

Research article

Affiliation-seeking among the powerless: Lacking power increases social affiliative motivation

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Abstract

Although it is well known that many people possess fundamental desires for both social affiliation and power, research has only begun to investigate the interplay between these two core social motives. The current research tested the hypothesis that an individual's level of power would influence that person's level of social affiliative motivation. We predicted that, compared with participants in a control condition, (1) individuals who possess power would exhibit less social affiliative motivation; and (2) individuals who lack power would display greater social affiliative motivation. Although we found little evidence to support the former prediction, we observed consistent evidence across two experiments that supported the latter. In Experiment 1, priming participants with low power (versus control) led them to display greater interest in joining a campus service aimed at fostering new friendships among students. In Experiment 2, placing participants in a position of low power (versus control) led them to seek greater proximity to a partner. Together, these results suggest that lacking power motivates people to seek social affiliation. Copyright © 2015 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Most people are highly motivated to foster positive, long-lasting relationships with others. Indeed, the desire for social belonging is a fundamental human need with profoundly important effects on a vast range of behaviors (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). At the same time, many people also greatly desire power, which affords the capacity to influence other people by controlling access to resources (Case & Maner, 2014; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003; McClelland, 1975). Hierarchy is a basic property of many social groups, and there are many benefits to possessing power (Van Vugt, 2006).

Although social affiliation and power are both central elements of group living, research has only begun to rigorously investigate the interface between these two motivational domains (e.g., Magee & Smith, 2013). In the present work, we examine the psychological intersection between power and the desire for social belonging. Across two experiments, we tested the hypothesis that the psychological experience of power would influence people's desire to affiliate with others.

POWER AND AFFILIATION

Power is a defining feature of human social relationships. Power refers to the presence of asymmetric control over valued material or social resources (Keltner et al., 2003; Magee

& Galinsky, 2008). Because powerful people control resources that can be used to reward or punish other members of the group, they have the capacity to influence other people (Emerson, 1962). Relative to people who lack power, powerful individuals are also less susceptible to punishment and interference from others. This affords them increased freedom to behave in ways consistent with their personal goals without having to worry as much as powerless people do about obstacles to goal attainment (Gruenfeld, Inesi, Magee, & Galinsky, 2008; Guinote, 2007). These features of power orient power-holders toward agentic and action-oriented behavior (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003; Keltner et al., 2003; Maner, Kaschak, & Jones, 2010; Slabu & Guinote, 2010). In sum, because they possess and control valuable resources, high-power individuals (relative to those who lack power) do not need as much help and support from others to pursue their desired outcomes (Keltner et al., 2003).

In contrast to those with power, those who lack power do not have abundant access to or control over important resources. Rather, their access to resources typically comes primarily through their relationships with other people, especially other people who have power (Emerson, 1962; Keltner et al., 2003). People who lack power often rely on others for support and assistance in facing the challenges of everyday life. Unlike powerful people, the powerless are highly susceptible to punishment and to encountering obstacles that stand in

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the way of pursuing their goals. Consequently, powerless people tend to behave in ways that are risk-averse and submissive, as opposed to assertive and agentic (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006; Galinsky et al., 2003). Thus, because of their lack of control over resources, powerless people often need to rely on others to help them achieve desired outcomes.

The main hypothesis guiding the current work is that an individual's level of power influences his or her desire for social belonging. Powerful people, compared with those who lack power, are less dependent on others for pursuing and reaching important goals (Galinsky et al., 2003). Because powerful individuals are able to satisfy many of their own needs without assistance from others, they are less dependent on, and possibly less interested in, satisfying their needs by enlisting the help of others. Thus, power might reduce social affiliative motives because power helps people fulfill many of the needs that might otherwise require social belonging.

In contrast, people who lack power are, relative to others, more dependent on other people for satisfying their goals. People at the bottom of the social hierarchy often need assistance from others in pursuing their desired outcomes and thus rely on their relationships with other people to help them face the challenges of everyday life. Forming and maintaining such relationships requires a high degree of social affiliative motivation. Consequently, relative to other people, those who lack power are expected to display relatively high levels of affiliative motivation. That is, whereas highly powerful people are expected to show relatively low levels of social affiliative motivation, individuals who possess low levels of power are expected to display relatively high levels of social affiliative motivation.

The current research can be contrasted with previous work examining the prosocial tendencies of powerful people. For example, previous studies have shown that possessing power can reduce people's tendency to display empathy, cooperate with others, and help others in need (Lammers, Galinsky, Gordijn, & Otten, 2012; Van Kleef et al., 2008; Woltin, Corneille, Yzerbyt, & Förster, 2011). That work can be interpreted in terms of powerful people's tendency to ignore social norms. Powerful people are less inclined to succumb to the influence of social norms and are less likely than others to behave in normative ways (Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008; Lammers & Maner, 2015). In contrast, the current work focuses more on spontaneous affiliative desires in the absence of any particular social norms. That is, whereas previous work has documented changes in the tendency to behave in line with prosocial norms, the current work investigates changes in people's spontaneous interest in affiliating with and being close to other people. We suggest that power decreases and lacking power increases, people's basic motivation for social belonging.

The hypothesis that power influences people's desire for affiliation is consistent with other findings in the power literature. For example, having power tends to reduce perspective taking, whereas lacking power is associated with greater perspective taking (Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006). Relative to those who lack power, powerful people also tend to reveal less intimate personal information in social interactions (Earle, Giuliano, & Archer, 1983). Moreover, relative to those who lack power, powerful individuals tend to maintain independent self-construals characterized by a subjective

sense of separation and distance from others (Lee & Tiedens, 2001). Such work is consistent with the recent social distance theory of power (Magee & Smith, 2013). Magee and Smith (2013) proposed that because the powerful are not dependent on their less powerful counterparts, powerful people experience greater psychological distance from those who lack power; conversely, those without power feel more subjectively close to those with power. Thus, a powerful individual's subjective experience of distance from a less powerful person might influence their social attitudes, cognition, and behavior toward the person lacking power. The current research provides an important test of the social distance theory of power by examining power's effect on people's level of motivation to affiliate. We propose that power might increase people's level of motivation to affiliate with other people, whereas lacking power might reduce people's level of motivation to affiliate.

The current research can be contrasted with classic work suggesting that powerless people sometimes seek affiliation as a strategic means of increasing their power. Emerson (1962, 1964) proposed that low-power individuals could decrease the power gap between themselves and another individual by extending their social network to include individuals other than the person who held power over them. By expanding their social network to include others, people who lack power can decrease their dependency on those above them in the social hierarchy and increase their level of relative power. Although it is true that people may seek new relationships as a way of increasing their relative power, our hypothesis focuses more on the general tendency to seek social affiliation, regardless of whether that tendency might increase one's power.

It is important to note that although theory implies that having power and lacking power may produce divergent effects on affiliation, extant evidence supports only that having power reduces social affiliation. For example, although Lammers et al. (2012) included both high-power and low-power conditions, they found only effects of high power; no effects of low power were observed in their studies. Although Van Kleef et al. (2008) did have conditions of higher and lower power, they did not include a control condition to which high power and low power could be compared, thus precluding the ability to discern whether effects were produced by high power, low power, or both. To our knowledge, no existing evidence has demonstrated that lacking power might increase people's spontaneous levels of social affiliation. Nevertheless, there are clear theoretical reasons for thinking that people who lack power should strongly desire affiliation. Lacking power increases people's dependency on others and seeking affiliation with others is one important means of satisfying that dependency. Indeed, seeking closeness with other people is a crucial strategy through which powerless people may be able to satisfy many of the goals inherent in everyday life.

OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT RESEARCH

In two experiments, we tested the hypothesis that power would influence people's level of social affiliative motivation. We

had two primary predictions: (1) experiencing high levels of power (versus control) would lead individuals to display relatively lower social affiliative motivation; and (2) experiencing low levels of power (versus control) would lead individuals to display higher social affiliative motivation. To help illuminate possible differential effects of high and low power, we included a neutral control condition in addition to conditions of high and low power.

In Experiment 1, we used a priming essay to prime the experience of either high or low power (or a neutral control state) and then assessed participants' levels of social affiliative motivation by measuring their interest in joining a university networking service that, for a fee, would help them form new friendships with other students. In Experiment 2, we randomly assigned participants to a powerful role, a powerless role, or a control role on a dyadic task. Participants then provided an implicit behavioral measure of affiliative motivation (how closely participants sat to an anticipated social partner).

We predicted that priming participants with high levels of power (compared with low-power or neutral control) would lead them to (1) display lower interest in joining the university social networking service; and (2) place greater distance between themselves and a social partner. Conversely, we predicted that priming participants with low levels of power (compared with high power or control) would lead them to (1) display higher interest in joining the university social networking service; and (b) place less distance between themselves and a social partner.

Study 1

Methods

Participants. After obtaining study approval from an ethics committee, we recruited participants from our university's undergraduate participant pool. One hundred forty five undergraduate students (93 women) enrolled in introductory psychology classes participated for course credit. Four participants were excluded for not following instructions, and one participant's data were lost due to computer error.

Design and procedure. Upon consenting to participate in the study, participants were randomly assigned to complete a priming essay intended to elicit either feelings of high-power, low-power, or control state (see Galinsky et al., 2003). Participants in the high-power condition wrote about a time in which they had power over another individual or individuals ('Power' was defined as a situation in which participants controlled the ability of another person or persons to get something they wanted or were in a position to evaluate those individuals [see Galinsky et al., 2003]). Participants in the low-power condition wrote about a time in which an individual or individuals had power over them. Participants in the control condition wrote about the last time they watched a show on television.

Participants then indicated their interest in a (fictitious) student service—Florida State University (FSU) Connect—whose implementation on campus ostensibly was being considered. This measure has been used in previous research to assess people's desire for social affiliation (Maner, DeWall,

Baumeister, & Schaller, 2007). Participants read that the purpose of FSU Connect would be to organize and put on student events with the goal of facilitating the formation of friendships among FSU students. They read further that student fees at FSU would need to be increased by \$75 to cover the cost of the student service; that was carried out to create some incentive for not supporting the service. Participants indicated the extent to which they were interested in participating in FSU Connect by responding to ten statements such as 'I have a strong interest in meeting new friends' and 'FSU Connect is a student service that I might try.' Responses were recorded using 12-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 12 (strongly agree). Responses were averaged to form a composite index of participants' desire to connect with others via the FSU Connect service ($\alpha=0.94$).

Following these measures, participants completed the Brief Mood Introspection Scale (BMIS; Mayer & Gaschke, 1988), a 16-item scale in which participants indicated the extent to which they were currently feeling various arousal (e.g., 'jittery' and 'active') and mood states (e.g., 'content' and 'happy'). The BMIS was included to ensure that any differences among priming conditions were not due simply to changes in affect. After completing all study measures, participants were thanked for their participation and debriefed regarding the purpose of the experiment.

Results and Discussion

Preliminary analyses. To ensure that any differences among priming conditions were not due simply to changes in affect or arousal, current mood valence and arousal were compared among priming conditions. No significant differences among priming conditions were found for current mood valence ($F=0.33$, $p=0.72$) or current arousal ($F=2.23$, $p=0.11$). In addition, there were no main effects or moderating effects of gender. Thus, gender is not discussed further.

Effect of power manipulation on desire for affiliation. Our main hypotheses were that the high-power prime would decrease participants' interest in the FSU Connect service, whereas the low-power prime would increase their desire in the service. A one-way analysis of variance with FSU Connect as the dependent variable indicated significant variability across the three conditions, $F(2,137)=3.93$, $p=0.02$ (Figure 1). Planned contrasts revealed that low-power participants ($M=7.92$, $SD=2.14$) expressed greater interest in FSU Connect than did high-power participants ($M=6.60$, $SD=2.45$), $t(137)=-2.69$, $p=0.008$, $d=0.57$, 95% CI(d) (0.14, 0.93). Low-power participants were also more interested in FSU Connect than were control participants ($M=6.93$, $SD=2.51$), $t(137)=2.03$, $p=0.04$, $d=0.43$, 95% CI(d) (0.01, 0.81). Although high-power participants reported descriptively less interest in FSU Connect than did control participants, that difference was not significant, $t(137)=-0.67$, $p=0.51$, $d=0.13$, 95% CI(d) (-0.26, 0.53). A post hoc (2 vs. 1) contrast comparing the low-power condition with the control and high-power conditions confirmed that participants in the low-power condition expressed greater interest in FSU Connect, $t(137)=2.73$, $p=0.007$, $d=0.50$, 95% CI(d) (0.13, 0.82).

Results from Study 1 support the hypothesis that individuals' experience of power influences their level of social

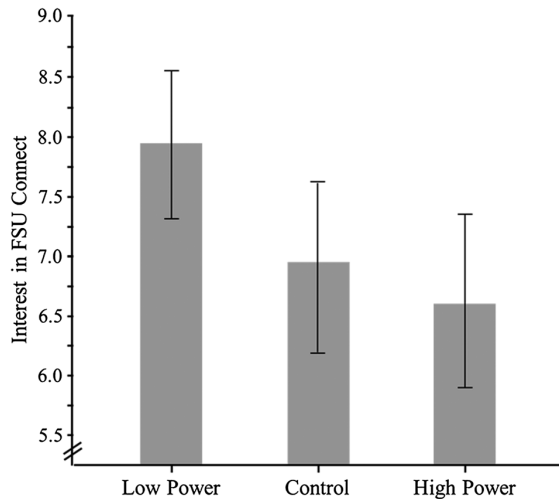


Figure 1. Priming participants with low power significantly increased their self-reported interest in Florida State University Connect, relative to the other conditions. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals

affiliative motivation. Although we observed no significant effects of high power, we found that priming participants with low power led them to express greater interest in participating in a service designed to foster interpersonal relationships.

Study 2 advanced the investigation in three main ways. First, to complement the approach used in the first study, Study 2 used a different power manipulation. In Study 1, we created the psychological experience of power by having participants complete a priming essay based on the participants' previous personal experiences. In contrast, Study 2 used a different and more psychologically immediate power manipulation in which participants anticipated having power in a dyadic lab task. Participants were randomly assigned to either a powerful role, a powerless role, or a control role. Second, rather than assessing participants' subjective feelings of affiliative motivation, we assessed a behavioral measure reflecting desire for social closeness—we asked participants to arrange a partner's chair side-by-side with their own and measured the physical distance they placed between the two chairs. If people desire social closeness, they should place their chair especially close to their partner. Third, the design of this study afforded us the ability to differentiate our hypothesis from that of Emerson's (1962) network expansion theory. Because participants in the low-power condition were preparing to interact with the very person who had power over them in the dyadic task, Emerson's model would predict that the low-power person would not desire closeness with that person. However, if lacking power generates a broad desire for social belonging, then powerless participants would be expected to seek social closeness with the person who has power over them.

Study 2

Method

Participants. Once study approval was obtained from an ethics committee, we recruited participants from our

university's undergraduate subject pool. One hundred sixty two undergraduate students (111 women, 50 men, and one not reported) enrolled in introductory psychology classes participated in exchange for course credit. Five participants were excluded for not following instructions; three participants were excluded for expressing substantial suspicion; four participants were excluded due to procedural errors; and two participants were excluded for providing chair distances that were extreme outliers (i.e., more than three standard deviations above the mean). In total, 148 participants were included in the analyses for the chair placement task.

Design and procedure. Upon providing consent to participate in the study, participants were given instructions regarding study procedures. The participants were informed that the study consisted of two parts. The participants were told that they would first complete a short questionnaire before interacting with a partner who was (ostensibly) seated in another lab room. Following these instructions, participants completed the Big Five Inventory (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991) and were told that their responses would be used to determine their role on the dyadic task. This was carried out to legitimize participants' assignment to the condition. Previous research shows that effects of power tend to hold only when power is perceived to be legitimate (Lammers, Galinsky, Gordijn, & Otten, 2008).

After completing the Big Five Inventory, participants were given instructions for performing the dyadic task with their partner. The task, which was adapted from Galinsky et al. (2003), consisted of participants building a model (called a Tanagram). Participants were randomly assigned to one of three positions within the task: manager (high power), builder (low power), or egalitarian control. In the high-power condition, participants were assigned the role of manager, whose task was to direct and evaluate the builder in building the Tanagram. As in previous research, participants in the high-power condition were told that they would direct the task and evaluate their subordinate at the end of the session. In the low-power condition, participants were assigned the role of builder, whose task was to build the Tanagram according to instructions given by the manager. As in previous research, participants in the low-power condition were told that they would follow the instructions of their superior and would be evaluated at the end of the session. In the egalitarian control condition, participants were not assigned a role of manager or builder; rather, participants merely completed the Tanagram with their partner, and each person had equal authority in performing the task.

After assigning participants to their roles, the experimenter informed participants that their partner was still completing the first part of the study and asked them to complete another short questionnaire while they waited. Following these instructions, participants completed the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule was used to complement the use of the BMIS in Experiment 1.

Next, the experimenter instructed participants to bring a chair from the lab waiting room and set it up for their partner. Participants were told to place the chair at the desk where they would complete the Tanagram with their partner. Immediately

after participants positioned the partner's chair, the experimenter directed participants to a different lab room where they completed a demographics questionnaire, were probed for suspicion and were debriefed regarding the purpose of the experiment. Upon completion of the session, the experimenter measured and recorded the distance (in centimeters) between the inner front leg of the participant's chair and the inner front leg of the anticipated partner's chair.

Results and Discussion

Preliminary analyses. To ensure that any differences among priming conditions were not due simply to changes in positive or negative affect, we assessed possible effects on current affective valence. No significant differences among priming conditions were found for either positive ($F=1.77$, $p=0.18$) or negative affect ($F=1.38$, $p=0.26$). There were no main effects or moderating effects of gender; thus, it was not considered further.

Effect of power on chair distance. Based on the findings from Experiment 1, we hypothesized that participants in the low-power condition would position the anticipated partner's chair closer to their own chair, compared with those in the control and high-power conditions. A one-way analysis of variance with chair distance as the dependent variable indicated significant variability across the three conditions, $F(2,145) = 3.38$, $p=0.04$ (Figure 2). Planned contrasts revealed that low-power participants ($M=38.96$, $SD=9.18$) positioned their partner's chair significantly closer to their own chair compared with those in the high-power condition ($M=43.84$, $SD=10.07$), $t(145)=2.56$, $p=0.01$, $d=0.51$, 95% CI(d) (0.11, 0.90), and marginally closer than those in the control condition ($M=42.15$, $SD=9.40$), $t(145)=-1.64$, $p=0.10$, $d=0.34$, 95% CI(d) (-0.07, 0.73). A 2 vs. 1 contrast comparing the low-power condition with the control and high-power conditions confirmed that participants in the low-power condition positioned the partner's chair closer to their own, $t(145)=-2.43$, $p=0.02$, $d=0.43$, 95% CI(d) (0.08, 0.77). Although high-power participants positioned their chair descriptively farther from their partner than did participants in the control

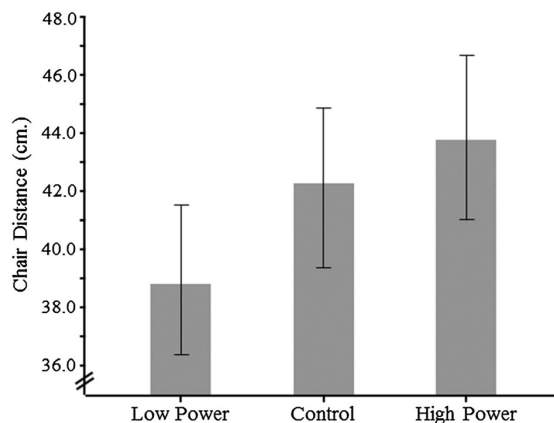


Figure 2. Participants in the low power condition placed their chair closer to a partner, relative to the other conditions. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals

condition, this difference was not significant, $t(145)=0.87$, $p=0.38$, $d=0.17$, 95% CI(d) (-.19, .49).

These results are consistent with the hypothesis that low-power participants would express their increased desire to affiliate with others by moving themselves physically closer to an anticipated social partner. Whereas Experiment 1 provides evidence that lacking power increased individuals' desire to affiliate with other students on campus, Experiment 2 suggests that lacking power increased individuals' desire for closeness with a laboratory partner. This latter finding can be contrasted with those of Mead and Maner (2011) who found that physical proximity was sought by powerful individuals (as opposed to those who lacked power) who wished to closely monitor their subordinate. Those findings suggested that seeking proximity sometimes serves to undermine the autonomy of one's subordinate, so that the leader can maintain control over the group. Indeed, proximity seeking in that study was observed only when the subordinate was perceived by the leader as a threat and only when the leader's powerful role could be lost. In the current study, powerful participants could not lose their role as manager. The distance powerful participants put between themselves and their partner is consistent with a lack of desire to affiliate with their partner, rather than a desire to monitor or control the partner.

META-ANALYSIS

The similar design of Experiments 1 and 2 allowed us to conduct a meta-analysis to assess the overall reliability of the effects of low power and high power. We used the Stouffer method (Mosteller & Bush, 1954) as advocated by Rosenthal and Rosnow (1991) to meta-analyze the effects of both low and high power (each versus control). One-tailed significance values for each effect (weighted by the study's corresponding degrees of freedom) were used to calculate the effect's overall reliability across experiments (see Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991, p. 496). Once z -scores were computed for the overall effects, the overall significance value was converted back from one-tailed to two-tailed.

The effect of low power (versus control) was highly reliable when meta-analyzed across the two experiments, $z=2.56$, $p=0.01$, $sr=0.15$. Thus, participants primed with low power displayed a greater tendency to seek affiliation than those in control. Although there was a trend in Experiment 2 for high-power participants (versus control) to avoid affiliation, the meta-analysis revealed that the effect of high power (versus control) was not reliable across the two experiments, $z=-1.09$, $p=0.28$, $sr=-0.06$.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Considerable research has investigated people's motives and behavior within the domains of power and affiliation. However, significantly less is known about how those core social motives interface with one another. Across two experiments, we found support for the hypothesis that power influences individuals' level of social affiliative motivation. Specifically,

we found that experiencing low levels of power increased individuals' desire for social affiliation. In Experiment 1, priming participants with low power led them to display greater interest in joining a campus service aimed at fostering friendships. In Experiment 2, priming participants with low power led them to seek greater physical proximity to a partner. Although previous research has hinted at the relationship between power and affiliation (e.g., [Lammers et al., 2012](#); [Magee & Smith, 2013](#)), the current studies provide more direct evidence that lacking power increases individuals' desire for social affiliation.

The current work is consistent with theories that emphasize the effects of power on social distance ([Magee & Smith, 2013](#); see also [Liberman, Trope, & Stephan, 2007](#)) and reveals the transformative effects of low power on affiliative cognition and behavior. Human beings are driven by a basic need for positive and lasting interpersonal relationships ([Baumeister & Leary, 1995](#)). Group living enables people to satisfy many of their goals by cooperating and affiliating with others. Within most social groups, individuals who lack power must rely intensely on others to satisfy their basic needs and goals. Thus, when people lack power or feel powerless, they should be especially inclined to affiliate with others. The current studies are the first to provide experimental evidence that those who lack power have higher affiliative tendencies. In addition to advancing our understanding of power and social affiliation, these findings begin to fill the gap in the literature on the specific effects of low power.

The current findings can be contrasted with Emerson's (1962, 1964) work on network expansion. Whereas Emerson proposed that people who lack power might seek relationships as a means of decreasing their dependence on those above them in the hierarchy, we propose that people who lack power experience a broad motivation to affiliate with other people—the target of that affiliation could even be the person who holds power over them. Indeed, although the network expansion models suggest that powerless individuals should seek new social partners and should not affiliate with the person who has power over him or her, we found that powerless individuals did indeed seek social closeness with that person (Study 2). Taken together, extant research suggests that lacking power might lead people to affiliate both for strategic reasons and because they experience a spontaneous desire for social belonging.

Although we found support for hypotheses pertaining to low power, we found little evidence for the prediction that having power decreases the strength of people's social affiliative motivation (cf. [Lammers et al., 2012](#); [Magee & Smith, 2013](#)). One possible interpretation is that the effect of power is relatively smaller than the effect of lacking power and, concurrently, while our studies were capable of detecting the low-power effect, our sample sizes were not sufficient to detect the effect of high power. However, another possible interpretation is that the desire for social belonging may be so fundamental to group living that it persists even among individuals who possess the self-sufficiency to satisfy many of their own needs and wants. Moreover, despite controlling access to resources, there are almost certainly instances in which powerful people need to rely on others to help them achieve desired outcomes. For instance, because power is often granted to individuals by the freely conferred deference

of their subordinate group members ([Anderson, Willer, Kilduff, & Brown, 2012](#); [Henrich & Gil-White, 2001](#)), powerful people may be able to maintain their role atop their group's hierarchy in part by currying favor with other, less powerful group members. Thus, powerful people might maintain the benefits of their high social rank by working to form positive social relationships with group members who lack power. Power may also amplify affiliative motives that are active in the current situation ([Slabu & Guinote, 2010](#)). For example, [Narayanan and colleagues \(2013\)](#) showed that power is associated with greater affiliative motives after rejection—a social situation that activates acute desires for affiliation ([Maner et al., 2007](#)).

It is also possible that power decreases the strength of people's affiliative desire with specific relationship partners not included in our experimental design. For example, powerful people may lack a desire to affiliate with those who are particularly low in power because powerless people could be perceived as offering little or no social benefit. Conversely, powerful people may be more interested in affiliating with others in their group who are of similar or higher social rank. Future research could benefit from considering whether power's effect on social affiliative motivation depends on the type of person with whom one is affiliating.

Thus far, we have proposed that power influences people's level of social affiliative motivation; however, there are likely to be potential exceptions to the predicted patterns. For example, individuals who lack power may be at risk of exhausting their resources. Thus, for some powerless individuals who already face obstacles that stand in the way of pursuing their goals, avoiding social contact may be an adaptive regulatory strategy to prevent further loss (cf. [Allen & Badcock, 2003](#)). This is consistent with previous research indicating that powerless people tend to behave in ways that are risk-averse ([Anderson & Galinsky, 2006](#); [Galinsky et al., 2003](#)). As another example, lacking power could undermine people's capacity to correctly identify appropriate partners for social affiliation. Indeed, research shows that lacking power impairs people's executive functioning ([Smith, Jostmann, Galinsky, & van Dijk, 2008](#)). Thus, feeling powerless may inhibit cognitive processes that are important for the pursuit of social affiliative goals. Although we expect the psychological experience of lacking power to motivate social affiliation in general, this pattern could depend on important individual and situational variables.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although the current work provides evidence that the psychological experience of power influences people's desire to affiliate with others, there are several limitations that offer valuable opportunities for further research. As with any laboratory investigation, our methods were designed in part to maximize situational control and to provide rigorous experimental tests of our hypotheses. It is difficult to know how these findings would generalize outside the lab, and future studies would benefit from examining the link between power and affiliation within extant social groups.

Future research would also benefit from including measures designed to distinguish between people's desire to affiliate

with the goal of attaining intimacy versus gaining access to resources or other tangible benefits. Our theory is predicated on the idea that power should reduce people's desire for affiliation because it makes them less dependent on others for getting the things they want, whereas lacking power should increase people's desire for affiliation because it increases their reliance on others. Thus, power may influence people's desire to affiliate mainly with those who could be instrumental in satisfying non-intimacy goals. In contrast, power might not influence people's desire to bond with potential sources of social intimacy. The measures used in the current studies were not designed to differentiate between these different types of social affiliation. An important avenue for future research, then, is to examine how power influences the desire for social intimacy, the need to rely on others to gain access to desired resources, or both.

The current research also fell short of investigating individual differences that might moderate the relationship between power and affiliation. For example, individual differences in people's desire for power could influence their levels of affiliative motivation in response to high or low-power positions. For example, individuals who would rather avoid power (e.g., people who are anxious or who lack dominance; Josephs, Sellers, Newman, & Mehta, 2006; Maner, Gailliot, Menzel, & Kunstman, 2012) might respond to positions of power by seeking social support rather than by displaying reductions in affiliative motivation. Alternatively, perhaps people who are socially anxious would respond to positions that lack power and status with social avoidance rather than social affiliation, as such individuals might be overly vigilant to the possibility of rejection or negative social evaluation (e.g., Maner et al., 2007). Future research should investigate individual difference moderating variables to better understand the boundary conditions surrounding effects of power on affiliation.

CONCLUSION

Power and social affiliation both reflect fundamental aspects of group living. Our findings suggest that lacking power leads people to exhibit relatively greater levels of social affiliative motivation. That is, lacking power may change the way people think about and behave toward others, increasing their desire to establish and maintain close interpersonal relationships. When lacking power or feeling powerless, people may be especially inclined to get by with a little help from their friends.

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