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The Role of Geographical Distance in Perceptions of Dissenters

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The Role of Geographical Distance in Perceptions of Dissenters

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The Role of Geographical Distance in Perceptions of Dissenters

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Dissent is a common feature of intragroup relations. The consequences of dissent, positive or negative, depend largely on group reactions to dissenters. The current study examined whether geographical distance as well as social dominance orientation (SDO) influence group responses toward a dissenter. I hypothesized that geographical distance would exacerbate negative reactions toward a group member who dissent from—rather than conform to—group norms. Further, I predicted levels of social dominance orientation would moderate group reactions. Findings were not consistent with our predictions; however, the current results did elucidate several interesting lines of future research. Specifically, the findings from the current study reveal that people were more likely to attribute blame to and perceive more harm done to the ingroup by a distal group member, regardless of whether he dissented or not. Further, those high in SDO, relative to low in SDO, were more likely to reprimand and perceive more harm done to the ingroup by a non-dissenting member when he was faraway compared to nearby. These results suggest that geographical distance, as well as individual differences, such as SDO, is important, albeit complex, factors in group reactions to dissenters.

Table of Contents

The Role of Geographical Distance in Group Perceptions of Dissenters	1
Dissent	3
Contextual Influences on Dissent	3
Contextual Influences on Group Reactions Toward Dissenters	4
Psychological Distance	5
Geographical Distance	5
Construal Level Theory and Geographical Distance	6
Individual Differences in Response to Dissention: Social Dominance	8
Social Dominance Orientation	8
Contextual Influences on SDO	9
The Present Study	11
Method	13
Participants	13
Procedure	13
Experimental Conditions	14
Ingroup Target: Conformist versus Dissenter	14
Geographical Distance: Near versus Far	14
Dependent Measures	15
Evaluation of Dissenter	15
Behavior toward Dissenter	15
Perceptions of Group Harm	15
Individual Difference Measure	16
Social Dominance Orientation	16
Results	17
Analytic Overview	17
Evaluation of Dissenters	17
Blame	17
Reprimand	17
Perceptions of Group Harm	18
Alternative Analysis	19
Blame	19

Reprimand	20
Perceptions of Group Harm.....	20
Discussion.....	22
Appendix A	27
Figure 1.....	27
Figure 2.....	28
Figure 3.....	29
Figure 4.....	30
Appendix B.....	31
Cooperative Prime.....	31
Competitive Prime	33
References	35

The Role of Geographical Distance in Perceptions of Dissenters

On March 20, 2003, the US invaded Iraq under the pretense of ending a tyrannical regime and eliminating a potential world threat. However, within President Bush's cabinet, there was doubt as to whether the invasion of Iraq was truly justified (Baker, 2002; Ricks, 2002; Woodward, 2002). Despite these concerns, President Bush led the US into a war that lasted eight years, cost the US government roughly trillions of dollars (Peralta, 2011), and killed nearly 4,500 US soldiers (NPR/Iraq Coalition Casualty Count). The failure of key White House members to protest President Bush's poorly informed decision to invade Iraq had serious long-term consequences for the US's domestic climate and international relations.

If there was doubt about US involvement in Iraq, why then did US officials not voice their concerns? The answer to this question is the phenomenon referred to as "groupthink" (Janis, 1972). Groupthink is defined as a tendency for groups to prioritize group solidarity over the critical assessment of group decisions. A group's tendency to value cohesiveness over critical thinking is due to the power of group norms, which inform members of appropriate behavior (e.g., littering and prejudice; Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990; Crandall, Eshleman, & O'Brien, 2002). To ensure that group members behave within the group's normative boundaries, groups use several techniques to exert control over members (e.g., social rejection). Thus, it is important to understand the conditions under which groups will react negatively to dissenters and who (i.e., individual differences) will react most negatively. Indeed, if research elucidates the personality characteristics and circumstances associated with negative reactions toward dissenters, individuals can utilize that knowledge to navigate group decision-making and decrease the likelihood of groupthink. Previous research has identified several factors that

influence group members' rejection of dissenters (Cartwright & Zander, 1968; Levine, 1989; Mannetti, Levine, Pierro, Kruglanski, 2010; Moscovici & Nemeth, 1974; Packer, 2010). The primary purpose of the current study was to investigate the role of geographical distance between a group and a dissenter on group members' reaction toward dissenters using an experimental design. To do so, I experimentally manipulated the geographical distance between a group and a dissenter and examined the consequent affect on individuals' perceptions of the dissenter. A secondary purpose was to test whether individual differences in social dominance orientation served to moderate individuals' responses to dissenting group members.

Dissent

Individuals often hold opinions that differ from those of other ingroup members. Consider, for example, the current Tea Party movement. What started as a few marginal group members who expressed their disapproval of the current affairs of the Republican Party evolved into a leading force in American politics. The Tea Party is only one of many examples that attest to how rapidly and infectiously dissenting views can spread and the magnitude with which they influence group behavior. It is important to note, however, that the relationship between the group and the dissenter is not orthogonal. Each has a profound influence on the other. And while dissent can have negative social repercussions, it is also true that dissent can have positive effects (e.g., minimizing groupthink, scientific advancement, and social progress). Thus, researchers have investigated contextual factors that encourage individuals to dissent, as well as contextual factors that shape groups' negative reactions toward dissenters.

Contextual Influences on Dissent

Social psychologists have long acknowledged the power of the situation and its influences on dissenters. Previous research has investigated the role of trust between subordinates and superiors (Edmondson & Munchus, 2007), culture (Tourish & Vatcha, 2005; Packer, 2009), and group identity (Packer, 2008) in producing dissent. For example, empirical evidence demonstrates that strongly identified group members tend to abide by group norms (e.g., Johnston & White, 2003; Terry, Hogg, & White, 1999), whereas weakly identified group members are more likely to deviate from the group (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002; White, Hogg, & Terry, 2002). However, the role of identity in dissent can be counterintuitive. For instance, research by Dominic Packer and his colleagues find that under certain contexts, highly identified group members can and will dissent; however, they tend to do so only when group norms are perceived to be detrimental

to the group (Packer & Chasteen, 2010). Such contradictory evidence attests to dissent's complexity and highlights that the behavior is not yet completely understood.

Contextual Influences on Group Reactions Toward Dissenters

Group behavior is determined primarily by group norms. Overall, groups value members who conform to (rather than deviate from) normative behavior. To ensure conformity and create a cohesive social identity, groups punish those who dissent (Festinger, 1950; Marques & Paez, 1994; Yzerbyt, Castano, Leyens, & Paladino, 2000). Therefore, to avoid social rejection, dissenters or nonconformists avoid expressing beliefs at odds with their group. However, under certain circumstances, groups will react less negatively toward dissenters. For instance, the social status of groups, cultural norms, and direction of deviance all impact group reactions to dissenters (Dolderer, Mummendey, Rothermund, 2009; Hornsey, Jetten, McAuliffe, & Hogg, 2006; Scheepers, Branscombe, Spears, Doosje, 2002). Another possible contextual variable that has yet to receive empirical attention is geographical distance. It seems possible that the level of geographical distance between groups and dissenters might influence group members' reaction toward dissenters. However, no research to date has examined the contextual influence distance has on group reactions toward dissent. The current study is the first to empirically test the proposed relationship.

Psychological Distance

Interpersonal interactions are the essence of human existence. A natural facet of these interactions is distance. We frequently remember past conversations, converse with others from different social groups, weigh probabilities of interacting with certain individuals, and sometimes interact and evaluate others who are located at varying distances. These forms of psychological distance (e.g., temporal, social, hypothetical, and geographical; for a review see Trope & Liberman, 2010) influence how we perceive, interact with, and understand our environment.

Geographical Distance

With the advent of the Internet and other technology, interaction between varying distal others has increased. For example, with the help of programs like Skype, one can communicate with friends and loved ones down the street or thousands of miles away or meet with colleagues halfway across the world. The frequency with which we communicate with distal others underscores the importance of understanding how exactly distance influences our perceptions of others. Previous research indicates that geographical distance affects our social judgments (Henderson, Fujita, Trope, & Liberman, 2006). For instance, Henderson and colleagues found that one's geographical distance from others affects one's interpretation of others' behavior (Henderson et al., 2006; Study 2). As individuals become more geographically close, people are more likely to take into account contextual constraints or influences on their behavior; As individuals become more geographically distance, people are more likely to rely on abstract guides to behavior (e.g., social norms). Additional research found that geographical distance from a group caused individuals to think in terms of common goals or prototypical behavior (Henderson, 2009). Given that geographical distance influences individuals' perception

and evaluations of others, it is important to identify the mechanisms by which such effects are produced.

Construal Level Theory and Geographical Distance

Construal level theory (CLT) posits that people espouse varying levels of representation depending on their psychological distance from other objects, events, or people (Liberman, Trope, & Stephan, 2007; Trope & Liberman, 2003, Trope & Liberman, 2010). People use lower level, more concrete construals to interpret events and objects in their immediate environment (i.e., geographically close). Conversely, as events and objects become more psychologically removed or geographically distant – limiting access to specific details, people rely on higher level, more abstract construals. Concrete construals tend to consist of specific details or situational idiosyncrasies of events and objects (Trope & Liberman, 2000). Abstract construals, in contrast, consist of the essence or general gist of events and objects (e.g., Reyna & Brainerd, 1995). Merging these two notions, it is assumed that as events or objects become psychologically close (e.g., geographically near), people are primed to pay more attention or attribute more weight to the specifics details (e.g., behaviors) and, conversely, when events and objects become geographically distant, individuals pay more attention or attribute more weight to broad contextual features (e.g., ideology). I expected that this principle might be useful for predicting group members' judgments of dissenters who vary in geographic distance from one's group. Specifically, as distance increases between a group and a dissenter, individuals should be primed to think in more abstract construals and, as a result, group normative ideology (i.e., group norms) should be more salient to individuals and result in more negative reactions toward a dissenter. Conversely, as geographical distance between groups and dissenters decreases, individuals should be primed to focus more on specific,

context dependent details of a situation and, as a result, group norms should be less salient to individuals and result in more neutral reactions toward a dissenter.

Individual Differences in Response to Dissent: Social Dominance

Importantly, individuals do not respond uniformly to dissenting ingroup members. Some individuals are more accepting of social group norm violations than other individuals. One possible predictor of individuals' attitudes toward dissenters concerns views of social dominance.

At the group level, humans show a strong tendency to organize their world according to social hierarchies (Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006). Social dominance theory posits that individuals promote ideologies that tout the superiority of one group over another in order to minimize group conflict (Sidanius, Pratto, Martin & Stallworth, 1991). For instance, anti-Black racism manifests itself through institutionalized forms of discrimination involving “banks, public transit authorities, schools, churches, marriage laws, and the penal system” (Sidanius, et al., 1991) in order to justify the unequal allocation of social goods. These hierarchy-enhancing ideologies, referred to as legitimizing myths, become ingrained in social institutions and perpetuate group differences. It is important to note that there are also hierarchy-attenuating legitimizing myths. Hierarchy-attenuating myths promote more inclusive and egalitarian values, such as those put forth in the American constitution. Members of groups maintain social inequality through the adoption or rejection of these myths. Because of the distinction between these ideologies, Pratto and colleagues argue that individuals differ in the extent to which they engage and agree with hierarchical beliefs (social dominance orientation; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994).

Social Dominance Orientation

Social dominance orientation (SDO) is a personality trait that encapsulates the extent to which individuals' prefer in-group superiority over seemingly inferior outgroups. SDO represents an intergroup attitude, in that it encompasses people's

preferences for either hierarchical or egalitarian intergroup relations (Pratto et al., 1994). According to the theory, those individuals who are higher on SDO show a strong inclination toward hierarchical-enhancing ideologies; whereas those individuals who score lower on SDO tend to adopt hierarchical-attenuating ideologies. Individuals' preferences for these ideologies predict the policies and social roles that they adopt. For example, individuals who are more socially dominant-oriented tend to be conservative (Sidanius & Pratto, 1993), oppose affirmative action, and exhibit higher rates of ethnocentrism (Pratto, et al., 1994). With regard to the current study, SDO could moderate group reactions toward dissenters. Specifically, those high in SDO should place more emphasis on the group and be more likely to negatively react toward the dissenter.

Contextual Influences on SDO

Most contemporary social psychologists view personality as an unstable characteristic influenced by the different contexts humans experience (person x situation; Cervone & Shoda, 1999; Mischel & Shoda, 1995,1998,1999). Only recently have SDO researchers adopted this notion. Prior to the 2000s, researchers operationalized SDO as a stable characteristic unchanged by varying environmental influences. However, SDO in its original form was too simplistic to explain complex intergroup attitudes. Recent research has adopted the person x situation approach to elucidate contextual factors that influence the power of SDO on intergroup relations, such as saliency of outgroup (Lehmiller & Schmitt, 2007), higher rates of intergroup contact (Hodson, 2008), and economical status of outgroups (Cohrs & Stelzl, 2010). Could something as simple as geographical distance shift the extent to which those low and high on SDO make social judgments? The current study examined the extent to which geographical distance influenced those high and low in SDO and their responses toward a dissenter. As geographical distance between group members and a dissenter increases, group members

should adopt a more abstract mindset. An abstract mindset should, in turn, prime individuals to focus more strongly on their ideology (group norms and SDO) and therefore, behave more negatively toward the dissenter.

The Present Study

Dissent research has identified numerous contextual factors that affect the likelihood that individuals will engage in dissent with ingroup members. To a lesser extent, research has also identified several contextual factors that impact groups' response toward dissenters. However, one contextual variable that has yet to be examined is geographical distance. The current study adopted a construal level theory approach in examining the role of geographical distance on group members' perceptions of a dissenter. Specifically, these perceptions were operationalized into three categories: participants' level of blame attributed toward the dissenter for a poor outcome, participants' likelihood to reprimand the dissenter for a poor outcome, and participants' perceptions of how harmful the dissenter's behavior was toward the group.

With respect to participants' attribution of blame, I hypothesize:

- 1) *As geographical distance increases between participants and the target, individuals will place more blame on the dissenting group member compared to the conforming group member.*
- 2) *When the target is faraway, individuals high on SDO as compared to low on SDO should blame the dissenting group member more than the conforming group member. There should be no difference in blame in the near condition.*

With respect to participants' likelihood to reprimand, I hypothesize:

- 1) *As geographical distance increases between participants and the target, individuals will reprimand the dissenter more compared to the conforming target.*
- 2) *When the target is faraway, individuals high on SDO as compared to low on SDO will reprimand the dissenter more than the conforming target.*

There should be no difference in participants' likelihood to reprimand in the near condition.

With respect to group's perceptions of harm, I hypothesize:

- 1) *As geographical distance increases, individuals will perceive more harm as a result of the dissenter's behavior compared to the conformist.*
- 2) *When the target is faraway, individuals high on SDO will perceive more harm from the dissenter's actions compared to the conformist's actions. There should be no difference in perceptions of harm in the near condition.*

To study the effects of geographic distance on perceptions of dissenters, participants read a vignette, which introduced them to a target who either (a) conformed to or dissented from the participants' ingroup (i.e., behaved counter to, or consistent, with group norms) and (b) was geographically near or far (i.e., either in Austin or Philadelphia) from the participant. Participants then answered several items assessing blame toward the target, likelihood to reprimand the target, and perceptions of harming the group as a result of the target's behavior. Finally, participants answered an eight-item SDO scale (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

Method

Participants

Participants were 128 college students recruited on and around the University of Texas at Austin campus. Twenty-nine subjects were excluded from analyses for failing the manipulation check. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 45 ($M = 19.71$, $SD = 4.493$). The sample was roughly even with regards to gender (62 females).

Procedure

Participants were approached on or around the University of Texas at Austin campus by one of two trained research assistants. Participants were asked if they would like to participate in a short study. After providing consent, participants completed one of two priming conditions designed to create ingroup norms. The priming conditions induced either a cooperative or competitive mindset (see below for a detailed explanation). Participants were then instructed to imagine that they are member of an eminent law firm. Participants were then informed that a fellow group member was either close or faraway (Austin or Philadelphia) trying to recruit recent law school graduates. Finally, participants learned that the representative recruited in a manner that contradicted or was consistent with group norms. In other words, the target behaved in a way that contradicted or was consistent with the prime. The outcome of the recruitment was held constant (i.e., the target failed at hiring a competent graduate).

Experimental Conditions

Ingroup Target: Conformist versus Dissenter

Participants were instructed to imagine that they are member of an eminent law firm. To create a group norm, I utilized a priming task to engender cooperative or competitive mindsets (Kay & Ross, 2003). Participants were told to rearrange 24 incoherent five-word strings into four-word cogent sentences. In each condition, 16 of the 24 strings contained one word that was associated with competitiveness or cooperativeness (For complete manipulation see Appendix). Next, participants read about a new employee (i.e., group member) who conformed to group norms (e.g., behaved cooperatively in the cooperative law firm) or who dissented from group norms (e.g., behaved cooperatively in the competitive law firm). For example, in the cooperative condition, participants read:

“Instead of promoting our firm, Erik [target] gave the student the pros and cons of both your firm as well as the firms that offered the student a job”

In the competitive condition, participants read:

“Instead of giving the student the pros and cons of all the firms, Erik highlighted only the positive attributes of your firm while at the same time denigrating other firms from which the student has offers.”

Geographical Distance: Near versus Far

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions describing the geographical distance of the dissenter from the group: near or far. In the *near* condition, participants were informed that the dissenter was currently in the city in which the

participant was located (i.e., Austin, Texas). In the *far* condition, participants were informed that the dissenter was in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The distant location was chosen as it was objectively far (roughly 1600 miles) from Austin, Texas.

Dependent Measures

Evaluation of Dissenter. Immediately following the vignette, participants answered two items that assessed the extent to which participants blamed the target for the bad outcome. Item one asked “How responsible was Erik for the poor outcome?” The item was attached to a scale ranging from 1 (not at all responsible) to 7 (very responsible). Next, participants answered the following question, “How much was Erik to blame for the poor outcome?” This item was attached to a scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). Responses to these items produced a significant reliability score (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .79$), and thus, averaged to form a blame composite index.

Behavior toward Dissenter. Participants also answered two items that assessed the degree to which they would reprimand the target for poor performance. Item one asked, “How likely would you be to reprimand Erik?” The item was attached to a scale ranging from 1 (not at all likely) to 7 (very likely). Next, participants answered the following question, “How likely would you be to fire Erik?” This item was attached to a scale ranging from 1 (not at all likely) to 7 (very likely). Responses to these items produced a significant reliability score (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .72$) and thus, averaged to form a reprimand composite index.

Perceptions of Group Harm. Participants answered two items that assessed the extent to which they believed the target’s actions harmed the group. The first item asked,

“To what extent do you think Erik’s approach negatively impacted your firm?” Item two asked, “To what extent do you think Erik’s approach hurt your firm’s success?” Items were scored using a scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). Both items were combined to make one composite (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .87$).

Individual Difference Measure

Social dominance orientation. Social dominance orientation (SDO) was measured using the eight-item scale created by Sidanius and Pratto (1999). The scale included items such as, “Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups,” “It’s OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others,” and “To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups.” Items utilized a 7-point scale with anchors ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Items were then averaged so that higher scores represented higher levels of SDO.

Results

Analytic Overview

I used multiple regression analyses to analyze the degree to which the target individual's geographical distance from the group (near vs. far), and target's behavior (conform vs. dissent), and participants' social dominance orientation (high vs. low SDO) influenced participants' (a) evaluations of the target, (b) likelihood to punish the target for poor performance, and (c) perception of group harm caused by the target's behavior.

Evaluations of Dissenters

Blame. To test whether individuals differed in their tendency to blame the target as a function of distance, target's behavior, and SDO, I entered target distance (near vs. far), target behavior (conform vs. dissent), SDO (mean-centered), and the products of these variables as predictors of target evaluation.

A significant main effect of distance emerged ($\beta = .26, p < .05$). As distance between the target and participants increased, the more likely individuals were to evaluate the target negatively, which is consistent with research suggesting individuals rates more psychologically distal others more negatively than psychologically close others (Henderson et al., 2006).

Results indicated no significant main effect of target behavior ($\beta = -.09, p = .50$) or SDO ($\beta = .07, p = .50$) and no significant interaction between target distance and target behavior ($\beta = .05, p = .71$), SDO and distance ($\beta = .09, p = .68$), SDO and target's behavior ($\beta = .11, p = .63$), or the three-way interaction of SDO, distance, and the target's behavior ($\beta = -.624, p = .180$).

Reprimand. To test whether individuals differed in their tendency to reprimand the target as a function of distance, dissent, and SDO, I entered distance, target behavior, and SDO, and the products of these variables as predictors of participants' likelihood to

punish or reprimand the target. Results revealed no significant main effects for SDO, target behavior, or distance ($\beta = -.031, p = .953$; $\beta = -.021, p = .882$; $\beta = .195, p = .159$, respectively). Additionally, there was not a significant interaction between distance and target's behavior ($\beta = .089, p = .519$).

A marginally significant interaction between SDO and distance emerged ($\beta = 1.440, p = .073$). However, this finding is subsumed in the significant three-way interaction among SDO, target behavior, and distance ($\beta = -.939, p = .048$; see Figures 1 and 2). As depicted in Figure 1, in the far condition, there was a significant difference between likelihood to reprimand as a function of dissent and SDO, $t(51) = -2.038, p = .047$, indicating that in the conform condition, those high on SDO are more likely to reprimand the confirming target than those low on SDO. In the dissent condition, however, there is no difference between those high and low on SDO and the likelihood to reprimand the dissenter. As evidenced in Figure 2, in the near condition there was no significant change in likelihood to reprimand as function of the target's behavior and level of SDO, $t(72) = .538, p = .592$.

Perceptions of Group Harm. Finally, I entered target distance (near vs. far), target behavior (conform vs., dissent), SDO, and the products of these variables as predictors of participants' perception of group harm as a result of the target's behavior. A marginal main effect of target distance emerged ($\beta = .280, p = .061$), indicating that people reported a greater perception of group harm when the target was farther away as compared to nearby. Main effects for target behavior and SDO were not significant ($\beta = -.052, p = .728$, $\beta = -.570, p = .319$, respectively) nor were the interactions between SDO and target behavior ($\beta = .374, p = .262$) and distance and target behavior ($\beta = -.033, p = .826$).

The interaction between SDO and distance was significant ($\beta = 2.098, p = .016$). However, the interaction between SDO and distance was subsumed by a significant three-way interaction among SDO, distance, and target behavior ($\beta = -1.179, p = .021$). In the far condition, participants high on SDO compared to those low on SDO perceived the target as more harmful to the group when he conformed to group norms, $t(51) = -.805, p = .024$ (see Figure 3). Perceptions did not differ as a function of SDO in the dissent condition. In the near condition, those high and low on SDO did not differ in their perceptions of group harm in either the confirming or dissent conditions, $t(72) = .374, p = .291$ (see Figure 4).

Alternative Analysis

Next, I conducted an alternative analysis where I regressed distance and the individual components of the target behavior variable (prime [competitive vs. cooperative] x target's behavior in the negotiation [competitive vs. cooperative]) as well as the products of these variables on the previous dependent variables (blame, reprimand, and perception of group harm).

Blame. To test whether individuals differed in their blame evaluations of the target as a function of distance, prime, and target's negotiation behavior, I entered distance, prime, and target's negotiation behavior and the products of these variables as predictors of target evaluation.

Results indicated a significant main effect of distance ($\beta = .261, p < .05$) and target's negotiation behavior ($\beta = .396, p < .01$), indicating that as distance increased between the group and the target, the participants were more likely to place more blame on the target. Further, individuals were more likely to place blame on the target when he was behaving more competitively than cooperative. However, my findings yielded a non-significant main effect of the prime ($\beta = .015, p = .909$).

No significant interactions between prime and distance ($\beta = .047, p = .718$), prime and target's negotiation behavior ($\beta = .035, p = .786$), or distance and target's negotiation behavior ($\beta = -.014, p = .913$) emerged. Further, the findings yielded a non-significant three-way interaction among distance, prime, and target's negotiation behavior ($\beta = -.082, p = .528$).

Reprimand. To test whether individuals' decision to reprimand the target varied as a function of distance, prime, and target's negotiation behavior, I entered these variables as well as their products as predictors of participants' likelihood to reprimand the target.

My analysis revealed a significant main effect of target's negotiation behavior ($\beta = .548, p < .001$), indicating that individuals were more likely to punish the target when he was behaving competitively compared to cooperatively. However, no significant main effects of prime ($\beta = .056, p = .649$) or distance ($\beta = .147, p = .238$) emerged.

Additionally, results indicated no significant interaction between prime and distance ($\beta = .073, p = .564$), prime and target's negotiation behavior ($\beta = .096, p = .440$), distance and target's negotiation behavior ($\beta = -.042, p = .737$)

Finally, results yielded a non-significant three-way interaction among distance, prime, and target's negotiation behavior ($\beta = -.132, p = .297$).

Perceptions of Group Harm. To test whether individuals varied in their perception of group harm as a function of the distance, prime, and target's negotiation behavior, I entered distance, prime, target's negotiation behavior and the products of these variables as predictors of participants' perceptions of group harm.

My analysis yielded a significant main effect of target's negotiation behavior ($\beta = .712, p < .001$), in that individuals were more likely to perceive the target's actions as harmful to the group when he behaved more competitively rather than cooperatively.

However, no significant main effects of prime ($\beta = -.117, p = .353$) or distance ($\beta = .224, p = .094$) emerged.

Additionally, results indicated no significant interaction between prime and distance ($\beta = .006, p = .966$) prime and target's negotiation behavior ($\beta = .058, p = .649$), or distance and target's negotiation behavior ($\beta = -.150, p = .244$).

And finally, results indicated no significant three-way interaction among distance, prime, and target's negotiation behavior ($\beta = .036, p = .783$).

Discussion

From social progress to war, dissent can affect change: either for the better or worse. The primary purpose of the current study was to examine the role of geographical distance in shaping group members' perceptions of dissenters. A secondary goal was to examine whether individual differences in social dominance orientation moderated individuals' responses to dissenters. Research on group perceptions of dissenters is sparse and research on contextual factors that influence group reactions to dissenters is virtually non-existent. Thus, the current study is the first to examine both the role of geographical distance on dissent in general as well as group reactions toward dissenters. Furthermore, the current study is the first to test geographical distance influence on SDO. Adopting a construal level approach to psychological distance (i.e., geographical distance), I hypothesized that geographical distance would exacerbate negative reactions toward a group member who dissented from—rather than conformed to—group norms. Further, I predicted levels of social dominance orientation would moderate group reactions, in that those who are more social dominance-oriented would have more negative reactions toward the dissenter when he is faraway compared to nearby. The results from the current study partially support the original hypotheses and also elucidate several possible future lines of research.

I first examined the extent to which participants attributed blame to the target when he dissented from or conformed to group norms as a function of whether he was either close by or faraway from participants. The data did not confirm my hypotheses; however, the result indicated a significant effect of distance on group evaluations of distal targets, participants placed more blame on the target, regardless of his behavior (i.e., conformity vs. dissent), when he was faraway compared to nearby. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting individuals ascribe negative evaluations to

geographically distal others (Henderson, et al., 2006). Although the finding did not support my main hypotheses, it does provide converging evidence that geographical distance influence individuals' social judgments (Trope & Liberman, 2010; Henderson et al., 2006; Henderson & Wakslak, 2010).

Through what mechanism does geographical distance affect group members' evaluations (i.e., attribution of blame) of the target? As discussed earlier, construal level theory (Trope & Liberman, 2010) posits that as geographical distance increases, abstract mindsets are primed, which focus the individual's attention to broader, situational-independent information. Therefore, much like the correspondence bias (Gilbert & Malone, 1995), group members may be less likely to take into account external influences that may determine a person's behavior as geographical distance between the group and an ingroup member increases. Instead, group members may focus more on the behavior the ingroup member exhibited and subsequently blame him more for poor outcomes or poor performance. Future research should further investigate the role of construal level theory in judgments of distal group members. Moreover, it may be beneficial to investigate this phenomenon in a real-world context (e.g., constituents-representatives). For instance, longitudinally tracking constituent approval ratings of political representatives across varying distances as a function of the representative publicly espousing views that conform or dissent from their constituents. The use of such designs would provide evidence that the phenomenon occurs naturally in the world as well as in laboratory settings.

Next, I examined whether the presence of dissent, SDO, and distance predicted participants likelihood to suggest firing and reprimanding the target. Results revealed a three-way significant interaction among SDO, target behavior, and distance. Specifically, when the target was far away (but not near), individuals who were higher on SDO

expressed that they would be more likely to reprimand the confirming target than the dissenting target. This finding was contrary to expectations. It may be that a conforming group member who fails to achieve a goal (e.g., recruit an employee) violates high (but not low) SDO persons' expectations of group dominance. In contrast, those high and low on SDO may view dissenters as equally harmful to the group, and thus be equally likely to reprimand the dissenter. It will be important for future research to replicate this finding in different contexts.

Next, I examined how the presence of dissent, SDO, and distance influenced participants' perceptions of group harm as a result of the representative's behavior. In general, individuals were more likely to perceive the target's actions as more harmful to the group when the target was farther away compared to nearby, as evidenced by a marginally significant main effect of distance. The finding is the first to shed light on a new facet of intragroup relations. It is important to further understand how group members' perceptions are influenced, especially given the increasing complexity of group dynamics as technology has made interactions between distal group members more common. Again, take for example the constituent-representative dynamic, in early 2011, there were several attempts between Democratic and Republican congressional representatives in Washington, D.C. (geographically far for most Americans) to reach agreement regarding federal budget cuts. However, congress reached several impasses, as both parties were not willing to make concessions (Norris, 2011). As the public's frustration grew, their faith in the American government and its representatives faltered. Specifically, Americans seem to have more distrust and anger toward the government and its elected representatives than in years past (Pew Research Center, 2010). Based on our findings and previous research, could the public's negative reactions to bipartisan antics be ameliorated if representatives were perceived as geographically closer? This question

may open an interesting line of research into factors that would counteract the effect of distance.

Lastly, results yielded a significant three-way interaction among target's behavior, SDO, and distance. When the target was a faraway, individuals high on SDO tended to perceive the actions of a conforming (but not dissenting) group member as more harmful compared to those low on SDO. When the target was nearby, those low and high on SDO did not differ in their perceptions of the confirming target and the dissenting target. Much like the findings regarding individuals' likelihood to reprimand the target, it may be that a confirming target that fails to achieve a goal may violate the worldview or expectations of those who are dominance oriented. Therefore, those individuals high on SDO may perceive harm to the ingroup as a result of the confirming group member's actions, whereas those individuals low on SDO, who promote more egalitarian views, may be less likely to perceive harm to the ingroup. However, a dissenting group member may be perceived as generally harmful to the ingroup and thus those individuals who are high and low on SDO may be equally sensitive to ingroup defectors.

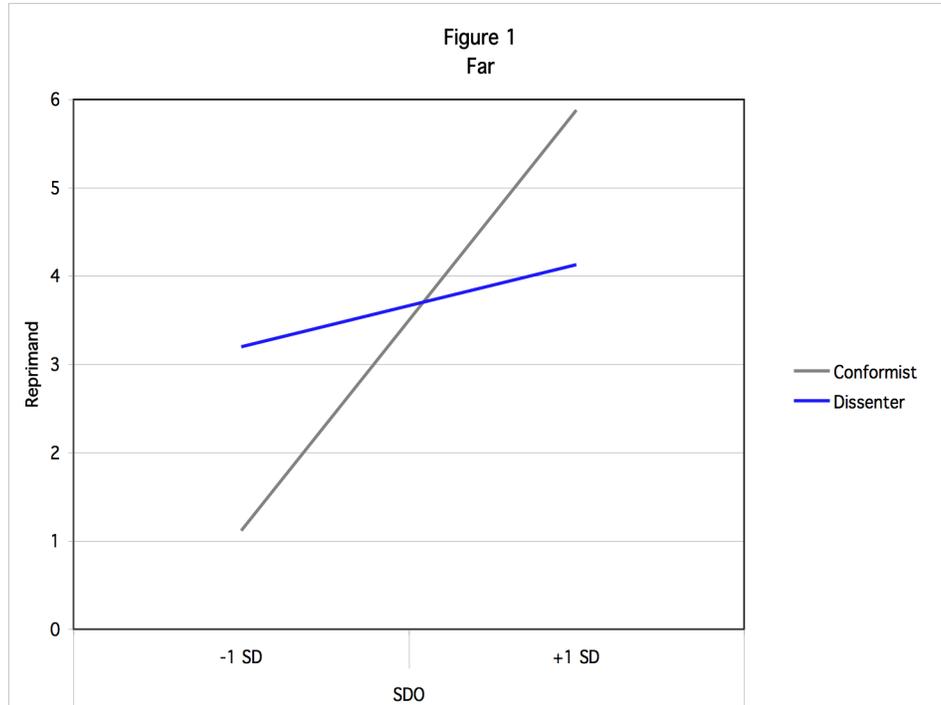
Additionally, results from my alternative analysis revealed a significant main effect of distance on participants' likelihood to place blame on the target. Participants placed more blame on the target when he was faraway compared to nearby, which is consistent with the findings from my first analysis. Interestingly, there were main effects of target's behavior on participants' likelihood to blame and reprimand the target as well as participant's perception of group harm. Participants placed more blame, more support to reprimand, and perceived the target's behavior as more harmful to the group when the target behaved competitively compared to cooperatively. These findings provide an interesting perspective to recent research noting the benefit of being more competitive. Judge and colleagues found that disagreeable men earned a higher income than their

more cooperative male peers (Judge, Livingston, & Hurst, 2011). Thus, it may be that more disagreeable (i.e., competitive) men earn more, but, utilizing the current findings, these individuals' competitive behavior may put them at risk for negative repercussions (e.g., termination) from their companies (i.e., group) following poor performance.

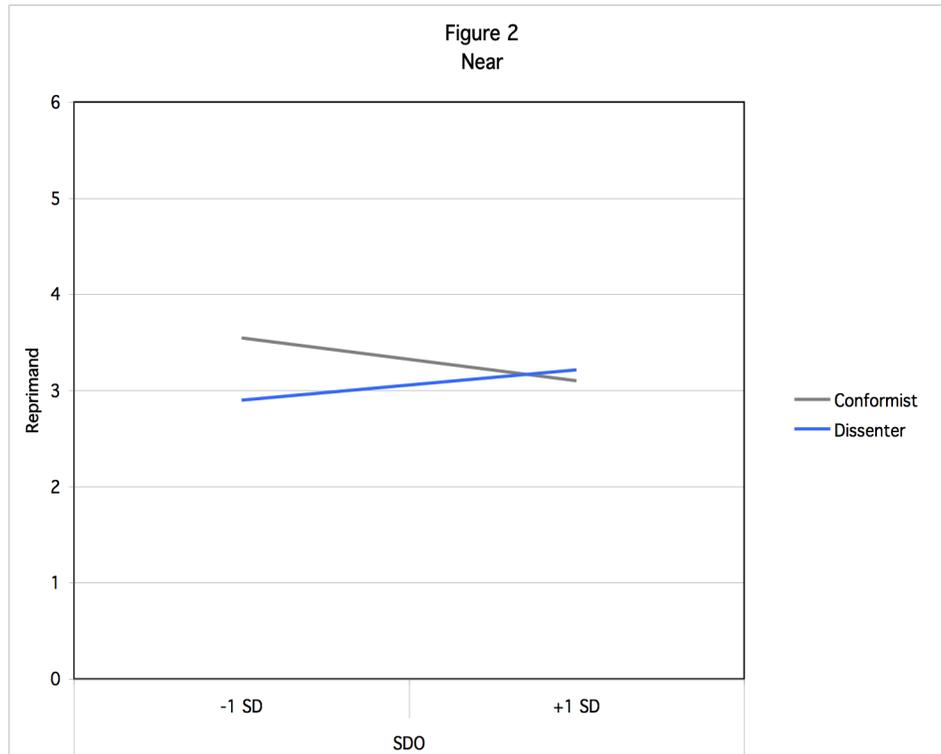
The present study has limitations that are important to note and that may account for the lack of anticipated results. First, the data was collected on a volunteer basis on the University of Texas campus. Participants were given no incentive (money, food, or class credit), so it may be that they were not intrinsically or extrinsically motivated to complete the study. Therefore, they may have not paid attention to the task.

Second, it may be that the prime did not engender group norms. Priming is considered to activate social constructs for a person outside of his/her conscious awareness that spill over to influence his/her behavior in unrelated tasks (Higgins, Rholes, & Jones, 1977). However, much like the researchers who use priming to activate "goals," (Capa, Cleeremans, Bustin, Bouquet, & Hansenne, 2011; Kesek, Cunningham, Packer, Zelazo, 2011) I worked under the assumption that priming could activate more abstract and personally embedded concepts such as social norms. Unfortunately, I did not test whether or not these norms were actually accepted by participants. In order to fix this issue, future research could benefit by experimentally manipulating norms in a group or conducting research using real-world groups that very clearly harbor and value certain norms (e.g., Google's relaxed employer-employee relationship). Enron's social norms of thus, the prime used in the current study may have only biased participants' perception of the target depending on their condition (cooperative vs. competitive) and not actually instilled a group norm. Nonetheless, the results suggest that the study of geographical distance may provide useful insights into the responses of group members to dissent.

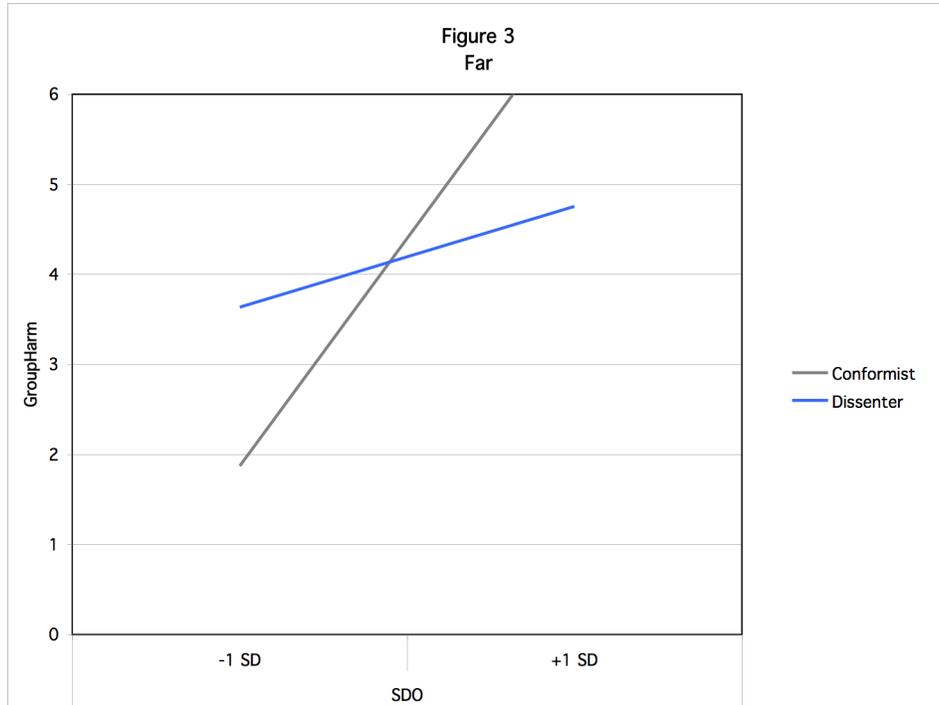
Appendix A



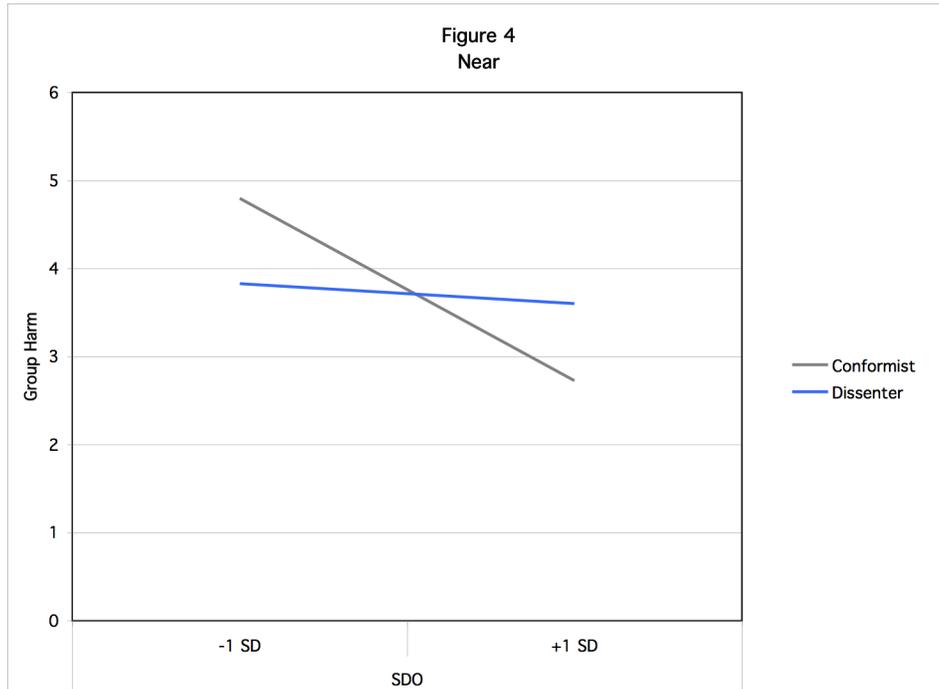
Note: Participants' likelihood to reprimand the target as a function of distance from target and social dominance orientation (1 SD below mean anchored toward lower social dominance, 1 SD above mean anchored toward higher social dominance). Scale ranged from 1 to 7 (higher numbers indicate more support).



Note: Participants' likelihood to reprimand the target as a function of distance from target and social dominance orientation (1 SD below mean anchored toward lower social dominance, 1 SD above mean anchored toward higher social dominance). Scale ranged from 1 to 7 (higher numbers indicate more support).



Note: Participants' perception of group harm as a result of the target's actions as a function of distance from target and social dominance orientation (1 SD below mean anchored toward lower social dominance, 1 SD above mean anchored toward higher social dominance). Scale ranged from 1 to 7 (higher numbers indicate more support).



Note: Participants' perception of group harm as a result of the target's actions as a function of distance from target and social dominance orientation (1 SD below mean anchored toward lower social dominance, 1 SD above mean anchored toward higher social dominance). Scale ranged from 1 to 7 (higher numbers indicate more support).

Appendix B

Cooperative Prime

INSTRUCTIONS

The following is a lexical creativity task. We've found that you can tell a lot about a person's personality and creativity by how they talk and write. In the following task, we would like you to put together statements using four of the five words provided.

1. helped friend computer she her _____
2. sky the seamless red is _____
3. harmony perfect have often they _____
4. the machine wash frequently clothes _____
5. created was start alliance the _____
6. misses Jared family his sunlight _____
7. send mailed I over it _____
8. looks house the fair nice _____
9. pact boys they a had _____
10. ball the hoop toss normally _____
11. medicine warm doctors demeanours have _____
12. though needs policeman cooperation the _____
13. somewhat prepared I was retired _____
14. light distribute turn the off _____
15. farming formed Kibbutz they a _____
16. easily paper store ripped the _____
17. ruling reasonable the was still _____
18. she agree to book had _____
19. apartment they the window cleaned _____
20. the was mutual if decision _____.

21. enough they just had was _____
22. carefully the listened or student _____
23. joined he tomorrow brotherhood the _____
24. learn children share June to _____

Competitive Prime

INSTRUCTIONS

The following is a lexical creativity task. We've found that you can tell a lot about a person's personality and creativity by how they talk and write. In the following task, we would like you to put together statements using four of the five words provided.

1. it bears sometimes aggressive are _____
2. disliked enemy his he _____
3. brown play desk the is _____
4. you gave rank three number _____
5. everyone him Bob else outwitted _____
6. long the today is book _____
7. is the office lawyer rich _____
8. ball the hoop toss normally _____
9. very be can manipulative cats _____
10. theory a paper Darwin had _____
11. helpless it hides there over _____
12. competition he well the won _____
13. weather needs power more California _____
14. sky the seamless is red _____
15. wrestler the fierce in looked _____
16. today is tournament often the _____
17. animals with are inconsiderate skunks _____
18. send I mail it over _____
19. lose money wallet your never _____
20. ongoing it battle the is _____
21. lions field scary are vicious _____

- 22. China today capitalist not is _____
- 23. big chairs they box are _____
- 24. boss office my cut-throat is _____

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