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# Injustice and Powerseeking

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*Lay perception and scientific accounts of powerseeking are rather uniformly negative, portraying powerseeking as dispositionally driven behavior with self-interested or antisocial origins. The present research suggests that powerseeking may be prosocially motivated, with situational rather than exclusively dispositional origins. Two experiments demonstrated that powerseeking motivation and powerseeking behavior are reliably motivated by the perception of injustice. Both experiments revealed that injustice-inspired powerseeking is mediated by the degree to which a situation is perceived to be wrong, violates beliefs regarding fairness, and inspires feelings of anger or upset. In addition, Experiment 2 revealed that the scope of justice concerns is relatively broad, in that powerseeking is not limited to injustice involving close victims.*

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It is wrong that a person deemed worthy to become a member [of the gerousia] should himself solicit the honour of membership. Whether he likes it or not, the man fit to hold office should be made to accept it. But at Sparta the lawgiver, in a way that is typical of his whole approach to the making of a constitution, begins by making the citizens ambitious and then uses their ambition as a means of getting people elected to the gerousia; for no one not ambitious would ask to be elected. Yet the truth is that mens' ambition and their desire to get on and make money are among the most potent causes of calculated acts of injustice.

Aristotle, *The Politics*

Aristotle is not alone in his condemnation of powerseeking. Most people regard powerseeking as a repellent personal disposition, questioning the motives of those who seek to enhance their control over others' actions or outcomes. We are cynical and distrustful of those who hold political power. We question the motives of those who seek power in public and private organizations. We regard powerseeking in everyday life as a vaguely repulsive personal trait. In short, powerseeking has a bad reputation. Indeed, distrust of powerseeking is not limited to lay perception. Scientific explanations of power-

seeking, too, are rather uniformly negative: Beginning with Aristotle, most social scientists have proffered negative accounts of powerseeking, characterizing powerseeking as dispositionally motivated behavior with distasteful origins.

The present research seeks to serve as a partial antidote to this portrayal by identifying positive bases of powerseeking. We begin by describing lay perceptions of powerseeking and outlining extant scientific characterizations of this phenomenon. Next, we suggest (a) that powerseeking may be situationally motivated as well as dispositionally motivated, and (b) that powerseeking may be motivated by prosocial concerns as well as by self-interested or antisocial concerns. In particular, we suggest that the perception of injustice leads individuals to seek power toward the goal of restoring fairness; we suggest that injustice motivates powerseeking even among relatively disinterested observers. Finally, we present the results of two experiments documenting the effects of injustice on powerseeking motivation and powerseeking behavior.

## *Powerseeking Behavior*

Consistent with interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), power is defined as the extent of an individual's control over the outcomes of another person or other persons. Control over others' outcomes can be direct or indirect—powerholders may directly govern others' outcomes, or may indirectly influence outcomes by modifying others' behavioral preferences. Also, control can be unilateral or bilateral—sometimes control over outcomes is one-sided, whereas sometimes the powerholder's control

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over others' outcomes is countered by others' control over the powerholder's outcomes. In the tradition of interdependence theory, powerseeking is defined as the extent to which an individual seeks to increase direct or indirect control over the outcomes of another person or other persons.

Powerseeking is not uniformly admired. Individuals frequently assume that powerseeking is driven by distasteful personal motives, such as blind self-interest or pathological dispositions. For example, research concerning citizen evaluations of political leaders suggests that Americans are highly cynical and distrustful of those who seek and hold positions of power (e.g., Hill, 1981; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler, Rasinski, & McGraw, 1985; Wright & Arbutnot, 1974). Scientific theories also tend to portray powerseeking in a negative light, suggesting that powerseeking reflects feelings of inferiority, excessive needs for dominance, or the expression of repressed hostility (Adler, 1956; Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Christie & Geis, 1970; Horney, 1950; Murray, 1938). These theories locate the origins of powerseeking in painful or dysfunctional early childhood experiences (e.g., rejecting parents, physical disability) or in the inability later in life to achieve affectionate and individualized interpersonal relationships (e.g., fear of abandonment, failure to receive unconditional positive regard).

Some scientific accounts of powerseeking point to both negative and positive qualities of this phenomenon. For example, McClelland (1970, 1975) suggests that powerseeking may have two faces—although the power motive may elicit desire to maximize one's own outcomes at the expense of adversaries, it can sometimes elicit desire to promote others' outcomes. Indeed, high levels of power motivation tend to be evident among individuals in prosocial professions, such as teaching and the clergy (e.g., Stewart & Winter, 1974; Winter & Barenbaum, 1985). But even in scientific accounts pointing to prosocial qualities of powerseeking, the prevailing characterization of this phenomenon tends to be negative. For example, Winter (1973) describes Don Juan as an archetype of the power motive. Thus, in both lay perception and scientific accounts, powerseeking typically is explained by reference to the personal dispositions of those who seek power; situational determinants by and large are disregarded. And the motives for powerseeking typically are portrayed in a negative light; prosocial motives by and large are disregarded.

### *Perceived Injustice and Powerseeking*

We take issue with the prevailing characterization of powerseeking. First, we suggest that powerseeking may be not only dispositionally motivated but also situationally motivated. Despite the pervasive tendency to regard

behavior as a reflection of personal dispositions (cf. Jones, 1990; Jones & Nisbett, 1972), it seems clear that behavioral preferences are also governed by the structure of interdependence situations per se, including situational variables such as dyad-specific needs, group structure, or broad societal considerations (cf. Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Granted, there may be situation by disposition interactions—specific situations may elicit greater powerseeking among some individuals than others (e.g., power-relevant situations may activate power striving among individuals with strong power motives). Unfortunately, research to date has focused primarily on dispositionally based motives for powerseeking, largely disregarding possible situationally based motives.

Second, we suggest that powerseeking may be motivated not only by self-centered or antisocial concerns but also by prosocial concerns. We take issue with a wholly rational characterization of human nature—the view that behavior is governed by the blind pursuit of direct self-interest. And we take issue with a wholly irrational characterization of human nature—the view that behavior is governed by such indirect and self-protective causes as unresolved personal conflicts or desire to maintain high self-esteem. Instead, we suggest that the underpinnings of human behavior are varied. Behavioral preferences sometimes are governed by direct self-interest (MaxOwn) or by antisocial goals such as desire to defeat others (MaxRel); behavioral preferences sometimes are governed by prosocial goals such as desire to maximize joint outcomes (MaxJoint) or desire to promote others' well-being (MaxOther; cf. Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; McClintock, 1972; Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996).

Specifically, in the present work we suggest that individuals frequently seek power to maintain or restore justice. Justice is broadly defined, referring to the degree to which a situation is perceived to be fair with regard to the distribution of outcomes, the procedure by which outcomes are distributed, or both (cf. Reis, 1986; Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1976). Support for this assertion derives from two sources. First, and as noted earlier, powerseeking may have two faces—for example, strong power motivation sometimes is associated with tendencies to help the needy (e.g., Hirschowitz, 1987; Stewart & Winter, 1974). Although this body of work emphasizes dispositional rather than situational motives, it does suggest that powerseeking may sometimes be motivated by prosocial concerns.

Second, a sizeable body of research demonstrates that individuals are concerned about justice, and will help deserving others even when it is not in their immediate self-interest to do so (for reviews, see Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler, Boeckmann, Smith, & Huo, 1997): (a) justice issues shape interpersonal perception, prejudice, and

political attitudes (e.g., Lerner, 1980; Lipkus & Siegler, 1993; Tyler, 1990; Tyler et al., 1985); (b) perceived injustice is associated with feelings of anger, envy, righteous indignation, depression, and self-esteem (e.g., Hafer & Olson, 1993; Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987; Smith, Parrott, Ozer, & Moniz, 1994; Walker & Mann, 1987); and (c) perceived injustice affects a variety of behaviors, including inclinations to help others, tendencies to restore equitable outcomes, and willingness to surrender power to group authorities (e.g., Baker, 1974; Moorman, 1991; Schopler & Matthews, 1965; Tyler, 1990; Tyler & DeGoey, 1995). Indeed, justice considerations often override self-interest—research concerning reward allocations demonstrates that the quality of obtained outcomes frequently is less important in affecting feelings of satisfaction than the perceived fairness of the interdependence situation giving rise to those outcomes (e.g., LaTour, 1978; Lind, Kulik, Ambrose, & de Vera Park, 1993; Rusbult, Campbell, & Price, 1990). Similarly, the literature regarding helping behavior demonstrates that individuals sometimes depart from their immediate self-interest to benefit others (for reviews, see Eisenberg & Fabes, 1991; Staub, 1978). Although this body of work does not directly address powerseeking per se, it does suggest that behavior may sometimes be motivated by prosocial concerns.

Precisely how does the present work extend previous research regarding helping behavior and reactions to injustice? To answer this question, it is important to distinguish powerseeking from power acts. A power act describes action oriented toward influencing the outcomes of another person or other persons (Cartwright, 1965; Kipnis, 1972). The literature regarding helping behavior and reactions to injustice demonstrates that individuals sometimes enact behaviors that improve others' outcomes—for example, belief in a just world may cause individuals to give food to a hungry child (Lerner, 1980). In contrast, powerseeking describes attempts to increase direct or indirect control over the outcomes of another person or other persons, where control describes a relatively stable, role- or structure-based influence over others' outcomes (e.g., formal committee membership, community activism, political office). We suggest not only that (a) individuals frequently behave in a just or helpful manner, but also that (b) individuals frequently react to injustice by attempting to increase their control over unjust situations. It seems particularly appropriate to examine powerseeking per se, given that both lay and scientific characterizations tend to portray powerseeking as dispositionally driven behavior that is motivated by self-interested or antisocial concerns.

Precisely why does injustice motivate powerseeking—what is the immediate trigger by which injustice is

argued to energize powerseeking? A priori, we did not seek to specify a single mediator of the injustice-powerseeking relationship. However, the present research obtains exploratory evidence regarding several potential mediators, including mediators identified in the justice literature such as anger, perceived wrong, and violated beliefs (e.g., Lerner, 1980; Rawls, 1971; Tyler et al., 1997), as well as mediators identified in the helping literature, such as empathy and negative state relief (e.g., Batson, 1987; Cialdini & Kenrick, 1976).

### *Hypotheses and Overview of Research*

We conducted two experiments to determine whether injustice inspires powerseeking. In both experiments, participants were randomly assigned to a situation designed to appear just or unjust. Hypothesis 1 predicted that in comparison to just circumstances, unjust circumstances would yield enhanced powerseeking motivation or increased desire to control the situation. Hypothesis 2 predicted that in comparison to just circumstances, unjust circumstances would yield enhanced powerseeking behavior or actual attempts to increase control over the situation. Both experiments also examined possible mediators of the link between injustice and powerseeking. Hypothesis 3 predicted that the association of injustice with powerseeking would be mediated by internal representations of injustice such as anger, perceived wrong, and violated beliefs.

In addition, in light of our assumption that injustice inspires powerseeking even among relatively disinterested observers (i.e., persons whose self-interest is not directly implicated), we examined the generalizability of our findings by exploring whether people will respond to the plight of victims who in many respects are quite remote from themselves. Toward this goal, Experiment 2 included a manipulation of victim closeness, defined as the degree of victim similarity to the self. We anticipated that the scope of justice concerns would be relatively broad, and that the impact of injustice on powerseeking would not be seriously moderated by degree of disinterest.

### EXPERIMENT 1

Experiment 1 was designed to test the proposed link between perceived injustice and powerseeking. We predicted that in comparison to individuals who were exposed to just circumstances, individuals who were exposed to unjust circumstances would exhibit greater powerseeking motivation and greater powerseeking behavior (Hypotheses 1 and 2). That is, we anticipated that individuals exposed to an unjust situation would seek to increase their power so as to rectify the injustice. In addition, we predicted that the association of injustice with powerseeking would be significantly mediated

by justice considerations such as perceived wrong (Hypothesis 3).

### Method

**Participants.** There were 87 undergraduates (48 women, 39 men) who volunteered to participate in the experiment in partial fulfillment of the requirements for introductory psychology courses at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Participants were recruited in groups ranging in size from 6 to 10 individuals. Within each group, participants were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions, with approximately equal proportions of women and men in each condition.

**Procedure.** It was important to develop a procedure that was suitable for our participants, including the following: (a) a dilemma with which our participants have considerable experience, and about which they hold relatively predictable and well-developed opinions; (b) a believable injustice manipulation involving just versus unjust conditions that participants reliably experience as fair versus unfair (irrespective of how those conditions might be evaluated by nonparticipants); and (c) a means of measuring powerseeking that is valid and believable. Based on pretesting, we developed a procedure centering on the assignment of course grades.

The experimenter explained that the study concerned student opinions regarding a recent grading dilemma at the university. Participants were told that during the previous semester, a professor had lost students' final examinations for an undergraduate course. Scores on the final exam were to account for 50% of students' course grades. Due to ethical considerations and scheduling difficulties, it was not feasible to ask that students retake the exam.

At this point in the procedure the injustice manipulation was introduced. Participants in the just condition were told that the professor had assigned every student a score of 95% on the final examination, so as to ensure that no students' grades would be unfairly lowered as a consequence of the lost exams. This decision resulted in a final distribution of course grades composed mostly of A's and B's, with some C's. Furthermore, the experimenter explained that this procedure was consistent with policy established by the North Carolina University System. In contrast, participants in the unjust condition were told that the professor had assigned every student a score of 75% on the final examination, because this score was the average of a bell curve. This decision resulted in a final distribution of grades composed mostly of C's, with some B's and some D's. The experimenter described this procedure as inconsistent with policy established by the University System.

Participants were told that faculty members had convened to review the grading dilemma, and that they wished to obtain information about undergraduates' attitudes and recommendations regarding the dilemma. Students from the introductory psychology participant pool were appropriate for this purpose, in that the participant pool provided a convenient and unobtrusive means of assessing student opinions. A questionnaire was distributed to assess participants' attitudes and recommendations about the grading dilemma.

In devising the injustice manipulation, we assumed that on average, undergraduates would regard assigning all A's on a final examination as more fair than assigning all C's (irrespective of the "objective" fairness of such a distribution, and irrespective of how persons other than undergraduates might evaluate such an outcome). To ensure that this assumption was valid and to evaluate the effectiveness of the injustice manipulation, the questionnaire included two items to measure perceived injustice: "Please rate how just the professor's decision was" (0 = *unjust*, 9 = *just*; reverse-scored), and "Please rate how fair the professor's decision was" (0 = *unfair*, 9 = *fair*; reverse-scored).

Participants also answered questions measuring justice considerations—upset about situation, and perceived wrong: "How much does the professor's decision about administering the grades upset you?" (0 = *does not upset me*, 9 = *upsets me a lot*), and "How wrong do you feel the professor's decision was?" (0 = *not at all wrong*, 9 = *very wrong*). In addition, participants indicated the degree to which they experienced each of 15 affective reactions to injustice, 10 of which are relevant to the present research (for each item, 0 = *does not apply at all*, 9 = *applies very much*). On the basis of previous research regarding emotion prototypes (Shaver et al., 1987), we used these items to develop averaged measures of anger (angry, bothered, annoyed, aggravated, pissed, irritated; alpha = .96), shame (embarrassed, shame; alpha = .88), and positive affect (glad, good; alpha = .86).

Participants then answered three questions concerning powerseeking motivation: "How much power would you like to have to change the current situation?" (0 = *no power*, 9 = *high power*), "How much control do you wish to exert over this situation, if such an opportunity were available?" (0 = *no control*, 9 = *high control*), and "To what degree do you wish to gain the power to change the final examination grades which were administered to the students?" (0 = *do not wish to change grades*, 9 = *do wish to change grades*). The opportunity to acquire power was then introduced, using two initial measures of powerseeking behavior: "What is your level of interest in signing a petition to change the grades which were administered to the Psychology 10 students?" (0 = *no interest*, 9 = *high interest*), and "What is your level of interest in being

briefly interviewed (5 minutes) over the telephone by a faculty member reviewing the decision, so as to exert some impact on the ultimate decision?" (0 = *no interest*, 9 = *high interest*).

Participants were then informed that they had the option of joining one of two committees for the remainder of the research session. One committee was explicitly described as possessing power with respect to the grading dilemma and a second committee was described as possessing no such power. The committee with power was the Ethics in Grading Review Committee. After discussing the grading dilemma, the attitudes and recommendations of this committee would be delivered to the faculty committee, which would base its decision about how to deal with the dilemma primarily on the advice of the student committee. The committee without power was the North Carolina University System Grading Policy Committee. This committee was to discuss general grading policy in the North Carolina University System; the opinions of the committee would not be delivered to the faculty committee.

Participants then responded to two additional measures of powerseeking behavior: "Please rate your degree of interest in becoming a member of the Ethics in Grading Review Committee" (0 = *no interest*, 9 = *high interest*), and "If a chairperson was needed for the Ethics in Grading Review Committee, would you be willing to serve in that capacity?" (0 = *not willing to chair committee*, 9 = *willing to chair committee*). Parallel measures of nonpowerseeking behavior were obtained regarding the committee without power: "Please rate your degree of interest in becoming a member of the North Carolina University System Grading Policy Committee" (0 = *no interest*, 9 = *high interest*), and "If a chairperson was needed for the North Carolina University System Grading Policy Committee, would you be willing to serve in that capacity?" (0 = *not willing to chair committee*, 9 = *willing to chair committee*). Participants were also asked to explain why they would or would not like to become a member of each committee.

## Results

**Manipulation check.** To evaluate the effectiveness of the injustice manipulation, two-group analyses of variance (just vs. unjust condition) were performed on participants' responses to the two injustice manipulation checks. These analyses revealed significant main effects of injustice condition,  $F(1, 85) = 252.32$  and  $223.52$ , both  $p < .01$ . As anticipated, participants in the unjust condition perceived the professor's decision to be significantly more unjust ( $M_s = 7.59$  vs.  $1.57$ ) and more unfair ( $M_s = 7.67$  vs.  $1.98$ ) than did those in the just condition.

**Powerseeking motivation and behavior.** To evaluate the consequences of perceived injustice, two-group analyses of variance (just vs. unjust condition) were performed on the powerseeking measures. Table 1 presents mean scores for each condition and summarizes the results of these analyses. As can be seen in Table 1, in comparison to participants in the just condition, those in the unjust condition exhibited greater powerseeking motivation and behavior. All three measures of powerseeking motivation differed significantly as a function of injustice condition. In addition, three of four measures of powerseeking behavior differed significantly for the just and unjust conditions. In contrast, the just and unjust conditions did not differ with respect to nonpowerseeking behavior,  $F(1, 85) = 2.90$  and  $2.97$ , both *ns*. These findings are consistent with Hypotheses 1 and 2—individuals exposed to an unjust situation not only wished to increase their power, but they also engaged in direct action toward power enhancement.

**Mediation of the association between perceived injustice and powerseeking.** We performed mediation analyses to further examine the association of injustice with powerseeking (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Prior to performing the actual mediation analyses, it is important to note that the preconditions for assessing mediation were met. First, we performed analyses of variance to ensure that the injustice manipulation significantly influenced all potential mediators. These analyses revealed that in comparison to participants in the just condition, those in the unjust condition felt more upset about the grading dilemma,  $F(1, 85) = 97.92$ ,  $p < .01$ ; were more likely to perceive the situation as wrong,  $F(1, 85) = 188.95$ ,  $p < .01$ ; felt more angry,  $F(1, 85) = 37.46$ ,  $p < .01$ ; experienced less positive affect,  $F(1, 85) = 15.31$ ,  $p < .01$ ; and reported greater shame,  $F(1, 85) = 4.42$ ,  $p < .05$ .

To ensure that a second precondition for assessing mediation was met, we calculated correlations of each potential mediator with our measures of powerseeking. To simplify analyses (both here and for the mediation analyses presented below), we combined responses to the seven powerseeking items to form averaged measures of powerseeking motivation (three items;  $\alpha = .86$ ) and powerseeking behavior (four items;  $\alpha = .77$ ). We calculated correlations of powerseeking motivation and powerseeking behavior with each potential mediator. Upset about situation, perceived wrong, and angry emotions were significantly positively correlated with both powerseeking motivation ( $r_s = .78, .81, \text{ and } .62$ ; all  $p_s < .01$ ) and powerseeking behavior ( $r_s = .62, .64, \text{ and } .49$ ; all  $p_s < .01$ ); positive affect and shame were significantly correlated with powerseeking motivation ( $r_s = -.40$  and  $.22$ , both  $p_s < .05$ ) but not with powerseeking behavior ( $r_s = -.19$  and  $.14$ , both *ns*). Despite the weak

**TABLE 1: Mean Levels of Powerseeking Motivation and Behavior as a Function of Injustice Condition: Experiment 1**

<i>Dependent Measure</i>	<i>Just Condition</i>	<i>Unjust Condition</i>	<i>Injustice Main Effect</i>
Powerseeking Motivation:			
Desire for Power to Change Situation	3.59	7.53	58.52***
Desire for Control Over Situation	4.95	7.28	21.88***
Desire for Power to Change Grades	2.14	7.49	104.66***
Powerseeking Behavior:			
Sign Petition to Change Grades	1.75	7.67	122.03***
Interview to Express Opinions	3.84	6.70	19.52***
Serve as Committee Member, Ethics in Grading Review Committee	3.73	5.60	10.04***
Serve as Committee Chair, Ethics in Grading Review Committee	2.89	3.95	2.48

NOTE: Higher numbers reflect greater powerseeking motivation and powerseeking behavior; for all measures, the possible range was 0 to 9. Statistics listed under Injustice Main Effect are *F*s.

\*\*\*  $p < .01$ .

findings for positive affect and shame, we performed mediation analyses for all five potential mediators.

To evaluate the degree to which each potential mediator accounted for the observed association between injustice and powerseeking, we regressed our measures of powerseeking motivation and powerseeking behavior (a) separately onto injustice condition, as well as (b) separately onto five two-factor models, each of which included as predictors injustice condition and one of the five potential mediators. The results of these analyses are summarized in Table 2. In one-factor models predicting powerseeking motivation and behavior, the coefficients for injustice condition were sizeable (see values under the Injustice Condition rows labeled "Predicting criterion from injustice condition"). Moreover, in the five two-factor models predicting both powerseeking motivation and powerseeking behavior, the coefficients for perceived wrong, upset about situation, and angry emotions were significant, whereas the coefficients for positive affect and shame were not significant (see values under the Mediator rows labeled "Predicting criterion from injustice condition and mediator"; e.g., in the two-factor model predicting powerseeking motivation, the *F* for injustice condition was 0.87 and the *F* for mediator was 39.75 for perceived wrong). Thus, three of five mediators account for significant unique variance in powerseeking motivation and behavior.

Consistent with Hypothesis 3, perceived wrong, upset about situation, and angry emotions account for a portion of the variance in the link between injustice condi-

tion and powerseeking. In comparison to one-factor models including injustice condition as a sole predictor, the coefficients for injustice condition in the two-factor models were reduced: (a) in predicting powerseeking motivation, the effect of injustice condition declined from an *F* of 84.26 as a sole predictor to *F*s ranging from 37.52 to 0.87 when one of these three mediators was included; and (b) in predicting powerseeking behavior, the effect of injustice condition declined from an *F* of 41.23 as a sole predictor to *F*s ranging from 17.30 to 0.65 when one of these three mediators was included. Perceived wrong was the most powerful of the three mediators, wholly accounting for the link between injustice condition and both powerseeking motivation and powerseeking behavior. That is, in predicting both criteria, including perceived wrong as a mediator reduced the coefficient for injustice condition to nonsignificance (i.e., injustice condition *F*s = 0.87 for powerseeking motivation, and 0.65 for powerseeking behavior).<sup>1</sup>

### Discussion

Consistent with Hypotheses 1 and 2, individuals who were confronted with unjust situations exhibited greater powerseeking motivation and behavior than did individuals confronted with just situations. Findings for powerseeking motivation were significant for three of three measures, and findings for powerseeking behavior were significant for three of four measures. The injustice manipulation did not significantly influence roughly parallel measures of nonpowerseeking behavior. For example, although individuals confronted with injustice were willing to exert the effort to participate in committee activities when a committee possessed the power to rectify injustice, individuals were not willing to participate in such activities when doing so would not directly influence injustice. These findings are consistent with the claim that the perception of injustice yields enhanced desire for power and enhanced attempts to increase one's power.

Why does perceived injustice motivate powerseeking? The most promising mediators examined in Experiment 1 centered on injustice-inspired anger, feeling upset by the situation, and perceiving the situation as wrong. Consistent with Hypothesis 3, above and beyond the effects of injustice condition, each potential mediator accounted for significant variance in powerseeking motivation and behavior; all three potential mediators accounted for some portion of the association between injustice and powerseeking. Injustice-inspired anger and feeling upset by the unjust situation served as partial mediators of the injustice-powerseeking association, whereas perceiving the situation as wrong wholly mediated the injustice-powerseeking association. These findings illuminate our understanding of why injustice

**TABLE 2: Predicting Powerseeking Motivation and Behavior as a Function of Injustice Condition and Each of Five Potential Mediators: Experiment 1**

Predictor Variable(s)	Powerseeking Motivation		Powerseeking Behavior	
	Injustice Condition	Injustice Mediator	Injustice Condition	Injustice Mediator
Predicting Criterion from Injustice Condition:	84.26***		41.23**	
Predicting Criterion from Injustice Condition and Mediator:				
Perceived Wrong	0.87	39.75***	0.65	13.24***
Upset About Situation	9.07***	37.12***	4.07**	13.28***
Anger	37.52***	14.54***	17.30***	5.90**
Positive Affect	61.76***	3.21*	36.35***	0.14
Shame	76.47***	0.74	38.25***	0.03

NOTE: Table values are *F*s from regression analyses predicting powerseeking motivation and powerseeking behavior from one-factor and two-factor models.

\*  $p < .10$ . \*\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*\*  $p < .01$ .

inspires powerseeking, and warrant further investigation in future research.

Although Experiment 1 provided relatively good support for our hypotheses, a potential limitation of this study should be considered: Recall that the individuals who were treated unjustly (or justly) were described as fellow students at the participants' university. Accordingly, it could be argued that participants' attempts to rectify injustice may not have been wholly disinterested, in that they or their intimates might at some point directly benefit from their actions. Thus, it becomes important to address the scope of justice concerns, seeking to determine whether the observed findings are limited to circumstances in which the victims of injustice are close to the potential powerseeker. Although individuals may seek power so as to rectify injustices involving close others, this is not to say that injustices involving nonclose others will exert parallel effects on powerseeking. Accordingly, Experiment 2 examines the effects on powerseeking of injustice involving victims who in many respects are relatively remote from the powerseeker.

#### EXPERIMENT 2

Experiment 2 replicated Experiment 1 by determining whether individuals exposed to unjust circumstances would exhibit greater powerseeking motivation and behavior than those exposed to just circumstances (Hypotheses 1 and 2), and by determining whether the association of injustice with powerseeking is mediated by internal representations of justice such as anger, perceived wrong, or violated beliefs (Hypothesis 3). In addition, Experiment 2 sought to assess the generalizability

of these findings by exploring powerseeking in situations involving victims of varying closeness to the individual. We held the general expectation that the tendency of perceived injustice to inspire powerseeking would not be seriously moderated by victim closeness.

#### Method

**Participants.** There were 190 undergraduates (95 women, 95 men) who volunteered to participate in partial fulfillment of the requirements for introductory psychology courses at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Participants were recruited in groups ranging in size from 6 to 10 individuals. Within each group, participants were randomly assigned to one of six experimental conditions, with approximately equal proportions of women and men in each condition.

**Procedure.** As in Experiment 1, the experimenter explained that the study concerned student opinions regarding a grading dilemma. During the previous semester, a professor had lost students' final examinations. Scores on the final examination were to account for 50% of students' course grades. It was not feasible to ask that students retake the exam.

Target closeness was manipulated by describing the targets of the grading dilemma in one of three ways: In the high closeness condition, targets were described as in Experiment 1—as students who were enrolled in introductory psychology courses at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In the medium closeness condition, targets were described as students who were enrolled in electrical engineering courses at the University of Montana at Bozeman. Finally, in the low closeness condition, targets were described as students who were enrolled in electrical engineering courses at the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil.

Injustice was manipulated as in Experiment 1: Participants in the just condition were told that the professor had assigned every student a score of 95% on the final examination, so as to ensure that no student's grade would be unfairly lowered as a consequence of the lost exams. Participants were told that this procedure was consistent with the policy at the affected student's university. Participants in the unjust condition were told that the professor had assigned every student a score of 75% on the final examination, in that this score was the average of a bell curve. Participants were told that this procedure was inconsistent with the policy at the affected student's university.

As in Experiment 1, participants were told that faculty members had convened to review the dilemma. One involved faculty member was a dean in the Division of Student Affairs at the University of North Carolina. (In the moderate and low closeness conditions, this individual was described as being on sabbatical leave at the tar-

get university.) Students from the introductory psychology participant pool at the University of North Carolina were judged to be a convenient source of information regarding undergraduates' opinions. A questionnaire was distributed to assess participants' attitudes and recommendations.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the injustice manipulation, we employed the two perceived injustice items that were used in Experiment 1. To evaluate the effectiveness of the target closeness manipulation, three items measured perceived target closeness: "How similar are the students in this situation to yourself?" (0 = *no similarity*, 9 = *high similarity*), "To what degree can you relate to the students in this situation?" (0 = *cannot relate*, 9 = *can easily relate*), and "How much can you empathize with the students in this situation?" (0 = *cannot empathize*, 9 = *can easily empathize*).

Participants also answered three questions intended to measure injustice distress—upset about situation and perceived wrong were measured as in Experiment 1. We also included a measure of violated beliefs: "To what degree does the professor's decision violate your beliefs about fairness?" (0 = *does not violate*, 9 = *does violate*). Participants also indicated the degree to which they experienced each of 24 affective reactions, 18 of which are relevant to the present research (for each item, 0 = *does not apply at all*, 9 = *applies very much*). On the basis of previous research regarding emotion prototypes (Shaver et al., 1987), we used these items to develop measures of anger (e.g., angry, bothered, annoyed, aggravated, irritated;  $\alpha = .92$ ), positive affect (e.g., good, glad, happy, positive;  $\alpha = .90$ ), and negative affect (e.g., unhappy, bad, terrible, sad;  $\alpha = .85$ ); we also developed measures of compassion (e.g., compassionate, empathic, concerned;  $\alpha = .72$ ) and powerlessness (e.g., powerless, controlled;  $\alpha = .35$ ). Participants then answered the three questions concerning powerseeking motivation and the two initial measures of powerseeking behavior that were employed in Experiment 1.

Also as in Experiment 1, participants were informed that they could join either of two committees for the remainder of the session. One committee was described as possessing power with respect to the grading dilemma and a second committee was described as possessing no such power. The committee with power was the Grading Review Committee. The attitudes and recommendations of this committee would be delivered to the faculty committee, which would base its decision primarily on the advice of the student committee. The committee without power was the Grading Policy Committee. The opinions of this committee would not be delivered to the faculty committee. Participants then responded to the two additional measures of powerseeking behavior that were employed in Experiment 1. As in Experiment 1,

parallel measures of nonpowerseeking behavior were obtained regarding the committee without power. Finally, participants explained why they would or would not like to become a member of each committee.

### Results

**Manipulation checks.** To evaluate the effectiveness of the experimental manipulations, two-factor analyses of variance (just vs. unjust condition, low vs. medium vs. high target closeness) were performed on participants' responses to the manipulation checks. These analyses revealed significant main effects of injustice condition for both injustice manipulation checks,  $F(1, 184) = 522.74$  and  $415.99$ , both  $p < .01$ . As anticipated, participants in the unjust condition perceived the professor's decision to be significantly more unjust ( $M_s = 7.23$  vs.  $1.80$ ) and more unfair ( $M_s = 7.42$  vs.  $2.24$ ) than did those in the just condition.

However, the main effects of closeness condition were not significant for the closeness manipulation checks,  $F(1, 184) = 0.53, 0.08, \text{ and } 1.18$ , all *ns*. With increasing target closeness, participants did not report reliably greater target similarity ( $M_s = 5.05$  vs.  $5.46$  vs.  $5.47$ ), ease of relating to the target ( $M_s = 4.95$  vs.  $5.16$  vs.  $5.12$ ), or ability to empathize with the target ( $M_s = 6.97$  vs.  $7.11$  vs.  $7.52$ ). How should we interpret these null effects? It is possible that participants felt no more similar to other students at their university than to students at the University of Sao Paolo. Alternatively—and more plausibly, in our view—it is possible that in the absence of a baseline for judging such phenomena as similarity and ease of relating, such implicitly comparative judgments may be difficult for participants to make.

**Powerseeking motivation and behavior.** Given that the manipulation of target closeness did not significantly influence the closeness manipulation checks, we employed relatively conservative methods to discern any possible effects of target closeness. First, we employed two operational definitions of closeness, performing two-factor analyses of variance to examine the impact of injustice (just vs. unjust condition) in combination with (a) closeness as it was experimentally manipulated (low vs. medium vs. high closeness, as experimentally defined), and (b) closeness as it was subjectively experienced (low vs. medium vs. high closeness, as categorized based on a three-group split of participants' closeness judgments, the average of the three closeness manipulation checks). Second, as a stringent test of the robustness of injustice-inspired powerseeking, we performed tests of simple effects to examine the impact of injustice among victims of varying closeness, defined both as experimentally manipulated and as subjectively experienced. The results of these analyses are summarized in Table 3.

**TABLE 3: Mean Levels of Powerseeking Motivation and Behavior as a Function of Injustice Condition and Target Closeness (high, medium, low): Experiment 2**

<i>Dependent Measure</i>	<i>Just Condition</i>	<i>Unjust Condition</i>	<i>Injustice Effect</i>	<i>Closeness Effect</i>	<i>Injustice <math>\diamond</math> Closeness Interaction</i>
<b>Closeness Categorization Based on Closeness Manipulation</b>					
Powerseeking Motivation:					
Desire for Power to Change Situation	4.29	6.75	46.50***	0.82	1.10
High	4.29	7.12	24.02***		
Medium	4.81	6.50	7.16***		
Low	3.78	6.60	18.52***		
Desire for Control Over Situation	4.65	6.68	35.33***	1.89	0.43
High	5.03	7.03	11.99***		
Medium	4.90	6.53	7.34***		
Low	4.03	6.43	17.27***		
Desire for Power to Change Grades	2.47	6.73	167.91***	1.51	0.83
High	2.13	6.94	70.96***		
Medium	3.06	6.88	41.83***		
Low	2.22	6.33	58.22***		
Powerseeking Behavior:					
Sign Petition to Change Grades	2.20	7.54	292.59***	0.10	0.60
High	1.97	7.59	106.44***		
Medium	2.52	7.38	67.64***		
Low	2.13	7.67	134.47***		
Interview to Express Opinions	4.07	6.40	34.70***	0.02	0.92
High	3.71	6.65	16.82***		
Medium	4.45	6.09	6.37***		
Low	4.06	6.43	12.46***		
Serve as Committee Member, Grading Review Committee	3.66	5.41	25.63***	0.43	0.17
High	3.42	5.26	7.98***		
Medium	4.00	5.47	7.25***		
Low	3.56	5.50	6.22***		
Serve as Committee Chair, Grading Review Committee	2.97	4.09	6.85***	0.58	1.50
High	2.84	4.06	2.41		
Medium	3.77	3.94	0.05		
Low	2.31	4.30	8.30***		
<b>Closeness Categorization Based on Three-Group Split of Closeness Measure</b>					
Powerseeking Motivation:					
Desire for Power to Change Situation	4.29	6.75	50.65***	0.16	3.66**
High	3.69	7.62	33.40***		
Medium	4.58	6.29	9.95***		
Low	4.61	6.64	9.60***		
Desire for Control Over Situation	4.65	6.68	37.40***	0.06	1.72
High	4.28	7.23	18.63***		
Medium	4.90	6.33	10.28***		
Low	4.77	6.68	8.10***		
Desire for Power to Change Grades	2.47	6.73	194.96***	0.15	13.54***
High	1.25	7.88	217.40***		
Medium	3.35	6.19	35.66***		
Low	2.84	6.46	28.47***		
Powerseeking Behavior:					
Sign Petition to Change Grades	2.20	7.54	328.23***	0.04	9.42***
High	1.34	8.50	322.11***		
Medium	2.90	6.90	57.23***		
Low	2.39	7.61	77.71***		
Interview to Express Opinions	4.07	6.40	41.50***	2.36+	6.85***
High	3.66	8.08	49.83***		
Medium	4.68	5.79	3.93**		
Low	3.90	5.75	5.36**		

TABLE 3: Continued

<i>Dependent Measure</i>	<i>Just Condition</i>	<i>Unjust Condition</i>	<i>Injustice Effect</i>	<i>Closeness Effect</i>	<i>Injustice × Closeness Interaction</i>
Closeness Categorization Based on Three-Group Split of Closeness Measure					
Powerseeking Behavior:					
Serve as Committee Member, Grading Review Committee	3.66	5.41	27.28***	0.51	4.39***
High	3.06	6.31	29.03***		
Medium	4.10	5.26	5.91**		
Low	3.84	4.79	1.80		
Serve as Committee Chair, Grading Review Committee	2.97	4.09	7.42***	0.16	1.62
High	2.56	4.81	8.40***		
Medium	3.42	3.81	0.31		
Low	2.94	3.85	1.39		

NOTE: Higher numbers reflect greater powerseeking motivation and powerseeking behavior; for all measures, the possible range was 0 to 9. Statistics listed under Injustice Effect, Closeness Effect, and Injustice × Closeness Interaction are *F*s; under Injustice Effect, the *F* for each target closeness row is the test of the simple effect of injustice within that closeness condition.

\*\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*\*  $p < .01$ .

As can be seen in Table 3, in comparison to participants in the just condition, those in the unjust condition exhibited greater powerseeking motivation and behavior. The main effect of injustice was significant for all three measures of powerseeking motivation and for all four measures of powerseeking behavior. In contrast, the just and unjust conditions did not differ with respect to nonpowerseeking behavior,  $F(1, 183) = 1.47$  and  $0.16$ , both *n.s.* Thus, and consistent with Hypotheses 1 and 2, individuals exposed to injustice not only wished to increase their power, but they also engaged in direct action toward power enhancement.

What role did target closeness have on the relation between injustice and power seeking? As can be seen in Table 3, out of seven analyses examining the effects of closeness as it was experimentally manipulated (low vs. medium vs. high closeness; see analyses listed under "Closeness categorization based on closeness manipulation"), no main effects of target closeness were statistically significant ( $F$ s ranged from 0.02 to 1.89), and no interactions of closeness with injustice were significant ( $F$ s ranged from 0.17 to 1.50). In the 21 tests of the simple effects of injustice within levels of closeness as it was manipulated, 19 injustice effects were significant.

Parallel findings were observed in analyses examining the effects of closeness as it was subjectively experienced (low vs. medium vs. high closeness; see analyses listed under "Closeness categorization based on three-group split of closeness measure"). Out of seven analyses examining the effects of subjectively defined closeness, no main effects of target closeness were significant ( $F$ s ranged from 0.04 to 2.36); however, five of seven interac-

tions of closeness with injustice were significant (significant  $F$ s ranged from 3.66 to 13.54). In the 21 tests of simple effects examining the impact of injustice within levels of closeness as it was subjectively experienced, 18 injustice effects were significant. Examination of the interactions of injustice with target closeness revealed that the impact of injustice on powerseeking tended to be greater within the high target closeness condition ( $F$ s ranged from 8.40 to 322.11) than within the medium target closeness condition ( $F$ s ranged from 0.31 to 57.23) and the low target closeness condition ( $F$ s ranged from 1.39 to 77.71). At the same time, even within the low target closeness condition, 5 of 7 tests of the simple effects of injustice were significant.

*Mediation of the association between perceived injustice and powerseeking.* As in Experiment 1, we performed mediation analyses to further examine the association of injustice with powerseeking. Prior to performing actual mediation analyses, we explored whether our mediators met the necessary preconditions. First, we performed analyses of variance to ensure that the injustice manipulation significantly influenced all potential mediators. These analyses revealed that in comparison to participants in the just condition, those in the unjust condition felt more upset about the grading dilemma,  $F(1, 188) = 155.32$ ,  $p < .01$ ; were more likely to perceive the decision as wrong,  $F(1, 188) = 366.61$ ,  $p < .01$ ; reported that the situation violated their beliefs about fairness,  $F(1, 188) = 234.76$ ,  $p < .01$ ; and experienced more anger,  $F(1, 187) = 15.33$ ,  $p < .01$ , less positive affect,  $F(1, 187) = 7.58$ ,  $p < .01$ , more negative affect,  $F(1, 188) = 10.03$ ,  $p < .01$ , and more compassion,  $F(1, 188) = 6.05$ ,  $p < .02$ . However, the

injustice manipulation did not significantly affect felt powerlessness,  $F(1, 188) = 2.12, ns$ .

To ensure that a second precondition for assessing mediation was met, we calculated correlations of each potential mediator with our measures of powerseeking. To simplify analyses (both here and for the mediation analyses presented below), we combined responses to the seven powerseeking items to form averaged measures of powerseeking motivation (three items;  $\alpha = .84$ ) and powerseeking behavior (four items;  $\alpha = .79$ ). We calculated correlations of powerseeking motivation and behavior with each potential mediator. Upset about situation, perceived wrong, violated beliefs, anger, negative affect, compassion, and powerlessness were significantly positively correlated with both powerseeking motivation ( $r_s = .62, .65, .63, .46, .30, .41, \text{ and } .38$ ; all  $p_s < .01$ ) and powerseeking behavior ( $r_s = .63, .66, .59, .34, .20, .34, \text{ and } .27$ ; all  $p_s < .01$ ). Positive affect was significantly correlated with powerseeking motivation ( $r = -.16, p < .03$ ) but not with powerseeking behavior ( $r = -.08, ns$ ). Despite the weak findings for positive affect, we performed mediation analyses for all eight potential mediators.

To evaluate the degree to which each potential mediator accounted for the observed association between injustice and powerseeking, we regressed our measures of powerseeking motivation and powerseeking behavior (a) separately onto injustice condition, as well as (b) separately onto eight two-factor models, each of which included as predictors injustice condition and one of the eight potential mediators. The results of these analyses are summarized in Table 4. In one-factor models predicting powerseeking motivation and behavior, the coefficients for injustice condition were sizeable (see values under the Injustice Condition rows labeled "Predicting criterion from injustice condition"). Moreover, in the eight two-factor models predicting powerseeking motivation and behavior, the coefficients for perceived wrong, violated beliefs, upset about situation, compassion, and powerlessness were significant; only one coefficient was significant for negative affect, and neither coefficient was significant for positive affect (see values under the Mediator rows under "Predicting criterion from injustice condition and mediator"; e.g., in the two-factor model predicting powerseeking motivation, the  $F$  for injustice condition was 5.16 and the  $F$  for mediator was 25.17 for perceived wrong). Thus, six of eight mediators account for significant unique variance in powerseeking motivation and behavior.

Consistent with Hypothesis 3, perceived wrong, violated beliefs, upset about situation, and anger account for a portion of the variance in the link between injustice condition and both powerseeking motivation and powerseeking behavior. In comparison to one-factor models

including injustice condition as a sole predictor, the coefficients for injustice condition in the two-factor models were reduced: (a) in predicting powerseeking motivation, the effect of injustice condition declined from an  $F$  of 105.43 as a sole predictor to  $F$ s ranging from 81.04 to 5.16 when one of these four mediators was included; and (b) in predicting powerseeking behavior, the effect of injustice condition declined from an  $F$  of 88.02 as a sole predictor to  $F$ s ranging from 69.30 to 1.07 when one of these four mediators was included. There was also some evidence for mediation by negative affect, compassion, and powerlessness—when one of these mediators was included: (a) in predicting motivation, the injustice effect declined from 105.43 to  $F$ s between 98.85 and 91.19; and (b) in predicting behavior, the injustice effect declined from 88.02 to  $F$ s between 79.69 and 79.07. As in Experiment 1, perceived wrong was the most powerful of the mediators, largely accounting for the link between injustice condition and powerseeking motivation, and wholly mediating the link between injustice condition and powerseeking behavior. That is, in predicting both criteria, including perceived wrong as a mediator substantially reduced the coefficient for injustice condition (i.e., injustice condition  $F$ s = 5.16 for powerseeking motivation, and 1.07 for powerseeking behavior).<sup>2</sup>

### Discussion

As in Experiment 1, Experiment 2 revealed support for Hypotheses 1 and 2, demonstrating that individuals confronted with unjust circumstances exhibit greater powerseeking motivation and behavior than do individuals confronted with just circumstances. The injustice manipulation significantly influenced all three measures of powerseeking motivation and all four measures of powerseeking behavior. Moreover, the injustice manipulation did not significantly influence roughly parallel measures of nonpowerseeking behavior. These findings are consistent with the claim that perceived injustice yields enhanced desire for power and enhanced attempts to increase one's power.

Is the effect of injustice on powerseeking moderated by victim closeness? Out of 14 analyses examining the effects of closeness as it was either experimentally manipulated or subjectively experienced, no main effects of target closeness were significant. In the 42 tests of the simple effects of injustice within levels of closeness as it was manipulated or subjectively experienced, 37 injustice effects were significant. In analyses examining closeness as it was subjectively experienced, five of seven interactions of closeness with injustice were significant. Tests of simple effects tended to reveal somewhat stronger effects of injustice within the high target closeness condition than within the medium or low target

**TABLE 4: Predicting Powerseeking Motivation and Behavior as a Function of Injustice Condition and Each of Eight Potential Mediators: Experiment 2**

Predictor Variable(s)	Powerseeking Motivation		Powerseeking Behavior	
	Injustice Condition	Injustice Mediator	Injustice Condition	Injustice Mediator
Predicting Criterion from Injustice Condition:	105.43**		88.02**	
Predicting Criterion from Injustice Condition and Mediator:				
Perceived Wrong	5.16**	25.17***	1.07	37.14***
Violated Beliefs	12.87***	24.28***	10.58***	20.00***
Upset About Situation	20.00***	30.17***	12.45***	36.69***
Anger	81.04***	32.72***	69.30***	11.12***
Negative Affect	91.19***	8.27***	79.07***	1.49
Compassion	98.43***	33.27***	79.69***	18.85***
Powerlessness	98.85***	27.91***	79.49***	8.61***
Positive Affect	98.29***	0.43	85.13***	0.28

NOTE: Table values are *F*s from regression analyses predicting powerseeking motivation and powerseeking behavior from one-factor and two-factor models.

\*\*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*  $p < .05$ .

closeness conditions, suggesting that injustice may be a particularly powerful motivator of powerseeking when the victims of injustice are perceived to be similar to the self. However, given that the closeness manipulation checks did not demonstrate that the closeness manipulation was effective, we cannot make conclusive statements about target closeness as a moderator of injustice-inspired powerseeking.

Precisely why does perceived injustice motivate powerseeking? The four most promising mediators examined in Experiment 2 were perceived wrong, violated beliefs, upset about the situation, and anger. There was also some evidence of possible mediation by negative affect, compassion, and powerlessness. Each mediator accounted for significant variance in powerseeking motivation and behavior, and inclusion of each mediator in the prediction of powerseeking yielded reductions in the effects of injustice. The most powerful mediator was perceived wrong, which largely mediated the effect of injustice on powerseeking motivation and wholly mediated the effect of injustice on powerseeking behavior. These findings are compatible with Hypothesis 3, and enhance our understanding of why inequity inspires powerseeking.

#### GENERAL DISCUSSION

##### *Perceived Injustice and Powerseeking*

As early as Aristotle, social scientists and lay persons alike have tended to develop negative interpretations of

powerseeking. Powerseeking typically is explained by reference to the personal traits of those who seek power. The motives for powerseeking typically are characterized as a reflection of impaired psychological functioning or the pursuit of self-interest. We have suggested that this is a limited account of the phenomenon of powerseeking, arguing that (a) powerseeking may be situationally as well as dispositionally governed, and (b) powerseeking may be motivated by prosocial motives as well as by self-interested or antisocial motives.

Two experiments revealed good support for our predictions. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, in comparison to individuals who were confronted with just situations, those confronted with injustice exhibited greater powerseeking motivation—they wished to acquire power that afforded the means to rectify injustice (this effect was significant for six of six measures across the two experiments). Consistent with Hypothesis 2, individuals confronted with injustice actually engaged in greater powerseeking behavior, agreeing to sign petitions, serve on committees, or chair committees to rectify injustice (this effect was significant for seven of eight measures across the experiments).

We have argued that injustice inspires powerseeking, even among relatively disinterested persons. How disinterested were participants in the present work? It could be argued that our participants were not entirely disinterested, and that our findings are explained by the indirect pursuit of self-interest. Participants may have believed that their actions as powerholders would shape university policy, thereby influencing their future well-being. Also, unjust grading situations presumably are at least mildly self-relevant to most students. However, when we examined participants' open-ended explanations of why they behaved as they did, they did not indicate that they regarded the situation as highly self-relevant—only a few expressed concern that they might be exposed to parallel forms of injustice, and only a few indicated that desire to avoid such an outcome was their reason for powerseeking (and such responses were about equally represented in the just and unjust conditions).

As a second means of examining the issue of disinterest and exploring the generalizability of our findings, in Experiment 2 we manipulated the level of victim closeness. Experiment 2 revealed some evidence of injustice by closeness interactions, suggesting that injustice may be a particularly powerful motivator of powerseeking when the victims of injustice are perceived to be similar to the self. At the same time, participants reported relatively high levels of similarity to the victim even in the low target closeness condition, and the effects of injustice on powerseeking were not greatly attenuated when individuals were confronted with injustice involving non-close victims. That is, individuals appear to feel close to

and respond to the plight of individuals who in some respects are quite remote from themselves.

Although we cannot conclusively determine whether the situations we examined involved no personal relevance or little personal relevance, given that no direct rewards would be afforded by obtaining power it seems safe to conclude that our participants were largely disinterested. More generally, we have no desire to suggest that the motives underlying powerseeking are wholly altruistic. Our goal was to demonstrate that existing explanations of powerseeking may place undue emphasis on self-interested or antisocial motives. The present orientation is compatible with that of interdependence theory, which suggests that rather than characterizing motives as either (a) wholly self-interested or (b) wholly altruistic, it is more fruitful to construe human motivation as complex, frequently involving a blend of self- and other-oriented concerns (Kelley & Thibaut, 1985; Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996).

At the same time, given the centrality of the distinction between little personal relevance and no personal relevance in the literature regarding prosocial behavior, in future research it might be interesting to directly manipulate both injustice and personal relevance, seeking to determine whether the effect of injustice on powerseeking is eliminated when personal relevance arguably is entirely absent. In the present work, to the extent that powerseeking is motivated by the violation of beliefs about justice and by the experience of anger or upset—and to the extent that obtaining power alleviates these negative experiences—it could be argued that powerseeking reflects concern with personal well-being. Accordingly, future research might seek to systematically rule out personal relevance as an explanation of our findings by adopting experimental procedures of the sort employed by Batson and his colleagues in their work regarding prosocial behavior (cf. Batson, 1987).

#### *Mediation of the Association of Injustice With Powerseeking*

To further document the role of perceived injustice in motivating powerseeking, both experiments examined several possible mediators of this relationship. Consistent with Hypothesis 3, justice considerations fairly effectively accounted for the association of injustice with powerseeking. Internal experiences such as feeling angry about the situation, feeling upset by the injustice, the violation of beliefs about fairness, and perceiving the situation as wrong were found to powerfully mediate the injustice-powerseeking link. There was some evidence of possible mediation by negative affect, compassion, and felt powerlessness, but no evidence of mediation by shame or the absence of positive affect. Of the variables

that we examined, perceived wrong was the most powerful mediator, wholly accounting for the injustice-powerseeking association in three of four analyses and largely accounting for this association in the fourth analysis.

Do constructs from the helping literature such as empathy, negative state relief, arousal, or personal upset play a role in mediating injustice-inspired powerseeking (e.g., Batson, 1987; Batson, Duncan, Ackerman, Buckley, & Birch, 1981; Cialdini, Darby, & Vincent, 1973; Cialdini & Kenrick, 1976; Dovidio, Piliavin, Gaertner, Schroeder, & Clark, 1991; Piliavin, Piliavin, & Rodin, 1975)? In Experiment 2, we obtained some evidence that compassion—a construct that resembles empathy—may partially mediate the injustice-powerseeking association. And mediators such as upset about situation and negative affect could be construed as relevant to helping motivation. However, out of all of the mediators that we examined, powerseeking in reaction to injustice appears to be most directly motivated by violated justice beliefs and by the perception that a situation is wrong. We speculate that emotional reactions such as upset, anger, and righteous indignation may serve as affective cues regarding the existence of unjust interdependence structure (cf. Kelley, 1984; Shaver et al., 1987). Of course, the present research was oriented toward verifying mediation by justice considerations and was largely exploratory in regard to variables identified in the helping literature, so our operational definitions of empathy, negative state relief, and personal upset did not align perfectly with those employed in previous research. In future work, it would be fruitful to determine whether a more direct examination of motives from the helping literature may illuminate our understanding of the injustice-powerseeking association.

We entertain two lines of reasoning to explain why perceived wrong so powerfully explains the impact of injustice on powerseeking. Our first line of reasoning is derived from Lerner's (1980) account of the development of a personal contract with society. Lerner notes that although we operate by the pleasure principle as infants, over time we learn to function according to the reality principle. The reality principle entails delay of gratification (e.g., "If I eat my vegetables I can have dessert"). The personal contract with society is an implicit conviction that justice exists—the belief that reward follows good behavior. Perceived injustice seriously threatens the sense of security implicit in the personal contract—to observe others suffer undeserved negative outcomes is to observe a violation of the contract. As Lerner and his colleagues have demonstrated, if observers of injustice cannot restore the contract by rectifying the injustice (as was possible for participants in our research;

in the present work, acquiring power was the mechanism for rectifying injustice), they cognitively restore the contract by diminishing the magnitude of the victim's negative outcome or by diminishing the deservingness of the victim (e.g., Lerner, Miller, & Holmes, 1976; Lerner & Simmons, 1966).

Our second account of the explanatory power of perceived wrong centers on what might be termed the *social contract* function of justice norms, or the role of justice norms in regulating interaction and solving everyday interdependence dilemmas. Justice has been described as "the first virtue of social institutions" (Rawls, 1971). Societies cannot function in the absence of internalized rules regarding the treatment of one person or group by another. Interdependence is not easy, particularly given the near inevitability of scarce resources and conflicting interests. Internalized codes of fairness function as a social contract, enabling us to solve interdependence dilemmas and function with a modicum of freedom, shielding us from the war of each against every person. Moreover, individuals and groups often achieve superior long-term outcomes via prosocial, cooperative action, whereby reciprocal cooperation is elicited from interdependence partners (cf. Axelrod, 1984). Given the varied interdependence situations with which individuals, groups, and societies routinely are confronted, it is not surprising that groups evolve justice norms to support prosocial resolution of interdependence dilemmas. Such norms ultimately acquire the force of moral rightness. Whereas observing or experiencing a deserved negative outcome is unpleasant, observing or experiencing an undeserved negative outcome arouses intensely negative emotions, including moral outrage. Accordingly, violations of justice are experienced as wrong; the more wrong an interdependence situation is perceived to be, the more powerfully it motivates action toward rectifying the wrong (in the present work, the direct mechanism was the acquisition of power).

#### *Limitations and Directions for Future Research*

Before closing, several limitations of the present work should be noted. First, both experiments employed the same operational definition of injustice, using a grade assignment dilemma as a means of exposing participants to just versus unjust situations. We believe that we created a dilemma with which our participants have considerable experience (and about which they hold well-developed opinions), that our injustice manipulation reliably influenced perceived injustice, and that our measures of powerseeking motivation and behavior were valid and believable. Nevertheless, there are obvious benefits to converging operations. Future research should seek to develop multiple operational definitions

of injustice, along with multiple operational definitions of powerseeking motivation and behavior.

Second, the present research employed a broad definition of injustice. A priori, we did not seek to develop a differentiated model of the effects of differing types of injustice (e.g., procedural justice, distributive justice, inequity, inequality, exploitation). Operationally, our definition of injustice most closely resembles perceived inequity. Indeed, our operational definition rested on participants' perceptions of that which is just versus unjust (i.e., from alternative points of view, observers might question whether it is "just" to assign all students a grade of A on a final exam). We believe that our broad definition of injustice was suitable for our theoretical goals, which centered on demonstrating the existence of situationally based, prosocial motives for powerseeking. Clearly, there are alternative theoretical goals for which it would be important to differentiate among types of injustice.

And third, the present research could be criticized for its exclusive use of college students as participants. College students are not representative of all human beings; students at the University of North Carolina are not representative of all college students. At the same time, it is remarkable that our work revealed such strong and consistent effects of injustice on powerseeking in a participant population with relatively limited experience at stepping forward to grasp the reins of power. Nevertheless, future research would benefit from the use of alternative participant populations.

#### *Conclusions*

As noted earlier, powerseeking has a bad reputation. The present work sought to serve as a partial antidote to existing negative characterizations of powerseeking. This work extends previous research regarding dispositional bases of powerseeking by demonstrating that powerseeking may be situationally motivated as well as dispositionally governed. And this work extends previous research regarding helping behavior and reactions to injustice by revealing that individuals who are exposed to injustice are willing to do more than simply enact behaviors that improve victims' outcomes—they seek to increase their role- or structure-based power over unjust situations so as to rectify perceived wrong. Moreover, the scope of justice concerns appears to be relatively broad, in that individuals in the present work felt close to and responded to the plight of victims who, in many respects, were relatively remote from themselves. Thus, it appears that powerseeking does not necessarily rest on distasteful origins and self-interested or antisocial motives—sometimes individuals desire power for its use in maintaining or restoring justice.

## NOTES

1. Follow-up analyses paralleling those reported above assessed whether reactions to the grading dilemma differed as a function of participant sex. Two-factor analyses of variance (just vs. unjust condition, women vs. men) performed on the manipulation checks and power-seeking measures revealed that no main effects of participant sex were significant. The interaction of injustice condition with participant sex was significant for two of nine measures—willingness to be interviewed, and interest in serving as a member of the Ethics in Grading Review Committee. The injustice manipulation significantly influenced powerseeking among both women and men, but this effect was stronger among men. In addition, correlational analyses performed separately for women and men revealed no significant differences in the strength of association between potential mediators and either powerseeking motivation or powerseeking behavior.

2. Follow-up analyses paralleling those reported above assessed whether reactions to the grading dilemma differed as a function of participant sex. Three-factor analyses of variance (just vs. unjust condition, low vs. medium vs. high closeness, women vs. men) performed on the manipulation checks and powerseeking measures revealed that no main effects of participant sex were significant; out of 26 two-factor interactions and 12 three-factor interactions involving participant sex, only 1 effect was significant. In addition, correlational analyses performed separately for women and men revealed no significant differences in the strength of association between potential mediators and either powerseeking motivation or powerseeking behavior.

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