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Power, Distrust and the Role of a Shared Identity

Sabrina Ravestein

Faculty of Social Sciences – Leiden University

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M.Mooijman

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Abstract

In this study, we propose that power leads to distrust and that a shared identity has a different effect on the amount of trust of low power people and high power people. Specifically, we propose that the perception of being similar to others increases the amount of trust of low power people, but decreases the amount of trust of high power people. We believe that the later is a result of perceived power threat. We tested our model in an experiment where power (i.e. low power or high power) and identity (similarity or dissimilarity) were manipulated, while measuring the effect of these manipulations on participants' trust. Results of this experiment demonstrate that high power people are more motivated to stay in power than low power people. Moreover and more importantly, low power people trust others more when they are similar to them compared to when they are dissimilar to them. However, high power people distrust others regardless of being similar or dissimilar to them, which is not effected by perceived power threat. We discuss the theoretical and practical implications of these results in our research.

Keywords: Power, Power Motivation, Distrust, Shared Identity

Within an organization there are nearly always power-differentials. For instance, a CEO has power over the company's managers, whereas the managers have a certain kind of power over the employees. From an evolutionary perspective, having power is extremely important. In our earlier days, men wanted to strive for and protect their power since their social status was a fundamental cue whether to be chosen as an attractive partner or not (Buss, 1998). Nowadays, power still plays an important role in our society. If you look at organizations, individuals are nearly always part of a hierarchy (Barkow, 1989), where it is inevitable that some people have power over others (Mooijman, Van Dijk, Ellemers, & Van Dijk, 2014a, 2014b). Possessing power could be beneficial to people within an organization as it provides them the opportunity to reward themselves with spacious bonuses (Kipnis, 1972) and they gather, among other things, more companions, appreciation and acknowledgement (Cummins, 1998). A lot of people who are in a beneficial position want to keep it -the same goes for power holders. Hence, power holders are motivated to protect and shelter their position (Lammers & Stapel, 2009; Maner, Gailliot, Butz, & Peruche, 2007). A powerful position provides power holders with non-financial benefits, which make them more reluctant to share their power. Moreover, people in power experience a great distaste for someone else being in charge of them, which is a great motivation to work hard to retain their control over others (Fehr, Herz & Wilkening, 2013). Trusting other people too much could be a threat to power holders, because people with less power could take advantage of this trust and therefore cause that power holder lose their beneficial position. Indeed, research indicates that people with power are less willing to trust others and therefore stimulate a more distrustful environment (Mooijman et al., 2014a, 2014b). Yet, feelings of trust are important, since it increases the productivity between individuals, groups and organizations (Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007) and determines the efficiency of accomplishing interdependent tasks (Lount & Pettit, 2012).

Given that power and distrust are related to each other and that distrust causes less productivity and efficiency, what can be done to reduce the relationship between power and distrust?

Some research suggests that a shared identity can create more trust between people within the same group (Foddy, Platow & Yamagishi, 2009; Kramer, 1999; Stroebe, Lodewijkx & Spears, 2005; Tanis & Postmes, 2005; Williams, 2001). However, even though a shared identity might create more trustful behavior between people with no power-differentials, no research has been done regarding the relationship between a shared identity and trust from a power holder's perspective. Power holders think of others' interests from their point of view (Overbeck & Droutman, 2013) and are less motivated to understand the perspective of others (Galinsky et al., 2006). Given that power holders want to stay in power and believe others think the same way as they do, creating an environment where people perceive each other to be similar might not be that beneficial; power holders might start to believe that others, like themselves, want to be in power. Moreover, perceived similarity vanishes the power-differential, which is a threat to power holders' position. Then, instead of the creation of a shared identity resolving the problem between power and distrust, a shared identity causes power holders to become even more distrustful.

In the current paper we would like to address this issue. We would like to examine if creating a shared identity between people with a high power position and people without power leads to a decrease in trusting behavior and to an increase in feelings of distrust from a power holder's perspective. Gaining more insight into the relationship between power, distrust and shared identity might dispute previous research and may help organizations in how to achieve higher productivity and better economical outcomes.

Power and Distrust

Power has been defined in various ways, but one definition states that having power means to be in a position to be in charge of other people's, as well as your own, valuable resources (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003; Messick & Kramer, 2001; Overbeck & Droutman, 2010). These resources could be monetary, social or physical by nature (Mooijman et al., 2014a, 2014b). Being in a powerful position is especially beneficial to those who have power. To illustrate this, power holders do not rely on others as much as people with less power do (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003), so they can create an environment where they can pursue their own goals and interests (Sassenberg, Ellemers, & Scheepers, 2012) and experience in addition in general higher appreciation and acknowledgement (Cummins, 1998).

People with power do not only differ from people with less power in their amount of control over resources, it has been shown that they think differently too. For example, power increases flexible (Guinote, 2007a), unconventional (Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson & Liljenquist, 2008), purposive (Guinote, 2007b) and conceptual (Smith & Trope, 2006) thinking. However, besides the fact that power could be beneficial to those who have power, having power is the fundament of some negative consequences too. Several studies demonstrate that people with high power are more likely to stereotype (Fiske, 1993), are less able to understand a situation from another person's point of view (Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006), they think others think the same way as they do (Overbeck & Droutman, 2013) and, because of their purposively thinking, assess people on their usefulness to achieve their personal goals rather than on their qualities (Gruenfeld, Inesi, Magee, & Galinsky, 2008). Yet more importantly to our research, power is related to a distrustful mindset (Mooijman et al., 2014a, 2014b). We will explain this relationship more specifically later on. First we will focus on, what is trust?

Trust is defined as “the willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party” (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995, p. 712). Creating an environment within an organization where people trust each other is highly important as it increases the productivity between individuals, groups and organizations (Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007) and determines the efficiency of accomplishing interdependent tasks (Lount & Pettit, 2012). Not only is trust important for the productivity and efficiency within an organization, but also trust is important for the relationship between people, for instance coworkers. Hence, coworkers describe their relationship to be more positive when it is based on trust (Tanis & Postmes, 2005). It is fundamental to experience feelings of trust from the start of a relationship, given that displaying distrustful behavior in the beginning of a new relationship is more harmful for the entire relationship compared to when distrustful behavior is exposed later on (Lount, Zhong, Sivanathan, & Murnighan, 2008). Furthermore, trust is as essential to power holders as to people with less power. People with less power have to trust their principal that they are not taken advantaged of and that they are treated according to their abilities (Tyler & Lind, 1992). Meanwhile, power holders have to trust that their subordinates will actively participate in executing their responsibilities and act according to the organization’s rules (Lount & Pettit, 2012).

But in what way causes power a distrustful mindset? Even though various researches confirm that feelings of trust between people can occur instantly (Willis & Todorov, 2006), unaware (Huang & Murnighan, 2010) and can be formed quickly (Brewer, 2008), it seems that this doesn’t count for powerholders. As stated before, having power entails desirable privileged that people with no power do not have.

Therefore, power holders are driven to maintain their beneficial position (Maner, Gailliot, Butz, & Peruche, 2007), and will strive to prevent others from getting a hold on their power (Lammers & Stapel, 2009; Piff, Kraus, Cote, Cheng, & Keltner, 2010). One way to maintain their position is to create a stable environment that is the same in every situational context, which could be generated through rules and principles (Lammers & Stapel, 2009). When rules and principles are implemented, power holders can make their subordinates stick to these rules, which stabilizes and secures their status quo (Habermas, 1975). In other words, they want to stay in control to protect their power. Their superior position is what brought them power, so to contain their power they have to protect their position (Fehr, Herz & Wilkening, 2012). Deciding to trust another person generates a potential threat to their control, since the trustee could take advantage of this trust and therefore causes that power holders lose their position. Since power holders are motivated to maintain and protect their position (Lammers & Stapel, 2009; Maner, Gailliot, Butz, & Peruche, 2007; Piff, Kraus, Cote, Cheng, & Keltner, 2010), they are more distrustful to others to protect their status quo. Hence, we propose that power leads to distrust.

H1: Having power increases more distrust towards others compared to powerlessness

Some research suggests that a shared identity can create more trust between people within the same group (Kramer, 1999; Tanis & Postmes, 2005; Wiley & Sons, 2010) and fosters greater loyalty among groupmembers towards their leader (Bruins, Ellemers & de Gilder, 1999). Withal, we would like to address this issue from a power holders' perspective.

Power, Distrust and Shared Identity

Nowadays, people work in (self-managed) teams more often compared to previous time (Parker, 1993; Smith, 1997). Feelings of mutual connection or the possibility to influence each other are important to speak of a group/team sharing an identity, according to social psychologists, such as Lewin (1935) and Sherif et al., (1961).

Currently, this view has been slightly adjusted by social cognitive psychologists. In their view, the shared identity of a group depends on the member's perceived similarities. It is more important that people within a group believe they share similarities, than to what extent they actually work together or influence each other (Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000). Thus, it could be argued that people who share an identity perceive each other as more similar and interchangeable (Brewer, 1981).

A shared identity differentiates one group from another, which causes in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination (Stroebe, Lodewijkx & Spears, 2005). Previous research suggests that in-group members have higher reciprocity expectancies compared to out-group members (Stroebe, Lodewijkx & Spears, 2005; Tanis & Postmes, 2005). Whether you decide to trust one another depends a great deal on your expectancy that your trusting behavior will be reciprocated. Since in-group members, created by a shared identity, expect higher reciprocity, they are also more willing to show trusting behavior (Tanis & Postmes, 2005). Indeed, further research indicates that members of the same group are expected to trust each other more in comparison to out-group members (Foddy, Platow & Yamagishi, 2009; Williams, 2001). However, in previous research the effect of power-differentials within a group on trust have not been taken into account. At least not from a power holder's perspective. Even though a shared identity might create more trustful behavior between people without power-differentials or fosters greater loyalty among group members towards their leader (Bruins, Ellemers & de Gilder, 1999), no research has been done regarding the relationship between a shared identity and trust from a power holder's perspective towards their group members. However, the amount of and difference in power a person possess can differ from one situation to another. For instance, the difference in power between a manager and an employee is smaller than the difference in power between a CEO and an employee.

Therefore, we believe it is important to differentiate low power people from high power people. Relatedly, we propose that a shared identity generates more trust among power holders towards their group members when power-differentials within that group are rather low. We believe that low power people are relatively the same to their group members, by which a shared identity, similarly to previous research, creates more feelings of trust with them. Yet, we propose that creating a shared identity between people who are high in power and people who are low in power counteracts its effect on trust. Instead of the assumption that a shared identity generates more trust between people from the same group without, or with low power-differentials within that group, we believe that people who are high in power become only more distrustful when they share an identity with others. This assumption is based on having regard to the fact that power holders self-anchor (Overbeck & Drouman, 2013), lack the capacity of perspective-taking (Galinsky et al., 2006) and require great distance from their subordinates (Kipnis, 1972). These characteristics of power holders in combination with the aspects of perceived similarity and interchangeability from a shared identity (Brewer, 1981), which could be perceived as a power threat, could strengthen the relationship between power and distrust, which will be discussed in more detail below.

Self-anchoring means that “one uses their own characteristics as the basis for judging other’s characteristics” (Overbeck & Drouman, p1466, 2013). Power holders in particular self-anchor because it is part of their job to personify with the group in which their own characteristic can provide them heuristic information about the group as a whole (Overbeck & Drouman, 2013). Another reason why power holders self-anchor is because their mind-set differs from people who don’t have power (Fast & Chen, 2009).

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For instance, power holders possess a psychological state in which they feel more in control compared to others, feel more authorized to judge (Guinote, Weick & Cai, 2012), are convinced of their own inclinations (Guinote, Weick & Cai, 2012) and are hardly sensitive to social-comparison (Johnson & Lammers, 2012). These differences in mind-set can occur in every individual when merely being in a powerful position. Feeling powerful fosters to evaluate and predict the group's traits, emotions or attitudes based on your own traits, emotions or attitudes, as the most reliable resource to attain information about the group (Otten & Epstude, 2006; Robbins & Krueger, 2005). Thereby, power holders lack the capacity of perspective taking more compared to people who don't possess power. The lack of perspective taking means that power holders have trouble experiencing the world from another point of view and are less motivated to imagine the emotions and perceptions of others (Galinsky et al., 2006). In short, power holders believe others feel, think and behave the same way as themselves and are less motivated to think differently, as a result of their power. (Overbeck & Droutman, 2013; Galinsky et al., 2006). Recurring to our research, one of the power holders' trait is that they are motivated to hold and shelter their position (Lammers & Stapel, 2009; Maner, Gailliot, Butz, & Peruche, 2007; Piff, Kraus, Cote, Cheng, & Keltner, 2010). Since power holders believe others think the same way as they do and are less motivated to consider if others think differently, this would mean that if power holders want to be powerful, they project their feelings on others and believe others from the group want to be powerful too. Creating a shared-identity could strengthen these feelings, since according to Brewer (1981) an important component of a shared identity is the perception to be similar (i.e. I want to be powerful, thus someone who looks like me wants to be powerful too).

Furthermore, Georgesén & Harris (2000) showed that managers, power holders, feel competent themselves and often evaluate their employees, people with less power, to be more competent than they are in reality. When a shared-identity is created, people perceive each other to be similar and interchangeable (Brewer, 1981). We believe this could be seen as a threat to power holders, because it makes their beneficial position unstable; perceived similarity and the feeling to be interchangeable vanishes the power-differentials, which makes the other members a competitor to their position. Being similar to other people is not beneficial to power holders, since obtaining a superior, unique position is what made them powerful. Indeed, research suggests that power holders require great distance from their subordinates to maintain their position (Kipnis, 1972). The more power holders are similar to their group members, the more they lose their distinctiveness in having a desirable position. Thus, power holders assess powerlessness to be more competent than they actually are (Georgesén & Harris, 1998), and, as we propose, experience a power threat since a shared identity makes them similar and interchangeable to the rest of the group. Research suggests that power holders in an unstable power position, and threatened by high expectancy employees, are more eager to control the situation and their boss-position in order to maintain their superior role. Moreover, when power holders experience that their position is threatened, they alter more negative attitudes and beliefs towards their subordinates. As a result, power holders intent to control the situation more (Georgesén & Harris, 2006). Therefore, we suggest that a shared identity will be encountered as a power threat to those who are high in power and in consequence causes more negative attitudes towards others, i.e. more distrustful behavior, and a greater desire to control the situation. Since people who are low in power have less to lose and are already more similar to the other group members, we believe that creating a shared identity will not be seen as a threat to them and will therefore cause no more distrustful behavior.

However, we do suggest that creating a shared identity between people who are high in power and powerlessness will make the power holders more distrustful as a protection of their desirable position.

To sum up our conclusions, we propose that:

H2a: A shared identity generates more trust among power holders towards their group members conditional on low power-differentials within that group

H2b: A shared identity generates less trust among power holders towards their group members conditional on high power-differentials within that group

H2c: The negative relation between people who are high in power, trust and a shared identity is caused by perceived power threat.

Research overview

To test our assumptions we conducted a social dilemma experiment. During this experiment we tested the proposed relationship between power and distrust, the positive relationship between trust and a shared identity in a low power condition and the negative relationship between trust and a shared identity in a high power condition. We manipulated power by creating a situation in which each participant was randomly assigned to either possessing a high power position or a low power position. We manipulated shared identity by having the participants filling out the Management Assesment Inventory (MAI) questionnaire, which measures leadership styles (Stouten, De Cremer & van Dijk, 2005; De Kwaadsteniet & van Dijk, 2010) and supposingly showed that participants were similar or dissimilar to each other. The manipulations were followed by a trust game, in which power holders had to evaluate if their group members would be honest to them or not. This created the opportunity to measure to what extent the power holders trusted the other participants and if this would be influenced by their amount of power and/or a shared identity.

Based on our reasoning, we expected that (1) participants in the high power position would show a lower level of trust compared to participants in the low power position. Furthermore, we expected that (2a) participants in the low power position would show a higher level of trust when they shared an identity compared to when they did not share an identity with the other participants. Moreover, we expected that (2b) participants in the high power position would show a lower level of trust when they shared an identity with the other participants compared to when they did not share an identity with them. At last, we expected that (2c), participants in the high power position would feel more threatened when they shared an identity with the other participants than the participants in the low power position who shared an identity with the other participants. To test the participants' feelings of being threatened we conducted three questionnaires, measuring their feelings of uniqueness, to what extent the participants were motivated to stay in power and to what extent they thought the other participants were motivated to be in power.

Since all participants executed the experiment successfully we didn't exclude any participants from our data. Furthermore, all items during this experiment were rated, and recoded if necessary, on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), unless mentioned otherwise.

Method

Participants and design. Two hundred and three Dutch students (159 females, $M_{age} = 21$ years, $SD_{age} = 3.61$) were recruited from Leiden University to participate in our experiment. In exchange for their participation they received in the first week either €5 or 2 course credits and in the second week either €8,50 or 2 course credits. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the conditions of a 2 (high power position vs. low power position) \times 2 (similarity vs. dissimilarity) between-subjects design.

Procedure. Participants were invited to participate in an experiment on ‘group decision making, leadership style and trust’. Upon arrival at the laboratory participants were asked to sit down in one of the eight separate cubicles and to sign informed consent. Inside the cubicles each participant had their own computer where instructions about the experiment were given and where they could respond to the questions. After taking place, participants received a subject number, which assigned them randomly to two of the four conditions (high power versus low power and shared identity versus no shared identity). The introduction of the experiment described that four other participants took anonymously part in the same experiment at the same time in the other cubicles, and that they together formed a group. We made sure that upon arrival the doors of the other cubicles were closed to increase the reliability that there actually were other participants participating at the same time.

In the next part of the experiment, participants were told that extra money could be earned during the experiment on top of their initial reward. It was described that all group members had to try to find as many words as possible in a word-search task. Afterwards, they had to report their number of words they had found to the group leader. Each word found could yield them extra money. Depending on their number of correctly found words during the puzzle, an extra bonus of €20 could be divided among the group members. After this, the word-search task was shown. Participants were told that each group member had 5 minutes to complete the puzzle.

Similarity procedure. Participants were told that one group member would be chosen as group leader who would have certain privileges. To decide which group member would be group leader we asked them to fill out the Management Assessment Inventory (MAI) scale, which measures leadership styles and management abilities (Stouten, De Cremer & van Dijk, 2005; De Kwaadsteniet & van Dijk, 2010; Mooijman et al., 2014a, 2014b).

This questionnaire consists of 26 items such as “Leadership is a matter of influencing others” and “A leader should be able to command respect”. Half of the participants were told that they were chosen as group leader because they had the most in common with the other group member (*similarity condition*), whereas the other half of the participants were told that they were chosen as group leader because they had the least in common with the other group members (*dissimilarity condition*). To verify the conditions and to measure similarity we used a 3-item scale ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.37$; $\alpha = .80$) such as “I have a lot in common with the other group members” and “I have a similar personality compared to the other group members”.

Power manipulation. In the next part of the experiments participants were told that an extra €20 could be divided among the group members. The group leaders (i.e. all participants) had the power to decide how this money would be divided among the other group members and that it could be used to reward the other group members for finding a lot of correct words during the puzzle. In the *high power condition* participants were told that as the group leader they controlled €17,5 of the €20 available, and therefore had a high degree of power, whereas in the *low power condition* participants were told that as the group leader they controlled €2,5 of the €20 available, and therefore had a low degree of power. The rest of the money, respectively €2,5 and €17,5, would be randomly divided among the other group members and was therefore not in control of the group leader. To verify the conditions and to measure power we used a 5-item scale ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 0.28$; $\alpha = .87$) such as “I feel powerful” and “I am in control of the other group members”.

Trust measurement. After the similarity and power manipulations, participants were told that the other group members had to *self-report* their amount of correct words they had found during the puzzle to the group leader. Thus, the group leaders would not know for sure if the other group members were honest about their amount of words they had found.

The other group members had the opportunity to report more words in order to (possibly) gain more money. To measure trust we used a 8-item scale ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.31$; $\alpha = .94$) such as “Group members are inclined to report more words than they had actually found” and “Group members can be trusted to report the correct amount of words”.

Power motivation. We measured the group leaders’ motivation to stay in power on a 5-item scale ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 0.30$; $\alpha = .92$) such as “It is nice to be and stay in control over the money myself” and “I prefer to keep the leadership position to myself”. We also measured to what extent the group leaders (i.e. all participants) thought the other group members were motivated to take over their position. We used a 5-item scale ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 0.18$; $\alpha = .86$) such as “I think others want control over the money” and “I think others aspire to my position”.

Other measurements. We also measured participants’ general trust towards others on a 5-item scale ($M = 4.97$, $SD = 0.34$; $\alpha = .85$) with questions as “In general I trust other people” and “Most of the people are honest”. Lastly, to measure if participants’ feelings of uniqueness was influenced by power or a shared identity we completed a 5-item scale ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.71$; $\alpha = .56$) measuring uniqueness with questions as “I am feeling unique compared to others” and “I feel less special when people are similar to me”. Item two of the uniqueness questionnaire was to be deleted to increase the Cronbach’s Alpha. Thus, eventually we used a 4-item scale measuring uniqueness ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.76$; $\alpha = .69$).

Power manipulation check. To test if the power manipulation was successful we conducted a two-way between subjects ANOVA for the effect of power and similarity on participants’ feelings of being powerful. Results showed a significant main effect of power, which means that people in the high power position felt more powerful ($M = 5.28$, $SD = .89$) compared to people in the low power position ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.29$), $F(1, 199) = 119.27$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2_p = .38$.

There was no significant main effect of similarity ($F < 1$) nor an interaction effect between power and similarity ($F < 1$) on participants' feelings of being powerful. These results confirm the validity of the power manipulation.

Similarity manipulation check. To test if the similarity manipulation worked we conducted a two-way between subjects ANOVA for the effect of power and similarity on participants' feelings of being similar to each other. Results showed a significant main effect of similarity on participants' feelings of being similar, which means that people in the similarity condition felt indeed more similar to each other ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 1.14$) in comparison to the dissimilarity condition ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.09$), $F(1, 199) = 128.68$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2_p = .39$. There was no significant main effect of power ($F[1, 199] = 1.88$, $p = .171$, $\eta^2_p = .01$) nor an interaction effect between power and similarity ($F < 1$) on participants' feelings of being similar to the other participants. These results confirm the validity of the similarity manipulation.

Results

To test the effect of power and a shared identity on trust we conducted a two-way between subjects ANOVA with power and similarity, and their interaction as independent variables, and trust as dependent variable. Results showed no significant main effect of either power ($F < 1$) or similarity ($F[1, 99] = 1.61$, $p = .207$, $\eta^2_p = .01$) on participants' trust. However, results did show a significant interaction effect between power and similarity on trust, $F(1, 199) = 5.78$, $p = .017$, $\eta^2_p = .03$. Subsequently, an independent sample t-test showed that people in the low power position and similarity condition trusted each other more ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.14$) than in the low power position and dissimilarity condition ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 1.26$), $t(98) = 2.59$, $p = .011$, $d = .52$. Furthermore, results showed no difference between the similarity ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.29$) or dissimilarity ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 1.12$) condition for people in the high power position on trust, $t(101) = -.808$, $p = .421$, $d = .16$.

Thus, people in the low power position trusted others more when they perceived others as similar, whereas people in the high power position distrusted others regardless of being similar to them or not.

A two-way between subject ANOVA with power as independent variable and power motivation of the self as dependent variable, showed that people in the high power position were more motivated to stay in power ($M= 4.82$, $SD = 1.25$) than people in the low power position ($M= 4.33$, $SD = 1.29$), $F(1, 199) = 7.55$, $p= .007$, $\eta^2_p = .04$. To test our underlying proposed motive that people in the high power position would feel more threatened than people in the low power position when they shared an identity with the other participants, we conducted two separate analyses of variances (ANOVA) with power and similarity, and their interaction as independent variables, and power motivation of others as dependent variable. Results showed no significant interaction effect ($F < 1$), which means that, even though people in the high power position were more motivated to stay in power than people in the low power position, they both did not think that the other participants were motivated to be in power too when they shared an identity with them.

Moreover, a two- way between subject ANOVA with power and similarity, and their interaction as independent variables, and uniqueness as dependent variable, showed that people in the high power position did not feel less unique when they shared an identity with the other participants compared to people in the low power position who shared an identity with them, $F(1, 199) = 1.81$, $p= .180$, $\eta^2_p = 0.01$. These results further indicate that a shared identity is not encountered as more of a threat to people in the high power position and therefore does not influence their distrust towards others.

Discussion

People in power possess certain privileges that people without power do not have, which motivates them to stay in power and to maintain their beneficial position (Lammers & Stapel, 2009; Maner, Gailliot, Butz, & Peruche, 2007; Piff, Kraus, Cote, Cheng, & Keltner, 2010). However, their willingness to protect their position generates a more distrustful mindset towards others. Since feelings of distrust can decrease the productivity and efficiency between individuals within organizations (Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007; Lount & Pettit, 2012), what can be done to increase power holders' feelings of trust towards others? To address this question we conducted an experiment to examine the role of a shared identity on people's trust in a high- and low- power position.

We proposed that people in the low power position would trust others more when they shared an identity with them compared to when they did not share an identity with them. Namely, a shared identity differentiates one group from another, which causes in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination (Stroebe, Lodewijkx & Spears, 2005). Research indicates that members of the same group are expected to trust each other more (Foddy, Platow & Yamagishi, 2009; Williams, 2001). Even though previous research did not take the effect of power differentials within a group on trust into account, and during this experiment people in the low power position possessed more power compared to the other participants, we believed this difference in power would be negligible to have a different effect on trust compared to previous research. Our results confirm this hypotheses; participants in the low power position trusted others more when they shared an identity with them in comparison to when they did not share an identity with them.

Furthermore, we suggested that people in a high power position would distrust others more when they shared an identity with them in comparison to when they did not.

We believed this relation between high power, distrust and a shared identity was caused by perceived power threat. Results of our experiment did not confirm these hypotheses; participants in the high power position distrusted others regardless of sharing an identity with them or not. They also did not feel threatened in such a way that they felt less unique or thought that others were motivated to be in power too when they shared an identity with them. However, they did show more motivation to stay in power compared to low power people. Since they did not feel threatened by others who were similar to them and also did not show more trust towards others who were similar to them as low power participants did, why showed high power participants more distrust towards others regardless of sharing an identity with them or not? We suggest several explanations for these unproposed results;

At first, research indicates that power holders neglect social norms more easily (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003) and that they are primarily focused on fulfilling their own goals (Guinote, 2007a) instead of paying attention to others (Goodwin, Gubin, Fiske, & Yzerbyt, 2000). Moreover, high power people pay less attention to others or the social context because they are not dependent on it (Stevens & Fiske, 2000; Goodwin, Gubin, Fiske, & Yzerbyt, 2000; Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003). Since maintaining their powerful position, which increases a distrustful mindset, is an important goal for power holders, it might be possible that the high power people are just focused on accomplishing and preserving that instead of paying attention to whether they are similar to others or not.

Secondly, research indicates that high power people are less motivated to maintain interpersonal harmony (Lee & Tiedens, 2000). An experiment of Copeland (1994) showed that people in a high power position were less willing to express behavior that would increase interpersonal harmony and disclosed less personal information (Henley, 1973). This is in line with the research of Kipnis (1972), which suggested that high power people require great distance from their subordinates.

We believe that a possible explanation for our findings is that high power people don't want to improve their relations with others, i.e. trust others more, no matter if they are similar to others or not, as an effect of their power.

Thirdly, participants in our experiment indicated that they felt more powerful and were more motivated to stay in power compared to the participants in the low power position. This difference in power motivation shows that it is more important to high power people to maintain their power than to low power people, which might be enough for a shared identity to have no effect or change their feelings of distrust towards others.

Theoretical and practical implications

The present study is an important contribution to the theory of power, distrust and a shared identity and its practical implications in several ways. First of all, it provides insight into the relation between power, distrust and a shared identity. Previous research demonstrated that power can foster a distrustful mindset (Mooijman et al., 2014a, 2014b) and that due to a shared identity people might trust others more (Foddy, Platow & Yamagishi, 2009; Tanis & Postmes, 2005; Williams, 2001). However, little research has been done regarding the relationship between the three of them.

Secondly, the little research that has been done regarding the relationship between power, trust and a shared identity focused on subordinates' trust towards their leaders. These research indicates that a shared identity might foster greater loyalty among group members towards their leader (Bruins, Ellemers & de Gilder, 1999). Yet, previous research did not include the effect of a shared identity on the amount of trust from a power holder's perspective. This is an important contribution to the theory, since power holders differ in the way they think compared to powerlessness, (Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson & Liljenquist, 2008; Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006; Gruenfeld, Inesi, Magee, & Galinsky, 2008; Guinote, 2007a; Guinote, 2007b; Fiske, 1993; Overbeck & Droutman, 2013;

Smith & Trope, 2006) and thus, can not be compared to the results and assumptions of previous research. Indeed, even though a shared identity increased trust of low power people, it did not have an effect of the feelings of distrust of high power people.

Thirdly, the results of this experiment provide us with a broader understanding of the psychological distinction in power motivation between high power people and low power people and the difference of the effect of a shared identity on them. Former research focused on the effect of a shared identity on trust, and the fact that power fosters a distrustful mindset. However, in our examination of the three entities combined, we distinguished low power people from high power people. Indeed, this is a valuable contribution, since a shared identity does have an effect in reducing feelings of distrust on low power people, but not change feelings of distrust of high power people. Furthermore, even though all participants obtained a position of power, high power people were more motivated to stay in power than low power people.

On a practical matter, this research has been important in gaining more insight into how to increase feelings of trust of power holders within an organization. Gaining more insight into this topic is important, since there are nearly always power differentials within groups in organization and, besides this, people work in teams more oftenly compared to previous times (Parker, 1993; Smith; 1997). This means that a lot of people within organizations (e.g. leaders, managers) distrust others (e.g. subordinates), which in turn effects the productivity and efficiency of an organization negatively (Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007; Lount & Pettit, 2012). Therefore, it is important to examine what could be done to reduce these feelings of distrust. This research has shown that it might be useful to create feelings of similarity between low power people and their subordinates to reduce feelings of distrust.

Furthermore, even though the shared identity did not have an effect on decreasing feelings of distrust of high power people, it did show that apparently feelings of similarity is not effective, and that other measures must be taken to increase their feelings of trust.

Possible limitations and directions for future research

Also in our research, there were some limitations. To begin with, we conducted an experiment where power holders, i.e. all participants, were asked to what extent they trusted the other participants and if this was influenced by the perception of being similar or dissimilar to them. We proposed that for the high power people, they would distrust others more when they were similar to them as a result of perceived power threat. However, the power threat in this experiment was relatively low. Participants could have thought that the 'other' participants would lie about their amount of words correctly guessed in the puzzle, to increase their chance on receiving a monetary reward. Yet, this is not a firm threat to the power holders in such a way that it could influence their beneficial position or control over their resources. We contrived another experiment in the beginning, in which power holders could actually lose a part of their power due to decisions made by other participants. Unfortunately, due to methodological reasons it was not possible to conduct this experiment. It might be interesting for future research to come up with another experiment where power can be 'taken' from the power holder, to examine to what extent perceived similarity or dissimilarity has an impact on the power holders' trust then.

Secondly, this study was conducted in a laboratory. In this way, the results of the experiment are not entirely reliable. It might be interesting for future research to conduct an experiment within an organization, where people are not manipulated with experiencing power, but actually hold a power position. Relatedly, during our experiment all bachelor and master students of Leiden University were allowed to participate in our study.

Since a lot of students conduct researches of similar nature themselves, especially master students, it might have reduced the reliability, and therefore the results, of our experiment. For future research it is recommendable to only include first year students, so they are not familiar yet with the approach of certain experiments.

Lastly, our experiment showed that high power people distrust others regardless of being similar to them or not. Thus, the question still remains what could be done to reduce the amount of distrust of high power people. Given the results of our experiment, this is an important direction for future research to examine.

Conclusion

In this study we examined the relationship between power, distrust and shared identity. We conducted an experiment in which power (i.e. high power and low power) and identity (i.e. similar or dissimilar) were manipulated. The results of our experiment showed that low power people trusted others more when they were similar to others compared to when they were dissimilar to others. High power people distrusted others anyway, whether they were similar or dissimilar to them. Furthermore, high power people were also more motivated to stay in power compared to low power people. As a result of this experiment, our knowledge about power, distrust, the role of a shared identity and the difference of this relationship between high power people and low power people, has been broadened. This is a valuable contribution to organizations, since it provides more insight into what does and what does not work to reduce distrust of certain power holders.

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Appendix A

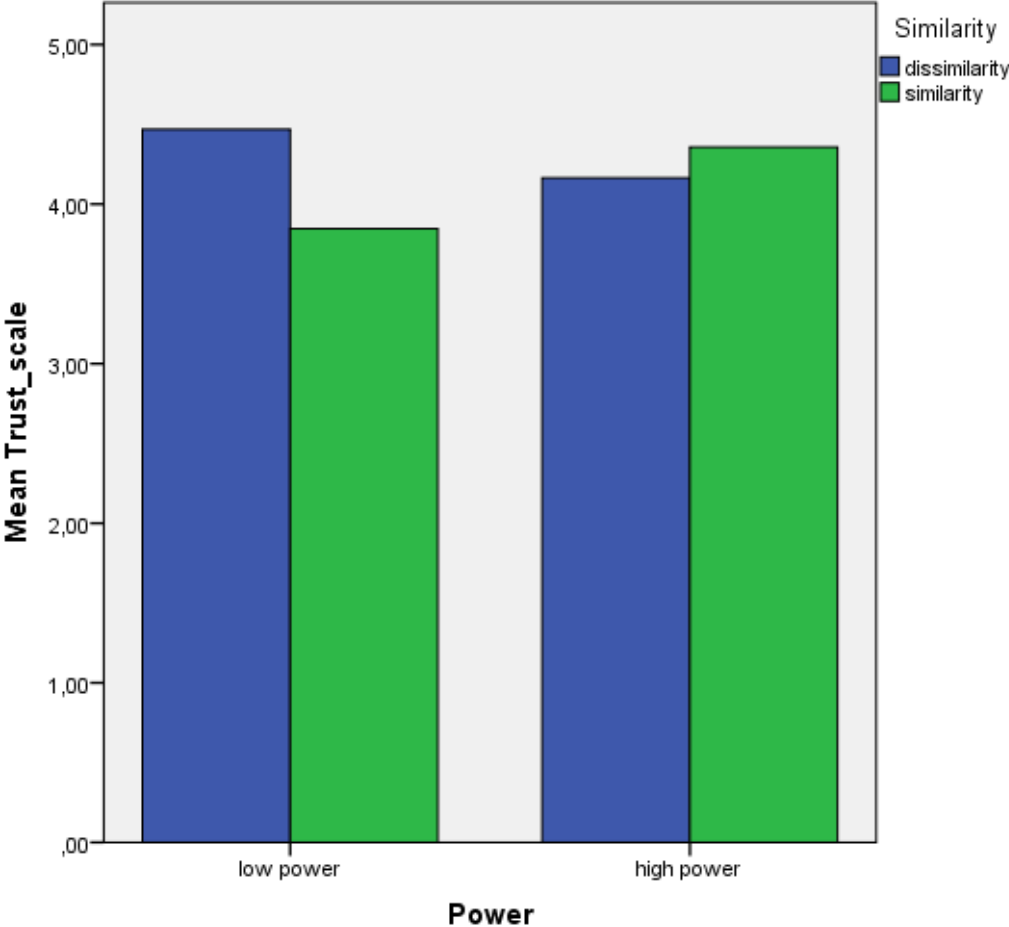


Figure 1. Graphic view of the interaction effect between power, distrust and shared identity.