

Does Power Magnify the Expression of Dispositions?

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Abstract

Conventional wisdom holds that power holders act more in line with their dispositions than do people who lack power. Drawing on principles of construct accessibility, we propose that this is the case only when no alternative constructs are activated. In three experiments, we assessed participants' chronic dispositions and subsequently manipulated participants' degree of power. Participants then either were or were not primed with alternative (i.e., inaccessible or counterdispositional) constructs. When no alternatives were activated, the responses of power holders—perceptions of other people (Experiment 1), preferences for charitable donations (Experiment 2), and strategies in an economic game (Experiment 3)—were more in line with their chronically accessible constructs than were the responses of low-power participants. However, when alternatives had been activated, power holders' responses were no longer more congruent with their dispositions than were the responses of low-power participants. We propose a single mechanism according to which power increases reliance on accessible constructs—that is, constructs that easily come to mind—regardless of whether these constructs are chronically or temporarily accessible.

Keywords

power, construct accessibility, dispositions, priming, automaticity, social cognition

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Conventional wisdom holds that power holders experience little external resistance, so they act in line with their personality and deep-rooted sentiments. For example, Abraham Lincoln noted that the best way to know a man's character is to give him power (cited in Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh, 2001). But does power really magnify the expression of dispositions and enduring sentiments? Recent sociocognitive research has shown that, compared with powerless individuals, those in power express their true attitudes more (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002) and behave in ways that are more in line with their relationship orientations (Chen et al., 2001) and their proclivity to engage in sexual harassment (Bargh & Raymond, 1995). In contrast, other findings have suggested that this may not always be the case. Power holders show less consistency in attitudes (Weick & Guinote, 2008) and behavior (Guinote, 2008; Overbeck & Park, 2006; Vescio, Snyder, & Butz, 2003) than one would expect on the basis of a dispositional account. However, these inconsistencies often remain unnoticed because observers fail to consider situational constraints on the actions of power holders (Overbeck, Tiedens, & Brion, 2006). In the research reported here, we examined the links

between power and disposition-consistent behavior and attempted to reconcile conflicting findings from prior work.

Following a tradition that considers the environment to be a press driving people to act in particular ways (Lewin, 1951), research on power has often treated the person and the environment as opposing influences. We favor a single-mechanism account for dispositional and environmental influences on behavior: reliance on accessible constructs, or the activation and use of constructs that are stimulated and readily come to mind (see Bargh, Bond, Lombardi, & Tota, 1986; Eitam & Higgins, 2010; Higgins, 1996; Higgins, King, & Mavin, 1982). We propose that such reliance occurs regardless of whether the constructs are chronically accessible (associated with dispositions) or temporarily activated (triggered by environmental influences).

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Chronic and Temporary Construct Accessibility

It is widely accepted that people differ in their dispositions (see Tyler, 1965). Dispositions derive from the accumulation of repeated experiences with the outside world and from the formation of knowledge structures that bias the ways in which individuals interpret and respond to the environment. These frequently used knowledge structures are chronically accessible and hence can be readily used in many situations (Bargh et al., 1986; Bruner, 1957).

Nevertheless, dispositional influences on behavior are not inevitable. Behavior is best understood in terms of a Person \times Situation interaction (Kunda & Spencer, 2003; Shoda & Mischel, 1993), whereby individuals flexibly navigate the world. They are able to respond to unexpected situations, using a hippocampal system for fast learning (McClelland, McNaughton, & O'Reilly, 1995), and possess multiple response models. For example, insecurely attached individuals act securely in some contexts (see Baldwin, Keelan, Fehr, Enns, & Koh-Rangarajoo, 1996). Models of construct accessibility converge in their assumption that activated constructs affect judgment and behavior, usually in ways that are congruent with the activated constructs, and regardless of whether these constructs are chronically or temporarily accessible (e.g., Higgins, 1996; Smith & DeCoster, 1998; Srull & Wyer, 1979, 1986).

Power and Construct Accessibility

As we noted earlier, past research has suggested that power promotes behavior consistent with individuals' dispositions. For example, Chen et al. (2001) found that power decreased prejudice among individuals who were primarily oriented toward responding to the needs and interests of others, and increased prejudice among individuals who saw relationships as opportunities to exchange benefits. However, on the basis of a Person \times Situation perspective, we argue that a full understanding of the links between power and dispositions requires an examination of behavior across different contexts—in particular, contexts that activate alternative constructs.

Power—the ability to control and influence other individuals in meaningful ways (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003; Vescio et al., 2003)—increases the ability to attain desired outcomes (see Fiske, 1993). According to the *situated-focus theory of power* (Guinote, 2007, 2010), power holders' greater control (relative to the control of powerless individuals) instigates trust in processes that are used by default in moment-to-moment responses to the needs, affordances, or goals that emerge as internal states or the environment changes. We propose, therefore, that power facilitates the activation and use of constructs stimulated in a given situation.

Furthermore, power holders often seek information less extensively than do powerless individuals (Fiske, 1993; Keltner et al., 2003), who attend to multiple sources of information (Guinote, 2007) and ruminate more (Karremans & Smith, 2010). Cognitive busyness (see Gilbert & Hixon, 1991)

and extensive information search (Kruglanski, 1989) decrease construct activation (see Kunda & Spencer, 2003). Power holders should therefore be in a better position to activate constructs than powerless individuals are. Indeed, when motivated to accomplish a goal, power holders, compared with their powerless counterparts, display greater accessibility of goal-related constructs, as has been shown in lexical decision tasks (Slabu & Guinote, 2010). In addition to displaying differences in construct activation, power holders may feel more confident and free than powerless individuals to use constructs that come to mind (Briñol, Petty, Valle, Rucker, & Becerra, 2007); that is, power may increase the *judged usability* of activated constructs (see Higgins, 1996).

In sum, we propose that power holders, more than powerless individuals, rely on accessible constructs, and that this reliance occurs regardless of whether the constructs are driven by the individual or the environment. These predictions differ from those that follow from the perspective that power necessarily strengthens dispositions: Such enhanced dispositional strength would imply greater reliance on chronically accessible constructs across situations.

The Present Research

In the research reported here, we sought to examine the links between power and disposition-congruent behavior. We propose that reliance on accessible constructs explains conflicting effects of power. We reason that power promotes the activation and use of constructs that readily come to mind, regardless of whether these constructs are chronically accessible or temporarily stimulated. Consequently, power facilitates the activation and use of chronically accessible constructs only when no alternative constructs compete for the control of judgment and action. When alternative constructs are stimulated, chronic and alternative influences may cancel each other out. For example, conflict between situationally activated goals and chronic goals may lead to equivocal responses (see Kleiman & Hassin, 2011). In such cases, there may be no observable differences between the behavior of powerful and powerless individuals.

These hypotheses were tested in three experiments. In all experiments, chronically accessible and inaccessible constructs were assessed in a first session. In a second session, power was manipulated, and half of the participants were primed with alternative constructs that were inaccessible (Experiments 1 and 2) or counterdispositional (Experiment 3). The remaining participants were subject to a neutral prime. Reliance on chronically accessible constructs was then examined in the contexts of perceptions of other people (Experiment 1), choice behavior (Experiment 2), and an economic game (Experiment 3).

Experiment 1

In Experiment 1, we examined reliance on accessible constructs in interpersonal relations. Following a power manipulation, participants were primed with either an inaccessible or

a neutral construct and then made judgments about an ambiguously described, fictitious person. Ambiguous targets are usually interpreted in line with accessible constructs (e.g., Bargh et al., 1986; Srull & Wyer, 1979). We also examined whether the power manipulation influenced participants' mood or level of effort (see Fiske, 1993; Keltner et al., 2003).

Method

Sixty-four students (14 males, 50 females) were selected on the basis of the chronic accessibility of specific trait constructs. For 24 participants, rudeness was chronically accessible and honesty was inaccessible; for 5 participants, honesty was chronically accessible and rudeness was inaccessible; for 19 participants, dishonesty was chronically accessible and extraversion was inaccessible; and for 16 participants, extraversion was chronically accessible and dishonesty was inaccessible. Thus, Experiment 1 employed a 2 (power: high or low) \times 2 (prime: neutral or inaccessible trait) \times 4 (chronically accessible trait: rudeness, honesty, extraversion, or dishonesty) between-subjects design.

First session. Following Higgins et al. (1982), we had participants in a mass pretest ($N = 322$) list 10 traits of a person they liked, of a person they disliked, of a person they sought out, of a person they avoided, and of a person they frequently encountered. The first two traits mentioned were considered chronically accessible. Inaccessible traits were those not mentioned. To enhance the generalizability of the effects, we selected four different groups of *chronics* (i.e., participants with particular chronically accessible traits): rudeness chronics, honesty chronics, extraversion chronics, and dishonesty chronics.

Second session. Several weeks later, we manipulated power by asking participants to imagine themselves as either a managing director or an employee in a marketing organization and to describe a typical workday (Guinote, 2008). Following the power manipulation, participants indicated how much influence they had over others and how much they were in charge in the work context, using scales from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*very much*). They then completed a word-search puzzle. For half the participants, the search matrix contained only neutral words (e.g., *paper*, *board*). For the remaining participants, it contained five words that primed an inaccessible trait, which could be used to make sense of a subsequent impression-formation task. Specifically, for rudeness chronics, the five words pertained to honesty (e.g., *sincere*, *trust*); for honesty chronics, the words were related to rudeness (e.g., *insult*, *offense*); for extraversion chronics, the words were related to dishonesty (e.g., *devious*, *false*); finally, for dishonesty chronics, the words were related to extraversion (e.g., *chatty*, *sociable*).

Participants next received a description of a fictitious person and were instructed to form an impression of him. Participants for whom dishonesty or extraversion was chronically accessible read, "Robert accepts invitations to parties,

including those from people he dislikes." A pretest indicated that this description elicited impressions of extraversion and dishonesty with equal frequency. Participants for whom rudeness or honesty was chronically accessible read, "When Donald met his friend, he told him that he was quite smelly." Results from the pretest showed that this description elicited impressions of rudeness and honesty with equal frequency.

Dishonesty chronics and extraversion chronics indicated their impressions of Robert on a scale from 1 (*dishonest*) to 9 (*outgoing*) and on a scale from 1 (*two-faced*) to 9 (*extraverted*). Rudeness chronics and honesty chronics indicated their impressions of Donald on a scale from 1 (*rude*) to 9 (*honest*) and on a scale from 1 (*inconsiderate*) to 9 (*veracious*).

Subsequently, participants reported their mood, using four 7-point scales (happiness: $-3 = \textit{very sad}$, $3 = \textit{very happy}$; contentedness: $-3 = \textit{very discontent}$, $3 = \textit{very content}$; calmness: $-3 = \textit{very tense}$, $3 = \textit{very calm}$; general mood: $-3 = \textit{very bad}$, $3 = \textit{very good}$). They then reported the level of effort they had invested to provide correct answers about the targets, using a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*very much*). After completing all measures, participants were probed for suspicion, thanked, and debriefed.

Results

Manipulation check. Participants' ratings of how much influence they had over others and how much they were in charge in the work context were averaged ($\alpha = .80$) and submitted to an independent t test. Participants who imagined themselves as managing directors perceived themselves as having more control ($M = 7.41$) than participants who imagined themselves as employees did ($M = 5.08$), $t(60) = 6.30$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.63$. This result suggests that the manipulation of power was successful.

Social impressions. Ratings of Robert and Donald were recoded so that higher values reflected impressions more in line with chronically accessible traits. In order to achieve adequate cell sizes, we averaged the two trait ratings for each target (Donald: $\alpha = .63$; Robert: $\alpha = .66$) and submitted these averaged scores to a 2 (power: high or low) \times 2 (prime: neutral or inaccessible trait) \times 2 (target: Robert or Donald) analysis of variance (ANOVA). The analysis yielded the predicted interaction between power and prime, $F(1, 56) = 6.35$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$. When participants were exposed to a neutral prime, high-power participants' perceptions of the target were more in line with their chronically accessible traits than were the perceptions of low-power participants (high power: $M = 6.22$; low power: $M = 4.70$), $F(1, 56) = 4.81$, $p = .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .19$ (see Fig. 1). However, when participants were primed with an inaccessible trait, this was no longer the case (high power: $M = 4.46$; low power: $M = 5.66$), $F(1, 56) = 1.87$, $p = .18$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. Furthermore, the impressions of the targets among participants in the high-power role varied across the priming conditions, $F(1, 56) = 4.59$, $p = .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .18$, but this was not the

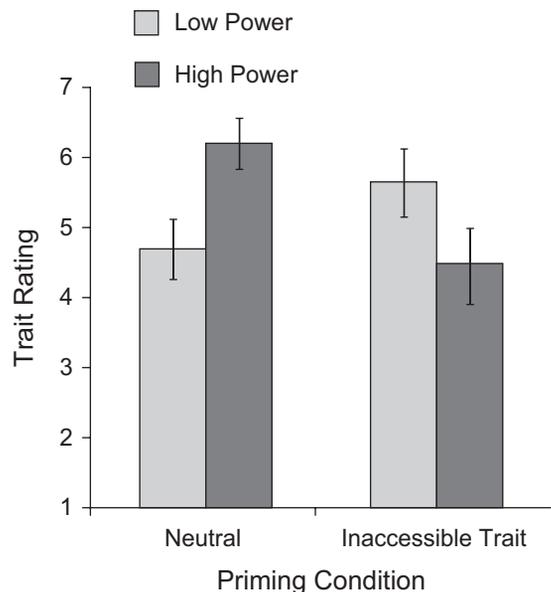


Fig. 1. Results from Experiment 1: rating of the ambiguous target as a function of power condition and priming condition. Higher scores indicate impressions that were more in line with participants' chronically accessible traits. Error bars represent standard errors.

case for low-power participants, $F(1, 56) = 1.95, p = .17, \eta_p^2 = .05$. No other significant effects emerged, $F_s < 1$.

Self-report measures. The averaged ratings of mood ($\alpha = .82$) and effort ($\alpha = .71$) did not differ between high-power and low-power participants, $t_s(62) < 1$.

Discussion

The results of Experiment 1 supported our predictions. Power enhanced the activation and application of chronically accessible constructs. However, this was the case only when the situation facilitated the activation of these constructs. When alternative constructs were activated, the ratings of high-power and low-power participants did not differ. The temporary activation of alternative constructs thus led to marked changes in impressions of an ambiguous target among high-power, but not low-power, individuals.

Experiment 2

In Experiment 2, we examined the joint effects of power and dispositions on behavior. Once constructs are activated, they usually guide behavior in the direction of the activated information (Bargh et al., 1986; Higgins, 1996). However, this is not always the case. For example, because of concerns about social desirability, prejudiced individuals do not always discriminate against minorities (e.g., Kunda & Spencer, 2003). Given that power holders have fewer constraints than powerless individuals do, they should freely apply chronically

accessible constructs. However, according to our hypothesis, this should be the case only when no alternative constructs are stimulated.

We tested these predictions in the context of choice behavior. The tendency to act in line with enduring attitudes decreases when the situation offers alternative possibilities (Posavac, Sanbonmatsu, & Fazio, 1997). Therefore, in Experiment 2, we asked participants to indicate charities they would like to donate money to, in the presence or absence of a list of alternatives (following Posavac et al., 1997).

Method

Experiment 2 consisted of two experimental sessions. In the second session, participants were randomly assigned to one of the conditions in a 2 (power: high or low) \times 2 (situation: alternatives not present or present) between-subjects design.

First session. Participants ($N = 45$) were asked to list as many exemplars of each of several categories as possible. The category of charitable organizations was included among several filler categories (e.g., vegetables). Charities nearer the beginning of a participant's list were considered more accessible (see Posavac et al., 1997). After they had finished listing exemplars, participants completed a questionnaire that allegedly assessed leadership skills. Finally, participants were thanked, paid, and dismissed.

Second session. Two weeks after the first session, 30 participants (15 male, 15 female) took part in the second session. They expected to simulate the role of a manager (high-power condition) or a subordinate (low-power condition) in an organization. Participants were allegedly assigned to either role on the basis of their responses to the leadership questionnaire. Following Guinote, Judd, and Brauer (2002), we told managers that they would evaluate the performance of subordinates on various assignments, and we told subordinates that they would work on the assignments. Furthermore, managers were told that they would receive a prize (an Amazon voucher) in exchange for their participation, and subordinates were told that they could potentially receive a prize if their assignments were evaluated positively.

While waiting to enact the roles in pairs, participants were told that the project was financed by a research council and that payment was originally supposed to be higher; however, the hosting institution had restricted the amount of money that could be paid to participants, and the researchers had decided to give the extra money to a charity. Because the money was originally supposed to be given to the participants, they were asked to choose their first, second, and third choice of charities to donate the money to. To manipulate the presence of alternatives, we had participants make their choices under one of two conditions: Participants either selected charities from a list or typed names of charities on a blank computer screen. The list

consisted of 13 charities that a pretest had indicated were well-known. After participants had finished selecting charities, they were probed for suspicion, debriefed, and paid.

Results

Chronic accessibility of the charities chosen in Session 2 was assessed following Posavac et al. (1997). Each charity listed by a participant in Session 1 received a score, with a lower value indicating an earlier position in that participant's list and therefore greater accessibility. Scores ranged from 1 to 13 (i.e., no participant listed more than 13 charities). Chosen charities that participants had not listed in the first session were given a score obtained by averaging the nonused ranks for each participant (e.g., if participants had listed 4 charities in Session 1, ranks 5–13 were unused).

A 2 (power: high or low) \times 2 (situation: alternatives not present or present) ANOVA was conducted on the mean rank of the three charities chosen by participants in Session 2. A main effect of situation, $F(1, 26) = 7.23, p = .01, \eta_p^2 = .22$, indicated that participants chose more chronically accessible charities when alternatives were not present ($M = 4.13$) than when they were present ($M = 6.16$). More important, there was a significant Power \times Situation interaction, $F(1, 26) = 6.25, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .19$ (see Table 1). When no information in the choice situation interfered with chronically accessible preferences, high-power participants chose more chronically accessible charities ($M = 2.82$) than did low-power participants ($M = 5.45$), $F(1, 26) = 7.94, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .38$. However, when a list of alternatives was present, no differences emerged between high-power ($M = 6.72$) and low-power ($M = 5.59$) participants, $F < 1$. Furthermore, the choices of high-power participants varied according to the situation, such that they relied more on chronic preferences when there was no list of alternatives and relied less on chronic preferences when such a list was present, $F(1, 26) = 24.49, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .67$, whereas low-power participants were not affected by the choice situation, $F < 1$.

Discussion

As predicted, and consistent with our results from Experiment 1, results showed that power influenced behavior in line with chronically accessible preferences when the situation was

Table 1. Accessibility of Chosen Charities as a Function of Power and Choice Situation (Experiment 2)

Situation	High power	Low power
List of alternative constructs present	6.72 (2.01)	5.59 (2.38)
List of alternative constructs not present	2.82 (0.89)	5.45 (2.48)

Note: Lower scores reflect choices more in line with chronically accessible preferences. Standard deviations are shown in parentheses.

neutral. This was not the case, however, when alternatives competed for the control of action. As in Experiment 1, power holders' behavior varied more across situations than the behavior of powerless individuals did.

Experiment 3

In Experiments 1 and 2, the inaccessible constructs did not directly oppose dispositions. However, the strongest test of our hypotheses occurs when dispositional tendencies are pitted against the activation of counterdispositional constructs (e.g., when a cooperative person is primed with a competition goal), rather than against the activation of constructs that are merely inaccessible. Because counterdispositional constructs can be used and have value in many situations (see Eitam & Higgins, 2010), we reasoned that the ways in which participants respond to counterdispositional primes should be similar to the ways in which they respond to inaccessible primes. We tested this hypothesis using an economic game. Participants with chronic cooperation or competition goals were exposed to either a neutral prime or a prime that activated counterdispositional goals. The activation of counterdispositional goals can lead to goal conflict (see Kleiman & Hassin, 2011). Therefore, we predicted that having power would lead to disposition-driven behavior following the neutral prime, but not following the counterdispositional prime. In contrast, because lacking power should lead to a more reflective consideration of multiple factors, we expected that the behavior of low-power individuals, compared with that of power holders, would be more consistent across the prime conditions.

Method

Eighty-six participants (21 males, 65 females) participated in two sessions. The study employed a 2 (power: high or low) \times 2 (prime: counterdispositional or neutral) \times 2 (disposition: prosocial or proself) between-subjects factorial design.

First session. Participants in a mass pretest ($N = 128$) completed an online questionnaire containing 25 social-value items embedded in unrelated filler items. Social-value items were taken from existing scales to best fulfill the purposes of the study (e.g., "I do not care if I hurt people on my way to success"; Martin & Larsen, 1976). Participants responded to all items using scales from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), and scores for all items were averaged for each participant. Participants with averaged scores ($\alpha = .82$) below the median were considered prosocial, and those with averaged scores above the median were considered proself.

Second session. One week later, 86 participants (42 proself and 44 prosocial) took part in the second session. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two power conditions (low power vs. high power; see Fiske & Dépret, 1996). All participants learned about an alleged plan to introduce a

university-wide course-credit scheme that would require future students across all disciplines to participate in psychology experiments. High-power participants were informed that their opinion would receive a weight of 60% toward the final decision. Low-power participants were told that the administration was merely interested in their opinions, but that these opinions would not affect the final decision.

Next, participants took part in what was described as a separate study. They were presented with 30 scrambled five-word sentences (see Srull & Wyer, 1979), and their task was to use the words in each scrambled sentence to construct a grammatically correct four-word sentence. Half the participants were primed with a trait opposing their dispositions (counterdispositional condition): For proself participants, 10 of the sentences pertained to cooperation, and the other 20 were neutral; for prosocial participants, 10 of the sentences pertained to competition, and the other 20 were neutral. For the remaining half of the participants, all 30 sentences were neutral (neutral condition).

Subsequently, participants were given instructions for a mixed-motive game (Smeesters, Warlop, Corneille, & Yzerbyt, 2003). They were informed that each participant would be paired with another participant and would receive five tokens. Each token had a value of 10 points for the participant who received it and 20 points for the partner; participants had to decide how many tokens they would give to their partner. Participants' payoff was the total number of points they gained for themselves. Thus, maximal cooperation consisted of giving five tokens to the partner, and maximal competition consisted of giving no tokens to the partner.

Participants next reported their mood, using the same scales used in Experiment 1 ($\alpha = .81$). They also indicated how much control they felt they had over the outcome of the university's decision about the course-credit scheme, using a scale from 1 (*no control at all*) to 9 (*a lot of control*). Finally, participants were thanked and fully debriefed.

Results

Manipulation check. High-power participants perceived themselves as having more control over the implementation of the university-wide scheme ($M = 5.00$) than did low-power participants ($M = 3.00$), $t(85) = 4.61$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.01$. The manipulation of power was therefore successful.

Cooperative behavior. A 2 (power: high or low) \times 2 (disposition: prosocial or proself) \times 2 (prime: counterdispositional or neutral) between-subjects ANOVA yielded a main effect of disposition, $F(1, 85) = 5.73$, $p = .019$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$. Prosocial participants gave more tokens to their partners ($M = 2.98$) than did proself participants ($M = 2.15$). Thus, dispositions affected participants' social behavior in the expected direction. More important, the Power \times Prime \times Disposition interaction was significant, $F(1, 85) = 4.75$, $p = .032$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$. In the neutral-prime condition, high-power participants behaved more in line

with their dispositions than did low-power participants, $F(1, 50) = 10.44$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .18$ (see Table 2). That is, proself high-power participants gave fewer tokens ($M = 1.36$ tokens) than did proself low-power participants ($M = 2.62$ tokens), $F(1, 26) = 5.31$, $p = .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .18$, whereas prosocial high-power participants gave more tokens ($M = 3.67$ tokens) than did prosocial low-power participants ($M = 2.42$ tokens), $F(1, 23) = 5.21$, $p = .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .19$. No differences between high- and low-power participants emerged when the counterdispositional trait had been temporarily activated, $F < 1$ (see Table 2).

Furthermore, the Disposition \times Prime interaction was significant for high-power participants, $F(1, 46) = 4.97$, $p = .031$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$, but not for low-power participants, $F < 1$. Compared with low-power participants, high-power participants acted more or less cooperatively, depending on their dispositions and whether they were primed with counterdispositional constructs or not.

Mood. High-power and low-power participants' mood did not differ significantly, $t(85) = 0.67$, $p = .51$, $d = 0.015$.

Discussion

Compared with participants who did not have power, power holders acted more in line with their dispositions, but only when no competing constructs were temporarily accessible. Notably, this was the case even though the temporarily accessible constructs were counterdispositional.

General Discussion

It is commonly believed that power magnifies the expression of dispositions, increasing resistance against situational influences. Sociocognitive research, however, has provided conflicting evidence on this front (e.g., Chen et al., 2001; Guinote, 2008). We propose a single mechanism to explain these effects: reliance on accessible constructs. Specifically, we propose that power magnifies dispositions only in conditions in which no alternative constructs are activated. Consequently, power

Table 2. Mean Number of Tokens Given to the Partner in a Mixed-Motive Game as a Function of Power, Dispositional Trait, and Prime (Experiment 3)

Dispositional trait and power condition	Counterdispositional prime	Neutral prime
Prosocial		
High power	2.85 (1.95)	3.67 (1.30)
Low power	3.00 (1.00)	2.42 (1.38)
Proself		
High power	2.50 (1.51)	1.36 (1.01)
Low power	2.14 (2.10)	2.62 (1.76)

Note: Standard deviations are shown in parentheses.

holders vary more in their judgments and behaviors across different situations than do individuals who lack power.

Results from our three studies support these claims. When the context was neutral, power holders showed greater activation and use of chronically accessible interpersonal constructs than low-power individuals did (Experiment 1); they also chose more chronically accessible charities to donate money to (Experiment 2) and acted more or less cooperatively, depending on their social-value orientation (Experiment 3). However, when alternative constructs were made temporarily accessible, no differences emerged between high-power and low-power participants. Notably, these effects were obtained using different manipulations of power and different methods for temporarily activating constructs. In addition, these effects occurred independently of the specific traits involved (Experiments 1–3), even when the alternative constructs were counterdispositional (Experiment 3).

These findings demonstrate that, rather than strengthening dispositions per se, power increases reliance on accessible constructs, and such increased reliance can then facilitate disposition-consistent behavior. Although the ability to resist external circumstances can also increase dispositional behavior in power holders (see Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008), dispositional behavior does not require such resistance. The cognitive ability to selectively activate and use chronically accessible constructs is enough to promote disposition-consistent behavior.

The effects of power on reliance on chronically accessible constructs in our three experiments occurred across multiple contexts, and effects were consistent across opposing ends of various trait dimensions and regardless of the traits' social desirability. These findings suggest that the influence of power on behavior derives primarily from reliance on accessible constructs. Moreover, we argue that differences in construct activation (i.e., accessibility) account to a great extent for the observed effects. This interpretation is consistent with findings from lexical decision tasks showing power-based differences in construct accessibility (Slabu & Guinote, 2010). In addition, differences in use of accessible constructs may have contributed to the results.

When the situation activated alternative constructs, chronic and temporarily accessible constructs competed, and we found no differences between powerful and powerless participants. Past research has shown that when primes do not compete with chronic response tendencies, power holders show greater priming effects than do low-power individuals. For example, power holders respond more to affordances of situations (Guinote, 2008) and act more in ways consistent with the task at hand (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003). These findings are consistent with the account we propose in this article.

Because chronically accessible constructs are by definition frequently activated, our results indicate that power holders act in line with their dispositions most of the time and in most circumstances. Crucially, their behavior depends to a great extent on the situation they find themselves in—that is,

whether the situation facilitates or hinders the activation of chronically accessible constructs. Contrary to Lincoln's belief, giving someone power does not always reveal his or her personality.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared that they had no conflicts of interest with respect to their authorship or the publication of this article.

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