APPENDIX A

Review of Status Dynamics

Status Dynamics: General concepts

The status dynamic approach to person and behavior description is derived from Descriptive Psychology, which is described as "a systematically related set of distinctions designed to provide formal access to all the facts and possible facts about persons and behavior" (Schideler, Popov, & Vanderburgh, 1982, p.1). Explications of Descriptive Psychology are found in a number of Dr. Ossorio's monographs (e.g., Ossorio, 1976, 1978a), as well as in his book: "What actually happens": The representation of real-world phenomenon (Ossorio, 1971/1978b). The interested reader is referred to these and other volumes by Dr. Ossorio for fuller explanation. Attention will be focused, instead, on status dynamics in particular, leading to a presentation of a status dynamic formulation of manic states.

Status dynamics in part grew out of an attempt to describe adequately psychopathological conditions: why people are the way they are, why they behave the way they do, and how they got to be that way. Ossorio's (1976) monograph Clinical Topics presents a status dynamic approach to both psychopathology and psychotherapy. Various writers in the field of Descriptive Psychology have

developed status dynamic formulations of pathological states. For example, there are status dynamic formulations of depression (Ossorio, 1976), self-criticism (Driscoll, 1981b), obsessive-compulsive personality style (Bergner, 1981), hysterical action (Bergner, 1982), attempted suicide (Kirsch, 1982), and hypnosis (Plotkin & Schwartz, 1982). Various other topics have been approached status dynamically as well, such as humor (Littman, 1980), alcoholic relationships (Marshall, 1981), Vietnam veteran's adjustment problems (Sternberg, 1981), and communities (Putman, 1981).

The notion of "dynamic" in status dynamics contrasts with the psycho-dynamic approach of Freud. Dynamic is not meant to imply any set of causal relations, in the sense of some sort of "push" that gets people to behave as they do, as in the psychoanalytic psychobiological/mechanistic model. Instead, the notion of dynamic should be seen as fundamentally noncausal and involving non-motivational explanation.

Status dynamics is codified as a rule-following enterprise (Ossorio, 1967/1981b), rather than a truth-seeking one. The rules for doing status dynamic analysis are, in essence, a number of tautologies, which serve as constraints on how persons and behavior can be correctly described. The principles of status dynamics (Ossorio, 1982b) provide the constraints, and are formulated as maxims, a set of rules to be followed as in an algebraic system. Status dynamics formulations can be likened to solving simultaneous

equations, though in the description of persons and behaviors, one may not reach a completely determinate answer. Such a completely determinate answer is commonplace only in formal systems such as algebra or geometry; these disciplines also provide good models for "indeterminate" solutions (e.g., differential equations). When describing behavior, one ends up with as good an answer as one needs to understand the behavior, within the particular context that provided the reasons for generating a description. "Correct description" is a status assignment, an appraisal made by a critic, and always subject to the appraisal of a second, or a third, and so on. In status dynamics, one uses the principles not as guaranteed to produce "the truth," but to produce a correct description suitable for the purpose at hand. The criterion is one of consistency with the facts as independently observed and formulated. The degree of consistency with the facts therefore in part reflects the competence of the observer-describer. The principles themselves may seem trivial on first glance, such as "If a situation calls for somebody to do something he can't do, then he'll do something that he can." It is their fundamental nature and their reflexive and recursive use, however, that give them their systematic power in description. Correct description must abide by these principles and violate none of them.

The Latin word for <u>status</u> means literally "place." In other words, something's status is the same as its place. Everything in the real world has a place, and what is at one place is logically

independent of something at another place. The two places are related by fact, not logic. For example, the pencil's place is on my desk; its being on my desk and a pen being on my desk is a factual relationship. Knowing that there is an eraser on my desk does not imply that there is a pen.

A thing has certain relations to everything else in the world, by virtue of its status. The concept of a _relationship_ identifies a specific relation to some other element in the real world. The pencil has relations to everything else in the real world, but only a portion of them could be specified. Its status could be described as on the desk, in my office, four feet off of the floor, sharpened, or mine. Probably the most significant relationship is the one the pencil has to me, since it is this relationship that specifies how I can behave with respect to it, and thus establishes some portion of my _behavior potential_. The concept of my total behavior potential corresponds to the totality of relationships I have with other elements in the world. Portions of the world can be specified, however, and this narrower portion is called a _domain_. When one refers to all the relations something has simultaneously, one is referring to its status. An individual has the behavior potential he has by virtue of the status (and therefore the relationships) he has. The domain is assumed to be the real world when the generic notion of status is used, unless one specifies a status in some smaller subdomain. For example, the domain of writing instruments may be the relevant one within which I wish to describe the pencil's

status. Within this domain, one might find the pencil's relationships to pens, crayons, typewriters, or word processors.

It is the relations which give the behavior potential. The fact that the pencil is "on my desk, just inches from where I'm seated," reflects a certain relationship I have to that pencil. That it is mine is also another relationship; that it is a pencil is another. These relations give me a certain behavior potential with respect to the pencil. In other words, I can pick it up and write with it. If it was on the table in the next room, I'd have a different relationship and behavior potential with respect to the pencil--I'd have to go into the next room if I wished to use it. Likewise, I'd have a different relationship and behavior potential with respect to that pencil if it was on a table in the house next door, or belonged to someone else. Therefore the status or place of something reflects my behavior potential--the amount and kind of behavior that can be engaged in with respect to that thing. Something's status provides the opportunities and reasons for behavior. For example, the pencil's being on the desk gives me an opportunity to write with it, and the fact that I'm preparing a paper gives me a reason to write with it.

Clearly all the relationships between something and all the other elements in the real world could not be named. Only the relevant ones are specified, though there may not be specific names. In relationships between people, various relationships commonly have been identified, such as friend, lover, enemy, or

parent. Others have not been coventionally named but can be specified, such as "the guy who sat next to me on the bus." The relationship between the various elements in a domain may not have any common designation, though the relation is clearly there. For example, in the domain of an automobile, the relationship between the carburetor and the brake pedal is not named, though it exists. It is not easily subsumed under the conventional part-whole relationships that we are familiar with in automobiles. The most significant relationships have been designated instead, such as the carburetor and the throttle being parts of the fuel system.

There is a correspondence between the concept of a relationship and those of status and behavior potential. A person's status is the same as the totality of his relationships with all the other elements that constitute the real world. To say that X has a given relationship, R_1, to Y is to specify a portion of his behavior potentital or status within a particular domain. One's relations with other people are perhaps the most important relations one has, for these provide much of one's behavior potential. This is particularly so in the clinical realm.

The relationship formula in status dynamics is a way of systemizing the description of relationships between people or other elements in the world. The formula states one of those status principles previously referred to. It is like a general rule, though it includes a set of "unless" clauses that provide explanations when what we observe appears to violate the rule. The

clauses in the formula are a way of specifying the fact that in the

relations between people or elements, there are relations to other

things in the world concurrently operative, influencing what we

observe and believe to be the case. The relationship formula is

stated as follows.

> If X has a given relationship, R, to Y, the behavior of X
> with respect to Y will be an expression of that
> relationship, unless:
> (a) X is acting on another relationship which takes priority
> (i.e., is motivated to act on another relationship to the
> person or another relationship to someone else),
> (b) X does not recognize the relationship for what it is
> (i.e., fils to distinguish correctly this relationship from
> other ones),
> (c) X is unable to act in accordance with this relationship
> at the time (i.e., is defective with respect to the know-how
> to behave in this way),
> (d) X mistakenly believes that what he did was an expression
> of that relationship, or,
> (e) X's behavior miscarries or fails.
> (Abridged from Outline for Descriptive Psychology, Ossorio,
> 1981d, p. 70)

An illustration will provide readier means of appreciating the

formula and how it works in describing adequately and thereby

understanding and treating behaviors more effectively. Say Fred has

a certain relationship, that of friendship, to Sam. Then Fred's

behavior with respect to Sam will be an expression of it. That Fred

acts in a friendly manner towards Sam does not require an

explanation, insomuch as acting friendly is an expression of a

friendship relation, as we would expect. Should we observe Fred

acting in an unfriendly way, however, by say punching him in the

nose, we would describe that as a violation of the friendship

relationship. Of course, we could have been wrong in our

description that Fred and Sam have a friendship relationship, but let us assume for the moment that this is not the case. Instead, we have observed a behavior that appears to violate the relationship, and the unless clauses help explain why this might be the case. The unless clauses are the forms of explanation when we see something that appears to violate what we had previously believed to be the case.

The first unless clause would be applicable if, for instance, Fred's relationship to his wife, Sue, takes priority, such that Sam's snide comment about her constituted a provocation. His marital relationship was a higher priority than his friendship relationship for the moment. The second unless clause would hold if Fred was unable to tell that his relationship with Sam was a friendship, as opposed to other types of relationships, such as enemies, sparring partners, etc. The third unless clause would apply if Fred simply did not have the know-how to engage in friendly behaviors and thought that a sock in the nose was solely his behavioral repertoire to act on. The fourth unless clause would be expressed if Fred mistakenly believed that a punch in the nose was what good friends did together. The fifth unless clause is more or less a wastebasket category, and could be further differentiated if other relevant dimensions were identified (though this is an empirical matter). This clause emphasizes the fact that when something is a mistake or an accident, we do not call it a behavior--an exercise of the person's competence or a deliberate

action. In this case, Fred may have been attempting to squash a mosquito on Sam's nose, but misjudged the force necessary to achieve this.

The relationship formula provides a conceptual schema for understanding the status of the behavior, or how it gets counted. This leads to another aspect of status dynamics called status assignment. To assign something a status is to give it a place and to treat it accordingly. Status should not be understood to mean the narrower notion of social status, such as a Cadillac. This notion of social status is just a specific instance of the former. The basic question about status is "what status? not "how much?"

Status assignments should be looked upon as designating the nature of something, and therefore, how we will treat it. To assign the status of "door" to something means that we will treat it very differently than if we had assigned it the status of "wall," for example. Assigning something one status as opposed to another will lead to different consequences in regard to our behavior potential and how we can operate with respect to it. If we give the status of a "door," we will treat it as a door (or attempt to do so): open it, close it, lock it, or any of the other kinds of things that one does with doors. If we assigned the status of "wall," we would not try to open it nor think of going through it. If we did manage to do so, however, we may judge ourselves to be crazy, or that the world has fallen apart. It also should be kept in mind that we may try to open the "door" and fail--subsequently changing our status

assignment from "door" to "wall." Whether the wall is <u>really</u> a wall
is an empirical matter, while the status assignment is not. Status
assignment has particular application to psychopathology in general,
and manic states in particular.

A person's <u>self-concept</u> is a summary formulation of his status
and works in the same way as status assignments in general (Ossorio,
1971/1978b). We have all observed the resistance a person's self-
concept has to factual information. For instance, a person with a
poor self-concept may retain his negative perception of himself
despite factual evidence to the contrary, such as good grades, many
friends, the flattering attentions of the opposite sex, or
whatever. The person will see these things via his status, which is
relatively impervious to change merely from accumulation of contrary
facts. He might conclude that the standards were lowered the year
he got the prize, or more likely, be amazed that such a prize could
be awarded to such an undeserving person. Conversely, there are
those people whose positive self-concept is unaltered by the
accumulation of what would be to us convincing evidence to the
contrary. No amounts of snubs, rejections, condemnations, failures,
etc. alter the high self-esteem or status the person has assigned to
himself. A person's status takes priority.

It is one's status that determines one's <u>eligibility</u> to engage
in certain behaviors or be a certain kind of person. For example, a
football lineman is probably capable of receiving a forward pass,
but is not eligible to do so. Even if he does catch one, it simply

does not count due to his status. The issue of eligibility is different from the one of capability. One's self-concept, as a "self-status-assignment," determines what one's behavior potential is, or in other words, what ways of being and doing one is eligible for. If your self-concept is one that requires you never to get angry (keep in mind the references made earlier to a rule-following model), you simply will not be eligible to engage in angry behaviors, or at least not choose your behaviors under that description. You might be engaging in hostile behaviors from an obsersver's standpoint and description, but you would not be describing your own behaviors that way, at least not at the time they are occuring. You may be able to give such a description of your own behaviors after thefact, however, if your status has changed.

The paradigm case formulation (Ossorio, 1979/1981a) of status assignment is based upon a conceptual analysis of the elements and stages of a successful degradation ceremony. The formal analysis of degradation ceremonies was done originally by Garfinkel (1967) and developed into a paradigm case formulation and status dynamics by Ossorio (1971/1978b). The analysis makes the relationships between status, behaior potential, eligibility, and domain more evident and can be transformed into the relevant issues of self-concept and psychopathology. Schwartz (1979) has written on this analysis and its applications to clinical situations. The degradation ceremony provides a concept with a number of useful distinctions that allow a

more complete description of how groups treat individuals,
individuals treat individuals, and individuals treat themselves. It
is this latter notion that is most directly related to the status
dynamic formulation of manic states.

The ceremony, in the formal analysis, requires three
preconditions, and two stages. The three preconditions are:

1. a community with a set of values such that adherence to
those values is a necessary condition for being in good
standing in the community,

2. paradigmatically, there are at least three people
involved: a perpetrator, a denouncer, and a witness, and,

3. the denouncer and the witness act as representatives of
the community, rather than out of personal motivations, and
are in good standing in the community.

The two stages of the process are:

1. the denouncer tells the witness that the perpetrator has
committed a certain act, and,

2. the denouncer redescribes the act so that engaging in
that act is seen to be a violation of community standards;
therefore, the person is not a member of the community, and
possibly never was, since the individual could engage in
such an act. The denouncer makes whatever case is
necessary, redescribing the act as a genuine expression of
the perpetrator's character, i.e., it is not to be explained
away by reference to extraordinary states, or atypical
circumstances.

The net result is an acknowledgement or status assignment that the perpetrator has failed to meet the requirements of good standing in the community. In the degradation ceremony, the status that is lost depends on the severity of the act or transgression that the perpetrator engaged in. The two limiting cases are expulsion from the community or being put to death--two alternate ways of construing a reduction to zero behavior potential. A degradation ceremony, if true, is not a violation of a person's rights. It is a way, instead, of recognizing the perpetrator's limitations in participating in the community. In other words, it is a way of recognizing the person's status and treating him accordingly.

The paradigm case of a successful degradation ceremony is the sequence portrayed in old war movies, where the sergeant and his squad go off the base and into the local town, subsequently raising drunken havoc with the local populace. The next day the sergeant is marched out in front of the company by the commanding officer. The commanding officer proceeds to read the sergeant out, describing his behavior of the night before as unbecoming a non-commissioned officer in this army. The commanding officer then literally degrades the sergeant by ripping off his stripes and reducing him to the rank of private. With this loss of status comes a corresponding loss in behavior potential; there has been a reduction in eligibilities. Now that he has the status of private, the soldier is no longer eligible to enter the non-commissioned officers' club, give orders to corporals or privates, receive a higher salary,

etc. His behavior potential has been reduced in a myriad of ways. There may be ways that his behavior potential has increased, for example, by having fewer administrative tasks as a private, or by being moved into a barracks with his drinking buddies. Overall, however, the net result of a successful degradation ceremony in the paradigm case is a loss of status, with a correspondingly reduced eligibility and behavior potential. The person's behaviorial repertoire has not necessarily been reduced, only his behavior potential--that which he has available to act on. The new private certainly retains the know-how to walk into the non-commissioned officer's club and order a drink; he simply is no longer eligible to do so and no longer has that behavior potential.

As a paradigm case formulation, the previous set of conditions and stages reflects the most archetypal case. All of these elements need not be present, however, for a degradation ceremony to take place. There are a number of transformations of the paradigm or representative case, which still constitute degradation ceremonies. For example, the ceremony need not be a public one, such as in the war movie example. It could be a private ceremony as well, where the commanding officer performs it in his office or by means of a registered letter to the sergeant, informing him of his demoted status. The perpetrator does not have to be present, for example, the commanding officer may simply announce to the assembled company that the sergeant is now a private, in his absence. The company subsequently would begin to treat him as a private, e.g., not take orders from him, etc.

The methodological statuses of denouncer and witness can be combined into one person. This particular transformation creates some validity problems, since when the roles are distinct and both the denouncer and the witness are considered to be members in good standing in the community, it is unlikely that both are making the same mistake at the same time. It further serves as an independent check on the possibility that the denouncer is acting out of personal motivations, rather than as a member in good standing and representative of the community. The ceremony need not be a visible one, and can be done in one person's head to another. To refer to the example where Fred punches Sam in the nose: Sam might perform a private degradation ceremenoy. This would be accomplished by Sam (denouncer) thinking to himself that Fred (perpetrator) is "not a friend" or is "crazy." These status re-assignments would be a recognition of Fred's lowered status and reduced eligibility to relate to same in certain ways. Recall again that status-assignments indicate what something is and therefore how it will be treated. For example, Sam may begin to treat Fred as a crazy person, relating to him as one who is unpredictable, dangerous, and likely to distort reality.

All of these statuses--perpetrator, denouncer, and witness--can be combined into the same person as well (recalling again that they are methodological statuses). The loss of reality checks is evident in this transformation. Various patterns of self-criticism frequently found in people conform to this pattern, particularly

pathological ones (Driscoll, 1981b). The person has become denouncer and perpetrator at the same time and the self-critical thoughts such a person might engage in are the equivalent of a private degradation ceremony. An example of a public ceremony involving only one person would be a psychotically depressed person, sitting on the floor of his hospital room and loudly bemoaning himself as the "worst sinner that ever lived." The self-status-assignment has clear implication for how the person will treat himself, as well. As an example of a private one-person ceremony, a person might look in the mirror, assign the status of "unattractive," and thereby reduce his or her sense of eligibility to participate in the community of the opposite sex, involving the social practices (social forms of behavior) of dating. The actual restrictions may take the form of inhibitions about asking someone out for a date, experiencing anxiety when talking to such a prospect (of obviously higher status), or experiencing depression as a result of the isolation and lowered behavior potential. There is a direct translation of these degradation principles to the realm of depressive disorders in general (Ossorio, 1976) and manic states.

A parallel process of accreditation is also possible, where the role of denouncer is replaced by the role of accreditor. In the paradigm case of accreditation, the person who is being accredited gains more status with greater behavior potential and more eligibilities. Examples abound, from public ceremonies such as a university commencement or telling someone he is a "friend," to

private ones, such a therapist treating a "client as someone who already makes sense, has strengths and abilities, and is of good character" (Driscoll, 1981a, p. 274). A person may also accredit himself, for example, by engaging in behaviors that would constitute greater status, such as giving oneself the status of "non-alcoholic" by not drinking. Accreditation is an essential feature of manic states.

Status assignment, as a rule, contains elements of both degradation and accreditation, and pure types of one or the other are probably exceptions. Much of person description constitutes status assignment, in this way. To say that a person is a psychologist, mentally retarded, or a ski pro, may hold implications for what he or she is not as well. For instance, to say that someone is a law-abiding citizen would also constitute giving him or her the status of being a defective criminal. In making a status assignment, a person is designating a portion of the person's behavior potential, which is a way of indicating what is expected of him as a person and how he is to be treated. Although status assignments may have a certain symmetry, as in the "criminal" example just cited, they are limited to certain domains. To assign a person the status of "gourmet cook" is to say nothing about his status in the domain of "safe driving." The two are related factually, not logically.

Derived from the concept of status assignment is the notion of self-presentation. Goffman's (1959) description of self-

presentation is essentially status dynamic in nature. A self-presentation is an interpersonal interaction, where one person overtly and/or covertly makes a claim for a particular status. In effect, the person is saying how he or she is, and promising to act accordingly. A person might, for example, in his speech and demeanor, present himself as having a lower status than the person he is interacting with. He might not initiate, have poor eye contact, offer a limp handshake, and defer to the other person's judgments. In status dynamics, such an interpersonal move is conventionally labeled a Move 1. A Move 1 is a way of presenting oneself that invites others to treat one that way. In effect, a Move 1 is a form of influence principle (Ossorio, 1976). People act in accordance with and make claims for certain status for different purposes. In the case of the previous example of someone making a self-presentation as a lower status person, that person might be choosing that particular self-presentation in order to elicit caretaking from the environment. A Move 1 is merely an invitation, in effect to be treated as the kind of person you are saying that you are. The invitation may or may not be accepted by those you are interacting with. A person could, of course also make a self-presentation of a higher status. He could act knowledgeable, self-assured, in control, and in charge. Self-presentations, particularly of greater status, have particular relevance for manic states.

Another influence principle involving self-presentation is designated as a <u>Move 2</u>. A Move 2 is a self-presentation that presupposes certain other related facts. To put it another way, Move 2 creates Move 1 after the fact. For example, should someone come up to you at a party and tell you what was meant to be a joke, your taking the joke as a sarcastic comment effectively makes it one. By treating the comment that way, the impression is given that the person intended it as one. The person is in the awkward position of having to bring the comment back into the realm of a joke, which requires much more effort than merely accepting the Move 2. It would require giving the comment some other status than the initial one. A more readily accessible example of a Move 2 would be the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Sadat and Begin prior to the signing of the Camp David Accords. The receipt of the prize would make it very difficult not to have the signing of the accords take place. A Move 2 can be a very powerful way to influence the course of behaviors.

Move 2's also have application in psychotherapy. The hynotic work of Milton H. Erickson (e.g., Erickson & Rossi, 1979) incorporates certain similar principles in the form of subtle presuppositions, such as: "You can go into a trance now or later." An example of how the use of a Move 2 in psychotherapy would be when a client comes into a session, describes a dilemma he or she is in and the therapist responds: " I wonder which choice you are going to decide on?" In this manner, the client (assigned

the status) of someone who has options and is competent to choose between them, rather than in the position of someone who is helpless and incompetent.

Self-presentation is, in part, a product of our mobile society, where knowledge of people and how they should be treated must be gathered rapidly--often on the first encounter. Many of our social practices involve self-presentations and negotiations of these presentations or statuses. Back when society was more stable and the people in one's world were simply the ones that you grew up with, self-presentations were not necessary to the same degree. Instead, people just knew who they were and who others were, from their long histories of acquaintance.

The concepts of powers and dispositions arise from a need to understand not just how one behavior is like or different from another, but how one person is like or different from another. People have different or similar behaviors constituting their life histories. The concepts of dispositions and powers are ways of specifying this.

Persons differ in how they behave over a lifetime, and dispositions are a way of specifying the various frequency patterns. In other words, dispositions are what you can expect a person to do or is "disposed to do." The four types of dispositions are traits, attitudes, interests, and styles. Each relates to some pattern or occurrence of behaviors in the life history of a person, and can be used to compare that person with other people.

A trait specifies a type of behavior that has a high frequency of occurrence in a person's life history. Any behavior can be a trait. For example, a person with the trait of miserliness would obviously be expected to show frequent stingy behaviors, and infrequent philanthropic behaviors.

Another disposition is an attitude. An attitude is similar to a trait in that it can be any behavior and is characterized by a frequency pattern of occurrence. The difference is that an attitude reflects behavior expressed toward a particular object, called the attitude object. For example, a person may be miserly only when dealing with his wife, but not with his drinking buddies at the bar or his playing buddies on the golf course. Thus, his wife would be the attitude object, the person towards whom the attitude is expressed.

A third type of disposition is interest. It, too, is distinguished by a type of behavior of a particular frequency pattern, but as well by the specification of an object which possesses an intrinsic interest. Interests are not abstract, but are always _in_ something, whatever the object of the interest is. To say that the interest is intrinsic is to say that the behavior is engaged for no ulterior motive. It is an end in itself. Examples of interests abound, such as interests in: chess, football, mechanics, music, etc. The focus is on what the interest is in and its intrinsic nature, rather than on the type of behavior, as was the case for traits and attitudes. This is because there is not a

specific way that an interest in something need be expressed behaviorally. For example, one may express an intrinsic interest in dance by attending performances, taking dance classes, reading biographies of famous dancers, watching dance-related films, contributing money to a particular dance troupe, or any of a variety of behaviors. Since the actual behaviors themselves that express an interest are so diverse, it is the object of the interest which is specified.

The fourth disposition is that of a style, which emphasizes the performance of behaviors. A style also has a strong frequency pattern; that is, one would expect to see it expressed often. A type of behavior is not specified, however, since the emphasis is on the performance of the behavior. If one has an awkward style, one is likely to express it by playing baseball as well as when wrapping a Christmas present. The paradigm case of a style would be a dialect, where it is expressed in the performance of all verbal behaviors, regardless of what language is being spoken of what sentence is uttered. One person may behave energetically or impulsively; another hesitantly or cautiously. What is characteristic is how things are done, not what is done.

Another way that two life histories and thus, two people, can be alike or different is whether or not certain behaviors appear in their respective life histories. Powers are thus distinguished in terms of achievements, or "the ability to." The distinction is one of yes/no or the possibility/impossibility of behavior, rather than

a frequency pattern, i.e., more or less, as was the case with dispositions. The three types of powers are: ability, knowledge, and values.

The other two power notions, knowledge and values, are defined in terms of ability. Knowledge is defined thus: "A person's knowledge is the set of facts and/or concepts that he has the ability to act on" (Ossorio, 1978a, p. 55). For example, a person's knowledge of arithmetic gives him the ability to do arithmetic problems. Without that knowledge, he could not have that achievement. Values are defined as follows: "A person's values are the set of priorities among motivations that he has the ability to act on" (Ossorio, 1978a, p. 55). For example, a person must value safety in order to escape danger. Without that value, he would not be motivated to have that achievement. In summary, a person is unable to engage in behaviors that require competencies, distinctions (knowledge), or motivations that he does not have, and able to engage in behaviors that require what he does have.