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Power Increases Social Distance

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Abstract

Five experiments investigated the effect of power on social distance. Although increased social distance has been suggested to be an underlying mechanism for a number of the effects of power, there is little empirical evidence directly supporting this claim. Our first three experiments found that power increases social distance toward others. In addition, these studies demonstrated that this effect is (a) mediated by self-sufficiency and (b) moderated by the perceived legitimacy of power—only when power is seen as legitimate, does it increase social distance. The final two studies build off research showing that social distance is linked to decreased altruism and find an interaction between power and legitimacy on willingness to help others. The authors propose that the concept of social distance offers a synthesizing lens that integrates seemingly disparate findings in the power literature and explains how power can both corrupt and elevate.

Keywords

social distance, power, legitimacy, decision making

Power has strong transformative effects on social relationships. It affects how people perceive others (Fiske, 1993; Gruenfeld, Inesi, Magee, & Galinsky, 2008), the degree to which people take into account others' perspectives and feelings (Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006; Schmid Mast, Jonas, & Hall, 2009; Van Kleef et al., 2008), their resistance to the pressures of others (Anderson, Keltner, & John, 2003; Cast, 2003; Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008), and what they allow others to do (Lammers, Stapel, & Galinsky, 2010). Given this plethora of research on the effect of power on social relationships, it is surprising that no empirical research has been conducted to study the effect of power on what is perhaps the most fundamental characteristic of all interpersonal relationships, namely, the degree of social distance (Lee & Tiedens, 2001).

Psychological distance refers to the degree to which events are directly experienced. If people experience distance toward an object, they are less involved with that object (Liberman, Sagristano, & Trope, 2002; Trope & Liberman, 2000, 2003). For example, psychological distance can be experienced due to increased time between an event and the present (temporal distance), when an event is perceived to be more hypothetical, or when a person is seen as less close to the self. The latter form of psychological distance—distance toward people—is called social distance and is the topic of the current article (Liberman, Trope, & Stephan, 2007).

Social distance can be the attribute of a target. For example, we feel more distant from out-groups and think about them in a more abstract manner (Liberman et al., 2002). But

social distance can also be an attribute of the perceiver; people can have a distant mind-set, meaning that they generally think about the world in a more distant manner (Wakslak, Nussbaum, Liberman, & Trope, 2008). In the current research, we propose that the experience of power increases social distance—it induces a mind-set in which people feel less close to others and experience a general preference to do things alone—independent of the target. This matches with classic and modern definitions of (social) distance, as a disinclination or resistance to connect to other people and form relations with them (Adler, 1933/1964; Heider, 1958; Vohs, Mead, & Goode (2006, 2008) and as a preference to be alone and do things individually (Fiske, 1991).

Power Increases Social Distance

In the current article, our initial aim is to provide the first empirical demonstration that power increases social distance. This connection has been hinted at in the past but never directly tested. For example, Smith and Trope (2006) suggest in their abstract that “power increases the psychological distance one

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feels from others” (Smith & Trope, 2006, p. 578) but did not provide empirical evidence for this claim. Similarly, in a compelling field study exploring reactions to the events of the September 11 terrorist attacks, Magee, Milliken, and Lurie (2010, p. 354) wrote in their abstract, “We conceptualize power as a form of social distance.” None of these studies directly tested this assumption, instead treating the effect of power on social distance as given in their introduction and discussion.

Self-Sufficiency: Explaining the Link Between Power and Social Distance

In the current research, we present more direct evidence that power increases social distance. We also show that this power to social distance link occurs because (a) power increases self-sufficiency and (b) self-sufficiency increases social distance.

This former idea, that power increases self-sufficiency, is rooted in the very definition of power: the ability to control one’s own outcomes, as well as the outcomes of others (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Because the powerful have an increased ability to control their own and others’ outcomes, they are less dependent on others (Fiske, 1993) and less constrained by others (Overbeck, Tiedens, & Brion, 2006). As a result, power creates a sense that one does not need others and can independently pursue and reach one’s own goals (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003; see also Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003; Guinote, 2007a; Lammers, Stoker, & Stapel, 2009b; Rucker, Galinsky & DuBois, 2011; Smith, Jostmann, Galinsky, & van Dijk, 2008). Overall, the powerful rely more on their internal states (Galinsky et al., 2008; Weick & Guinote, 2008), are less likely to consider about what others think (Galinsky et al., 2006), and as a result are often more efficient in self-regulation (Dewall, Baumeister, Mead, & Vohs, 2011; Guinote, 2007b; Slabu & Guinote, 2010). In sum, this wealth of research has firmly established a link between power and self-sufficiency.

The latter idea, that self-sufficiency increases social distance, has been given less attention in literature. There are some indications to this relation, though. In their work on the psychological effects of money, Vohs, Mead, and Goode (2006, 2008) showed that if people were given money, they showed signs of increased social distance: they requested less help, they were less helpful toward others, they preferred to play alone and work alone, and even put more physical distance between themselves and other people. The authors explained these effects by noting that “money brings about a self-sufficient orientation” (p. 1154).

Combining these two literatures—that power increases self-sufficiency and that self-sufficiency increases social distance—we propose that elevated power will increase social distance toward others and that this effect will be mediated by self-sufficiency. We predict, however, that lacking power will not decrease social distance. Earlier research, both correlational (Lammers et al., 2009b) and experimental (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006; Galinsky et al., 2003; Smith & Bargh, 2008),

has demonstrated that the effect of power on self-sufficiency is mainly due to the fact that the experience of elevated power increases rather than low power decreases it. Hence, we expect an experience of elevated power to increase social distance compared to an experience of decreased power or a baseline condition.

Moderating Effect of Legitimacy

The second aim of this article is to show that the link between power and social distance depends on the way power is conceived and conceptualized. Specifically, we propose that the effect of power on social distance is moderated by the perceived legitimacy of that power. We base this literature on research showing that the subjective legitimacy of power reverses the effect of power on people’s self-sufficient orientation (Lammers, Galinsky, Gordijn, & Otten, 2008). When power is experienced as legitimate, the powerful feel more assertive and independently pursue their own goals, whereas those who feel a sense of powerlessness are inhibited and dependent on others (Galinsky et al., 2003; Keltner et al., 2003). Yet, research has shown that this effect of power is completely reversed if that power is experienced to be illegitimate (Lammers et al., 2008). When power is illegitimate, the powerless do not experience a sense of dependence and inhibition but rather experience a sense of resistance toward others, which leads to a self-sufficient orientation and independent pursuit of their own goals. In contrast, when power is illegitimate, its link to self-sufficiency is broken and the powerful show inhibition. Hence, the experience of legitimate power and the experience of illegitimate powerlessness lead to a self-sufficient approach orientation (Lammers et al., 2008, 2010; Lammers & Galinsky, 2008; Willis, Guinote, & Rodriguez-Bailon, 2010).

Because of the hypothesized crucial mediating role of self-sufficiency in the effect of power on social distance, we predict that legitimacy will moderate the effect of power on social distance. To sum up, we expect that the experience of legitimate power and of illegitimate powerlessness increase social distance, compared to the experience of legitimate powerlessness, illegitimate power, or a baseline condition.

Willingness to Help

Finally, we also aim to demonstrate a downstream implication of the effects of power and its legitimacy on social distance: differences in helping behavior. When people experience distance by remaining objective in the face of someone’s suffering, they are less likely to help that person in need (Batson, 1991; Batson, Van Lange, Ahmad, & Lishner, 2003). Conversely, when people experience less social distance toward a victim, they are more likely to help and support that person (Small & Loewenstein, 2003). Given that we expect power to affect social distance, we also expect corresponding effects on the tendency to help others. This prediction is consistent

Table 1. Results of Experiments 1 and 2

	Experiment 1		Experiment 2	
	Legitimate	Illegitimate	Legitimate	Illegitimate
Power	5.57 (1.03)	4.84 (1.45)	5.05 (1.21)	4.55 (1.24)
Powerless	4.74 (1.11)	5.57 (.92)	4.36 (1.21)	5.15 (1.09)
Baseline	4.80 (1.04)		4.36 (1.41)	

Cells show the mean level of social distance (SD in parentheses). Numbers are based on 9-point scales.

with literature demonstrating that the experience of power increases competitiveness in negotiations and undermines the willingness to yield and help other (Kray, Reb, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2004; Magee, Galinsky, & Gruenfeld, 2007; Tjosvold & Okun, 1979). As with self-sufficiency, we predict that illegitimacy will moderate the effect of power on helping. This prediction is consistent with literature showing that when the powerful feel uncomfortable about their position, their tendency to help others does not decrease (Camerer & Thaler, 1995; Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler, 1986, 2005; Van Dijk & Vermunt, 2000; Van Knippenberg, Van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 2001).

Conversely, we predict that illegitimate powerlessness will decrease the willingness to help because it increases social distance. This prediction is backed by research demonstrating that subordinates who feel that their low-power position is illegitimate often react in highly unhelpful ways (Greenberg, 1990; Hollinger & Clark, 1983; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). Overall, we expect that legitimate powerlessness and illegitimate power increase the likelihood of helping others compared to legitimate power and illegitimate powerlessness.

Predictions and Overview of Studies

We conducted five experiments to test the relationships between power and legitimacy on self-sufficiency, social distance, and willingness to help. The first two studies test the basic interaction effect of power and its legitimacy on social distance by orthogonally manipulating power and legitimacy along with a fifth, hanging baseline condition. We predicted that the legitimate power and illegitimate powerlessness would increase social distance compared to the baseline, illegitimate power, and legitimate powerless conditions. Study 3 explores whether the effect of power and its legitimacy on distance is mediated by feelings of self-sufficiency. Finally, Studies 4 and 5 test the downstream effects on helping behavior and use the same $2 \times 2 + 1$ experimental design of Studies 1 and 2.

Experiment 1: Computer Game Preferences

In our first experiment, we tested whether power and legitimacy affect social distance. Our measure of social distance consisted of participants' preference for four computer games that differed in social distance.

Method

Participants and Design

One hundred and eleven students (46 men, 65 women, mean age 21 years) were randomly assigned to one of five cells of a 2 (power: high, low) $\times$ 2 (legitimacy: legitimate, illegitimate) $+ 1$ (baseline condition) between-participants design.

Procedure

Manipulation. We used a role manipulation of legitimate/illegitimate high/low power, adapted from Lammers, Galinsky, Gordijn, and Otten (2008). Participants were told that they would play a business simulation together with a costudent. One would be assigned manager and the other subordinate. Although the assignment was actually based on experimental condition, participants were told that it was based on a 12-item leadership test. In the legitimate conditions, participants were told that they would be assigned the position of boss or subordinate that was consistent with the test outcome. Participants in the illegitimate conditions were told that they were given a position inconsistent with the test because the researchers preferred an equal distribution of genders across the experiment and therefore needed to ignore the test outcome. Participants in the baseline condition were not told about the simulation, did not complete the leadership test, and completed only the dependent measures.

Measures. Next, participants were told that while waiting for the business simulation to start, they would play computer games as part of an unrelated study. Participants were presented with the descriptions of four games, two of which expressed increased and two decreased social distance.

A small pilot study (see Online Supplementary Appendix for details) confirmed that these games communicated the expected social distance. Participants indicated how attractive they found these games on a 9-point scale (1 = *very unattractive* and 9 = *very attractive*). We combined these rating to one measure of social distance.

We collected manipulated checks to confirm the effect of the power and legitimacy primes. These manipulation check data for Experiments 1–4 are presented in the Online Supplementary Appendix.

Results

Following Jaccard (1998; see also Schwinghammer & Stapel, 2006), we tested our hypotheses in two steps. We first performed a 2 (power) $\times$ 2 (legitimacy) analysis of variance (ANOVA; without the baseline condition) to determine the effects of power and legitimacy. Next, we conducted single degree of freedom contrasts to test the predicted differences (including the baseline condition).

The two-way ANOVA showed the expected interaction effect, $F(1, 86) = 10.45$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .11$, and no main effects of power or legitimacy, $F < 1$, $p > .80$. Means across conditions are in Table 1 (left panel). Planned contrasts showed

that *legitimate high power* increased preferences for socially distant games compared to the baseline condition, $t(106) = 2.24, p = .03, d = 0.74$, and legitimate low-power condition, $t(106) = 2.41, p = .02, d = 1.37$. The legitimate low-power and baseline conditions did not differ, $t < 1, p > .80$. As also expected, *illegitimate low-power* increased preferences for distant games compared to the baseline condition, $t(106) = 2.30, p = .02, d = 0.79$, and compared to the illegitimate high-power condition, $t(106) = 2.24, p = .03, d = 0.62$. As expected, the illegitimate high-power and baseline condition did not differ, $t < 1, p > .90$.

We also checked whether gender moderated these effects, given that men and women might like different games. Although men liked games associated with increased social distance somewhat more than women ($p = .12$), gender did not moderate the interaction between power and legitimacy ($p = .40$).¹

Our first experiment found that feelings of power affect social distance, but that this effect is crucially moderated by the legitimacy of that power. Legitimate power and illegitimate powerlessness both increased social distance.

Experiment 2: Working Alone Versus With Others

In the next experiment, we aimed to replicate this finding but measure social distance more directly. Also, we manipulated legitimate/illegitimate power/powerlessness in an unobtrusive manner through priming.

Method

Participants and Design

One hundred and fifty students (41 men, 109 women, mean age 21 years) were randomly assigned to one of five cells of a 2 (power: high, low) $\times$ 2 (legitimacy: legitimate, illegitimate) + 1(baseline) between-participants design.

Procedure

Manipulation. Participants first completed Galinsky, Gruenfeld, and Magee's (2003) episodic power prime that was adapted to orthogonally manipulate power and legitimacy (see Lammers et al., 2008). Specifically, participants were asked to think and write about an experience in which they felt powerful or powerless, and where this power difference was in their opinion either legitimate or illegitimate. Participants in the baseline condition did not complete this prime.

Measures. Next, participants were told that they would work on a series of puzzles, but that they could do so either alone or together with another student (for a conceptually similar measure, see Vohs et al., 2006, experiment 9). We measured their preference for social distance toward the other student using eight 9-point items ($\alpha = .93$). Example items read "I would prefer to do these puzzles together with the other student" and

"I would rather work alone" (reverse coded). During debriefing, no participant identified the purpose of the priming task.

Results

We followed the same data analytic procedure as Experiment 1. A 2 (power) $\times$ 2 (legitimacy) ANOVA revealed the expected interaction effect on social distance toward the other student, $F(1,112) = 8.30, p = .005, \eta^2 = .07$, and no main effects of power or legitimacy, $F < 1, p > .5$. Means across conditions are depicted in Table 1 (right panel). Planned contrasts on all five conditions showed that *legitimate high power* increased distance compared to the baseline condition, $t(145) = 2.30, p = .02, d = 0.53$, and the legitimate low-power condition, $t(145) = 2.05, p = .04, d = 0.57$. The legitimate low power and baseline conditions did not differ, $t < 1, p > .90$. As also expected, *illegitimate low power* increased distance compared to the baseline condition, $t(145) = 2.48, p = .01, d = 0.63$, and was marginally different from the illegitimate high-power condition, $t(145) = 1.84, p = .07, d = 0.51$. As in Study 1, illegitimate high power ($M = 4.55, SD = 1.24$) did not increase distance compared to the baseline condition, $t < 1, p > .5$.

The current findings replicated Experiment 1. Legitimate power and illegitimate powerlessness both increased social distance compared to the other three conditions.

Experiment 3: Mediation by Self-Sufficiency

In our next experiment, we aimed to establish the mediating role of self-sufficiency. The design and procedure were the same as that of Experiment 2, but we added a measure of self-sufficiency (the mediator) before the dependent measures. Because the previous two experiments confirmed our predictions concerning the direction of the effect (compared to the baseline condition), in Experiment 3 we did not use a baseline condition.

Method

Participants and Design

One hundred and ninety-two students (42 men, 150 women, mean age 19.5 years) were randomly allocated to one of four conditions of a 2 (power: high, low) $\times$ 2 (legitimacy: legitimate, illegitimate) between-participants design.

Procedure

The procedure was similar to Experiment 2 except that we measured feelings of self-sufficiency with 4 items ($\alpha = .67$) after the power and legitimacy recall primes. These were "I think I can deal with most problems by myself," "I currently feel that I do not really need the help of others," "Currently, I think that I can obtain most things by myself," and "I could use some help by others, at the moment" (reversed). All answers in the scale ranged from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 9 (*fully agree*). Next, we measured distance using the scale of Experiment 2 ($\alpha = .98$).

Figure 1. Experiment 3. Self-sufficiency mediates the interaction effect between power and legitimacy on social distance. Values represent standardized regression coefficients and their statistical significance (* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$). Values to the left of the forward slash represent direct effects, values to the right represent coefficients derived from a simultaneous regression.

Results

Self-sufficiency. A 2 (power) $\times$ 2 (legitimacy) ANOVA revealed the expected interaction effect on self-sufficiency, $F(1, 188) = 14.72$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .07$, and no main effects, $F < 1.1$, $p > .30$. Planned contrasts showed that legitimate high power ($M = 6.45$, $SD = 1.22$) increased self-sufficiency compared to legitimate low power ($M = 5.74$, $SD = 1.00$), $t(188) = 2.88$, $p = .004$, $d = 0.64$. In contrast, illegitimate high power ($M = 5.61$, $SD = 1.40$) decreased self-sufficiency compared to illegitimate low power ($M = 6.22$, $SD = 1.06$), $t(188) = -2.54$, $p = .01$, $d = -0.50$.

Social distance. A two-way ANOVA on distance showed the expected interaction effect, $F(1, 188) = 11.11$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$, and no main effects of power or legitimacy, $F < 0.1$, $p > .75$. Planned contrasts showed that legitimate high power ($M = 6.11$, $SD = 1.87$) increased social distance compared to legitimate low power ($M = 5.13$, $SD = 1.75$), $t(188) = 2.54$, $p = .01$, $d = 0.54$. In contrast, illegitimate high power ($M = 5.15$, $SD = 1.99$) decreased social distance compared to illegitimate low power ($M = 5.98$, $SD = 1.87$), $t(188) = -2.17$, $p = .03$, $d = -0.43$.

Mediation. Next, we conducted a stepwise regression analysis to determine whether self-sufficiency mediated the interaction between power and legitimacy on social distance (see Figure 1). A simultaneous regression found that the presence of the mediator self-sufficiency (which was by itself a significant predictor, $\beta = .34$, $t(191) = 5.01$, $p < .001$) decreased the significant direct interaction effect from $\beta = .24$, $p = .001$ to $\beta = .16$, $p = .03$. This mediation was significant using both Sobel's $Z = 2.25$, $p = .02$ and bootstrapping (using 5,000 resamples), 95% confidence interval = [.125, .587].

These results demonstrate that the effect of power and its legitimacy on social distance is mediated by feelings of self-sufficiency.

Experiment 4: Willingness to Help

Having established the interaction effect of power and legitimacy on distance, we next explored whether these variables affect people's willingness to help others. In the Introduction,

Table 2. Results of Experiments 4 and 5

	Experiment 4		Experiment 5	
	Legitimate (%)	Illegitimate (%)	Legitimate (%)	Illegitimate (%)
Power	53.6	82.1	57.9	77.8
Powerless	77.8	50.0	88.9	55.0
Baseline	79.7		88.7	

Cells show the percentage of respondents per cell who helped and obliged with the request.

we cited multiple lines of research linking social distance to decreased helping. Given that power affects social distance, we hypothesized that power and its legitimacy would interact to predict willingness to help. Specifically, we predicted that feelings of legitimate power and illegitimate powerlessness would both decrease willingness to help relative to legitimate powerlessness, illegitimate power, or a baseline condition.

Method

Participants and Design

One hundred and seventy-two students (87 men, 84 women, one missing, mean age 20 years) were randomly assigned to one of five cells of a 2 (power: high, low) $\times$ 2 (legitimacy: legitimate, illegitimate) + 1 (baseline) between-participants design.

Procedure

Participants first completed the same episodic priming manipulation as in Experiments 2 and 3. Participants in the baseline condition did not complete any of these primes.

Measures. Next, participants completed a simple dilemma designed to measure willingness to help others. Participants played the role of a farmer who owned a large property of land. They were asked for their permission to have a railroad track built across their property. This would bring collective benefits (economic prosperity, easier traveling) at great individual costs (losing part of the property, etc.). Participants answered whether they were willing to help on a dichotomous item (yes or no). During debriefing, no participant identified the purpose of the power manipulation.

Results

We followed the same data analytic procedure described in Experiment 1. Table 2 (left panel) shows proportion of participants willing to help across conditions. A hierarchical log-linear analysis on the effect of power and legitimacy on willingness to help showed the predicted interaction between power and legitimacy, $\chi^2(1) = 10.21$, $p = .001$. Simple comparisons showed that legitimate power decreased willingness to help compared to the baseline condition, $\chi^2(1) = 6.31$, $p = .01$, $d = 0.57$, and the legitimate low-power condition, $\chi^2(1) = 3.56$, $p = .06$, $d = 0.51$. In contrast, illegitimate low

power decreased willingness to help compared to the baseline condition, $\chi^2(1) = 8.28, p = .004, d = -0.66$, and the illegitimate high-power condition, $\chi^2(1) = 6.62, p = .01, d = -0.71$. As in previous studies, illegitimate high power did not differ from the baseline condition, $\chi^2(1) = .07, p = .79$. Legitimate power and illegitimate power, which had both increased social distance in the previous experiments, also decreased willingness to help, compared to the other three conditions.

Experiment 5: Willingness to Help

In Experiment 5, we replicated the findings of Experiment 4 using a different manipulation of power: a word search puzzle containing words related to legitimate/illegitimate power/powerlessness (Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh, 2001; Lammers et al., 2008).

Method

Participants and Design

One hundred and twenty-eight students (52 men, 76 women, mean age 20 years) were randomly assigned to one of five cells of a 2 (power: high, low) $\times$ 2 (legitimacy: legitimate, illegitimate) + 1 (baseline) between-participants design.

Procedure

Participants first received a lexical priming manipulation (Chen et al., 2001) adapted by Lammers et al. (2008). Participants completed a word search puzzle and encircled 12 hidden words, of which a quarter was related to power (control, influence, and powerful) or powerlessness (dependent, powerless, and subordinate), and another quarter was related to legitimacy (fair, just, and righteous) or illegitimacy (unfair, unjust, and unrighteous), depending on condition. The remaining were fillers (railway, house, cats, clean, trees, and garden). In the baseline condition, only filler words were used. Next, participants completed the same dilemma as in Experiment 4. Finally, we checked awareness of the primes and no one noticed that the words related to power and its legitimacy or its link to the helping measure.

Results

We followed the same data analytic procedure described in Experiment 1. Table 2 (right panel) shows proportion of participants willing to help across conditions. A hierarchical log-linear analysis on the effect of power and legitimacy on willingness to help showed the predicted interaction, $\chi^2(1) = 6.86, p = .009$. Legitimate power decreased willingness to help compared to the baseline condition, $\chi^2(1) = 8.46, p = .004, d = 0.75$, and compared to the legitimate-powerlessness condition, $\chi^2(1) = 4.50, p = .03, d = 0.75$. In contrast, illegitimate powerlessness decreased willingness to help compared to the baseline condition, $\chi^2(1) = 10.09, p = .001, d = -0.82$ and nonsignificantly decreased willingness compared to illegitimate power,

$\chi^2(1) = 2.18, p = .14, d = -0.49$. As previously discussed, illegitimate power did not differ from the baseline condition, $\chi^2(1) = 1.32, p = .25$.

These findings replicated the results of Experiment 4. Even with a less obtrusive prime, legitimate power and illegitimate power decreased willingness to help.

General Discussion

Five experiments provided the first direct evidence that power increases social distance. Throughout these studies, we consistently found medium- to large-sized effects of power on distance. We also identified an important boundary condition. Whenever power was seen as illegitimate, the experience of powerlessness increased social distance but power did not. Again, the size of this opposite effect was medium to large. In line with our theorizing that self-sufficiency drives these effects, Experiment 3 demonstrated that the interaction between power and legitimacy was mediated by feelings of self-sufficiency. Finally, given past findings that link social distance and helping, Experiments 4 and 5 found parallel medium- to large-sized effects on willingness to help; legitimate high power and illegitimate low-power participants were the most likely to help strangers.

Social Distance as a Synthesizing Force in the Power Literature

By invoking social distance, the current findings can help integrate a large number of seemingly disparate findings in the power literature. For example, Fiske (1993) explained that power increases stereotyping because the powerful are motivated to take more distance toward their subordinates. The finding that power decreases perspective taking has been explained by noting that the powerful keep more distance between their own self-concept and those of others (Galinsky et al., 2006). Power is thought to increase objectification (Gruenfeld et al., 2008) and dehumanization (Lammers & Stapel, 2010) because by seeing social targets in a more distanced manner, the powerful are better able to use others as instruments to reach their goals. Power decreases compassion and distress about the emotions of others because the powerful are less likely to affiliate with others (Van Kleef et al., 2008). Smith and Trope (2006) and Magee et al. (2010) claimed that power increases the distance one feels toward others. All these findings have assumed that power increases distance but none of them directly tested this claim. The current research provides the first direct evidence that power, as long as it is legitimate, can indeed be conceptualized as a form of social distance. This does not mean that the current article serves only to lay a solid foundation under these other papers. Rather, it also serves as a keystone to lock these different isolated effects of power together, thus contributing toward an integrative understanding of power.

Power and Money

It is interesting to note that our effects of legitimate power on social distance mirror the effects of priming money found by Vohs et al. (2006, 2008). This is not surprising since the definition of power involves control over resources (Magee & Galinsky, 2008) and money is often a critical resource. Thus, the concepts of money and power are often experienced together. Both money and power increase a sense of self-sufficiency and social distance.

Despite the parallel effect, we do not think that the effects of power can be reduced to those of money. After all, by definition, money confers power (it allows one to buy the service of others), but power does not necessarily require (or confer) money and can also be based on expertise or authority (French & Raven, 1959).

In addition, money appears to have invariant effects on social distance and helping, whereas the effects of power can increase feelings of connectedness when the powerful are communally oriented either through personality or culture (Chen et al., 2001; Zhong, Magee, Maddux, & Galinsky, 2006) or when power is tied to social connections (Lammers, Stoker, & Stapel, 2009a; Overbeck & Park, 2001, 2006). Thus, the effects of power will not always overlap with the effects of money, which seems to uniformly decrease responsibility (Vohs et al., 2006). In general, the effects of power appear to be more strongly susceptible to various moderating effects than the effects of money (Lammers & Galinsky, 2009). Future research should explore this in more detail by determining whether or not the effects of money are moderated by how money is conceived and conceptualized.

Applied Implications

Our findings may offer a fundamental understanding of how power can increase social distance and decrease helping behavior in organizations. The results demonstrate that both feelings of legitimate power and illegitimate powerlessness increase social distance. This is an important observation because numerous findings in the management literature hold that a tight relationship between leaders and subordinates is crucial for many positive organizational effects to emerge, such as organizational citizenship behaviors (Dansereau, Cashman, & Graen, 1973; Gerstner & Day, 1997; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The effects identified in this article may affect one or even both parties' sense of distance toward other organizational members. First of all, the powerful may feel distance but only when they are convinced of the legitimacy of their position. If instead they sense that some see their power as illegitimate, our results suggest that these effects may be blocked. Second, subordinates will likely feel distance if they sense that their subordinate position is illegitimate. Of course, more direct applied research is needed to confirm that the findings of our experiments can be applied to organizations, but tentatively we suggest that by engaging those lower in the power hierarchy in organizational decision making, subordinates will

have increased feelings of legitimacy and may also make the powerful aware that their power is not all encompassing. Both the effects will decrease social distance and increase helping behavior. Giving those down below more voice may allow people at the top and at the bottom of an organization to embrace each other in a spirit of mutual cooperation.

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1. Gender produced no main effects or interactions in any of the remaining studies.

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