Developing countries, depending on how and where they are placed, will have more or less space for contestation and capacity for agency (We make a similar observation about different groups and subgroups of the poor). We argued that while the dominant poverty discourse might profit many people (for example, by placing issues on the agenda that developing country governments might have otherwise ignored), including the locally powerful may use it to their own political advantage; it can also be detrimental to and even cause poverty and inequality among the very people it purposes to assist. A number of analysts have emphasized this dichotomy. Arguably, the governance discourse is framed in ways that divert attention from external influences on political management and poverty outcomes. Similarly, ‘empowerment’ can so concentrate on the domestic agenda that it ignores, to its detriment, how supranational relations can conflict with or support its objectives. This restricted stance avoids the wider battles, though these are extremely important if ‘empowerment’ aims to be substantive and transformative rather than instrumental.

The overview of the transition in development orthodoxy shows that power can be coercive and apparently conflictual (particularly when economic and political power are concentrated in the same source) but that it is also key to influencing agreements/gaining consensus. Power may be manifested in overt acts and in covert manipulation of the agenda. Power is visible in language and knowledge; it is often used to define how people and situations are perceived. The ability to advance alternate positions depends, critically, on the power to contest, though this may be compromised by the other party’s power to co-opt and adapt.

Therefore, analyses of the relationship between power and poverty should consider the multiple sources of power, the ways in which these sources interact, and the consequences for how poverty is framed and addressed. Further, it is important to be sensitive to the many guises of power, including its more and less coercive expressions. The case study of poverty and inequality in Ceres, South Africa shows that power has deep historical roots and can withstand attempts to curb it.
3 How Power Performs: Domestic Domains

The previous section used policy analysis to highlight some of the key dimensions of power and the ways in which power performs. All these are pertinent for understanding how power relations within countries, communities and households affect inequality and poverty. This section provides a synopsis of DuToit’s case study of poverty and inequality in Ceres, South Africa. The case study outlines the history of inequality and poverty in Ceres; the origin and sources of power; the overt and covert tactics used to secure power; post-Apartheid efforts to transform power relations and the ways in which elites resist. The section then comments on the relation between power and regime type; the role of macro, meso and micro level institutions; informal norms and power relations and how passive acceptance reproduces power.

3.1 A Case Study of Ceres, South Africa

Du Toit’s (2003) study of the chronic poor in Ceres, South Africa provides a good example of the importance and value of combining methodological approaches in poverty analyses, of conducting sound historical assessments, and of focusing explicitly on how relations of power affect inequality and poverty. The author uses both the livelihoods and social exclusion approaches – though remaining critically aware of the limitations of each and making modifications as needed – to provide a comprehensive contextual analysis. For example, he finds that the concept of ‘adverse incorporation’, rather than exclusion provides a more realistic explanation of the condition of the chronic poor in Ceres. Similarly, he acknowledges the need to supplement the livelihoods approach with broader political analysis and with deeper investigation of power relations from the household to national levels.

Ceres is located in the Western Cape of South Africa. It is one of the centers for the deciduous fruit export industry. The author explains that slavery shaped social relations in the Cape and continues to have a lasting influence both on the elite group of farm owners and on the workers who depend on farm employment for survival. In the 18th century, the rural landowning class built and solidified its power through coercion, and through what DuToit describes as ‘a discourse of mastery’. This discourse substantiated white right to rule and own and, conversely, black inferiority and destined servility. By seeking membership and visibility in local government and prominent white political parties, the elite solidified economic and political power, thereby entrenching their positions and reducing the space for contestation. The elite also secured power through other, more subtle, means, including controlling local agro-food and credit institutions, and using informal networks and family ties. This created ‘a local landed elite with a subtle but clearly marked internal hierarchy dominated by the wealthy “old money” of the descendants of the very first white settlers. This local elite made effective use of the opportunities and institutions created by Apartheid and its associated agricultural policies and, in particular, the institutional apparatus of regulated agriculture.’ The history of slavery had lasting consequences on the black workers as well. Institutions and practices were paternalistic in nature and this bred a culture of dependence and servitude.

Since 1994, the ANC government has attempted to reverse the regulations that protected white ownership and control. Following a neoliberal framework, it deregulated

These measures have had mixed consequences. The white elites have lost political power and have had to face new economic risks, as protective regulations were discontinued. Conditions for skilled and permanent workers have improved and a few individuals have benefited from ‘empowerment’ initiatives. However, white workers have responded by shedding labour, increasing the proportion of temporary workers and reducing provisions such as housing. These seasonal/temporary workers subsist in conditions of chronic poverty. Despite labour regulations, market relationships are ‘characterized by highly unequal power relationships. Farmers and workers do not encounter [each other] in a completely open market with equal access to information. Rather, farmers pursue arrangements that allow them to pay as little as possible for the labour they need, and that allow them to displace downwards - or to externalize onto labour contractors and seasonal workers – the risks associated with the uncertainties of agricultural production.’ (DuToit, 2003: 21) Conditions are even worse for women, who comprise 60% of unpaid labourers and 61% of the seasonal labourers. Sixty five percent of the permanent labourers are men. This inequality is justified with discourses of female inferiority, male superiority and patriarchy.

Du Toit discovered that despite the institutional and political changes, the white elite has reorganized (one prominent family has replaced another) and still has a firm hold on economic power: ‘The coming into power of a black majority government in South Africa has not signaled the end of white hegemony in the Ceres district or elsewhere in the rural Western Cape. True: Ceres now has a black, African National Congress mayor. But the machinery of local government has not fundamentally changed’. Afrikaners are now divided in their political loyalties, with some advocating non-racialism and liberalism. The language and practices of paternalism are now described as ‘empowerment’, though it is paternalism and patronage that continue to define the livelihoods of the poor. Among the poor, reliance on gangs and smuggling operations has become a key livelihood strategy and violence an important ‘capability’:

Not everything that can be listed within the ‘asset pentagons’ used to inventory household resources is necessarily the kind of private or public good policymakers would approve of. It bears thinking about that in all of these communities, the ability to use (and to survive) violence, for instance, is a key ‘capability’ or form of human capital, and that for some households, participation in criminal networks and associations is a very successful livelihood activity. (DuToit: 24)

Other formal institutions, such as the Church, have not provided viable avenues for the poor: ‘It is not enough simply to see, say the structures of the Church as benevolent and those of the gangsters as predatory. Rather, all these structures contain within themselves both the possibility of assisting (some of) the poor, and significant room for exploitation and the manipulation of power relationships.’ (DuToit 2003: 26) It is also significant that the poor have not participated in development efforts, such as the Integrated Development Plan. The author suggests a number of possible explanations: the continued dependence on patron client relations; the legacy of spatial apartheid; and the ‘paternalist and demobilizing’ discourse of poverty, in which the poor are portrayed
as those who are ‘left-behind’. This discourse masks the underlying power relations and keeps the poor in a continuous state of dependence on benefits and spoils.

The case study suggests:

- Power structures and the relationships that support them can be cultivated over long periods and, therefore, have deep historical roots. Such entrenched arrangements are difficult to change.
- Power relations may persist despite institutional change because less tangible but durable factors, such as ingrained norms and perceptions of inferiority and superiority, continue to hold the status quo in place.
- In principle, certain political regimes offer more scope than others for transforming power relations. In practice, though visible sources of power may change, real power may still be lodged with the old elite, now operating effectively from behind-the-scenes.

The following subsection expands on these themes and provides a basis for understanding how power and institutions may interact. Certain approaches to institutional reform (including the governance framework) tend to discount the considerable role of power in influencing the pace of change and in determining whether change is at all feasible. We examine two questions: To what extent does regime type influence power distribution and relations? How does power shape institutions?

### 3.2 Power and Regime Type

Moore (2001:6) provides a basic typology of political systems, which describes how the level of state institutionalization and party competition can determine the scope for anti-poverty policymaking, including the extent to which the poor are able to mobilize in their own interests or that claims can be made on their behalf. The typology—which includes collapsed states, those under personal rule, minimally institutionalized states, institutionalized non-competitive and institutionalized competitive states—reinforces the significance of the wider framework and usefully builds the case for an ‘enabling environment’ for poverty reduction and empowerment. Based on Moore’s analysis, it is in institutionalized competitive democracies that people have the best prospects to make and contest claims and to shape their lives in order to reach their goals. We review and qualify the main (pro-democracy) arguments, arguing that because power is diffuse and embedded in all institutions and relationships, societies with formal democratic systems may sustain inequality.

**Democracy, Power and the Poor**

In principle, democracies are valued for their intrinsic, instrumental, and constructive roles. Sen (1996) contends that the democratic arrangement guarantees the political freedoms necessary for realization of basic capabilities, including political and social participation. It provides forums in which views can be expressed and heard; therefore, citizens have legitimate basis to make claims of economic and social needs and to expect attention. Furthermore, democracy has a constructive role in creating (through avenues such as discussion and exchange) values and norms that inform how needs are conceptualized and satisfied. These are significant features, which have material consequence in issues of access and distribution.
However, Sen is careful to emphasize that the achievements of democracy do not hinge exclusively on rules and procedures. Other crucial factors include the ways in which opportunities are used, the dynamism of moral arguments and value formation, the activism of opposition parties and the general quality of multiparty politics. Notably, all these reflect existing and historical structures and relations of power, which produce wide variations in the substantive content of formal, electoral democracy.10 How well do categorizations of political systems predict power relations?

- First, typologies can never be applied uncritically; usually, there are only few cases that entirely suit the molds they are ascribed. For example, we should not assume that the people who live within ‘collapsed states’ immediately have no capacity for agency or mechanisms for empowerment. Rule by force may spur the poor to develop innovative means of securing their livelihoods. As Geoff Wood (2003) points out, where governments fail to provide the rights and social protection needed for security, people rely on their own networks and personal resources. These resources may involve ‘potentially destructive forms of social capital’. Conversely, the poor may use family and community networks to safeguard some acceptable level of services.

- Second, different forms of rule can be combined within one state, which makes it difficult to establish straightforward maps between regime type and power distribution/relations. For example, our case study of Ceres shows that a patronage system of rule can coexist with an institutionalized competitive system.

- Third, political systems – particularly those undergoing or still in the early post transition phase – will bear traces, sometimes significant, of the previous systems of rule. It is often difficult to pinpoint where authoritarian forms of rule are truly succeeded by democratic governance. Elections are not sufficient to tell. For this reason, O’Donnell [36] stresses the importance of horizontal accountability mechanisms, which he considers necessary to protect citizens against government incursions on rights and other improper practices. These practices normally have long historical precedence. In many developing, particularly post-colonial, countries, economic fortunes have been distributed inequitably, the class structures are polarized and the governing institutions were not designed to counteract the abuse of power. These contorted arrangements are difficult, and may even be impossible to change. Du Toit’s case study is another reminder of the weight of history. Governments may be replaced without disturbing the underlying power structure. Fantu Cheru (2001) is among the many commentators who suggest that though South Africa’s majority black population has gained political power since 1994, real economic power remains

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10 It is important to note that Moore et al found no consistent relation between democracy and poverty reduction. Instead, they observe that some of the best performers in poverty reduction are the former socialist but un-democratic countries, such as Cuba, China and Vietnam. Nattrass and Seekings made similar observations about the relation between democracy and inequality. While some democratic countries endorse and observe principles of equity in procedures and outcomes, others such as Brazil and South Africa, have horrendous records in income and social inequalities. Chile has been successful at reducing the incidence of poverty but has sustained high levels of inequality, which analysts fear may well culminate in social unrest. In these and other cases, democracy has opened spaces for government by the poor but has not produced the expected egalitarian outcomes.
with select corporate and elite interests. The resulting ‘neo-liberal strategies of privatization, liberalization and deficit reduction effectively undermines the country’s anti-poverty strategy, with costly consequences in areas such as water supply and sanitation, health, education and social security. Therefore, there is an underworld of political wheeling and dealing that may be critical for political stability but inconsistent with goals of poverty reduction and empowerment.

These qualifications suggest that regime type need not predict power relations. Only careful study of the context can show how people experience poverty and how power relations influence these experiences. We have emphasized that history is important in any analysis of power and poverty. Long-established power relations may remain embedded in institutions (formal and informal) and relationships despite regime change. These important factors must figure prominently in analyses of how political systems actually function, including how they reproduce relations that are injurious or beneficial to the poor.

The following subsection focuses on macro, meso and micro level institutions. These are key arenas in which people contest power. What transpires in these domains is consequential for poverty outcomes. It is important that poverty studies include investigation of how power works at the macro, meso and micro levels. Without power analysis, policymakers can overlook some of the serious constraints to policy. They will not be able to make a thorough assessment of why some policies work and do not work. The section notes:

- Power is diffuse; it is embedded in formal and informal institutions from the macro to micro levels.
- Power relations (and their influence on poverty outcomes) may differ across levels. This means, for example, that policies at the macro level need not be applied at the meso and micro levels. Therefore, it is important to assess power structures and relations at each level, how these correspond or conflict, and how the identified (cross-level) relationships influence poverty outcomes.

Nattrass and Seekings (2001) explain that black South African voters have remained loyal to the ANC despite their disappointment with the party’s performance; they have not used their political power to demand swift economic reforms. Nevertheless, the ANC must be careful to balance its economic policy for ‘as partisan identification declines, retrospective voting on economic performance rises in importance’. This threat remains though there are no immediate prospects for realignments in political allegiances.

Nancy Powers (1995) study of the Politics of Poverty in Argentina in the 1990s provides a lucid description of how the Menem government was able to establish fiscal pacts with provincial governments in order to continue its structural adjustment programmes and to ignore or minimize the merit of opposing constituencies through surreptitious wheeling and dealing. Consequently, poverty and inequality continued unabated.

Analysts tend to force a sometimes unnatural division between formal and informal institutions. However, some formal institutions also reflect societal norms, though ideally, they should have a ‘distinct presence over and above the performance of individuals’. (Strathern 1997) Informal institutions are behavioural norms and conventions that are transmitted throughout history. They are the products of shared historical experiences, and choices made by particular groups can be dictated by these common (and often unique) points of reference’ (Moncrieffe 1997). Informal norms can be both supportive and destructive. As, noted, inequality and poverty can breed their own norms as societies try to find ways to survive.
3.3 Macro, Meso and Micro Institutions

We have suggested that institutions may be ‘carriers of history’, upholding inequalities – as did property rights and constitutional rules under the Apartheid regime – either by overtly defending the interests of select groups or by failing to protect the most vulnerable. Horizontal disparities can take root and may result in conflict where constitutional rules do not provide for balanced political representation (Stewart 2002). Institutions may need to go beyond recognition and provide for redistribution in order to ensure social justice and defend human and civil rights (Fraser 1997). We have suggested, too, (Section 3) that not all that transpires under the rubric of pro-poor policy-making includes or defends the interests of the poor.

Annex 4 (also see Textbox 3.1) describes high-level policymaking in Uganda. It shows that while there is consensus on policy emphasis, it is the power relations among the more dominant stakeholders that is most consequential for defining policy components and, as a result, policy outcomes. The President has a strong role in policymaking, which is, at times, tempered by the donors and the Ministry of Finance. However, he has the latitude to implement policies that suit his own or his party’s interests. Both the President and donors have been involved with ‘crafting civil society’. The President rules over an institutionalized but non-competitive system and allows select civil society (though, importantly, non-political) groups partial freedoms. Donors also fund select –

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**Text Box 3.1: Power Relations and Policy-making in Uganda**

In Uganda, there has not been a zero-sum game between donors, the political directorate and core departments (principally the Ministry of Finance). The President is powerful, and though he is constrained by financial accountability to the donors, he has leverage to advance his own/his party’s interests. The President also has substantial control over the Ministries, though there is some space for contestation. Uganda is well-favoured among the donors, who have developed ‘partnership arrangements’ with selected departments. Similarly, civil society groups are carefully selected and groomed, by both government and donor agencies, though with differing underlying motives and potentially conflicting outcomes. The donor approach to building civil society reflects the conventionally narrow perspective, which has a restricted conception of the political and concentrates on crafting, through substantial funding, a dynamic and visible (often always urban) sector, while ignoring the ‘uncivil’ and avoiding the unknown. It also reflects the Movement’s policy, which entails allowing partial civil freedoms and minimising political contestation. Meanwhile, the less technical, less visible and less political organizations, including some with the closest connections to the poor, are excluded.

The balance of power at this macro level has allowed the most influential donors to establish and pursue certain economic priorities. These have, in cases, been tempered by government intervention or from contestation from other donors and ‘civil society’ groups. Poverty language is all-inclusive but poverty policies have concentrated on the progressive poor. Chronic poor groups and the destitute are marginalized. ‘Opposition’ MPs argue that the political system precludes satisfactory representation of the poor. The Movement—though now divided on this issue—believes that a party system would be more injurious to the poor, as it would capitalize on historical divisions.

There is ample evidence that historical legacies are affecting decentralisation and participation programmes, which did not adopt a sufficiently politicised approach. At all levels, there are substructures that sustain inequalities, discrimination, and norms and values that are inconsistent with ideals of fair access and equitable participation.

*Source: Annex 4*
largely urban and visible organisations. The more political, rural, seemingly ‘uncivil’
groups remain marginalized, though they may have close connections to the poor.

Norton and Elson (2002) came to similar conclusions about the role of power in the
budget process. Power, they note, is embedded in formal structures and in the prevailing
values, norms, procedures and practice. Power determines who gets excluded and
included; power defines the priorities, and privileges some forms of knowledge over
others. Therefore, in order to understand the role of power in the budget process, one
must investigate formal roles and responsibilities, the rules governing decision-making,
power relations among key stakeholders, the more and less visible incentives governing
decision-making, the latitude for discretionary action and institutional norms and values.
Therefore, the power play at high-level domestic arenas resembles that among and
within the prominent development agencies.

Rules and procedures at a macro level can be subverted by those at the meso and
micro levels. The sources of power at these levels are similar to those at the macro
level, and present similar constraints and opportunities. Mamalakis has found that in
addition to macroeconomic and political factors, absolute poverty and inequality have
persisted in Latin America because of failed micro policies: governments lack the power
and/or will to curb the widespread monopolistic/oligopolistic and
monopsonistic/oligopsonistic elements in the various markets – labour, land, capital and
product which reduce efficiency, thereby contributing to poverty and inequality).
Governments and policymakers have also neglected the meso-economic dimensions:
the ‘sectoral constitutions in agriculture, industry, mining and services that would ensure
social justice and therefore be able to generate the accelerated sectoral growth needed
to reduce both poverty and inequality. Mamalakis argues that ‘Caudillista’ style
constitutions characterize Latin American industries and social sectors, with benefits
distributed in a highly unequal fashion to the wealthy and middle class, and at the
expense of the poorest households.14

Informal norms and institutions can undermine macro level rules and procedures. For
example, Balagopalan and Subrahmanian (2003) show that despite formal rules for
including previously disadvantaged castes in educational institutions, upper caste
teachers systematically discriminate against dalit and adivasi children, whom they regard
as having very limited potential. Therefore, the new (formal) processes of inclusion are
shaped by traditional power relations and reproduce old exclusions. Similarly, at the
household level, ingrained power relations may produce outcomes that are inconsistent
with macro level principles and rules. For instance, gender and age discrimination and
discrimination against persons with disabilities may persist despite formal provisions.

14 Quoted in ODI (2003) discussion paper on Inequality in Middle Income Countries
Formal and informal institutions/norms interact at all levels. ‘Adequate institutions – both formal and informal – are necessary but may be ineffective if the relations of power such that they undermine them. Power relations often give shape to the institutions that exist and the synergism of power and institutions defines the direction and speed of change.’ (Moncrieffe, 1999:210)

**Habitus**

The case study indicates that ‘tacit consensus’ has a significant role in sustaining power relations. This is where people come to accept their positions in the social order, using past experiences to order their futures. Bourdieu (1989) defines this as habitus. By failing to critically analyze their position, people become complicit in reproducing relations of domination. People may be aware, yet accepting of their condition; however, power relations may become so ingrained that they do not recognize systems of domination (Haugaard 2002). Habitus describes those among the poor who accept that they are ‘undeserving’ and ‘left behind’, with no capacity for agency. This condition presents major challenges to empowerment and to assumptions that given the assets and opportunities, people will act to improve their condition. Kabeer (1999), in her reflections on measuring women’s empowerment, makes the point that there is an ‘intuitive plausibility’ to equating power and choice, when the ‘disempowered’ use their power to improve their welfare. In contrast, analysts have much more difficulty accommodating those instances when women not only accept but also choose their inequality.

People have different capacities for agency. These are not merely the cause of deep or long term deprivation in income and material assets but from other social and psychological (not easily quantifiable) sources of poverty.
3.4 Summary

This section used a case study of Ceres, South to expand on some of the key features of power that were introduced in Section 2. The case study shows that power relations can persist despite regime change and other institutional reform efforts. Power relationships can remain deeply embedded in relationships and institutions and may, therefore, be difficult to transform. These issues are important for poverty analysis; they suggest that institutional change cannot guarantee poverty reduction and that an explicit focus on power is critical for understanding the constraints and opportunities that power presents.
4 Conclusion: Key Messages and Future work

4.1 Overview
The preceding sections demonstrated the relations between power, poverty and inequality. They established the importance of explicitly addressing relations of power and hinted at the methodological challenges this may produce. Power has been marginalized in development discourse, and not necessarily by accident. It does not sit comfortably with ‘accepted knowledge’ or easily lend itself to conventional tools of analysis.

Section 1 used a life story to depict some of the ways in which power relations influence inequality and poverty processes. It compared these findings with those from a quantitative, more large-scale study of chronic poverty in Bangladesh and showed that the latter does not focus sufficiently on how relations of power affect poverty. The section argued that by not focusing on power, dominant methodologies have failed to analyze one of the critical variables that keep people poor and that undermine development programmes. Therefore, poverty analyses would profit, substantially, from including qualitative methodological approaches, from a more ‘individual’ approach to understanding poverty and from an explicit focus on power. The section outlined three key messages:

- Inequality and poverty can be understood as relational as well as categorical.
- Quantitative measures alone are inadequate for understanding ‘relational’ forms of poverty and inequality.
- By combining qualitative and quantitative methods, particularly those explicitly designed to understand power relations, analysts are likely to gain a better understanding of the processes underlying poverty and inequality.

Section 2 outlined some of the major concepts of poverty and inequality, and discussed their advantages and limitations, particularly for understanding how power performs. It contends that economic explanations of poverty and inequality tend to advance categorical as opposed to relational positions. Social and political frameworks highlight relational forms of poverty and inequality; however, these frameworks have their limitations, which must be compensated for in any good analysis. The synopsis of the transition in development orthodoxy emphasized how power relations influence what views of poverty and inequality are included in the policy-making agenda and how these feature. The section integrated findings from this synopsis with a selection of pertinent theories on power and used these to identify key dimensions of power, which can guide power and poverty analyses. The section reinforced that:

- Power analysis cannot be restricted to national boundaries. Power – sometimes considerable – also resides in external circles and pervades domestic areas via avenues such as shared knowledge networks, development policies, and loan conditionalities. Therefore, power and poverty analysis take account of:
  - the context within which developing country governments operate;
  - the ways in which the history of inequality between the ‘North’ and ‘South’ continues to shape policy choices; and
the important roles of power and knowledge in influencing how poverty and inequality are perceived and in determining which strategies are more and less desirable.

Section 3 used a case study of power, inequality and poverty in Ceres, South Africa to expand on the themes raised in Section 2. It emphasized the historical roots to power and showed how power relations can become so embedded in institutions and relationships that they constrain reform efforts and restrict people’s ‘capacity to make purposive choice’/ exercise agency. Power relations can persist despite regime change. Power performs overtly or covertly in the different domestic domains and sub-domains in which people operate. (See Table 4.1 below) Our analysis shows the importance of placing these within the context of the global environment, where ideas, externally imposed policies and other forms of engagement can be either disempowering or empowering. For example, the poor may be able to appeal to widely accepted rights based principles (Indeed, these have been crucial for the recognition of many indigenous communities) or make claims using prevailing poverty language. However, poverty language can also disempower and policies can favour some but not all of the poor, thereby generating their own inequalities. The section made five key points:

- Power structures and the relationships that support them can be cultivated over long periods and, therefore, have deep historical roots. Such entrenched arrangements are difficult to change.
- Power relations may persist despite institutional change because less tangible but durable factors, such as ingrained norms and perceptions of inferiority and superiority, continue to hold the status quo in place.
- In principle, certain political regimes offer more scope than others for transforming power relations. In practice, though visible sources of power may change, real power may still be lodged with the old elite, now operating effectively from behind-the-scenes.

Sections 1-3 provide examples of how people can be both empowered and disempowered in the different contexts in which they operate. Table 4.1 summarizes (and adds to) some of these examples. The table reinforces the significance of power analysis and the need for policies that explicitly address power relations; it demonstrates that ‘inclusion’ (in global or state markets, political and social systems) and institutional reforms can be insufficient for poverty reduction, where power structures and relations remain unchanged.
Table 4.1: Domains and Sub-domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Sub-domains</th>
<th>How Power Performs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>The more powerful development agencies, lending agencies and governments have significant influence on how poverty is perceived and addressed. This may be both advantageous and disadvantageous to the poor. Agencies can help to make poverty a more prominent domestic issue; on the other hand, a poverty discourse that classifies and prioritizes the deserving poor or that does not address the power relations that keep people poor invariably (a) excludes significant segments and (b) fails to recognise and attack some of the deep causes of poverty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social, Political, Economic</td>
<td></td>
<td>Globalization has facilitated a massive upsurge in communication, such that various groups have been able to form associations and make claims on their governments, international actors/agencies and local leaders. Through globalization, many people have become armed with information and have used this to defend their rights. However, globalization also disempowers, particularly the poorest (countries and people) whose welfare is quickly eroded through rapidly shifting markets and rationalized social services. The ideology and practice of globalization prioritizes the progressive, which creates deeper inequalities and levels of poverty. Those who lack ‘agency’ are most severely affected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>Legal systems can enforce poor people's rights; they can protect against social discrimination and abuses of power. However, legal systems can support discrimination and infringement of rights. Importantly, state and communal systems can both empower and disempower. For example, communal systems can provide easy access where the state does not; however, they can support local norms that discriminate against particular groups. As Maymana's life story shows, legal systems have both direct and indirect influences on people's poverty experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td></td>
<td>Political leaders can defend the interests of the poor and seek to address imbalances of power. They can also ignore contraventions of rights, fail to protect and disempower. Political actions and inaction are consequential for poverty. There are other features of the political system that affect people's capacity to make effective choice, including whether political systems are open or closed to public contestation and whether poor people genuinely have space to present their interests.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service Delivery</td>
<td></td>
<td>Power relations play out in service delivery arenas. Without adequate protection, the more powerful are likely to be those who have the greater capacity to pay. At the street level, service providers have substantial influence on determining who benefits and how.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market</td>
<td>Credit, Labour, Goods</td>
<td>The market is not merely a domain for rational economic transactions. Rather, social relations of power influence the capacity to negotiate and access to credit and goods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>Household and Community</td>
<td>Power relations have substantial weight at the household and community levels for, in these domains, people can sustain dorms that perpetuate discrimination and poverty (such as against the aged, women, people with disabilities); conversely, they can provide important networks that help people to move out of poverty. However, not all these associations may be consistent with/supportive of formal laws or ‘civil’ behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td></td>
<td>People also operate in a less tangible domain, one in which personal convictions, norms and expectations help to define attitudes. This means that ‘rational’ expectations of welfare-enhancing behaviour need not obtain. People may choose to use their power not to participate, own and control resources and make claims. Some of this behaviour may be explained through examining prevailing discourses, particularly the ways these disempower. However, people develop their own value systems and establish priorities that may not be consistent with the ideals of ‘agency’.</td>
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4.2 Research Areas, Selected Questions and Early Guidelines on Approach

The text has hinted at a number of areas that require further research and analysis. We highlight these below and emphasize how qualitative studies can be used to qualify quantitative methodologies and research conclusions.

- Despite wide acceptance of the ‘multidimensionality’ of poverty, analysts tend to resort to the more popular categorical indicators. Yet, the act of defining and measuring is itself an act of power that can trigger changes in social relations and lead to inequality of outcomes in terms of life chances. Therefore, it is important to understand the relational dimensions of poverty, to improve analysis of the multidimensionality of poverty, and to examine the different ways in which categorical approaches influence poverty experiences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Questions</th>
<th>Units of Analysis and Suggested Approach</th>
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| 1. How do categorical and relational approaches differ in their explanations of poverty and inequality? Specifically, how do relational explanations deepen understanding of different forms of poverty, such as chronic poverty and destitution? | A. Section 1 provides an example of how these questions might be examined. The section compared findings from the multiple assets and life-history approaches and used these to analyze categorical and relational forms of poverty. However, the section would have been more conclusive if the studies were conducted among the same population groups.  
B. One approach to investigating how relational explanations deepen understanding of poverty is to focus on defined groups, such as the chronic poor, transient and never poor, and to assess what power analysis tells us about the causes for the duration and nature of poverty. For example, Maymana’s story demonstrates that factors such as social discrimination and patriarchal traditions are disempowering and add to the causes for long term/chronic poverty. Do power relations differ across and within groups? If so, in what ways? How do these relations influence poverty processes and outcomes? To what extent can our understanding of power help us to predict movements in and out of poverty?  
C. However, we have already noted the limits of categorization. The research should assess and test existing boundaries. How adequate are categories that are based on income? Does power analysis help us to understand the significance of non-income dimensions of poverty, including how these can disempower. There is another important approach to moving beyond categories, which involves analysing intra group power relations bearing in mind that constructed group collectives often hide complex relations of power. Therefore, it is crucial to resist common assumptions, such as of women’s powerlessness and to study the gradations of inequality and poverty—within groups—that are rooted in power relations and structures. |
| 2. In what ways do categorizations create new forms of power relations and how do these influence poverty? | A. We have suggested that categorization can trigger changes in social relations that may compromise the goal of peaceful social transformation. One such categorization is the division between the ‘progressive’ and ‘non-progressive’ poor. It is important to examine how such distinctions influence domestic policy, and whether and how they lead to changes in local level relations. Do such categorizations generate new hierarchies and new forms of discrimination among the poor? What are the consequences for efforts to empower communities/build ‘community’ capacity? |
We note that there are certain groups, sub-groups and individuals who may have less capacity for agency. For these, ‘an enabling framework’ may not be sufficient. Much research is required here to analyze the correspondence between different forms of poverty and differing capacities for purposive choice. Power analysis is critical for assessing the conditions under which people remain poor and for providing a comprehensive evaluation of what is required for moving out of poverty. Here, there is a huge and urgent gap in poverty analysis.

### Significant Questions

3. Under what conditions do people develop or lack ‘agency’? What does the evidence suggest for policies? How might governments and development agencies assist the least able with moving out of poverty? What changes in power relations are required? How can such transformations be achieved and what are the constraints?

### Units of Analysis and Suggested Approach

A. These questions are very closely related to set (1) above and can be addressed in the same research. However, there are a number of important qualifications. First, the questions require indicators of ‘agency’. It is important that these are context-specific, since what is required for agency---the capacity for purposive choice---in one context may differ in another. Second, context-specific investigation should go beyond the group to sub-groups and individuals. For example, our early case study suggests that what Maymana requires for agency may differ considerably from another, perhaps equally income poor woman, who does not have a child with a disability. Therefore, quantitative and qualitative methods should be combined in ways that make general observations but that also seek to penetrate levels and types of poverty. Third, power analysis is likely to suggest that what is required for ‘agency’ exceeds improvement in assets. The empowerment process need not function in a quantifiable/measurable (asset accumulating) way. The research would add to current knowledge if it were able to make reliable qualitative statements about the types of interventions that are important for empowerment. These could improve our appreciation for the multidimensionality of poverty and for the ways in which less tangible interventions can produce tangible outcomes.

B. Importantly, this paper has suggested that the agency approach takes a rational view of human behaviour; it is based on the assumption that as long as people are sufficiently empowered, they will act to improve their welfare. However, people need not use their power in this way. Power analysis can tell us a lot about the limitations of the agency approach. Why do capable people not exercise agency? How does this affect poverty processes and outcomes? What questions and challenges does the failure or unwillingness to exercise agency pose to current discourse and policy?
Development policies tend to proceed without sufficient thought for how people can be complicit in their own poverty and, thereby, help to perpetuate the relations of power that harm them. This type of analysis is critical for designing realistic programmes; that is, for formulating credible policy components, determining feasibility and assessing the pace of change.

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<td>4. To what extent do people accept the power relations that harm them? How does ‘tacit consensus’ affect people’s poverty experiences and outcomes? What does the evidence suggest about (a) the desirability of poverty interventions; (b) what interventions might be appropriate and (c) how such interventions should be staged?</td>
<td>A. Gender analysts are already investigating problems of ‘tacit consensus/habitus’. Therefore, this is one useful avenue for exploring how people can become complicit in the exercise of power and the implications for their ‘empowerment’. The questions are also pertinent to the work on agency (Set 3) and for work on how people are empowered and disempowered in different domains (Set 5 below). We highlight the issue of ‘tacit consensus’ here, given its significance yet underdevelopment in development discourse and research.</td>
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It is important to investigate how power relations feature in the different domains and sub-domains in which people operate. Power relations may conflict or correspond across and within domains and have significant influence on policy implementation and poverty outcomes. Conventional analyses have not paid sufficient attention to what transpires in these multiple arenas of power. Consequently, policies are implemented without adequate assessment of the likely constraints. For example, analysts are now discovering that some of the serious problems with decentralization are rooted in ingrained power relations at both the centre and local levels.

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<td>5. How are people empowered and disempowered in the different domains in which they operate? How do these varied experiences influence poverty outcomes? What do the findings suggest for policy approach and content?</td>
<td>A. Table 4.1 has demonstrated that people can be empowered and disempowered in different contexts. It implies, for example, that despite political openings at state level, people can suffer substantial disadvantage within their communities, where power structures and relations work against them. Poverty analyses must investigate how power performs in different arenas, and to whose advantage and disadvantage. B. Here, categorical and relational approaches can be combined in useful ways. For example, the horizontal inequality approach examines how different ethnic groups are disadvantaged through state or local policies. Table 4.1 suggests that we can expand these to include a wide range of domains in which people operate——the market, the legal system, the international context——and produce valuable data on cross-group inequalities. This data may help generate policy recommendations that are important for addressing power relations at one level. However, it is possible to use relational understandings of power to go deeper. What are the processes of discrimination that influence how people engage in different domains? How are sub-groups and individuals empowered and disempowered? How do social networks empower and disempower, and whom? How do the places people occupy within ethnic groups and social networks then affect how they function within state or local level institutions?</td>
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As Set 5 (b) above shows, there is need for work on cross-group and intra-group inequalities. There is insufficient attention to how groups empower and disempower. However, as individuals and subgroups depend on their group/social identities, it is important to investigate how groups perpetuate inequalities and poverty and, conversely, how they provide routes of escape for their members. Many of these questions are already represented in Set 5; therefore, we mention them briefly here.

### Significant Questions

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<td>As noted, there is scope for study of the different ways in which power relations within and across groups influence poverty processes and outcomes. Researchers might focus on ethnic groups and subgroups, family networks and, importantly, on groups that are normally regarded as 'uncivil'.</td>
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Development agencies tend to minimize their own powerful role in poverty processes. However, as Section 2 emphasizes, power relations across and within major agencies help to define the poverty agenda: they shape the poverty language; enforce or encourage favoured approaches; select and shape constituencies of support; prioritize and define measurement indicators. Development agencies can create new inequalities and help to sustain old ones. By ignoring power relations, agencies can, inadvertently, allow certain forms of poverty and inequality to deepen.

### Significant Questions

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<td>Section 2 introduced analysis of how power performs (overtly and covertly) in the policymaking process. This is still an under-investigated area. In addition, there is need for more work on how poverty discourses, many of which are externally influenced, empower and disempower different groups and individuals. This analysis requires study of high level politics and its relation to domestic policy and politics.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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