From System Justification to System Condemnation: Antecedents of Attempts to Change Power Hierarchies

Paul V. Martorana
McCombs School of Management
University of Texas at Austin

Adam D. Galinsky
Kellogg School of Management
Northwestern University

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The Powerful Seem To Take Assertive Action

Political Actions

Business Actions
System Justification (Jost & Banaji, 1994)

Lower power individuals psychologically help maintain systems that subordinate them.

Stereotyping + False Consciousness:
Low power individuals perpetuate beliefs that maintain their disadvantaged position
From Powerless to Action?
Model of Action

What factors lead low power individuals to maintain their subordinated position in a hierarchy or attempt to alter the power hierarchy and its policies?

- Sense of Power
- Emotions Associated with Power
- Perceived Illegitimacy

Actions to Change System of Authority
Power is positively associated with Behavioral Approach and negatively associated with Behavioral Inhibition Keltner et al. 2003
– High power individuals are more attentive to rewards and less attentive to threats compared to low power individuals

Positive relationship with
– Variability and range of behaviors Guinote, Judd, & Brauer, 2003
– Approach; extraversion Smith & Bargh, 2007, Anderson et al., 2001
– Action Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003
– Negotiating Magee, Galinsky, & Gruenfeld, 2007
– Risk-taking Anderson & Galinsky, 2006, Maner et al., 2007

Hypothesis 1: Low power individuals who have a high sense of power will be more likely to act against those in positions of authority over them and attempt to change their position in the hierarchy.
Disobedience to Authority
Sense of Power $\Rightarrow$ Authority Resisted

**Priming High Power** $\Rightarrow$ Refuse experimenter request to draw an E on forehead

Power primed can be authority resisted.
Emotions and Action

Emotions associated with power

Anger and pride are associated with high power (Tiedens, 2001)

Fear, sadness, and gratitude are associated with low power (Tiedens, 2001)

Emotions associated with action

Fearful individuals passively resign to subordinating situations (Martin, Scully, & Levitt, 1990) and is associated with inaction (Woodzicka & LaFrance, 2001).

Anger is associated with assertiveness (Buss & Perry, 1992) and action (Martin, 1993) and produces the same brain activity as other factors in the behavioral approach system (Harmon-Jones & Allen, 1998)

Hypothesis 2: Emotions associated with high power (anger, pride) will predict more actions against a system of authority compared to emotions associated with low power (sadness, fear, gratitude)
Perceived Illegitimacy and Action

Perceived Illegitimacy of a system leads individuals to

– Seek redress through activism  
  Davis & Thompson, 1994
– Appeal court rulings  
  Fuller, Edelman, & Matusik, 2000; Tyler, 1994
– Voice concerns  
  Hirschman, 1970; Morrison & Milliken, 2000
– Change power  
  Tajfel & Turner, 1986

Hypothesis 3: Perceptions of the illegitimacy of the hierarchy will predict more actions against a system of authority.
What Type of Action?

Overt (action is visible and public)

Covert (action is invisible and private)

Normative (act within the rules of the system)

Non-normative (act outside or supersede the rules of the system)
### A Typology of Actions to Change System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Covert</th>
<th>Overt</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Normative</strong></td>
<td>• Complain in private with colleagues</td>
<td>• Openly discuss grievances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Send anonymous e-mail expressing concerns</td>
<td>• Proxy statements at annual shareholder meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Normative</strong></td>
<td>• Covert sabotage (delete computer files)</td>
<td>• Argue loudly with supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Compensatory or justice-motivated theft.</td>
<td>• Join a wildcat strike</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Exit:** Physical and psychological/neglect  
**Loyalty:** Individual mobility  

(Hirschman, 1970; Martin, 1986; Morrill, Zald, and Rao, 2002)
213,211 participants in international field survey
6,521 U.S. participants

**Independent Variable: Sense of Power**

“Indicate how much freedom of choice and control you feel you have over the way your life turns out.”

10 point Likert scale

**Dependant Variable: Actions to Change System (all overt)**

Normative (Sign a petition)

Non-normative (Join a boycott, Demonstrate illegally, Strike illegally)
# Sense of Power → Actions to Change System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>International Survey</th>
<th>National Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sign a petition</td>
<td>.077***</td>
<td>.084***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Join a boycott</td>
<td>.037***</td>
<td>.047***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate illegally</td>
<td>.034***</td>
<td>.058***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strike illegally</td>
<td>.033***</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** = .0001
Experimental Manipulation of Sense of Power and Illegitimacy

57 paid undergraduate students
2 x 2 research design

**Independent variables:**
- **Sense of Power**  High or low sense of power autobiographical recall prime
- **Legitimacy**  Legitimate or illegitimate promotion policy in scenario

**Dependant variables: Behaviors towards Apex**
- **Voice:**  Overt/covert x normative/non-normative
- **Exit:**  Psychological and physical
- **Loyalty:**  Individual mobility

Anger and fear measured
Independent Variable: Sense of Power

Autobiographical recall prime (Galinsky, Gruenfeld & Magee, 2003)

**High Sense of Power:**
Recall a particular incident in which you **had power over another individual** or individuals. By power, we mean a situation in which you controlled the ability of another person or persons to get something they wanted, or were in a position to evaluate those individuals. Please describe this situation in which you had power—what happened, how you felt, etc.

**Low Sense of Power:**
Recall a particular incident in which **someone else had power over you**. By power, we mean a situation in which someone had control over your ability to get something you wanted, or was in a position to evaluate you. Please describe this situation in which you did not have power—what happened, how you felt, etc.
Apex is a 200-person information services and consulting services firm. Apex has been serving a similar client base for 25 years and its profits, size and market have remained relatively stable. You have been an employee of Apex Corporation for 3 years. You are a Service Representative, which means that you supervise Junior Service Representatives and manage accounts. You have reached the highest position you can reach before entering upper management. Your responsibilities differ from those of Senior Managers (one level above you) because Senior Managers make the final decisions concerning hiring and salaries and create and implement initiatives.

The CEO/founder has maintained the same organizational structure and promotion structure since the firm’s inception. Individuals are not promoted from within to Senior Manager positions. Instead, he has filled all previous upper level management positions from the outside.
Independent Variable: Illegitimacy of the Hierarchy

Manipulated perceived illegitimacy of the hierarchy

**Legitimate**  
Prior knowledge of the promotion policy;  
Lack of skills necessary to advance.

**Illegitimate**  
No prior knowledge of the promotion policy;  
Possession of skills necessary to advance.
Dependent Variable: Types of Actions

- **Voice**
  - Non-Normative: e-mail a virus, delete computer programs
  - Normative: send a letter, talk, sign a petition
  - Overtly
  - Covertly

- **Exit**
  - Physical Exit: job search
  - Psychological Exit: work slow down

- **Loyalty**
  - Individual mobility: Accept polity: have an have an exception made for oneself to attain individual mobility within the firm
Sense of Power → Overt Non-Normative Actions

- Sense of Power: $p = .040$
- Illegitimacy: $p = .708$
Illegitimacy → Overt Normative Actions

Sense of Power: $p = .544$

Illegitimacy: $p = .046$
### Summary

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<tr>
<td>Low Power Emotion</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>High Power Emotion</td>
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- **Sense of Power** → **Overt Non-Normative Actions**
  - Physical Exit
  - Individual Mobility
- **Low Power Emotion** → **Covert Actions**
- **High Power Emotion** → **Overt Non-Normative actions**
  - Physical Exit
- **Perceived Illegitimacy** → **Overt Normative Actions**
Experimental Manipulation of Emotions

69 paid undergraduate students
2 x 2 research design

**Independent Variable: Emotions**

- **Anger:** High power emotion, negative valence
- **Pride:** High power emotion, positive valence
- **Sadness:** Low power emotion, negative valence
- **Gratitude:** Low power emotion, positive valence

**Experimental Context: Apex Company**

**Dependant Variable: Behaviors towards Apex**

- **Voice:** overt/covert – normative/non-normative
- **Exit:** psychological and physical
- **Loyalty:** individual mobility

**Dependant variable: Donation**

Donate $1 to a Charity that supports Workers’ or Managers’ interests
Independent Variable: Emotion

Anger
Please relive and vividly recall a particular event in your life that made you feel angry towards someone and continues to make you angry whenever you think about it, even today.

Pride
Please relive and vividly recall a particular event in your life that made you feel personally proud and continues to make you proud whenever you think about it, even today.

Sad
Please relive and vividly recall a particular event in your life that made you feel personally sad and continues to make you sad whenever you think about it, even today.

Gratitude
Please relive and vividly recall a particular event in your life that made you feel grateful to someone and continues to make you feel grateful whenever you think about it, even today.
Powerful Emotions → Covert Non-Normative Actions

Powerful Emotion: $p = .059$

Valence of Emotion: $p = .926$
Powerful Emotions $\rightarrow$ Physical Exit

- **Powerful Emotion**: $p = .007$
- **Valence of Emotion**: $p = .745$

**Bar Chart**

- **Low Power Emotion**
  - Negative Emotion
  - Positive Emotion

- **High Power Emotion**
  - Negative Emotion
  - Positive Emotion

**Legend**

- **Negative Emotion**
- **Positive Emotion**
Powerful Emotions → Psychological Exit

Powerful Emotion: $p = .033$

Valence of Emotion: $p = .703$
One set of organizations advocate for ability to manage without excessive constraints and generally support firms like Apex having the organizational policies that it does. They consider rules and regulations as placing burdensome constraints that drain firm wide resources.

The other set of organizations advocate for laws and regulations that support workers’ rights within firms like Apex. They work to ensure that all workers have equal opportunity to move up within firms like Apex. Again, you can choose any one of the organization to have us donate $1.
Powerful Emotions → Donate to Workers

High Power Emotion Prime: p = .04
### Overall Summary

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<td>Sense of Power High Power Emotions</td>
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- Sense of Power → Non-Normative Actions
- High Power Emotion → Overt Actions
- Perceived Illegitimacy → Overt Normative Actions