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Power and Dissent:
Implications for Ethics in Organizations
by
Jessica Alynn Kennedy

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Business Administration
in the
Graduate Division
of the
University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Cameron Anderson, Chair
Professor Jennifer Chatman
Professor Barry Staw
Professor Robb Willer

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Power and Dissent:
Implications for Ethics in Organizations

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by

Jessica Alynn Kennedy

ABSTRACT

Power and Dissent: Implications for Ethics in Organizations

by

Jessica Alynn Kennedy

Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Cameron Anderson, Chair

This dissertation examines how power, defined as higher rank in a hierarchy, affects dissent, the expression of disagreement with a value, goal, or practice embraced by a group majority. I examine this relation in the context of ethics in organizations in order to understand whether those higher in organizational hierarchies are more likely to intervene when unethical practices are ongoing in organizations.

I propose that although possessing power confers the psychological and social freedom to dissent, the process of attaining power makes individuals unlikely to see the need to dissent. Specifically, I suggest that advancing to a position results in greater identification with the group. By creating this identification, power may lead individuals to adopt the morality embedded in the group. As a result, advancing in the hierarchy may cause individuals to see existing practices as more ethical, and high power individuals may dissent less than those who have not advanced in the hierarchy. I refer to this as the theory of power attainment. On the basis of this theory, I propose a negative relation between power and dissent.

I explored this topic in a series of five studies. The first study explored lay perceptions of power and ethics. It examined whether organizational members considered high power individuals more responsible for ethics in organizations, and members' lay theories of how attaining power affects individuals' ethics. In this study, I found that 73 percent of survey respondents believed advancing in a hierarchy makes individuals more responsible for the organization's ethics, but only 42 percent believed that power inclines individuals to do so. Moreover, 42 percent reported that advancing in the hierarchy makes individuals less ethical. Thus, although most individuals perceived high power people to be responsible for organizational ethics, most respondents did not think high power individuals generally fulfill this responsibility.

The second study examined the relations between power, group identification, and dissent. It used the priming methodology currently dominant in the research on power to examine two central hypotheses: Power increases group identification and decreases dissent. In this study, I found attaining power enhanced group identification. However, attaining power had no effect on dissent using this approach.

The third study examined the effect of power on dissent in a laboratory study. It examined these central hypotheses as the prior study: Those who advance to a position of power in a group identify more with the group and dissent less than individuals who do not advance to power. In this study, individuals ostensibly interacted with a group and were randomly selected or not selected to advance in the group hierarchy. They later had the opportunity to dissent when the group decided whether to lie to obtain additional compensation for participating in the study. In this study, a negative relation between power and dissent emerged. Relative to a control condition, high power individuals dissented less. This occurred regardless of whether groups recommended lying or telling the truth. Low power had no effect on dissent relative to the control condition. Increased group identification among high power individuals explained the negative relation between power and dissent. Attaining power caused greater identification with the group and therefore, less dissent.

The findings of Study 3 were puzzling in light of current power research, which has found that power decreases conformity. Study 4 aimed to integrate the findings of Study 3 with the existing power research by examining moral awareness as a moderator of the effect of power on dissent. I predicted that high power individuals would dissent more than others when their personal moral standards were salient due to the freedom power confers, but less when these standards were not salient because power makes individuals more susceptible to social influence from the group. In this study, individuals did or did not advance to a position of power in the group. Then, before they saw an ethically questionable negotiation strategy recommended by the group, they either wrote about the ethical virtues they saw as important in the negotiation (high moral awareness condition) or the goals they saw as important in the negotiation (low moral awareness condition). This study found a main effect of power on views of the group decision's ethicality. High power individuals rated the group's decision as more ethical than did individuals in a control condition. Moral awareness had no effect of power on dissent.

Finally, Study 5 examined the relation between power and dissent using archival survey data. In an archival study of over 11,000 employees in 22 U.S. federal government agencies, I found evidence that higher power was associated with lower odds of perceiving and reporting unethical activity. However, among individuals who did perceive unethical activity, higher power was associated with higher odds of dissent, consistent with existing power theory.

This research suggests that attaining power changes how individuals react to social influence; power appears to enhance conformity with the choices of those who accorded power. Because this finding stands in stark contrast to prior research on power, this research highlights the value of examining power in a social context. This research also provides one explanation for how unethical practices may persist in organizations. Power confers the psychological and social freedom to dissent and is widely perceived to confer responsibility for ensuring ethical behavior, policies, and practices in organizations. However, advancing in power appears to lead individuals to see the organization's values, goals, and practices as more ethical than they would otherwise. Therefore, by the time individuals achieve the psychological and social freedom to dissent, they may not see the need for dissent. As a result, high power individuals may not intervene to stop unethical practices.

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CHAPTER 1

Toward a Theory of Power and Dissent

Individuals in positions of power hold significant responsibility for practices and policies in their organization. They are often charged with ensuring their organization's success by setting its goals (Drucker, 1954), outlining its strategies (Hambrick, 1989), recruiting and motivating its members (Pinder, 1984), and communicating with its stakeholders (Heath, 1994). They are also often charged with maintaining ethical behavior in the organization (Sims, 1992; Sims & Brinkman, 2002). Across cultures, individuals are seen as more responsible for wrongdoing when they are higher in autonomy and authority (Hamilton & Sanders, 1995), and the behavior of high ranking individuals has ranked first in surveys of factors that affect unethical decisions (Baumhart, 1961; Brenner & Molander, 1977).

However, history is replete with situations in which high power individuals failed to intervene when ongoing practices were unethical. From accounting fraud (Patsuris, 2002) and undisclosed backdating of stock options ("Litigation Release 21599"; McCullagh, 2006) to the sale of harmful products (Motavalli, 2010) and organizational cultures with pervasive incivility and discrimination (Antilla, 2002), many unethical practices appear to persist unchecked in organizations. When these practices are discovered, the failure of high power individuals to intervene is puzzling not only in light of their perceived responsibility for the organization's ethicality, but also in light of the current research on power, which suggests that high power individuals should be enabled psychologically and by their social context to dissent when they deem it necessary (Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008). In this research, I explore the relation between power and dissent in the context of unethical behavior in organizations. I propose that high power individuals may not dissent when observers would expect them to because power increases group identification, preventing those who have advanced to power from seeing the need for dissent. Consequently, although observers often expect high power individuals to take responsibility for ethics in organizations, high power individuals may fail to intervene when unethical practices surface in organizations.

CONSTRUCT DEFINITIONS

Power

I use the term power to refer to higher rank in a hierarchy. I use this definition of power because this research aims to understand dissent in the context of organizational hierarchies, where higher rank in the hierarchy typically involves both more control over resources and more social status (Weber, 1948). Although recent work (Magee & Galinsky, 2008) has argued for distinguishing control over resources from social status, the respect, prominence, and admiration accorded to individuals by a group (Anderson, John, Keltner, & Kring, 2001; Bales, Strodtbeck, Mills, & Roseborough, 1951; Berger, Cohen, & Zelditch, 1972), and this distinction can be useful (e.g., Blader & Chen, 2012), prior research has noted that power and status are not independent. Status can lead to power by increasing the value of a person's approval and advice (Blau, 1964), and power can lead to status as individuals seek to satisfy their system justification and just world motives by viewing individuals in high power positions as deserving of these

positions (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Lerner, 1980). For these reasons, I consider rank in a hierarchy the most realistic conceptualization of power in the context of organizations.

Dissent

In this research, dissent refers to the expression of disagreement with a value, goal, or practice embraced by a group majority, consistent with the conceptualization in the existing literature (Nemeth & Goncalo, 2011; Nemeth & Staw, 1989; Packer, 2008). Dissent signals that an individual disagrees with the group's current behavior (its descriptive norms), or with how the group believes it should behave (its prescriptive norms) (Packer, 2008). Because it represents a departure from norms, "the regular behavior patterns that are relatively stable and expected by a group's members" (Bettenhausen & Murnighan, 1991: 21), dissent has much in common with some sociological conceptualizations of deviance (e.g., Merton, 1949). However, this research uses the term dissent because deviance has largely come to connote negative behaviors, such as those harmful to the organization or members within it, in the organizational literature (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Moreover, the term deviance introduces the group's evaluation of an individual's behavior. Social labeling theory (Becker, 1963; Goffman, 1963) has highlighted the socially constructed nature of deviance, suggesting deviance is a label applied by a group rather than a specific type of behavior. By conceptualizing dissent as the expression of disagreement, this research avoids confounding the group's evaluation of a behavior or person with the actual behavior in question.

Because dissent may take the form of a discretionary verbal expression with constructive intent, it resembles voice (Morrison, 2011). Voice represents one form of dissent, but dissent is a broader construct. Dissent encompasses not only verbal expressions, but also behaviors that express disagreement with the prevailing opinions, practices, and values of the group. In this way, dissent may be conceptualized as a ladder. Individuals may express small levels of disagreement by asking challenging questions or expressing reservations to individuals outside the organization. As the force of their disagreement grows, individuals may engage in more direct expressions of disagreement, voicing direct arguments and lobbying colleagues for support. At the highest levels of conviction, individuals may take actions to correct the issue they see as problematic, even at some personal risk or expense. Thus, voice may represent a lower-level form of dissent chosen by individuals early in the stages of disagreement, whereas counter-normative acts may represent higher-level forms of dissent chosen by individuals in later stages of disagreement. Because power confers the tendency and the authority to act, and by definition, high power individuals have fewer people above them in the hierarchy to serve as targets of their voice, high power individuals may tend to engage in higher-level, action-oriented forms of dissent. Thus, by encompassing both verbal expressions and acts that express disagreement, this definition of dissent serves the purposes of this research better than conceiving of dissent as voice.

CONSTRAINTS ON DISSENT BY LOW POWER INDIVIDUALS

Existing research has suggested that holding a low power position constrains individuals from dissenting. Low ranking positions mute individuals' ability to recognize the need for dissent and to dissent when they recognize this need. Recognizing the need for dissent can be

difficult for low ranking individuals for at least two reasons. Generally, individuals rely on authority as a heuristic, one that suggests obedience is best (Strudler & Warren, 2001). Because high ranking individuals are thought to have greater competence, experience, and commitment to collective goals (Magee, Kilduff, & Heath, 2011), low ranking individuals may trust them to provide orders that are good, overall. In addition, low ranking individuals may perform more routinized tasks. By inducing individuals to focus on processes rather than end goals, this routinization may suppress recognition of questionable end goals (Ashforth & Anand, 2003; Brief, Buttram, & Dukerich, 2001), preventing individuals from seeing the need for dissent. However, their relatively short socialization periods suggest they may be able to turn a more critical perspective toward organizational practices and values than higher ranking individuals (Ashforth & Anand, 2003).

The greater obstacle for low power individuals is dissenting when they see the need for it. If low power individuals do recognize the need for dissent, they face considerable obstacles to expressing it. One source of constraint arises from their psychological inhibition, which impedes the tendency to act. When individuals occupy low power positions, they experience psychological inhibition, a mental state marked by increased fear of sanctions and punishment, higher levels of negative affect and the stress hormone, cortisol, and a subjective sense of constraint that inhibits expression and action (Keltner et al., 2003). Research has found low power individuals to inhibit the expression of their attitudes, experience more negative emotions, and overestimate the extent to which others feel threatening emotions toward them (Anderson & Berdhal, 2002). As a consequence of their inhibited mental state, low power individuals are less likely than high power individuals to engage in action in a variety of forms and contexts, from taking a card in a game of blackjack, to moving an annoying fan, to contributing to and taking from a shared resource pool (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003). They may therefore also be less likely dissent.

In addition, individuals in low power positions are constrained from dissenting by a sense of duty to obey orders. Those lower in hierarchies often feel a moral duty to obey the orders given to them by organizational authorities, regardless of the orders' content (Hamilton & Sanders, 1992). This occurs because low power individuals often believe higher ranking individuals have a moral right to obedience simply by virtue of their official position in the organization (Astley & Sachdeva, 1984; Biggart & Hamilton, 1984). As a result, individuals often obey authorities even when their orders demand wrongdoing and inflict harm on others (Milgram, 1963). This sense of duty has the double effect of enabling diffusion of responsibility. Because low power individuals feel bound to obey orders from another party, they can attribute their behavior to this source, diffusing responsibility. This weakens low power individuals' sense of moral agency, freeing them from self-sanctions for morally reprehensible behavior (Bandura, 1999).

Finally, the social context inhabited by low power individuals is not especially hospitable to dissent. Prior work has shown that low power individuals are punished more severely for norm violations (Becker, 1963; Hollander, 1958, 1961), particularly when high ranking individuals are in charge of evaluating deviants (Bowles & Gelfand, 2010). Dissent is often viewed as deviant because it represents non-conformity to views held by the group (Cosser, 1956; Packer, 2008). Thus, dissenting is risky for low power individuals. They may face social

sanctions for expressing disagreement. In these ways, low power individuals are both psychologically and socially constrained from dissenting.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DISSENT IN ORGANIZATIONS

Ensuring some level of dissent is present in organizations is important because sub-optimal behavior often emerges in group contexts. When operating in groups, individuals seek approval and social validation of their beliefs (Festinger, 1950; Nemeth & Staw, 1989), and as a result, they tend to perpetuate existing practices and prevailing opinions without reflection. Although this enables coordination and cohesion, it can also result in poor decision-making (Janis, 1972), the perpetuation of arbitrary norms and suboptimal performance (Asch, 1956; Staw & Boettger, 1990; Zucker, 1977), and unethical behavior (Cohen, Gunia, Kim-Jun, & Murnighan, 2009; Milgram, 1963). Because they encourage cohesion, uniformity, and locomotion toward established goals, group contexts often discourage thoughtful, innovative, and ethical behavior.

Dissent provides one solution to these problems by helping groups detect errors and limitations in beliefs or goals (Nemeth & Staw, 1989). Dissent prevents groups from rushing to conclusions; it stimulates the search for more information and causes people to consider facts and opinions from a variety of angles (Nemeth & Goncalo, 2005). Prior research has found dissent to enhance originality, spontaneity, and innovation in groups (De Dreu, 2002; Nemeth & Kwan, 1985; Nemeth & Wachtler, 1983) and work on principled organizational dissent and whistle-blowing implicitly recognizes dissent as an important way for individuals to challenge unethical behavior and practices (Graham, 1986; Near & Miceli, 1985, 1987). Because dissent can have a positive impact on innovation, decision-making, and ethicality in organizations, understanding how and when it emerges is a critical question for organizational researchers.

EFFECTS OF POWER ON DISSENT

With low power individuals constrained, organizations may rely on high power individuals to dissent. This is especially likely given the limited impact that low power individuals may have even when they overcome constraints; groups accept the ideas of low power individuals less, even if these ideas are objectively correct (Torrance, 1954). Therefore, a question of considerable importance is how occupying a high power position affects a person's tendency to dissent.

My research examines this question. In the following section, I review existing literature that suggests high power individuals should be well-equipped to meet organizations' need for dissent. Then, contrary to this existing theoretical view, I suggest that although power confers the freedom to challenge unethical practices, it generally renders individuals unlikely to see the need for dissent. Thus, high power individuals may not dissent, despite having the freedom to do so.

Effects of Possessing Power on Dissent

Existing research suggests two primary reasons that high power individuals should be well-positioned to meet organizations' need for dissent. First, power changes individuals' psychology, encouraging action. Power activates an approach orientation characterized by uninhibited action and decreased sensitivity to threats (Anderson & Berdhal, 2002; Keltner et al., 2003). As a result, high power individuals are driven more by internal states than external constraints (Galinsky et al., 2008; Keltner et al., 2003). For instance, high power actors reported expressing their true attitudes more than low power individuals did (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002); when primed with power, communal individuals acted more generously and exchange-oriented individuals acted more self-interestedly (Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh, 2001), and spouses with more power in their marriage acted in ways more consistent with their own identities (Cast, 2003). High power actors have also been found to generate creative ideas less constrained by salient examples and to perceive greater choice in making counter-attitudinal statements (Galinsky et al., 2008). Galinsky et al. (2008) proposed that this freedom from social pressures occurs because high power actors notice situational information less and find it less affecting and concerning when they do notice it. The psychological freedom power confers may increase the likelihood that high power individuals will dissent when they see a need to do so.

Second, power alters the risk of sanctions in individuals' social contexts. Past research has found that groups accord higher ranking individuals more leeway to deviate from group norms without punishment (Hollander & Julian, 1970), in part because high power individuals have accumulated idiosyncrasy credits through the process of attaining high rank (Harvey & Consalvi, 1960; Hollander, 1958, 1960, 1961), at least when the group is succeeding (Alvarez, 1968). Further, because high power individuals are often the ones to define deviance (Becker, 1963; Bowles & Gelfand, 2010; Giordano, 1983; Goffman, 1963), they can do so in ways favorable to themselves, perpetuating their own values and goals (Hage & Dewar, 1973; Selznick, 1957). In these ways, power decreases the social risks of dissent and confers social freedom.

This existing research describes the effects of *possessing* power at a discrete moment. It suggests that power confers psychological and social freedom. On the basis of this research, I suggest the following proposition:

Proposition 1: High power individuals will be more likely than those who do not hold power to dissent when they see a need to do so.

Effects of Attaining Power on Dissent

Whether high power individuals will see the need to dissent remains a critical question, however. Although power confers the psychological and social freedom to dissent, existing theory has yet to describe the effects of the power attainment process, a critical element of power in organizational hierarchies. I argue that the process of attaining power may prevent individuals from seeing a need to dissent because power increases group identification. As a result of their

identification with the group, individuals may turn a less critical eye toward values and goals embraced by the group.

I begin by considering the relation between power and group identification. Drawing on exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961) and optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991), I propose that individuals feel greater group identification after they receive power because power fulfills their needs for belonging and distinctiveness. Then, I explore the relation between group identification and the acceptance of group values and goals. I review considerable evidence that suggests group identification increases the acceptance of group values and goals, resulting in greater cooperation at the price of independence. From this logic, I draw the propositions that attaining power increases group identification and decreases dissent. Finally, I propose tenure in the group and moral awareness as moderators of the effect of power on dissent.

Power and group identification. In organizations and social life at large, individuals advance in power in return for contributing to others' goals (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1962; Willer, 2009). In this sense, individuals receive power as part of an exchange process designed to elicit contributions from them. This conceptualization of the power attainment process squares well with notions of hierarchies as structures designed to provide incentive for strong performance. From this traditional conceptualization of hierarchies, how power could lead to identification with the group remains unclear. The affordance of power for contributions would seem to complete this exchange process.

Yet recent work suggests the exchange process continues. In a recent study of laboratory groups, Willer (2009) found evidence that expressions of status toward contributing individuals resulted in these individuals seeing the group more positively. In Willer's (2009) study, participants were randomly allocated high or moderate levels of social status in the form of ratings of how prestigious, honorable, and respected they were seen by two other group members. When participants were randomly allocated high levels of status, they reported greater identification with the group, more desire to contribute to the group's goals, and increased perceptions of cohesion and solidarity in the group. This suggests that rather than providing a simple incentive to contribute to the organizations' goals, organizational hierarchies may set in motion a cycle of exchange. Individuals may contribute to attain power, but attaining this power does not end the exchange process; instead, it leads them to identify with the group and feel more positively toward it (Homans, 1961).

Why this occurs is not immediately obvious. Individuals would seem to recognize power as a reward for their contributions. However, research on group identification suggests individuals do not see this exchange process quite so rationally. Brewer's (1991) theory of optimal distinctiveness provides one possible explanation. In this work, Brewer noted that individuals define themselves in terms of category memberships that balance their needs for assimilation and differentiation. When individuals obtain both a sense of belonging and a sense of distinctiveness from a group, their identification with the group increases (Brewer, Manzi, & Shaw, 1993). Power provides optimal distinctiveness because high ranking positions are few in number and those who hold these positions are viewed positively and enjoy considerable benefits (Berger et al., 1972; Blau, 1964; Ellis, 1994; Griskevicius, Tybur, & Van den Bergh, 2010; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003; Savin-Williams, 1979). By fulfilling this need for

optimal distinctiveness, power may simultaneously activate conceptions of the self, the group, and positive valence, conditions that result in identification, according to the neural network model of organizational identification (Lane & Scott, 2007).

Supporting this logic, research on organizational identification has found that individuals identify more highly with prestigious organizations because these organizations meet individuals' needs for a positive social identity (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002; George & Chattopadhyay, 2005; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004) and research on cooperation in groups has suggested that pride, respect, and status increase group identification (Blader & Tyler, 2009; Tyler & Blader, 2003; Willer, 2009). Thus, attaining power may cause group identification by meeting individuals' psychological need for optimal distinctiveness.

Group identification and acceptance of group goals and values. Identification is “the degree to which people cognitively merge their sense of self and their evaluations of self-worth with their judgments of the characteristics and status of their group” (Tyler & Blader, 2003: 354). By aligning individuals and organizations, identification produces a number of positive outcomes for organizations. Numerous studies have found that identification produces cooperation with the group's goals. For instance, O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) found that people who identified with their organization subsequently gave more donations to the organization a number of years later. Dukerich, Golden, and Shortell (2002) found that physicians who identified more highly with the health care system engaged in more cooperative behaviors. Similarly, Willer (2009) found that participants who identified more highly with a laboratory group contributed more money to the group in a public good game. McDonald and Westphal (2011) found that CEOs who identified more with the corporate elite provided more social support to CEOs experiencing personal problems. Conversely, McDonald and Westphal (2010) found that reduced social identification with the corporate elite decreased CEOs' willingness to provide strategic help to other CEOs. The cooperation caused by group identification can have positive effects on organizational functioning, resulting in performance improvements (Walumbwa et al., 2011) and reductions in agency costs and the need for external governance controls (Boivie, Lange, McDonald, & Westphal, 2011). Barreto and Ellemers (2000) found that high identifiers worked to improve the status of their group regardless of whether they were anonymous or accountable to the in-group. This research supports the proposition that hierarchies reduce coordination costs (Barnard, 1938; Chandler, 1977; Galbraith, 1977; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Thompson, 1967). However, this benefit may arrive at some expense.

The form of this expense may grow more evident if cooperation is conceptualized in more value-neutral terms. Following Tetlock (1998; Tetlock, Armor, and Petersen, 1994), Table 1 shows a Peabody (1967) plot which considers both high and low levels of cooperation and the value judgments that can be attached to each. What underlies each of these adjectives is a description of how an actor responds to the influence of externally established standards, such as goals or norms. If a person accepts the standards another has set for her, she may be described positively, as cooperative, or negatively, as conforming. If a person acts without regard for the standards another has set for her, he may be described positively, as independent, or negatively, as uncooperative. Drawing from this understanding of cooperation, the loss exacted by high

levels of group identification appears to be one of independence. Stated provocatively, by causing group identification, power may compromise one's independence. Stated in more scientific terms, by causing group identification, power may cause individuals to become more tractable to social influence exerted by the group. By dissolving the boundary between self and group, power may lead individuals to be more inclined to accept the group's goals and values, one critical dimension of socialization (Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994). In this way, hierarchies may serve not only coordination and motivation functions, but also a socialization function.

Power and acceptance of group goals and values. For the study of dissent, this implies that attaining power may lead individuals to accept the group's goals and values and therefore, see less need for dissent than who have not attained power. Some empirical evidence supports this idea, finding that those higher in the organizational hierarchy view their organization more positively (Stouffer, Suchman, DeVinney, Star, & Williams, 1949; Tannenbaum, Kavcic, Rosner, Vianello, & Wieser, 1974), and endorse its values more strongly. For instance, in a study of senior managers and lower level employees in three organizations, Trevino, Weaver, and Brown (2008) found that senior managers saw the internal ethical environment of their organizations more positively than lower level employees saw this environment, after controlling for tenure in the organization. Examining value endorsement more directly, Guimond (1995) found that cadets promoted in a military hierarchy endorsed military values more strongly than they had the prior year, whereas those not promoted showed no change in endorsing military values across that year. Similarly, Guimond, Dambrun, Michinov, and Duarte (2003) found that upper-level students adopted their profession's attitudes toward hierarchical relations between groups. Specifically, upper-level students in law schools displayed higher social dominance orientation than first year students, whereas, in psychology, upper-level students displayed lower social dominance orientation than first year students. In the medical diffusion literature, researchers have found that high ranking actors adopt innovations consistent with group norms (Becker, 1970; Menzel, 1960). Each of these studies provides some evidence of a relation between the attainment of power and socialization.

Evidence also exists to suggest that group identification is associated with greater acceptance of group goals and values. In a study of individualistic and collectivistic cultures, Jetten, Postmes, and McAuliffe (2002) found that high identifiers in both cultures endorsed their culture's values more than low identifiers did. Sechrist and Young (2011) found that group identification moderated consensus affects, such that high identifiers were more susceptible to being influenced by others' beliefs than low identifiers or those in a control condition. If group identification leads to the acceptance of influence from the group, members who advance to positions of power should share the group's conceptions of what is good. In the context of ethical issues, high power individuals should see the group's goals, values, and practices as more ethical. In this way, powerful individuals come become instruments of the group, advancing the goals and values embedded in its culture. When these goals and values are ethical, power will enhance individuals' ethicality. When these goals and values are unethical, power will debase individuals' ethicality. Regardless of the value content, the attainment of power leaves traces of influence that marshal individuals toward the goals and values embedded in the group, away from those they may have embraced upon more independent evaluation.

This perspective, which considers the effects of *attaining* power in a social context, complements the existing research, which has examined the effects of *possessing* power at a discrete moment. From this theory of power attainment, I draw the following propositions:

Proposition 2: Individuals who advance in a group's hierarchy will see the group's goals, values, and practices as more ethical than individuals who have not advanced in the group's hierarchy.

Proposition 3: Individuals who advance in the group's hierarchy will be less likely to express dissent than those who do not advance in the group's hierarchy.

Moderators of the Effect of Attaining Power on Dissent

A number of factors may affect the relation between power and dissent. Tenure in the group may represent one key factor. In organizations, individuals may have low levels of power for one of two distinct reasons – because they have not been seen as worthy of powerful positions and were passed over for promotions, or because they are new to the group and have not yet had the opportunity to come up for promotion. At extremely low levels of tenure, when the opportunity for promotion lies ahead, low power individuals may be optimistic about their future prospects for attaining power. In an effort to attain power, they may display endorsement of the group's values and conform in order to develop harmonious social relations with others in the group. Supporting this idea, some research has found that low power individuals demonstrate conformity for strategic purposes, in order to highlight their commitment to group harmony (Jetten, Hornsey, & Adarves-Yorno, 2006). Therefore, at low levels of tenure, the negative relation between power and dissent may not hold; instead, the relation between power and dissent may be curvilinear, with both low power individuals and high power individuals dissenting less than individuals with moderate power. Therefore, the effect of power on dissent may depend on tenure in the group.

Proposition 4: Tenure in the group will moderate the effect of power on dissent, such that the negative relation between power and dissent will hold only at moderate to high levels of tenure in the group.

The salience of personal moral standards may also moderate the relation between power and dissent. Although the preceding logic suggests that advancing in the hierarchy leads individuals to accept influence from the group, adopting its standards as their own, the existing power research has found that powerful individuals act in accord with their internal standards (Galinsky et al. 2008). Therefore, if internal standards are salient before individuals are subject to influence from the group, high power individuals may act on their internal standards rather than the standards of the group. In the context of ethics, this may occur when high power individuals recognize that a moral issue is at stake, a state called moral awareness or ethical sensitivity (Jones, 1991; Rest, 1986). When individuals are high in moral awareness, they may see the need for dissent. As suggested in Proposition 1, power may relate positively to dissent in this scenario because of the psychological and social freedom power confers. By this logic, moral awareness may moderate the effect of power on dissent. It may do this by making internal standards salient and enabling individuals to see the need dissent. Therefore, when they are

morally aware, those who hold high power positions may dissent more than those who do not hold these positions.

Proposition 5: Moral awareness will moderate the effect of power on dissent, such that power and dissent will relate negatively at low levels of moral awareness, but positively at high levels of moral awareness.

The source of the values, goals, or practices in question represents a third potential moderating factor. Because group identification emerges through an exchange process (Blau, 1964, Willer, 2009), individuals who have attained power may identify most with those who have accorded power to them. Therefore, individuals may be more influenced by the values, goals and practices embraced by those most directly responsible for according them power. Research on ingratiation provides some evidence for this idea. Other-enhancement (Jones, 1964), the expression of favorable opinions and evaluations of the target person (Ralston, 1985), represents the according of informal rank in the form of positive evaluations to another person, and other-enhancement has been found to be an effective influence strategy. For instance, Westphal (2007) found that engaging in ingratiating behavior toward peer directors increased directors' chances of receiving additional board appointments. This logic suggests that individuals may accept goals, values, and practices most readily from those who accorded them power. When goals, values, practices are suggested by individuals who have directly accorded power, the effect of attaining power on dissent may be stronger; when they are suggested by those who have not had any part in according power, the effect of attaining power on dissent may be weaker. Newcomers may represent one group not seen as responsible for according power. Because they have not been fully socialized into their role as group members, they may not be seen as representing the group. Group members who question superiors' competence may represent another such group (Fast & Chen, 2009). This suggests that attaining power will decrease dissent most when the source of power is also the source of suggested values, practices, or goals.

Proposition 6: The negative relation between attaining power and dissent will be stronger when the source of power is also the source of the suggested goals, values, and practices.

This proposition may provide one explanation for research that has found power to reduce conformity (Galinsky et al., 2008). This research used tasks in which the salient examples providing the impetus for conformity (e.g., product names, another participant's drawing of an alien or ratings of the task) did not come from the source of power.

CONCLUSION

Summary

In this research, I examine how attaining a position of power in a group affects dissent, the expression of disagreement with a value, goal, or practice embraced by that group. Although existing power research has found that power confers psychological and social freedom, this research has examined power possession without a social context. In contrast, I propose that

attaining power in a social context results in group identification, and ultimately, acceptance of influence from the group. As a result, attaining power in a group may reduce dissent. Although power confers the freedom to dissent, high power individuals may not see the need to do so.

Overview of Studies

A series of five studies examined the key propositions. The first study explored public perceptions of responsibility for the ethics in business organizations and lay theories of how advancing in a hierarchy affects dissent. The second study examined the relation between power, group identification, and dissent using priming methods. The third study examined the relation between power, group identification, and dissent in a laboratory study with a causal design. In this study, individuals had the opportunity to dissent in a group context. It examined the empirical support for the key proposition, Proposition 3. The fourth study examined whether moral awareness moderated the relation between power and dissent. This study also employed a causal design and measured dissent in a group context. It examined Propositions 2, 3, and 5. The fifth study examined the relation between power, observing unethical behavior, and dissent in an archival survey dataset collected from U.S. federal government agency employees. It examined Propositions 1, 2, 3, and 4. Together, these studies were designed to provide internally and externally valid tests of the relation between power and dissent, moving toward a model of full-cycle research (Chatman & Flynn, 2005).

CHAPTER 2

An Examination of Lay Theories of Power, Ethics, and Dissent

OVERVIEW

The first study explored lay theories of power and ethics in organizations. Specifically, it examined how organizational members allocate responsibility for ethics in the organization, their perceptions of the state of ethics in organizations and the nation, and their lay theories of how power affects ethics and dissent. This study was exploratory in nature.

METHODS

Sample

Participants ($N = 75$) were recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk, a web site with more diverse samples than traditional Internet or college sources (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). The study description requested that only those who worked in an organization with a hierarchy participate. They participated in exchange for \$0.35. Nine participants failed key attention check questions and were excluded from analyses. The remaining sample was 73 percent male and 77 percent Caucasian, 12 percent Asian, 6 percent Hispanic, 3 percent African American, and 2 percent who reported other ethnicities. Ages ranged from 18 to 59 years ($M = 29.67$, $SD = 10.03$). On a scale of 1 (*At the bottom*) to 6 (*At the top*), participants reported their current position in their organization's hierarchy, $M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.25$. Most (89 percent) worked in a business organization. They had been with their organization for 3.68 years on average ($SD = 3.35$). Participants rated themselves slightly liberal, on average, on a scale of 1 (*Very liberal*) to 7 (*Very conservative*), $M = 3.17$, $SD = 1.67$. Approximately 49 percent identified as Democrats, 18 percent identified as Republicans, 24 percent identified as independents, 5 percent did not follow politics, and 5 percent reported other affiliations.

Procedure

Participants completed an online survey. The survey software randomized the order in which questions appeared.

Measures

Allocation of responsibility. To provide measures of how they perceived ethical responsibility to be apportioned in their organizations, participants reported who their organizations relied on most to prevent and stop unethical behavior, ensure practices and policies are ethical, ensure members' behavior is ethical, and intervene if unethical behavior occurred. They selected one of three options: Individuals lower in the organizational hierarchy, individuals higher in the organizational hierarchy, or both are equally relied on.

Perceptions of the state of ethics. To provide measures of how they perceived the state of ethics in their organizations, participants reported how ethical their managers and leaders are and how ethical their organization's policies and practices are, on a scale of 1 (*Very unethical*) to

7 (*Very ethical*). They also indicated how much leaders in their organizations care about ethics on a scale of 1 (*Very little*) to 4 (*Very much*). To provide measures of how they viewed the state of ethics in the nation at large, they indicated to what extent they agreed that most business organizations are ethical, most business leaders are ethical, there has been a failure of leadership in America, and a failure of leadership in American companies, on a scale of 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*). They also indicated whether they agreed, disagreed, or were undecided about whether they had experienced good leadership, bad leadership, and working for someone they found very ethical and very unethical. Finally, they reported how frequently they had experienced good and bad leadership on a scale of 1 (*Never*) to 6 (*Very frequently*).

Lay theories of how power affects ethics and dissent. To provide measures of their lay theories of power, ethics, and dissent, participants answered three questions. They reported whether people usually become more ethical, less ethical, or exhibit no change after advancing in a hierarchy. They also reported whether advancing in a hierarchy makes people more responsible, less responsible, or no different in responsibility for the organization's ethics. Finally, they reported whether advancing in a hierarchy usually makes people become more likely, less likely, or no different to intervene if they see something unethical going on.

RESULTS

Allocation of Responsibility

Respondents were split in response to the question of who is most responsible for ethical behavior in organizations. Forty-four percent reported that those higher and lower in the hierarchy are equally relied upon to prevent or stop unethical behavior, whereas 46 percent indicated that higher ranking individuals are more responsible for this. Similarly, 42 percent indicated that higher and lower ranking individuals are equally responsible for ensuring members' behavior is ethical, whereas 49 percent reported those higher in the hierarchy to be most relied upon for this. However, a majority of participants (71 percent and 65 percent, respectively) indicated that those higher in the hierarchy were most relied upon to ensure policies and practices are ethical and to intervene when unethical behavior occurs.

Perceptions of the State of Ethics

Participants harbored fairly sanguine views of ethics in their organizations, overall. Participants reported that their managers and leaders were slightly ethical to ethical, on average, $M = 5.53$, $SD = 1.23$, and that their organization's policies and practices were also slightly ethical to ethical, $M = 5.30$, $SD = 1.41$. They felt their managers and leaders cared about ethics from slightly to very much, $M = 3.26$, $SD = 0.85$. Participants were fairly neutral regarding whether most business organizations, $M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.62$, and business leaders, $M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.57$, are ethical, although the mean for business leaders indicated some skepticism. They expressed slight to moderate agreement that leadership in America, $M = 5.23$, $SD = 1.31$, and at American companies, $M = 5.33$, $SD = 1.17$, has failed, indicating less positive views of the national leadership climate. These ratings did not vary significantly by self-reports of liberalism or conservatism (coded 1 or 0 at the midpoint of the scale) or by gender.

Their assessments of their experiences with leadership were also relatively positive. The vast majority (85 percent) agreed that they had worked for someone they considered very ethical. However, most (61 percent) also indicated that they had worked for someone they considered very unethical. Most agreed they had experienced both good leadership (85 percent) and bad leadership (73 percent), and they reported experiencing good leadership ($M = 4.58, SD = 0.84$) more often than bad leadership ($M = 4.00, SD = 1.08$), $t(65) = -2.89, p = .005$.

Lay Theories of Power, Ethics, and Dissent

Participants were divided over how advancing in a hierarchy affects a person's ethics, but most did not consider it a positive event for ethics. Forty-two percent reported that individuals generally become less ethical after advancing, and 36 percent reported that there is usually no change. Only 21 percent of respondents thought advancing in a hierarchy made individuals more ethical. They were also divided over whether advancing in a hierarchy led individuals to be more inclined to intervene if they see something unethical going on. Forty-two percent believed they would be more likely to do so, whereas 30 percent believed there would be no change in this inclination, and 27 percent believed they would be less likely to intervene. However, a majority (73 percent) of respondents considered individuals more responsible for the organization's ethics after they advance in the hierarchy.

DISCUSSION

This study provided the first empirical examination of lay theories of power, ethics, and dissent. It contributed knowledge of how organizational members apportion ethical responsibility. Respondents clearly viewed those higher in the organizational hierarchy as having much responsibility for ethics in the organization. Although many respondents felt those lower in the hierarchy shared responsibility for ensuring ethical behavior, no one thought that people lower in the hierarchy were more responsible for ethics than those higher in the hierarchy. Further, most participants believed those higher in the organizational hierarchy were more relied upon than those lower in the hierarchy to ensure policies and practices are ethical. This suggests that individuals higher in organizational hierarchy are expected to take partial responsibility for the ethics of behavior in the organization, and most of the responsibility for the ethics of policies and practices. When unethical policies, practices, or behavior emerge in organizations, most respondents believed those higher in the organizational hierarchy would be most responsible for intervening.

The study also contributed knowledge of how organizational members think about power. Despite imputing moral responsibility to those in power, a significant proportion of people see advancing in a hierarchy as an event with negative implications for one's ethics. Although most participants believed that advancing in a hierarchy makes people more responsible for the organization's ethics, more respondents believed that power makes individuals less ethical than believed that power enhances ethicality. In addition, most respondents doubted that advancing in a hierarchy would make individuals more likely to actually intervene if something unethical were going on. Thus, respondents exhibited ambivalence regarding the effects of power. Their responses indicated that power confers greater moral responsibility, but few respondents believed power leads individuals to take greater responsibility for ethics in the organization.

Finally, the study contributed knowledge of how individuals in organizations currently view the state of ethics. People did not show much skepticism toward ethics in their organizations, suggesting that dissent by individual members may be difficult because few people perceive a need for it. Nevertheless, most people felt they had worked for someone very unethical, suggesting most had felt the need for dissent. These perceptions imply that dissent by lone individuals may be necessary but difficult because most people in organizations do not perceive the need for it, overall.

CHAPTER 3

Power and Group Identification: A Priming Experiment

OVERVIEW

The second study conducted a preliminary test of the power attainment theory by examining the relation between power and group identification. To conduct this test, the study employed the priming methods currently dominant in experimental studies of power. Because these priming methods provide no social context and may merely activate lay theories of power and the roles that accompany it, I was unsure whether this methodology would provide a sound test of the relation between power and dissent. However, I proposed the hypothesis drawn from Proposition 3 nonetheless. Study 2 tested the following hypotheses:

H1: High power individuals will identify more with the group than low power individuals.

H2: High power individuals will dissent less than low power individuals.

METHOD

Sample

Participants consisted of 93 students (64 percent female) enrolled in an undergraduate organizational behavior course at a West Coast university. They received course credit in exchange for participating. The sample was approximately 54 percent Asian, 28 percent Caucasian, 3 percent Hispanic, 2 percent Native American, and 13 percent who reported other ethnicities. The sample ranged in age from 19 to 30 years ($M = 21.15$, $SD = 1.77$).

Design and Procedure

The study employed a two-condition (Power: High, Low), between-subjects design. Participants reported to the laboratory in groups of approximately 20 people. After signing the consent form, they completed the study at a private computer terminal. Adapted from Staw and Boettger (1990), the survey asked participants to imagine themselves as a Legal Officer for the university and described an ongoing negotiation with community residents and local businesses surrounding the university's desire to acquire an adjacent tract of land. Participants first read about their role and level of power. Drawing from Blader and Chen (2012), the power manipulations read as follows:

Within your division, you are one of the (least / most) powerful staff members, and your role is one of the (least / most) important in the division. Your projects are allocated one of the (smallest / largest) budgets in the division, and you have control over (a relatively meager / an unusually large) amount of resources, compared to your colleagues in the division. You also have (very little / significant) power over other division members, with (little / a lot of) influence on their performance ratings, compensation, and career trajectories. Within your division, you have a (somewhat negative / very positive)

reputation, and you command (relatively little / a great deal of status). (You don't have the sense that your colleagues particularly like or respect you / Your colleagues really like and respect you), and you feel (somewhat excluded / very well accepted) by them in social contexts.

Then, they completed a short survey with the power manipulation check and group identification items.

After completing the survey items, participants read a memo from their legal team at the university. The memo described the current issues in the negotiation and recommended a course of action to advance the negotiations. The team's proposed course of action included ethically questionable negotiation tactics based on the Self-reported Inappropriate Negotiation Strategies (SINS) scale (Robinson, Lewicki, & Donahue, 2000). The tactics included leaking false rumors, making false promises, and gathering information in deceptive ways. The scenario appears in full in Appendix A. After reading the memo, participants indicated their response to the team's memo.

Measures

Manipulation check. Participants rated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that they felt powerful, had control over important resources, felt respected, felt they had high status, and felt admired, on a scale of 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*). The five items formed a reliable scale, $M = 4.26$, $SD = 2.32$, $\alpha = .99$.

Group identification. Four items from prior research (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Packer & Chasteen, 2010; Willer, 2009) measured group identification. Participants reported the extent to which they identified with their division at the university, felt connected with their division at the university, and valued being a member of their division at the university, on a scale of 1 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*A great deal*). They also reported the extent to which they agreed that their division's successes were their successes on a scale of 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*). The items correlated highly, so they were averaged to form a scale, $M = 4.62$, $SD = 1.89$, $\alpha = .93$.

Dissent. Participants' response to their team members' memo served as a measure of dissent. They responded to their team members' memo by finishing the statement, "After reviewing your proposed negotiation strategy, I..." Responses included six options: "Strongly agree with it. I recommend we proceed with this plan," "Mostly agree with it. I recommend we proceed with this plan after making a few minor revisions," "Am on the fence about it. I'm fine with either proceeding with this plan or making a few major revisions," "Mostly disagree with it. I recommend we make revamp the plan but stay with a few parts of it," and "Strongly disagree with it. I recommend we draft an entirely new plan." These responses were assigned values of 1 to 6 to represent the degree of dissent embedded in them, $M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.06$.

RESULTS

Manipulation Check

I first examined whether the power manipulation was effective. Participants in the high power condition ($M = 6.34$, $SD = 0.68$) reported significantly more power than those in the low power condition ($M = 2.23$, $SD = 1.34$), $t(91) = 18.64$, $p < .001$.

Group Identification

I next examined the first hypothesis, which stated that high power individuals would identify more with the group than low power individuals. An independent samples t-test provided support for this hypothesis, $t(91) = 12.44$, $p < .001$. Those in the high power condition ($M = 6.10$, $SD = 0.71$) reported significantly more identification with their division than those in the low power condition ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 1.43$). This evidence supported hypothesis 1.

Dissent

Finally, I examined the second hypothesis, which proposed that high power individuals would dissent less than low power individuals. The data did not support this hypothesis, $t(90) = 0.20$, $p = .85$, *ns*. No difference in dissent emerged between high power ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.99$) and low power ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.14$) individuals.

DISCUSSION

Summary

Study 2 provided support for one central tenet of the power attainment theory – that power causes group identification, as suggested in hypothesis 1. However, it did not support hypothesis 2, which proposed that power would reduce dissent. When individuals imagined themselves in a high ranking role, they identified more with the group, but this did not affect how they responded to ethically questionable negotiation tactics proposed by the group.

Theoretical Contributions

This study provides the first evidence that power affects group identification. This contributes to theories of how power alters psychological reactions to the social environment. Past research has largely focused on how power decreases sensitivity to threat (Keltner et al., 2003), and increases abstract reasoning (Smith & Trope, 2006), resulting in more independent thought and action. For instance, power has been found to decrease perspective-taking (Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006), conformity to social norms (Ward & Keltner, 1998), and the level of influence exerted by salient examples and opinions (Galinsky et al., 2008). In contrast, this study suggests that high power individuals feel a greater sense of connection to the group. Therefore, power may cause individuals to feel more distance from those outside the group, but to feel more connection with the group at large. Therefore, by

causing group identification, power may heighten the importance of social identity to individuals who hold it, leading to positive reactions toward other group members such as perceptions of similarity and liking (McDonald & Westphal, 2011), trust (Colquitt, Lepine, Zapata, & Wild, 2011), and behavior that helps the group and its goals (Boivie et al., 2011), but potentially more negative behavior toward out-group members (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Understanding this could help integrate research that has found power to lead to derogation and mistreatment of others (Georgeson & Harris, 1998; Gruenfeld, Inesi, Magee, & Galinsky, 2008; Kipnis, 1972) with research that has found more positive consequences of high rank, such as increased fairness and contributions to group goals (Blader & Chen, 2012; Guinote, 2007; Willer, 2009).

Strengths and Limitations

The primary strength of Study 2 was its controlled experimental setting. In a causal design, it provided some evidence that power causes group identification. However, Study 2 had a number of limitations. In particular, the power prime may lack internal validity. It may have activated not the actual experience of power, but the concept of it or role expectations for those who hold it. Power has the dual implication of both freedom and responsibility (Fiske & Berdahl, 2007). Thus, individuals in the high power condition may have responded in a way consistent with their concept of power and its role requirements. The effect of the power prime on group identification may represent nothing more than how students imagine high power individuals feel. In addition, if individuals do not predict intervening less after advancing to a high power role, a priming method may not form a strong test of the relation between power and dissent.

In addition, the measure of dissent was not unobtrusive. This may provide one explanation for why power did not affect dissent despite the theoretical rationale provided earlier. By using a survey method, the study allowed participants to ask what kind of person they should be as they answer the questions. Thus, they may have manipulated their response to be socially desirable (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, & Sechrest, 2000), for instance by speaking against the recommendation of unethical behavior regardless of their hierarchical position. If participants universally like to believe that they would speak out when they saw ongoing unethical behavior, this concern may have dominated the effect of the power prime.

The realism of the task may provide another explanation for why power did not affect dissent, even if a relation exists between these variables outside the laboratory. The scenario provided an imaginary setting. Although the scenario described a social context for power and dissent, individuals may not have been able to imagine it vividly enough for power to have the effects it would have in a real group setting. Therefore, power have not affected dissent in this study because participants imagined making a decision, rather than actually making one. Study 3 was designed to ameliorate these limitations by using a more realistic task setting, a more realistic manipulation of power in a group context, and a behavioral dependent measure of dissent.

CHAPTER 4

Power and Dissent: A Behavioral Experiment

OVERVIEW

The third study examined how advancing to a high power position in a hierarchy affects the expression of dissent. It also explored whether an increase in group identification among high power individuals could explain this effect of high power on dissent. The power manipulation aimed to manipulate rank in a group, in order to replicate the conditions common in organizational hierarchies, where higher levels in the hierarchy generally have more power and more status than lower levels. The group ostensibly selected a person to hold a high ranking position. Although high ranking individuals in organizations are not usually elected, the alternative – having the experimenter select a person to have high power – resembled receiving power from outside the organization. For this reasons, I considered it more realistic to have the group ostensibly accord power.

The study also manipulated the morality of the group's recommended course of action. I did this in order to ensure that any effect of high power on dissent occurred due to a general effect on dissent, rather than an effect of high power on the course of action preferred by individuals. For instance, if high power individuals dissented less when the group recommending lying, this could imply that power makes individuals dishonest, rather than tractable to influence by the group. Therefore, I manipulated the course of action recommended by the group. This study drew from Proposition 3, to test the following hypotheses:

H1: Those who advance to a high power position in a group will be less likely to express dissent than those who do not advance.

H2: Increased group identification will explain the effect of power on perception of unethical activity.

I made no predictions about the effects of low power relative to the control condition because the power possession and power attainment theories, when combined, suggest no difference in dissent may emerge between these conditions. The power attainment theory suggests that low power individuals may identify less with a group after being passed over for promotion. Therefore, they may turn a more critical or open eye to its practices, enabling them to see the need for dissent. However, the power possession theory suggests that their lower levels of social and psychological freedom may prevent them from expressing these views. Because of these constraints on their freedom of expression, low power individuals may not dissent any more than individuals in a control condition, despite possibly seeing more need for dissent. Therefore, low power may have no effect on dissent relative to the control condition.

METHOD

Sample

Participants included 271 adults (67 percent women) affiliated with a West Coast university as undergraduate or graduate students, staff, alumni, or local community members. They participated in exchange for \$15. The sample was 60 percent Asian, 22 percent Caucasian, 7 percent Hispanic, 2 percent African American, and 6 percent who reported other ethnic backgrounds. Their ages ranged from 18 to 63 years ($M = 21.55$, $SD = 6.17$).

Design and Procedure

The experiment had a 3 (Power: High, Low, Control) x 2 (Group Morality: High, Low), between-subjects design. Participants reported to the laboratory in groups of six people for a study of decision-making in virtual groups. The experimenter informed them that the study had three parts and that they would begin with an icebreaker exercise. Participants introduced themselves to their group by stating their first name, seat letter, field of study or a recent job, and favorite thing about their city of residence. Then, to establish realism for the decision in the Cheap Talk Game (Gneezy, 2005), the experimenter called a researcher assistant to ask whether the other group was full and if they were ready to begin the study.

Basis for the power manipulation. The next part of the study involved ostensibly selecting a group leader based on personal information provided by group members. After sitting at computer terminals separated by dividers, participants completed a personal information questionnaire based on the one used in Leary, Cottrell, and Phillips (2001). It asked questions related to personality characteristics, personal behaviors and habits, and political and moral attitudes. Then, participants read a short Harvard Business School case study (Hamermesh, Whittemore, & Sherman, 2010) and reported in three sentences how they would recommend the protagonist handle the situation described in the case. Participants were informed in advance that the group would see their answers to these questions. As participants submitted their answers, their computers showed a dialogue box indicating that the answers were printing. After all participants had ostensibly printed their answers, a research assistant delivered a packet of responses to the experimenter. Participants believed these responses were from their fellow group members, but they were actually pre-scripted. After viewing these answers, participants allocated 10 “leadership points” among the 5 other members of the group. The leader was described as responsible for making key decisions, overseeing the group’s performance, evaluating other group members, and determining whether they should receive a bonus for their participation (see Appendix B).

Power manipulation. After a randomly generated wait time between 1 and 2 minutes, participants received one of three randomly determined messages (see Appendix C). In the high power condition, they read that the group allocated them 32 leadership points and had chosen them to serve as the leader. In the low power condition, they read the group allocated them 6 leadership points and did not select them to be the leader. In the control condition, participants received no information regarding the leader selection outcome. Participants then answered a short survey.

Basis for dissent. Finally, the group engaged in the Cheap Talk Game (Gneezy, 2005), in which group members had to decide whether to lie to another group for a dollar. Participants read that they were to report their recommendation to their group via a chat-room. To ensure that participants expressed genuine opinions regarding what the group should do (not, for instance, a desire to tell the truth because they thought the group down the hall would disbelieve their recommendation), participants also received a message that indicated that the other group had committed to follow their recommendation (based on Cohen et al., 2009).

Then, participants received a message indicating they had been randomly assigned to report their recommendation to the group in the fifth position. Over a few minutes, participants saw four messages, purportedly from the other group members, appear on the chat-room screen. In the high group morality condition, the four messages indicated a unanimous preference to tell the other group the truth, forgoing six dollars. In the low group morality condition, the four messages indicated a unanimous preference to tell the other group members a lie, gaining six dollars for the group. These messages are included in Appendix D.

Participants selected which message they wanted to send and typed a short explanation to their group. Their short explanations appeared in the chat-room. After all six group members had ostensibly reported their recommendation, the computer screen showed a message that summarized the group decision. Finally, participants were paid, thanked for participating, and informed that additional information about the study would come by email. After data collection was complete, all participants were debriefed.

Measures

Manipulation check. The manipulation check consisted of five items. Participants rated the extent to which they felt powerful, respected, admired, and that they had control over important resources and had high status in this group, on a scale of 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*). The five items correlated highly and formed a reliable scale, $M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.02$, $\alpha = .87$.

Group identification. Four items from prior research (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Packer & Chasteen, 2010; Willer, 2009) measured group identification: “How much do you identify with the group?” and “How much do you feel connected with the group?” on a scale of 1 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*A great deal*), “How much do you value being a member of this group?” on a scale of 1 (*Not at all*) to 6 (*A great deal*), and “This group’s successes are my successes” on a scale of 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*). The items correlated highly, so they were standardized and averaged to form a scale, $\alpha = .80$.

Dissent. I examined the effect of power on dissent using both binary and continuous versions of the dissent variable.

I coded the binary measure of dissent “1” when participants disagreed with their group by expressing the desire to send a message different from the one their group ostensibly wanted to send and “0” when participants agreed with their group. Thus, in the high group morality

condition, when participants voted to lie, they received a value of “1” on the dissent measure, and in the low group morality condition, when participants voted to tell the truth, they received a value of “1” on the dissent measure. Overall, 20 percent of participants dissented.

The continuous measure of dissent was obtained by having two independent coders rate the level of dissent present in the messages participants sent to their group members in the online chat-room. The coders were blind to the study conditions and hypotheses. They rated the messages on a scale of 1 (*Strongly agreed*) to 6 (*Strongly disagreed*). The two sets of ratings correlated highly and were averaged to form a continuous measure of dissent, $M = 2.50$, $SD = 1.33$, $\alpha = .92$.

Alternative Mediators

Prior research has suggested that power leads to positive affect (Keltner et al., 2003). In addition, the power manipulation in this study may have created a sense of distributive justice if those who advanced to a high power position felt satisfaction with their outcome (Folger, 1977). Higher positive affect or perceptions of distributive justice might lead to more general satisfaction with the group and therefore, less desire to dissent. To examine these alternative explanations of the effect of high power on dissent, I included measures of positive affect and distributive justice.

Positive affect. Participants reported their positive affect at the present moment using the 10 items from the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), using a scale of 1 (*Very slightly or not at all*) to 5 (*Extremely*), $M = 2.76$, $SD = 0.82$, $\alpha = .90$.

Distributive justice. Two items adapted from Tyler (1994) measured distributive justice perceptions. Participants reported how fair and equitable their group had been in rewarding them on a scale of 1 (*Very unfair*) to 5 (*Very fair*), $M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.71$, $\alpha = .88$.

Control Variables

Gender. Because social norms stipulate that women should be more cooperative and agreeable than men (Prentice & Carranza, 2002), I controlled for gender in all analyses of dissent. Men served as the reference group.

Ethnicity. Because race and ethnicity convey social status (Berger et al., 1972; Berger, Webster, Ridgeway, & Rosenholtz, 1986) and lower status individuals are expected to abide by group norms (Hollander, 1958, 1961; Torraine, 1954), I controlled for ethnicity in analyses of dissent. Caucasians served as the reference group.

RESULTS

Manipulation Check

Analysis of variance showed a significant effect of condition on participants' sense of power, $F(2, 268) = 46.04, p < .001$. Participants in the high power condition, $M = 4.68, SD = 0.92$, reported feeling significantly higher power than those in the control condition, $M = 3.90, SD = 0.75, p < .001$, and participants in the low power condition, $M = 3.44, SD = 0.97$, reported feeling significantly less power than those in the control condition, $p = .001$. After determining that the power manipulation was successful, I proceeded to examine my central research question of how power affects dissent.

Effect of Power on Dissent

Binary measure. To examine Hypothesis 3, which suggested that advancing to a position of power would reduce dissent, I conducted a logistic regression analysis that predicted the odds of dissent with high power, low power, group morality, gender, and ethnicity as explanatory variables. The analysis provided support for hypothesis 1. Those who advanced to a position of high power had 65 percent lower odds of dissent than individuals in the control condition, $OR = 0.35, z = -2.26, p = .02$. Low power did not affect the likelihood of dissent relative to the control condition, $OR = 1.05, z = 0.12, p = .91, ns$.

A main effect of the group morality condition also emerged. Individuals in the high group morality condition, in which the other group members ostensibly voted to tell the other group the truth, had 86 percent lower odds of dissent than those in the low group morality condition, in which the other group members ostensibly voted to lie to the other group, $OR = 0.14, z = -4.79, p < .001$.

Neither the control variables nor any interactions between power and group morality attained statistical significance. A likelihood-ratio goodness-of-fit test indicated that there was no evidence to suggest that another model would fit the data better than the current one, $X^2(18) = 8.44, p = 0.97, ns$. The frequency of dissent in each condition appears in Table 2 and the logistic regression results appear in Table 3.

Continuous measure. Using the continuous measure of dissent, analyses again supported hypothesis 1. An omnibus ANOVA indicated main effects of power, $F(2, 256) = 6.50, p = .002, \eta^2 = .05$, and group morality, $F(1, 256) = 42.61, p < .001, \eta^2 = .14$. The control variables did not attain statistical significance and no interaction emerged between power and group morality, $F(2, 256) = 0.55, p = .58, ns$.

The main effect of power was driven by the effect of the high power condition on dissent. Participants in the high power condition ($M = 2.10, SE = .13$) dissented less than those in the control condition ($M = 2.61, SE = .13$), $p = .01$. Dissent did not vary between the low power ($M = 2.70, SE = .13$) and control conditions, $p = .61, ns$. Participants also dissented less in the high group morality condition ($M = 1.99, SE = .10$) relative to the low group morality condition ($M =$

2.95, $SD = .10$), $p < .001$. Means on the continuous dissent measure in each condition appear in Table 4.

These analyses provided support for hypothesis 1. Across two measures of dissent and two courses of action recommended by a group, high power individuals dissented less than individuals who had not advanced to a position of power.

Mediation by Group identification

I next examined hypothesis 2, which stated that group identification would mediate the effect of high power on dissent. Analyses controlled for low power condition, group morality condition, gender, and ethnicity. Using the binary measure of dissent, a bootstrapping analysis of mediation (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) with 1,000 re-samples with replacement estimated the indirect effect to be $-.34$ and provided a 95 percent bias-corrected confidence interval of $-.04$ to $-.68$. Using the continuous measure of dissent, the bootstrapping analysis estimated the indirect effect to be $-.14$, with a 95 percent bias-corrected confidence interval of $-.02$ to $-.31$. Because these intervals excluded zero, the analyses suggested that increased group identification explained the effect of high power on dissent, supporting hypothesis 2.

Analyses of Alternative Explanations

To explore the validity of alternative explanations, I next examined whether either positive affect or distributive justice perceptions could explain the effect of power on dissent.

Positive affect. A linear regression analysis showed that high power participants felt more positive affect than those in the control condition, $b^* = .49$, $t(268) = 7.78$, $p < .001$, but low power and control condition participants did not differ in their positive affect, $p = .58$, *ns*. However, positive affect had no effect on dissent, $p = .28$, *ns*, controlling for high power, low power, group morality, and gender. A bootstrapping analysis of mediation (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) with 1,000 re-samples with replacement provided a 95 percent bias-corrected confidence interval of $-.66$ to $.30$. Thus, increased positive affect did not explain why high power individuals dissented less.

Distributive justice. A linear regression analysis showed that high power participants reported greater perceptions of distributive justice than those in the control condition, $b^* = .40$, $t(268) = 6.02$, $p < .001$, and low power participants reported less perception of distributive justice than control condition participants, $b^* = .14$, $t(268) = 2.17$, $p = .03$. However, perceptions of distributive justice had no effect on dissent, $p = .33$, *ns*, controlling for high power, low power, group morality, and gender. A bootstrapping analysis of mediation (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) with 1,000 re-samples with replacement provided a 95 percent bias-corrected confidence interval of $-.58$ to $.18$. Thus, increased perceptions of distributive justice also did not explain why high power individuals dissented less.

DISCUSSION

Summary

Study 3 provided support for the key proposition of this research, which stated that individuals in high power positions would dissent less than those who did not hold high power positions. Through an experimental design, Study 3 found that advancing in the hierarchy caused a reduction in dissent. This effect occurred regardless of the course of action recommended by the group. Low power did not affect dissent relative to the control condition. Study 3 also provided some support for the theoretical model, which suggested that an increase in group identification among high power individuals would explain why they dissented less than individuals who did not hold powerful positions. Group identification explained the effect of high power on dissent using both binary and continuous measures of dissent. Finally, Study 3 examined two alternative explanations of the effect of power on dissent, but found no evidence that either positive affect or perceptions of distributive justice could explain why those who attained power dissented less than those who did not.

Theoretical Contributions

This study makes a number of important theoretical contributions. First, it contributes to knowledge of whether power corrupts. Past research had drawn conflicting conclusions. Some research found that power leads to the expression of individual differences (Bargh, Raymond, Pryor, & Strack, 1995; Chen et al., 2001) whereas much other research concluded that power does corrupt, leading to unethical behavior such as moral hypocrisy (Lammers, Stapel, & Galinsky, 2010), objectification of other people (Gruenfeld et al., 2008) and a lack of empathy (van Kleef et al., 2008). This research suggests that the effects of power may depend on the ethics embraced by the group according power. When the group embraces high ethical standards, power may lead to greater virtue. When the group lacks ethics, power may lead to unethical behavior.

Second, this research contributes to knowledge of how power affects the relation between individuals and their social contexts. Contrary to past research that has found power to encourage independent action and thought (Galinsky et al., 2008), this research found that those in power conformed more to the group's recommendations. This may be due to the exchange processes incited by power conferral (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961). Because power research that utilizes priming methods lacks a social context, it may overlook this exchange process. This research suggests power research may wish to manipulate power in a social context in addition to utilizing existing power priming methods.

Third, this research contributes knowledge of why dissent may be difficult to sustain in organizations. Past research has alluded to how difficult organizations may find it to sustain dissent (Nemeth & Staw, 1989; Sutton, 2002), but why organizations cannot solve this problem by simply instruct individuals to express dissent when they see the need to do so was largely unclear. This research suggests that one reason dissent may be difficult to sustain is that those with the psychological and social freedom to dissent, as well as those with the greatest

responsibility to do so – people higher in the organization’s hierarchy – may not be able to recognize a need for dissent because of their high levels of identification with the group.

Strengths and Limitations

Study 3 had a number of strengths. Its controlled setting enabled the study to demonstrate the causal relation between advancing in a hierarchy and dissent. In addition, it created a realistic group environment for participants and examined a behavioral dependent variable.

However, despite these strengths, the study had a number of limitations. One limitation of the study was that it did not examine the full theoretical model. Specifically, it did not examine how power affected views of the group’s decision or how power affected dissent among individuals who saw the group’s decision as unethical. Another limitation of Study 3 was that it occurred in a laboratory context, leaving questions about the external validity of the findings unaddressed. The fourth study was designed to address the first limitation, and the fifth study was designed to address both of these limitations.

CHAPTER 5

Moral Awareness as a Moderator of the Effect of Power on Dissent

OVERVIEW

The fourth study aimed to make two key contributions. First, it aimed to examine the effect of power on views of the group's decision. In Chapter 1, I proposed that higher power individuals would see the group's decision as more ethical than individuals who had not attained a position of power. This study aimed to test this proposition, as it provides a key link in the theory. Second, the fourth study aimed to integrate the findings from Study 3 and existing power theory. Study 3's finding that power reduced dissent is puzzling in light of the current power literature, which suggests that individuals should be enabled psychologically and by their social context to dissent. However, examining a key moderating variable may help to integrate these theories of power. In Chapter 1, I suggested that attaining power may enable dissent when a personal moral standard is salient. High ranking individuals may be inclined to accept influence from those who accorded them power, but when their own standards are salient, they may act on these standards due to the psychological and social freedom conferred by power. Thus, this study tested the following hypothesis:

H1: Moral awareness will moderate the effect of power on views of the ethicality of the group's decision, such that:

- (a) When independent moral standards are not primed, individuals who have advanced in the hierarchy will view the group's decision as more ethical than individuals who have not advanced in the hierarchy.*
- (b) When independent moral standards are primed, individuals who have advanced in the hierarchy will view the group's decision as less ethical than individuals who have not advanced in the hierarchy.*

H2: Moral awareness will moderate the effect of power on dissent, such that:

- (a) When moral standards are not primed, individuals who have advanced in the hierarchy will dissent less than individuals who have not advanced in the hierarchy.*
- (b) When moral standards are primed, individuals who have advanced in a hierarchy will dissent more than individuals who have not advanced in the hierarchy.*

METHOD

Sample

Participants included 60 adults (57 percent women) who had elected to receive research study notifications from a West Coast university. They participated in exchange for \$12. The sample was 63 percent Asian, 25 percent Caucasian, 7 percent Hispanic, and 5 percent who

reported other ethnic backgrounds. Their ages ranged from 18 to 61 years ($M = 21.53$, $SD = 5.50$).

Design and Procedure

The experiment had a 2 (Power: High, Control) x 2 (Moral Standards: Primed, Control), between-subjects design. Participants reported to the laboratory in groups of six people for a study of negotiations in virtual groups. After they signed consent forms, the experimenter called a research assistant to ask whether the other group was full and if they were ready to begin the study in order to establish realism for the decision in the task.

Basis for the power manipulation. Participants began by introducing themselves to their group by stating their first name, seat letter, hometown, field of study or a recent job, favorite thing about their city of residence, and the world leader or public figure they most admired. Then, participants then selected a leader on the basis of the introductions. As in Study 3, participants allocated 10 “leadership points” among the 5 other members of the group. The description of the leadership position was identical to that given in Study 3.

Power manipulation. After a randomly generated wait time between 1 and 2 minutes, participants received one of two randomly determined messages. In the high power condition, participants read that the group allocated them 34 leadership points and had chosen them to serve as the leader. In the control condition, participants received no information regarding the leader selection outcome. Participants then answered a short survey.

Moral standards manipulation. The moral standards prime appeared after participants read the two courses of action available to the group, but before they reported their recommendation. In the priming condition, participants indicated the ethical virtues they thought were important in this negotiation. In the control condition, participants indicated the goals they thought were important in this negotiation.

Basis for dissent. Finally, the group engaged in a task that simulated a business decision. Drawing from the cheap talk game (Gneezy, 2005) and the trust game, the task told participants that they would represent a company, KV, that may be the target of a takeover attempt, and a group down the hall would represent the potential acquirer, JBC. The other group did not truly exist. Participants heard that JBC’s task was to decide whether to offer them a truce period, during which they could discuss mutually beneficial arrangements, or to launch the hostile takeover. Participants believed that JBC had elected to offer them a truce period and that their task was to decide how to respond. The two options appear in Appendix E. Participants had to choose whether to reciprocate the other group’s trust, at some risk, by accepting the meeting (Option 1) or to take advantage of the other group’s trust by using the time to put takeover protections in place and then declining the meeting (Option 2). If participants chose to reciprocate, the two groups could potentially receive equal payoffs for participating (\$12 per person). If they chose not to reciprocate, participants would receive higher payoffs (\$12 per person) than the other group (\$8 per person). Participants then read that they were to report their recommendation to their group via an online chat-room. All participants received a message indicating they had been randomly assigned to report their recommendation to the group in the

fifth position. Over a few minutes, participants saw four messages, purportedly from the other group members, appear on the chat-room screen. The four messages indicated a unanimous preference not to reciprocate the other group's trust, resulting in a loss of payment for the other group. Appendix F shows the messages that appeared in the chat-room.

Participants then indicated which course of action they preferred and typed a short explanation to their group. Their short explanations appeared in the chat-room. After all six group members had ostensibly reported their recommendations, the computer screen showed a message that indicated the group had chosen Option 2 and participants completed a short survey. Finally, participants were paid, thanked for participating, and informed that additional information about the study would come by email. After data collection was complete, all participants were debriefed.

Measures

Power manipulation check. The power manipulation check consisted of three items. Participants rated the extent to which they felt admired, powerful, and high rank in the group on a scale of 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*). The three items correlated highly and formed a reliable scale, $\alpha = .85$, $M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.23$.

Ethicality of the group decision. At the end of the study, participants rated how ethical the group's decision was by indicating how ethical, fair, and moral it was, on 7-point, bi-polar scales, $\alpha = .87$, $M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.51$.

Competence of the group decision. To test whether power caused a general positive evaluation of the group's decision, rather than leading individuals to accept the group's values, I measured evaluations of another key dimension of the group decision, its competence. Participants rated how competent and effective the group's decision was on 7-point, bi-polar scales, $\alpha = .89$, $M = 5.18$, $SD = 1.26$.

Dissent. To examine moderation with the standard analysis of variance approach, I measured dissent with a continuous item. Participants reported their recommended course of action to the group by selecting a number from 1 (*I strongly recommend Option 1*) to 6 (*I strongly recommend Option 2*). This measure was reverse-scored so that higher numbers indicated greater dissent, $M = 2.03$, $SD = 1.46$. As in Study 3, analyses of dissent controlled for gender and ethnicity.

RESULTS

Manipulation Check

Analysis of variance showed a significant effect of condition on participants' sense of power, $F(1, 58) = 16.67$, $p < .001$. Participants in the high power condition, $M = 5.26$, $SD = 1.07$, reported feeling significantly higher power than those in the control condition, $M = 4.10$, $SD = 1.12$, $p < .001$.

Effect of Power on Views of the Group Decision

Ethicality. Analysis of variance showed a significant effect of power, $F(1, 56) = 7.30, p = .009$, on views of the group decision's ethicality. High power participants, $M = 4.74, SD = 1.41$, saw the group's decision as more ethical than control condition participants, $M = 3.72, SD = 1.46$. Neither the moral awareness term, $F(1, 56) = 0.01, p = .92, ns$, nor the interaction term, $F(1, 56) = 0.32, p = .57, ns$, attained significance. Thus, hypothesis 1 was not supported in full; evidence emerged only for a main effect of power on views of the group decision's ethicality.

Competence. To examine whether the effect of power on views of the group decision's ethicality represented a general positive evaluation of the group's actions, I next examined whether power affected views of the decision's competence. Analysis of variance indicated no effect of power on views of the group decision's competence, $F(1, 56) = 0.50, p = .48, ns$.

Effect of Power on Dissent

An omnibus ANOVA indicated no effect of the manipulated variables on dissent. Power, $F(1, 56) = 0.75, p = .39$, moral awareness, $F(1, 56) = 0.02, p = .90$, and the interaction term, $F(1, 56) = 1.04, p = .31$, were all non-significant. Thus, no evidence emerged in support of hypothesis 2.

DISCUSSION

Summary

Study 4's hypotheses did not receive support. There was no evidence that moral awareness affected the relation between power and dissent. Instead, this study found a main effect of power on views of how ethical the group's decision was. High power individuals perceived the decision not to reciprocate trust to another group to be more ethical than individuals in a control condition perceived this decision to be. This occurred regardless of whether individual's moral standards were primed. This effect on views of ethicality did not appear to be evidence of a general halo effect. High power individuals saw the group's decision as more ethical, but not as more competent.

Theoretical Contributions

Although this study's key hypotheses were not supported, it contributed some useful theoretical information. Its finding that high power caused individuals to see the group's decision as more ethical suggests some support for the internalization account of the relation between power and dissent. Study 3 could not address whether high power individuals were internalizing the group's values or merely complying with the group's wishes. Study 4 suggests some support for the internalization account because high power individuals privately rated the group's decision as more ethical, even when their own moral standards were primed before they knew the group's preference. This suggests that the existing research on power may find decreased conformity among high power individuals because the priming design does not allow for individuals to be influenced by the source of power. In organizations, power is conferred

from a source. High power individuals may act more independently when the social source of their power is not present in the environment, but may conform more when those who conferred power are present and exerting social influence on high power individuals' decisions. This research further supports the importance of considering the source of power and the social context when examining the effects of power on individuals who hold it. Future research on power and conformity may benefit from attending to both the source of power and the source of the value, goal, or practice that serve as a stimulus for high power individuals. When these sources are congruent, high power individuals may dissent less; when the sources differ, high power individuals may dissent more.

Strengths and Limitations

This study's strengths were its experimental realism and controlled setting. Individuals experienced power in a group context and made a decision they believed would impact another group in the study. However, the results were weak and the design had limitations. The results showed no effect of power on dissent. Why high power individuals' more sanguine views of the group decision's ethicality did not lead to decreased dissent is unclear. One possibility is that the task manipulated too many factors. Rather than asking participants to weigh ethical and pragmatic trade-offs, the task in this study also required participants to withstand risk. Therefore, even if individuals in the control condition saw the decision as less ethical, concerns about risking their payment may have informed their decision more heavily than ethical concerns. A future study should examine dissent using a task decision that involves only trade-offs between ethical action and practical gain, rather than issues of risk.

The study's control condition may also have been flawed. Participants were asked to list the goals they thought were important in the negotiation. Although this was intended to supply a task similar to that in the moral awareness condition, without priming moral awareness, it is now apparent that this control condition primed personal standards in the form of goals. Perhaps a better control condition would have been to task participants with imagining what was important to the group in this negotiation. Nevertheless, this study did provide some indication that moral awareness may not be the integrating link between the existing research on power and Study 3. Moral awareness may not explain why power leads to less conformity outside the social context in which it was attained, but more conformity within that social context. Participants primed to consider ethical virtues at stake in the situation saw no more need for dissent than those at lower levels of moral awareness. The congruence between source of power and source of the value, goal, or practice in question may provide a more promising avenue for a future study.

CHAPTER 6

Power and Dissent: An Archival Study

OVERVIEW

Because the prior studies took place in a laboratory setting, it is unclear whether power would have the effects found in those studies when ethical transgressions are more severe, participants are older and have more developed identities (Sears, 1986), and power involves the role requirements and responsibilities associated with it in real organizations. To address the issue of external validity, Study 5 used archival survey data collected from employees of U.S. federal government agencies. This study examined how power affects the likelihood of perceiving and reporting unethical activity. It aimed to test the full theoretical model.

As in previous studies, I predicted that advancing to a high power position in a hierarchy would cause individuals to become more tractable to the organization's social influence and, as a result, higher power individuals would adopt the moral standards of the group and therefore be less likely to view ongoing activities as unethical. This effect, referred to as the power attainment theory, was proposed in Propositions 2 and 3 of Chapter 1. This led to the following hypothesis:

H1: Holding a higher power position in the hierarchy will be associated with less perception of unethical activity.

Although this archival data set included no measure of group identification, it did include a measure of perceived fairness. Because perceptions of fairness are closely tied to identification with the group (Tyler & Blader, 2003), I predicted that perceptions of fairness would serve as a proxy for group identification and would therefore mediate the effect of power on perception of unethical activity. Hypothesis 2 formally states this idea.

H2: Perceptions of greater fairness will explain the effect of power on perceptions of unethical activity.

As in prior studies, I predicted that attaining power would lead individuals to dissent less.

H3: Holding a higher power position in the hierarchy will be associated with less dissent.

In Proposition 4 of Chapter 1, I suggested that tenure may moderate the negative relation between power and dissent. Because individuals are exposed to group values, goals, and practices over time (Chatman, 1991), those with longer tenure in the group will have experienced more influence encouraging acceptance of these group attributes. Therefore, the effect of power on dissent may be stronger for those with greater tenure in the group. In this study, I tested this hypothesis.

H4: The negative relation between power and dissent will be stronger at longer levels of tenure in the group.

This study also tested the power possession theory, proposed in Proposition 1 of Chapter 1. This proposition suggested that when individuals see the need to dissent, higher power will be associated with greater expression of dissent. I predicted that this would occur because high power individuals have more psychological and social freedom to act on their internal values and goals. Psychological freedom allows individuals to attend less to the threat of social sanctions (Keltner et al., 2003) and social freedom reduces the threat of sanctions in an objective sense (Hollander, 1958). Therefore, when they see the need for dissent, high power individuals may be more likely to express disagreement. Hypotheses 5 and 6 state these ideas.

H5: Higher power individuals will be more likely than those who do not hold power to dissent when they see a need to do so.

H6: Decreased fear of sanctions will explain the effect of power on dissent when individuals see a need for dissent.

Sample

In 1992, the U.S. Merit Systems Protections Board conducted a survey of 11,162 randomly selected employees of U.S. Federal Government agencies. This represented approximately a 54 percent response rate¹. The sample consisted of 58 percent men and 40 percent women. Two percent of respondents did not provide data on their gender. The sample exhibited a diverse age distribution, ranging from ages 20 to over 65 (see Figure 1 for the full age distribution). The sample was 75 percent Caucasian, 13 percent African American, 5 percent Hispanic, and 3 percent Asian, 2 percent Native American, and 1 percent who reported other ethnic backgrounds. Two percent of respondents did not supply data on their racial background.

Measures

Power. Power was operationalized by level in the agency. The data contained five levels. The first level described trade, craft, and laboring employees. The second level described supervisors of trade, craft, and laboring employees. The third level described professional, technical, and administrative employees. The fourth level described managers, and the fifth level described executives. I confirmed that power varied from level to level through interviews with agency employees. I also controlled for education level and tenure in an effort to ensure that this measure captured power, not other differences between people at each level, $M = 3.03$, $SD = 0.71$.

Perception of unethical activity. Respondents reported whether they perceived unethical activity by answering the question, “During the last 12 months, did you personally observe or obtain direct evidence of one or more illegal or wasteful activities involving your agency? (Note: Do not answer “yes” if you only read about the activity in the newspaper or heard about it as a rumor).” I created a dummy variable with “1” representing the response, “yes,” and “0” representing the response, “no.” Of those who responded, 17 percent reported observing such activity.

¹ The response rate cannot be ascertained due to a discrepancy between the data set available from the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, contained 11,162 responses, and the 13,432 responses cited in its report.

Dissent. Respondents who answered affirmatively to the prior measure indicated whether they reported the illegal or wasteful activity to any of a number of parties. This provided the measure of dissent. Response options are provided in Appendix G. I coded the dissent measure “1” if respondents reported the activity to anyone other than a friend, family member, or coworker and “0” otherwise. Overall, 9 percent of participants reported dissenting under this definition. Of respondents who observed unethical activity, 51 percent reported dissenting using this measure.

Fairness perceptions. Although this archival dataset included no measure of organizational identification, it did include perceptions of fairness, which past research has found to closely relate to group identification (Tyler & Blader, 2003). Respondents reported the extent to which they believed they had been treated fairly regarding promotions, awards, training, and job assignments on a scale of 1 (*To a very great extent*) to 5 (*To no extent*). If respondents selected, “No basis to judge,” their data was excluded from the analysis. The four items were reverse-scored so that higher numbers indicated greater perceived fairness and then averaged to form a scale, $M = -3.00$, $SD = 1.00$, $\alpha = .77$.

Fear of sanctions. The importance placed on protections from retaliation served as a measure of fear of sanctions. Using a scale of 1 (*Very important*) to 3 (*Not important*), respondents indicated how important a number of variables would be to them as they considered whether to report unethical activity. Three of these items served to approximate individuals’ fear of sanctions: “You could be protected from any form of reprisal,” “Your identity would be kept confidential by the people to whom you reported the activity,” and “There were adequate legal protections against unlawful retaliation for reporting the activity.” These items were reverse-scored so that higher numbers indicated greater importance and averaged to form a scale, $M = -1.46$, $SD = 0.55$, $\alpha = .80$.

Control Variables

Gender. Because social norms stipulate that women should be more cooperative and agreeable than men (Prentice & Carranza, 2002), I controlled for gender in analyses of dissent. Men served as the reference group.

Race and ethnicity. Because race and ethnicity convey social status (Berger et al., 1972; Berger et al., 1986) and lower status individuals are expected to abide by group norms (Hollander, 1958, 1961; Torrance, 1954), I controlled for ethnicity in analyses of dissent. Caucasians served as the reference group.

Education. Because education and power likely correlate positively and education may have socialized individuals to detect and report unethical behavior, I included education as a control variable. Respondents reported their highest education level on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*Less than high school diploma*) to 7 (*Graduate or professional degree*), $M = 4.48$, $SD = 1.68$.

Tenure. Because prior research has found that individuals tend to adopt their organizations’ values over time (Chatman, 1991), and tenure and power are often positively

correlated in organizations, I controlled for tenure. Respondents reported how many years they had been a federal government employee (excluding military service) using an 8-point scale ranging from 1 (*Less than 1 year*) to 8 (*31 years or more*), $M = 4.41$, $SD = 1.82$.

Knowledge of protections from retaliation. Because higher power individuals may have more knowledge of rules about retaliation for dissenting, I controlled for this variable. Using a scale of 1 (*A lot*) to 4 (*Nothing*), respondents reported how much they knew about the actions they could take if they “blew the whistle” and were retaliated against. I reverse-scored this measure so that higher numbers indicated greater knowledge, $M = -2.92$, $SD = 0.96$.

Table 5 shows the correlations between the continuous variables used in Study 5.

RESULTS

Effect of Power on Dissent

Relation of power to dissent. I first examined the relation between power and dissent, using the binary measure of dissent. Higher power was associated with less dissent, $OR = 0.88$, $z = -2.40$, $p = .02$ (see Table 6 for the full model). A quadratic term for power was not statistically significant when entered into the model, $p = .20$, *ns*, indicating no support for a curvilinear relation between power and dissent. This confirmed hypothesis 3. Among the control variables, non-Caucasian ethnicity, $OR = 0.66$, $z = -4.43$, $p < .001$, was associated with less dissent. Higher levels of education, $OR = 1.07$, $z = 2.92$, $p = .003$, and knowledge of protections from retaliation, $OR = 1.21$, $z = 5.26$, $p < .001$, were associated with more dissent. Gender, $p = .33$, *ns*, and tenure, $p = .54$, *ns*, had no significant relation with dissent.

Because the power measure may not represent an interval scale, I also examined the relation between power and dissent using a non-parametric test (Siegel, 1957). A chi-squared test indicated a significant difference in dissent by power level, $X^2(4) = 18.93$, $p = .001$, providing additional support for hypothesis 3.

Relation of power to perception of unethical activity. I then proceeded to examine whether high power individuals perceived less unethical activity, as predicted in hypothesis 1. I examined the relation between power and perceptions of unethical activity using logistic regression. Higher power was associated with lower odds of reporting that one had perceived unethical activity, $OR = 0.78$, $z = -5.87$, $p < .001$. This supported hypothesis 1. Higher power was associated with less perception of unethical activity.

Explanation of the Relation between Power and Perception of Unethical Activity

I next used logistic regression analyses to examine hypothesis 2, which stated that group identification, approximated here by perceptions of fairness, would explain the relation between power and perceptions of unethical activity. As shown by the preceding analysis, higher power predicted less perception of unethical activity. Specifically, a one unit increase in power was associated with 22 percent decrease in the odds of perceiving unethical activity, on average. Table 7 shows the full results of this analysis. A chi-squared test provided additional evidence that perception of unethical activity differed by power level, $X^2(4) = 27.92$, $p < .001$.

Thus, I proceeded to examine the relation between power and perceptions of fairness. Higher power was associated with greater perceptions of fairness, $b^* = .14$, $t = 11.08$, $p < .001$. Next, I examined the effect of perceptions of fairness on perceived unethical activity, controlling for power. Greater perceptions of fairness significantly predicted less perception of unethical activity, $OR = 0.58$, $z = -16.83$, $p < .001$, but power remained significant, $OR = 0.88$, $z = -2.63$, $p = .01$. Following Kenny's (2006) and MacKinnon and Dwyer's (1993) recommendations for mediation with dichotomous outcomes, I standardized the data from the regressions. Finally, the Sobel (1982) test indicated evidence of significant mediation, $z = -9.25$, $p = .002$. This analysis provided some support for hypothesis 2. Greater perceptions of fairness, which served as a proxy for group identification, significantly, but not fully, explained why high power individuals reported observing less unethical activity.

Tenure as a Moderator of the Effect of Power on Dissent

I next examined whether tenure in the organization moderated the relation between power and dissent, as proposed in hypothesis 4. Logistic regression analyses indicated no support for this hypothesis. The interaction between power and tenure did not attain statistical significance, $z = -0.22$, $p = .83$, *ns*.

Effect Power on Dissent Among Those Who Perceived Unethical Activity

Using logistic and linear regression, I finally examined the effect of power on dissent among those who perceived unethical activity. This served to test hypotheses 5 and 6.

Dissent. Among respondents who reported observing unethical activity, higher power was associated with higher odds of dissent, $OR = 1.16$, $z = 1.99$, $p = .046$. The full results of this regression are shown in Table 8. A chi-squared test also provided evidence that power affected dissent among those who perceived unethical activity, $X^2(4) = 14.56$, $p = .006$. These analyses provided support for hypothesis 5, which suggested that, when individuals see the need to dissent, higher power is associated with higher odds of dissenting.

Mediation by fear of sanctions. Finally, I examined the support for hypothesis 6, which proposed that higher power individuals' decreased fear of sanctions would mediate the effect of power on dissent among respondents who perceived unethical activity. First, I examined the relation between power and fear of sanctions. Consistent with the approach-inhibition theory of power (Keltner et al. 2003), higher power was associated with decreased fear of sanctions, $b^* = -.08$, $t = -6.94$, $p < .001$. Next, I examined the effect of fear of sanctions on dissent, controlling for power. Higher fear of sanctions significantly predicted less dissent, $OR = 0.52$, $z = -6.90$, $p < .001$, and power dropped to non-significance, $OR = 1.06$, $z = 0.74$, $p = .46$, *ns*. Following Kenny's (2006) and MacKinnon and Dwyer's (1993) recommendations for mediation with dichotomous outcomes, I standardized the data from the regressions. Finally, the Sobel (1982) test indicated evidence of significant mediation, $z = 4.89$, $p < .001$. Thus, hypothesis 7 received support.

DISCUSSION

Summary

The data provided some support for all hypotheses, except hypothesis 4, which suggested an interaction between tenure and power. To summarize, in U.S. federal government agencies, individuals with higher power were less likely to dissent. This occurred because higher power individuals were less likely to perceive unethical activity in the organization. Greater perceptions of fairness, which served as a proxy for group identification, among high power individuals explained this relation between power and perceptions of unethical activity. When individuals did observe activity they viewed as unethical, holding a higher power position in the organizational hierarchy was associated with higher odds of reporting this activity to an individual inside the organization. Fear of sanctions, which served as a proxy for approach orientation, fully mediated the relation between power and dissent among those who perceived unethical activity.

Theoretical Contributions

This study makes a number of important theoretical contributions. First, it contributes to knowledge of how power alters cognitions in organizations. Past research has found higher power to be associated with positive evaluations of oneself and negative evaluations of others (Fast, Sivanathan, Mayer, & Galinsky, 2012; Georgeson & Harris, 1998; Lammers et al., 2010). This would seem to suggest that powerful individuals would judge practices and behavior in their organization harshly. In contrast, this research found power to be associated with perceiving more fairness and less unethical activity in the organization. This suggests that powerful individuals may evaluate the groups that accord them power positively, especially along ethical dimensions. This may explain why leaders tend to attribute unethical behavior in their organizations to the actions of rogue individuals rather than exploring policies, practices, and structures as possible causes (Zimbardo, 2007). High power individuals may perceive existing policies, practices, and structures in the organization positively, concluding that they surely could not be the source of unethical behavior. Thus, this study has implications for theories of how powerful individuals react to and make attributions for unethical behavior in their organizations.

This tendency to evaluate the group positively along ethical dimensions may also explain why conformity is widely recognized as an aid to advancement in organizations (Whyte, 1956). If groups aim to accord status to those who can help the group reach its goals (Anderson & Kennedy, 2012), why groups would care about conformity along dimensions unrelated to goal achievement is unclear. Individuals who conform to norms that clearly lack implications for group goals should achieve no more status than individuals who deviate from these norms. However, if high power individuals come to see all existing norms associated with the organization as containing ethical value, individuals who conform to these norms may also be seen as more ethical or legitimate due to their association with these norms. This study contributes knowledge of how power affects cognitions in an organizational context, with numerous implications for theories of how powerful individuals react to policies, practices, norms, and other people inside their organizations.

Second, this study contributes to understanding of why groups may be hostile to dissenters. Although prior work has found groups to dislike dissenters (Minson & Monin, 2011; Trevino & Victor, 1992), why this occurs has largely been unclear. Although past work has suggested that individuals fear being judged negatively by dissenters (Minson & Monin, 2011) or resent the disruption of cohesion and stability posed by dissenters (Janis, 1972), this research suggests that dissenters may be disliked by high power individuals because high power individuals genuinely see existing practices and policies as ethical; they may therefore see no need for dissent. If others are influenced by high ranking individuals' judgments, these negative evaluations of dissenters may spread among the group. This study suggests a "transparent motive" theory (Mitchell & Tetlock, 2009) of reactions to dissent may prove promising if researchers wish to predict why high power individuals and perhaps groups at large react negatively to dissenters.

Third, this study contributes to theories of the normalization of corruption in organizations. Ashforth and Anand (2003) recognized institutionalization, rationalization, and socialization as three processes that allowed unethical practices to persist. Previously, hierarchies were recognized as encouraging the perpetuation of unethical practices largely by coercing low ranking individuals to carry out immoral orders (Hamilton & Sanders, 1992; Milgram, 1963). This research suggests that hierarchies may contribute to the normalization of corruption by leading individuals to view organizational practices and policies more positively over time, as they advance in the organization. Thus, by the time individuals have the power to intervene, they may not see the need to do so.

Strengths and Limitations

By replicating the negative relation between power and dissent in a field setting, this study contributed some confidence that this effect occurs in work organizations, where power carries role requirements and responsibilities, participants are older (Sears, 1986), and more factors vary at natural (rather than ideal) levels (Chatman & Flynn, 2005). This study suggests the relation between power and dissent surfaces not only within the laboratory, but also in real-world contexts.

This realism came at some expense, however. Because the study did not employ a causal design, a number of alternative explanations exist for the results. For instance, higher power may have been associated with less dissent because higher power individuals have invested more in the organization and are more responsible for the organization's policies and practices. They may therefore hesitate to criticize the organization or its policies or practices, as suggested by escalation of commitment (Staw, 1981) or cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) theories. In addition, because the study utilized archival survey data, the measures were imperfect proxies for the underlying constructs. For instance of perceiving unethical activity was an imperfect proxy for seeing practices as unethical because the measure surely carried both objective and subjective evaluations. Some participants who reported not observing unethical activity genuinely did not observe any; others may have observed unethical activity but failed to label it as such. For these reasons, the laboratory studies were an integral part of exploring the relation between power and dissent.

CHAPTER 7

Contributions and Future Directions

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Four studies provided some support for the central proposition of this research – that attaining power reduces dissent. Power led to group identification in Studies 1, 2 and 3, and to perceptions of fairness, a proxy for group identification, in Study 5. Power caused more positive ethical perceptions in Studies 4 and 5 and reduced dissent in Studies 3 and 5. This research utilized both laboratory designs, to examine the causal relations, and archival survey data, to examine the relations in a realistic setting. The studies found evidence that attaining power increases group identification and therefore, reduces dissent.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions to Theories of Power

This dissertation contributes to power theories in three primary ways. First, this dissertation contributes knowledge of how the process of attaining power affects individuals' cognitions and behavior toward the group. By studying power attainment in a group setting, this dissertation found evidence that power changes the relation between individuals and groups. By increasing identification with the group, it makes individuals more accepting of the group's social influence. As a result, hierarchies may expedite the transmission of group goals and values, one dimension of socialization (Chao et al., 1994; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Thus, hierarchies may be instituted not only in the name of efficiency, coordination, and motivation, but to encourage acceptance of group goals and values.

This has methodological implications in addition to theoretical ones. Currently, power is often examined without reference to the socialization processes that accompany its attainment. This work suggests that researchers may need to examine power in a social context to fully understand its effects on behavior. By social context, I mean the people who conferred power and the group setting (including its culture and norms) in which power conferral took place. With only a few exceptions (e.g., Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003), the power research has largely relied on priming methods. Even those studies that manipulated power in settings with greater experimental realism lacked mundane realism by lacking a group context. By ignoring the group context in which power naturally occurs, prior studies' results may be artifacts of the power priming method. Because this method draws no attention to the social context in which power occurs, high power individuals may feel none of the group identification they would naturally feel toward other people in the social environment. As a result, findings that power causes ethically unattractive behavior may be mere artifacts of the lack of identification high power individuals feel toward lower power individuals in their groups.

Second, by examining rank in a hierarchy, this dissertation contributes knowledge of how control over resources, the dominant current definition of power, and social status combine to affect behavior in organizational settings. Existing literature paints disparate portraits of the

effects of resource control and status. For instance, existing work in the power literature suggests that resource control leads to some morally unattractive behavior, such as decreased perspective-taking and increased derogation of subordinates (Georgeson & Harris, 1998). Existing work in the status literature suggests that status may encourage fair behavior (Blader & Chen, 2012). Yet resource control and social status often co-occur. By examining rank in a hierarchy, this research contributes a more realistic portrait of how individuals with power act in organizational settings.

Third, this research enhances knowledge of how power affects ethical behavior. The current literature suggests either that power corrupts (Gruenfeld et al., 2008; Kipnis, 1972) or that whether power-holders act ethically is largely a matter of their unique attributes and individual differences (Chen et al., 2001). This work suggests that the process of attaining power encourages the adoption of the morality embedded in the group. Therefore, whether individuals act morally will depend on the system in which they matured into leaders. This represents another sense in which power is self-reinforcing. Not only do individuals who have power tend to acquire more power (Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Merton, 1968), they have the ability to perpetuate their values by sharing power with others below them.

Contributions to Theories of Ethical Behavior

To research on behavioral ethics, this dissertation makes at least two contributions. First, it provides one explanation for why unethical practices may persevere in organizations. If low power individuals are constrained from dissenting, and high power individuals see no need to dissent, no one but organizational outsiders is left to challenge unethical practices after they emerge. This implies that values, goals, and practices may persist in organizations, even if they are less than ideal from a normative perspective.

Second, this research contributes knowledge of one way in which work contexts may discourage higher level moral reasoning. Trevino, Weaver, and Reynolds (2006: 956) reviewed evidence that moral reasoning occurs at a lower level for older and longer tenured managers (Elm & Nichols, 1993) and when individuals respond to work-related dilemmas compared to nonwork dilemmas (Weber, 1990; Weber & Wasieleski, 2001), and questioned whether those with higher moral reasoning select themselves out of work organizations or whether the work environment itself undermines moral judgment. The studies here suggest that both processes are likely. As the process of attaining power increases group identification, individuals may adopt the morality embedded in the group, which is likely to hover around the third stage of Kohlberg's (1981) model due to the prevalence of individuals at that stage (Weber, 1990). Individuals who manage to retain their higher levels of moral reasoning may find themselves alienated and without any social support for their views or concerns, eventually selecting out of the organization (Schneider, 1987; Schneider, Smith, Taylor, & Fleenor, 1998). Thus, over time, the power attainment processes that create uniformity (Nemeth & Staw, 1989) may achieve it not only via coercive pressures and rewards from authorities, but also through a less conscious process which erodes attention to alternative moral standards.

Contributions to Theories of Socialization

Although empirical evidence has demonstrated that individuals' values converge to those in their social environments over time (Chatman, 1991), how and when socialization effectively occurs versus fails remains relatively unexplored. Socialization processes remain largely a black box, like organizational demography once was (Lawrence, 1997). This work suggests that hierarchies may serve as mechanisms of socialization, helping not only to coordinate and motivate individuals, but also to transmit values and culture to them. It also explores a psychological mechanism by which this may occur, namely identification. The direction of causality differs from that proposed in prior research. Past research has proposed that organizational members must demonstrate that they hold appropriate values, goals, and attitudes in order to attain full inclusion in a group. For instance, Enz (1988) found that perceived value congruity between department members and top managers explained variance in departmental power. Van Maanen and Schein (1979) illustrated this, showing that individuals increase in inclusion and acceptance as they move from outsiders, to newcomers, to accepted but not permanent group members, and eventually, to permanent members and leaders. They stated that newcomers' abilities, motives, and values must be tested before they were granted inclusionary rights. This research suggests that moving up the hierarchy may affect individuals' motives and values, leading people to adopt those embedded in the group after they move into more central positions in the organization.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Exploring Other Explanations for a Relation between Power and Dissent

Although this research focused on increased group identification, other reasons that high power individuals might dissent less do exist. In particular, because power and tenure are often highly correlated in organizations, high power individuals have often made greater investments in the organization than low power individuals. Because of these investments, high power individuals may feel irrational for holding negative views of the organization, or its values, practices, or policies. Seeing the need for dissent may provide difficult for high power individuals then not only because they identify more with the group, but because they feel a need to justify their past behavior (Staw, 1981). This need to justify past behavior may derive from a sense of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) caused by holding negative attitudes toward the organization after investing in its success or by social pressures to hold thoughts consistent with one's past behavior (Staw, 1981). Cognitive dissonance is especially likely when high power individuals see the need to change policies, practices, or norms they themselves promoted because they will feel highly responsible for any negative consequences of their past decisions (Cooper, 1971). Thus, dissent may be embarrassing for high ranking individuals. Future research could examine this by comparing dissent among people who occupy the same organizational roles, but were hired from outside the company instead of promoted within the company. If power causes identification by establishing an exchange process, both sets of individuals should identify highly with the organization, but those hired from outside the organization will have made fewer investments in the present policies, practices, and norms.

Integrating with Legitimacy Research

This research examined the effect of power on dissent through the lens of group identification. Attending to group identification led to predictions quite different than those suggested by work on middle-status conformity, which attends to the potential loss of legitimacy. Research on middle-status conformity has found that actors of middle status were most conforming, whereas those with high and low status conformed less (Phillips & Zuckerman, 2001). This occurred due to the potential for legitimacy losses. Phillips and Zuckerman (2001: 385) noted that actions serve as evidence of legitimacy only for those whose legitimacy is up for question – those with moderate levels of rank. They argued that low status individuals do not value their group membership or have the possibility of inclusion necessary to have the motivation to conform (Dittes & Kelley, 1956), whereas high status individuals have established identities that make conformity unnecessary to maintain legitimacy. Notably, the legitimacy perspective assumes greater cost-benefit analyses on the part of actors. It suggests that high ranking individuals will conform less because they do not need to in order to maintain their status. Future research should explore when the effects of legitimacy dominate the effects group identification or vice versa. One possibility is that the legitimacy perspective applies better to firms, whereas the group identification perspective applies better to individuals. Because the actions of firms – such as deciding whether to enter family law or issue sell recommendations – are driven by individuals, whereas the firm itself is the high status party, individuals may make decisions more rationally and consciously, based on cost-benefit analyses. In contrast, when individuals are accorded status themselves, group identification, a warmer and less conscious process, may drive their actions. The level of analysis may matter for understanding the effects of rank on dissent.

Boundary conditions

Future research should examine boundary conditions surrounding the effects of power on dissent. Neither tenure in the organization nor moral awareness was supported by the data as a moderator. One critical moderator may be whether the value, goal, or practice in question helps or harms the group. Packer's (2008; Packer & Chasteen, 2010) normative conflict model of dissent in groups suggests that highly identified group members will dissent when they perceive group norms as harmful to the collective interest. Although the current research suggests that the group will influence whether high power individuals see a norm as harmful, future research should explore how harmful norms can be without high power individuals recognizing them as harmful.

Another promising avenue is the congruence or mismatch between source of power and source of the values, goals, or practices in question. This potential moderator seems most likely to enable integration of this research on power attainment with the existing research on power possession. Future research should examine when high power individuals interpret values, goals, or practices as coming from individual group members, who may or may not accord them power, versus from the group at large. This will help explicate when they will dissent more rather than less than lower ranking persons.

Compliance versus Internalization Explanations

Future research should also explore the relative validity of compliance versus internalization accounts of the effects of power attainment. From these studies, it is unclear whether power reduces dissent by causing internalization of the group's values and goals or mere compliance with them. Internalization represents acceptance of influence because the content of the induced behavior is intrinsically rewarding, whereas compliance represents acceptance of influence out of hope of achieving a favorable reaction from the group (Kelman, 1958). The first explanation appears likely in light of Study 4, which found an effect of power on views of the group decision's ethicality. However, future research should explore this question more directly and in more depth.

Effect of Group Morality on Dissent

The effect of group morality on dissent found in Study 3 also merits exploration. In that study, participants dissented less when the group chose to tell the truth rather than lie. Why this affected dissent is unclear. It is puzzling in light of the finding that power leads individuals to see the group's decisions as more ethical. The decrease in dissent in the high group morality condition suggests that high power and low power individuals alike see that decision as more legitimate in some way. The apparent ethical value of the decision would offer one explanation. Clearly high power individuals retain some degree of objectivity in their judgments. A future model could incorporate this fact with findings of this power attainment theory of dissent.

Dyadic and Group-Level Implications

The morality of group cultures. Future research should examine the implications of this power attainment theory of dissent for dyadic relations and group cultures. If low power individuals see more need for dissent, but feel constrained from expressing it, and high power individuals perceive little need for dissent, but perceive great freedom to express dissent, how does this affect their interpersonal relations? At the group level, if there is no one to dissent, what does this mean for organizational cultures? It would seem to suggest that group cultures may have great inertia and continue in whatever direction they embarked. Whether this means the morality embedded in groups is arbitrary and varied or set with intention by founders and homogenous is unclear, though. Future research could explore this content.

Power affordance as mitigating the negative effects of hierarchy? Although this research highlighted the negative implications of power attainment for ethical behavior, the tractability of powerful individuals to influence surely has a variety of positive outcomes as well. For instance, Tannenbaum et al. (1974) noted numerous forms of dissatisfaction suffered by those in low ranking positions within hierarchies. This research suggests one way these effects could be naturally mitigated. Bourgeois, Sommer, and Bruno (2009) reviewed evidence that having influence fulfills five needs, belongingness, accuracy, self-esteem, control, and meaning. By making high ranking individuals more susceptible to influence, low power individuals may have more of their psychological needs met and group stability may increase. Future research should examine power flows in organizations. To the extent that power can be accorded more often and more freely among individuals in organizations, it may result in greater satisfaction,

more cooperation, and less alienation in organizations. More broadly, future research should explore ways organizations can manage the positive and negative effects of these dual power attainment and power possession processes.

CONCLUSION

This research suggests that individuals who advance in a group's hierarchy may not dissent when they encounter unethical activities embraced by others in the group. It provides evidence that advancing in power socializes individuals, increasing group identification and preventing individuals from seeing the need for dissent. As a result, high power individuals dissent less than low power individuals. This occurs despite the fact that high power individuals are more likely than others to dissent when they see a need to do so. Although this may enable cooperation and cohesion, it leaves groups without anyone to dissent. As a result, they may struggle to detect error in their values, goals, or practices, at a loss to ethics and innovation in organizations.

These losses may not be immediately apparent. In the short run, organizations may benefit from a lack of dissent. The organization may function smoothly and efficiently and enjoy cohesion because members have accepted its values, goals, and practices. Members' acceptance of existing ways of thinking and acting may lead to steady, predictable performance, with few organizational members failing to fulfill their duties as defined by the institution (Ashforth & Saks, 1994). In the long run, however, organizations' ethics and innovation may suffer. Ethics in the organization may suffer because groups tend to act strategically, to reach goals, rather than ethically (Cohen et al., 2009), and because any value system necessarily involves trade-offs (Worline, & Quinn, 2003). Courageous principled action. In K.S. Cameron, J.E. Dutton, & R.E. Quinn (Eds.), *Positive organizational scholarship* (pp. 138-157). San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.). To the extent that individuals fail to recognize value trade-offs because they completely accept the existing value system, their thought and behavior may come to lack the wisdom necessary for ethical decisions and behavior (Aristotle, 2000; Berlin, 2002). Similarly, innovation may suffer because it requires seeing the need for new ways of doing things (Amabile, 1988). To the extent that individuals accept the existing ways of doing things, they may struggle to recognize the need for innovation or to think or act independently. To prevent these casualties of ethicality and innovation, organizations may need to retain some under-socialized members or continuously recruit outsiders to hold leadership roles. In other words, organizations need outsiders on the inside of the organization, as difficult as this may be to sustain.

This research suggests that unethical behavior in organizations may have much more complex origins than simply immoral orders or negligent oversight. Individuals at the top and the bottom of the organizational hierarchy face unique constraints on their tendency to discern and impede ethically wanting behavior. While this conclusion is not comforting, it suggests that moral behavior in organizations is complex, and a more thoughtful approach to encouraging morally good behavior in organizations could hold promise for individuals, organizations, and the societies that live with them.

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Table 1

Peabody (1967) Plot of Cooperation

Value Judgment	Description	
	Low	High
<i>Positive</i>	Independent	Cooperative
<i>Negative</i>	Uncooperative	Conforming

Table 2

Proportion of Dissenting Participants by Condition in Study 3

Group Morality	Power		
	Low	Control	High
Low	39.13%	37.78%	17.39%
High	8.89%	11.36%	2.22%

Table 3

Effect of Study 3 Conditions on Binary Dissent Measure Using Logistic Regression Analysis

Variable	OR	SE	z	p	95% CI	
High power	0.35	.14	-2.52	.01	0.13	0.77
Low power	0.95	.36	-0.14	.89	0.45	1.99
High group morality	0.15	.06	-4.75	.00	0.07	0.33
Female gender	0.60	.21	-1.43	.15	0.30	1.20

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations of Continuous Dissent Measure by Condition in Study 3

Condition	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Low Group Morality		
Low Power	3.26	1.53
Control	3.18	1.45
High Power	2.47	1.16
High Group Morality		
Low Power	2.17	1.14
Control	2.18	1.15
High Power	1.72	0.73

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among Continuous Variables in Study 5

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Power	3.04	0.71					
2. Fairness	-3.01	1.00	.14***				
3. Attention to threat	-1.46	0.55	-.08***	-.05***			
4. Tenure	4.41	1.82	.15***	-.08***	-.04***		
5. Education	4.48	1.68	.41***	.06***	-.08**	-.05***	
6. Knowledge of prot.	-2.92	0.96	.12***	.11***	-.11***	.18***	.04*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 6

Effect of Predictors on Odds of Dissent in Study 5

Variable	OR	SE	z	p	95% CI
Power	0.88	.05	-2.40	.016	0.79 - 0.98
Tenure	0.99	.02	-0.61	.543	0.95 - 1.03
Education	1.07	.03	2.92	.003	1.02 - 1.12
Female gender	0.93	.07	-0.97	.331	0.80 - 1.08
Non-Caucasian ethnicity	0.66	.06	-4.43	.000	0.55 - 0.79
Knowledge of protections	1.21	.04	5.26	.000	1.13 - 1.30

Table 7

Effect of Predictors on Odds of Perceiving Unethical Activity in Study 5

Variable	OR	SE	z	p	95% CI
Power	0.78	.03	-5.87	.000	0.72 - 0.85
Tenure	0.98	.01	-1.36	.172	0.95 - 1.01
Education	1.10	.02	5.11	.000	1.06 - 1.14
Female gender	0.96	.06	-0.77	.44	0.85 - 1.07
Non-Caucasian ethnicity	0.74	.05	-4.42	.000	0.65 - 0.85
Knowledge of protections	1.08	.03	2.72	.006	1.02 - 1.14

Table 8

Effects on Dissent Among Those Who Perceived Unethical Activity in Study 5

Variable	OR	SE	z	p	95% CI
Power	1.16	.09	1.99	.046	1.00 - 1.34
Tenure	1.01	.03	0.48	.630	0.96 - 1.07
Education	0.97	.03	-0.93	.354	0.91 - 1.04
Female gender	0.93	.10	-0.63	.527	0.76 - 1.15
Non-Caucasian ethnicity	0.77	.10	-2.04	.041	0.60 - 0.99
Knowledge of protections	1.25	.06	4.42	.000	1.13 - 1.38

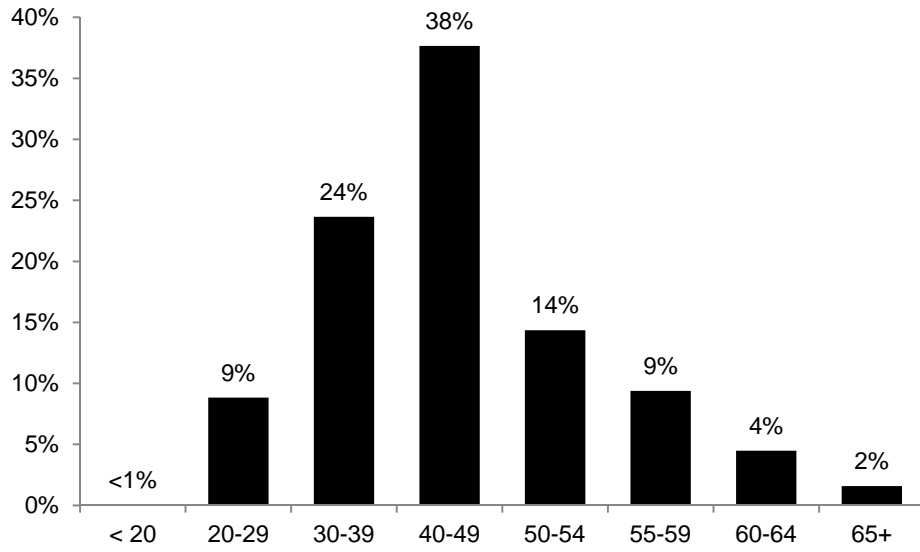


Figure 1. Age distribution of the sample of government agency employees in Study 5.

Appendix A

Negotiation Task Used in Study 1

Legal Officer Exercise

Your Role: Legal Officer for UC Berkeley

Please imagine yourself in the role of Legal Officer for UC Berkeley. This job concerns all aspects of managing negotiations and legal issues with various constituents of the School: vendors, students, faculty, staff, alumni, the city of Berkeley, the State, and the general public. Responsibilities include creating contracts, handling negotiations with vendors and key constituencies, preventing lawsuits filed against the School, managing any lawsuits filed by the School.

Currently, UC Berkeley is in negotiations to acquire real estate adjacent to the School in order to expand its facilities. The School has encountered opposition from local community members who wish to protect the trees and from local businesses that currently reside on the property.

You and your team in the Legal Division have been in negotiations with these residents and the local businesses for months, and it seems that the opposition may not be negotiating in good faith. You suspect that they are drawing out the negotiation in hopes that budget cuts will reduce the university's funding to such a low level that UC Berkeley can no longer afford to build the planned expansion.

Your team members in the Legal Division sent you the following memo:

Attached is a proposed course of action for our negotiations regarding the expansion tract. We've identified two key issues and proposed next steps. Could you please review this plan while we are at the conference in San Francisco today?

Re: Negotiations with Community Residents over the Expansion Property

Currently, two primary issues have arisen in the acquisition of the expansion tract:

- (1) The opposition may not intend to settle. They may intend to continue negotiations until we are too budget-constrained to expand the facilities as planned.
- (2) Local residents are placing pressure on business owners not to sell their land.

To resolve these problems, we propose the following negotiation strategy:

- Leak a rumor to the press that the university has received a record number of private donations to fund the expansion
 - This rumor is probably false, though it is unclear because of poor record-keeping of donations in prior years
- Propose a truce period, in which both sides agree to explore integrative solutions
- During the truce period, secure a settlement deal by:
 1. Offering 5% above-market prices to business owners
 2. Agreeing to contract only with local business to run the new cafés and shops
 3. Agreeing to plant approximately 2 new trees for every 1 tree removed
 4. Making a \$100,000 donation to a rainforest preservation group
 - Please note that only points 1 and 4 are legally enforceable agreements. Therefore, we will have flexibility on points 2 and 3, if we choose not to follow through with them
- During the truce period, draft documents alleging libel and obstruction of private property rights against community residents
- Gain information about business owners' profitability to determine which business owners are the unprofitable and therefore, most likely to sell
 - For instance, by paying others to pose as frequent customers to develop relations and acquire this information
- Conduct due diligence on cases of food poisoning or issues with health inspections to drive down local business' profits before presenting them with the sale offer

Appendix B

Leader Election Instructions Used in Study 3

Decision-making in organizations often occurs in a hierarchical context, so I would like you to choose one person from your group to be the leader. Later in this experiment, the leader will be responsible for making key decisions and overseeing the group's task performance. The leader will also be responsible for evaluating other group members and determining whether they should receive a bonus for their participation today.

To choose who you would like to hold the leadership position, please review each set of materials carefully so you can make judgments of each person's leadership qualities. Now, please review the packets and think about who you'd like to choose as the leader. You may not vote for yourself.

Please indicate who you would like to be the group's leader. To vote, you have 10 leadership points to allocate. You may give them all to one person or divide them among the other participants however you would like.

Please indicate how many leadership points you would like to allocate to each group member (from 0 to 10):

Person A _____

Person B _____

Person C _____

Person D _____

Person E _____

Person F _____

(The participant's own seat letter was omitted from the display.)

Appendix C

Power Manipulations Used in Study 3

High Power Condition

Your group awarded you this many leadership points:

32

This is an average of 6.4 points from each person.

You have been chosen by your group to hold the leadership position in the third part of this experiment. This means you will be responsible for making key decisions and overseeing the group's task performance. You will also be responsible for evaluating others' task performance.

Low Power Condition

Your group awarded you this many leadership points:

6

This is an average of 1.2 points from each person.

You have not been chosen by your group to hold the leadership position in the third part of the experiment.

Control Condition

Thank you for your vote. It has been recorded. Results will be announced later.

Appendix D

Pre-Scripted Messages Used as a Basis for Dissent in Study 3

High Group Morality Condition

Choosing 2 is more honest. Let's do that.
We should do what is right – msg 2.
i say we send 2. they trusted us obviously.
Message 2 is ok by me. They'd probably do the same.

Low Group Morality Condition

Choosing 1 is practical. Let's do that.
we should do what is best for us – msg 1.
i say we send 1. We're here to make money obviously.
Message 1 is ok by me. They'd probably do the same.

Appendix E

Courses of Action Available to the Group in Study 4

Option 1

Take the meeting with JBC to see if you can find a mutually beneficial arrangement and avoid a hostile takeover battle.

- Do some analyses so you can name a price at which you would accept
- Draw up contracts that would protect KV from being broken-up and sold in pieces, if that is JBC's intention
- Consider selling some assets to JBC that they can manage more efficiently than you currently can due to their existing operations and the potential for synergies (i.e., cost savings)
- This risk is that you, as KV's employees, lose your jobs if JBC accepts your offer and decides to institute lay-offs

Thus, if you choose Option1:

- **The other group, JBC, will receive \$72 today**
- **If JBC decides not to conduct layoffs, your group, KV, will receive \$72 today**
- **If JBC decides to conduct layoffs, your group, KV, will receive \$48 today**

Option 2

Drag your feet on responding to JBC. Use the time to put in protections against a hostile takeover. Then, deny the meeting.

- Put in a staggered Board of Directors, so that JBC must hold more than one proxy fight to replace the management team with people who would agree to the acquisition
- Put in place "golden parachute provisions" which pay out large amounts to compensation to KV's employees, including your group, if another company successfully acquires KV without KV's consent
- Find a "white knight" – i.e., a company KV wouldn't mind being acquired by – to outbid JBC

Thus, if you choose Option2:

- **Your group, KV, will receive \$72 for participating today**
- **The other group, JBC, will receive \$48 for participating today**

Appendix F

Pre-Scripted Messages Used as a Basis for Dissent in Study 4

I say Option 2. We should do what's best for us.

Agree, we should be practical - I vote for 2.

I'm ok with Option 2 as well. It makes sense for us to avoid the risk

option 2. we're here to make money obviously

2 is ok. They'd probably do the same in our position. They still get \$8 each

Appendix G

Measure of Dissent in Study 5

Did you report this activity to any of the following?

(Please mark ALL that apply.)

- I did not report the activity.

- Family member or friend
- Coworker
- Immediate supervisor
- Higher level supervisor
- Higher level agency official
- Agency Inspector General
- Office of Special Counsel
- Law enforcement official
- General Accounting Office
- Union representative
- News media
- Congressional staff member or member of Congress
- Advocacy group outside the Government
- Other