ARTICLE

Power and perceived influence: I caused your behavior, but I'm not responsible for it

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Abstract

There are numerous examples of powerful people denying responsibility for others' (mis)conduct in which they played—and acknowledge playing—a causal role. The current article seeks to explain this conundrum by examining the difference between, and powerful people's beliefs about, causality and responsibility. Research has shown power to have numerous psychological consequences. Some of these consequences, such as overconfidence, are likely to *increase* an individual's belief that he or she *caused* another person's behavior. However, others, such as decreased perspective-taking, are likely to *decrease* an individual's belief that he or she was *responsible* for another person's behavior. In combination, these psychological consequences of power may lead powerful people to believe that they instigated another's behavior while simultaneously believing that the other person could have chosen to do otherwise. The dissociation between these two attributions may help to explain why people in positions of power often deny responsibility for others' behavior—unethical or otherwise—that they undeniably caused.

1 | INTRODUCTION

"Former President Richard M. Nixon has denied under oath any 'personal responsibility'"
  –San Francisco Chronicle *(September 23, 1975)*

"[F]ormer chief executive officer Jeffrey Skilling ... shaped Enron in his own image."

"'I am Enron!' he once exclaimed over drinks."

"Yet Skilling remained remarkably unwilling to accept any personal responsibility for the company's demise."
  –McLean and Elkind (2013), The Smartest Guys in the Room

"If you don't go, I'll assume you're not serious about your future at 'Runway' or any other publication. The decision is yours."

–Meryl Steep as Miranda Priestly in The Devil Wears Prada *(Frankel, 2006)*

It is a familiar scene: A large scandal, followed by a leader who undeniably influenced a subordinate's behavior denying responsibility for that behavior. Despite his pivotal role in the Watergate cover-up, President Nixon denies "personal responsibility." Jeffrey Skilling, the notorious former CEO of Enron, denies any responsibility for the unethical behavior that occurred at the company he previously referred to as an incarnation of himself. On a lighter note, in the movie *The Devil Wears Prada*, Miranda Priestly, the fictional Anna Wintour-esque character, emphasizes to her subordinate the perils of ignoring her directive, but then declares that the decision is up to the subordinate. How can people in positions of power consistently deny responsibility for other people's behavior they undeniably caused? We will attempt to explain this conundrum by demonstrating how power leads people to dissociate beliefs about *causality* from beliefs about *responsibility*.

It is often assumed that causality and responsibility go hand in hand. To the extent that we cause actions and events, we are responsible for them. However, despite the common belief that causality and responsibility are one and the same, some scholars have drawn distinctions between them and identified circumstances in which they may not coincide (e.g., Hamilton, 1980; Shaver, 1985; Weiner, 1995). In this paper, we consider this insight in combination with research on powerful people's perceptions of themselves and their influence, and we argue that powerful people in situations of interpersonal influence are inclined to view themselves as having caused others' actions, while simultaneously believing that they are not responsible for those actions. In other words, the link between power and perceived influence may not be as straightforward as it initially appears: While powerful people may overestimate their influence over others in some ways, they may underestimate it in others. Understanding this dynamic is critical to illuminating not only how power affects self-attributions of causality and responsibility but also the role of powerful individuals in instigating unethical acts, given that powerful people often engage in misconduct indirectly through others (Paharia, Kassam, Greene, & Bazerman, 2009) and are arguably in the best position to prevent such misconduct.

2 | WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BELIEVE YOU INFLUENCED SOMEONE? CAUSALITY VERSUS RESPONSIBILITY

At first glance, it may seem logically incoherent for an individual to claim that they caused an individual's behavior, but are not responsible for it. As Kelly Shaver (1985) acknowledges early in his book on the subject, "it might appear that the straightforward questions about causality, responsibility, and culpability would have an equally direct answer: [p]eople are accountable for the events they bring about." (p. 1). However, as Shaver goes on to argue, and other theorists have argued as well, these two concepts, while highly related, are in fact distinct. We argue that this distinction is important for understanding how an individual is likely to view their own culpability for another person's behavior—an assessment that is ultimately influenced by one's own power.

Distinctions between causality and responsibility have typically been made with respect to outsiders' judgments of individuals' direct moral or legal culpability for unethical or harmful acts. Psychological theories of blame examine how social perceivers determine whether an actor should be blamed for causing some negative event (Cushman, 2008; Heider, 1958; Malle, Guglielmo, & Monroe, 2014; Schwartz, 1968). Similarly, legal scholarship identifies criteria by which outside observers are to determine whether an individual is legally responsible for a harmful outcome (Hamilton, 1978; Hamilton, 1980; Hamilton & Sanders, 1995; Hart & Honoré, 1985; Sanders & Hamilton, 1997; Shaver, 1985; Weiner, 1995). Notably, in both the psychological and legal realm, a distinction is made between *causing* harm and being *responsible* for the harm that was caused. An individual who has clearly enacted a behavior that resulted in harm may nonetheless be deemed not responsible for that harm by outside observers because the harm

was unintentional, the actor had justifiable reasons for her actions, or the actor's actions were ordered or encouraged by an authority or superior.

This last case is our focus in the current article, except we consider the perspective of the superior. Actors often commit unethical acts at the behest of authority figures (Shultz, Jaggi, & Schleifer, 1987). Notable examples include participants' behaviors in the infamous Milgram (1974) shock experiments and the disturbing acts of prison guards at Abu Ghraib (Fiske, Harris, & Cuddy, 2004). The authority figures involved in situations such as these are largely considered responsible for such "crimes of obedience" both by the actors who ultimately commit such acts (Caspar, Christensen, Cleeremans, & Haggard, 2016; Gaeta, 1999; Gibson, Blenkinsopp, Johnstone, & Marshall, 2018) and by outside observers (Kelman & Hamilton, 1989). Participants in the Milgram experiments, for example, assigned the lion's share of responsibility for their behavior to the experimenter (Gibson et al., 2018). And when assessing corporate misconduct, outside observers assign the greatest responsibility to those individuals who had the greatest power (Kennedy & Anderson, 2017; Sanders et al., 1996; Shultz et al., 1987).

Yet it does not always follow that individuals with more power *take* greater responsibility for such misdeeds. Here we explore the question of how powerful people come to deny responsibility for the unscrupulous behaviors of their subordinates: Do authority figures make such denials disingenuously, because it is personally and publicly desirable to distance themselves from wrongdoing? Or does possessing power actually change the way someone sees their role in such situations, allowing powerful individuals to fully recognize the key role they have played in bringing about such events, while also sincerely believing that they are not responsible for them?

Specifically, the psychological experience of having power over another should make salient the aspects of an interaction that would lead an individual to believe they have caused another person's behavior—that is, to believe the other person has heard, understood, and valued one's own opinions or statements—while simultaneously obscuring the aspects of an interaction that would lead an individual to believe they are responsible for another person's behavior—that is, obscuring the other person's difficulty rejecting a powerful person's suggestion in order to do what they think is right. Below we elucidate the divergent effects that one's sense of power may have on these self-attributions of causality and responsibility.

3 | THE EFFECT OF POWER ON BELIEFS ABOUT CAUSALITY

In order to determine whether one has caused another person's behavior, an individual must determine whether the other person would have done what they did were it not for something oneself said or did (Hamilton, 1980; Hamilton & Sanders, 1995). Research suggests that power is likely to influence this determination by increasing an individual's belief that they caused another person's behavior. This occurs because feelings of power increase an individual's (a) confidence in their talents and abilities, (b) predisposition to share ideas and take action, and (c) predisposition to see the implementation of their ideas in the actions that surround them. These factors lead an individual to view their own opinions and behaviors as key determinants of others' opinions and behaviors.

People in positions of power believe they are there because they deserve to be (Sawaoka, Hughes, & Ambady, 2015; Van Dijk & De Cremer, 2006). This means they tend to esteem their talents and abilities highly. Further, power leads individuals to feel overconfident in their knowledge of the world (Anderson, Brion, Moore, & Kennedy, 2012; Fast, Sivanathan, Mayer, & Galinsky, 2012). In one study, individuals who were reminded of their high degree of formal power at work were more likely to bet that they would know the answers to a series of general knowledge questions than individuals who were reminded of their low degree of formal power at work (Fast et al., 2012). These findings demonstrate that power increases people's sense of their own ability and talent; powerful people think they are smart and have good ideas.

In addition to believing they have good ideas, people in power are also predisposed to share their ideas with others and to take action. Research has shown that a sense of power compels individuals toward action through behavioral activation and disinhibition (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006; Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003; Hirsh,

Galinsky, & Zhong, 2011; Inesi, 2010; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003; Kilduff & Galinsky, 2013; Smith & Bargh, 2008; Smith, McCullocj, & Schouwstra, 2013). In one study, participants primed with high power were more likely to move an annoying fan staged to blow on them during the study than participants primed with low power (Galinsky et al., 2003). In another study by the same researchers, participants primed with high power were more likely to act in a social dilemma, regardless of whether their action resulted in prosocial or antisocial consequences.

These research findings reveal psychological consequences evoked by possessing power that are likely to increase an individual's belief that they caused another person's behavior by something they said or did. People in power believe they have good ideas and they are inclined to share them, paving the way for their belief in their influence. Similarly, they believe they can impact their environment and they are inclined to attempt to do so. Together, this research suggests powerful people are inclined to see their own virtuosity in the actions of those around them, leading them to feel that *they* have caused the events that have occurred by the hands of others.

4 | THE EFFECT OF POWER ON BELIEFS ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY

In contrast to judgments of causality, judgments of responsibility require that a person consider the extent to which someone they have influenced felt they had a choice or could have done otherwise in a given situation—i.e., the agency of the actor (Haggard & Tsakiris, 2009; Hamilton, 1978; Shaver, 1985). Crucially, determining whether someone could have done otherwise requires a person to consider another person's perspective—the situation in which the person has found themselves, and their corresponding feelings, thoughts, and motives. In general, it is difficult for people to appreciate others' perspectives. It is hard to imagine what we ourselves would feel and do in a given situation, let alone what another person with different motives, life experiences, and beliefs is likely to feel and do (Epley, Keysar, Van Boven, & Gilovich, 2004; Van Boven & Loewenstein, 2003; Van Van Boven & Loewenstein, 2005; Van Boven, Loewenstein, & Dunning, 2005; Van Boven, Loewenstein, Dunning, & Nordgren, 2013). One consequence of these challenges of perspective-taking is that people consistently find it difficult to appreciate how hard it is for others to say "no" to social pressure (Bohns, 2016; Bohns et al., 2011; Bohns, Newark, & Xu, 2016; Bohns, Roghanizad, & Xu, 2014; Flynn & Lake (Bohns), 2008; Newark, Flynn, & Bohns, 2014). That is, people tend to underestimate the strong pressure others feel to avoid an awkward encounter and/or conform to social norms of agreement; as a result, people assume it is easier for someone to choose to do otherwise in a situation involving social influence than it actually is.

A large body of research suggests that possessing power should exacerbate this bias (Copeland, 1994; Fiske, 1993; Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006; Woike, 1994). People primed with high power are less likely to spontaneously take the perspectives of others. This tendency was illustrated in a clever study in which participants primed with high power were less likely than those primed with low power to draw an outward-facing "E" on their foreheads, which would have allowed others to read the letter, instead drawing an inward-facing "E" that only they could read (Galinksy et al., 2006). Powerful people also attend less to low power individuals (Fiske, 1993), and when they do attend to them, they form less complex interpretations of their motives and emotions (Copeland, 1994; Woike, 1994; although see Overbeck & Park, 2001 for an exception).

This research suggests that when a powerful person sees someone engaging in a behavior, they are more likely to interpret that behavior in the simplest of terms—typically as, "that person must have wanted to do that"—above and beyond the general tendency people have to interpret others' behavior in this way (e.g., Gilbert & Malone, 1995; Jones, 1979; Tetlock, 1985). Such an interpretation is especially likely because powerful individuals themselves feel less constrained by situational pressures than powerless individuals (Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008; Kraus, Chen, & Keltner, 2011; Overbeck, Tiedens, & Brion, 2006; Pitesa & Thau, 2013a; Whitson et al., 2013). Powerful people may anchor on their relative sense of freedom from pressure and fail to adjust sufficiently to others' experiences, assuming that they too share the same autonomy and agency—including the autonomy and agency to refuse and ignore others. Consequently, possessing power should make people even *more* likely to underestimate the extent to which others feel compelled by social pressure, thereby leading them to overestimate

the extent to which another person "could have done otherwise." This makes power likely to obscure a person's awareness of the coerciveness of their own requests and suggestions, decreasing their own sense of responsibility for another person's questionable behavior. Indeed, as this line of theorizing would suggest, inducing an other-focus in powerful individuals—essentially, intervening to counteract powerful people's hyper-egocentrism—has been found to increase their willingness to take responsibility for others (Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh, 2001; De Wit, Scheepers, Ellemers, Sassenberg, & Scholl, 2017; Gordon & Chen, 2013; Sassenberg, Ellemers, Scheepers, & Scholl, 2014; Scholl, Sassenberg, Scheepers, Ellemers, & de Wit, 2017; Scholl et al., 2018).

5 | I CAUSED YOUR BEHAVIOR, BUT I'M NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR IT

5.1 | Dissociation of self-attributions of causality and responsibility by the powerful

In the preceding sections, we argued that power has a multitude of psychological effects on those who possess it. In particular, power makes people more confident and biases them to assume things in their environment happen because of them; it also makes them less inclined to take the perspectives of others and realize the extent to which those around them may be constrained in their ability to refuse or ignore their suggestions. These consequences of power may be borne from a similar mechanism: The same disinhibition that leads someone to take action without a second thought may also lead that person to spend minimal energy considering what others are thinking. Considered together, these effects of power may help explain the apparent contradictions illustrated by the opening examples. Namely, power may have divergent effects on beliefs about whether one has *caused* another person's behavior and beliefs about whether one is therefore *responsible* for that person's behavior. While individuals in positions of low power are likely to believe that having caused someone's behavior necessarily means one must take a certain degree of responsibility for it, people in positions of high power may in fact deny—genuinely—their responsibility for others' misconduct that they believe they caused.

In order to further illustrate how a powerful person might simultaneously believe that they have caused someone else's behavior but they are not responsible for it, let us unpack an episode of interpersonal influence. An episode of attempted or realized interpersonal influence involves two people, each with defined roles. There is the influencer, who proposes, implants, advocates for, or attempts to serve as the impetus for a particular course of action. Then there is the target of the influence, who carries out a particular course of action and who behaves in a particular way (Bohns, Newark, & Boothby, 2018).

These two roles are closely linked to notions of who causes a behavior and who is responsible for it. If the action taken by a target originates with or is instigated by the influencer, then the influencer can be said to have caused that action. The action would not have happened without the influencer; they were its catalyst. However, this does not automatically mean that the influencer is responsible for that action. If the target chose to carry out the proposed action freely (i.e., if it was truly an episode of influence, rather than coercion or force), then one could argue that the responsibility for the action lies with the target, even if the cause of the action was the influencer.

For example, imagine a professor mentions to a graduate student a little-known conference that they think the student may want to attend. Then imagine the graduate student attends that conference. The professor may believe they caused the student to attend the conference. After all, the professor made the student aware of the conference and its potential merits. At the same time, the professor may believe that they are not responsible for the student attending the conference. The professor sees the graduate student as an intelligent, autonomous individual who decides for themselves how best to spend their time and advance their career. The professor believes they were only making a suggestion. In decision-making terms, the professor believes they supplied a decision alternative for the graduate student's choice set and that that alternative was ultimately chosen, but they are not the one who did the choosing. The professor suggested an option to be considered, but it was up to the graduate student whether

to choose that option or another—the graduate student had agency. In this way, the professor simultaneously believes that they both caused the action and that they are not responsible for it.

Given the professor's power over the graduate student and the psychological consequences of power described earlier, this is the pattern of beliefs we would expect. The professor should be more likely than a fellow graduate student, for example, to view their suggestion as the impetus for or cause of the graduate student's decision to attend the conference—i.e., to believe they supplied a good idea worthy of serious consideration whose merits were recognized by the graduate student. At the same time, the professor should be less likely than a fellow graduate student to recognize the extent to which their suggestion would be viewed by the graduate student as a directive the student was expected to follow.

Importantly, this same pattern of beliefs should apply to other suggestions made by the professor—even irresponsible or unethical ones. For example, imagine that instead of suggesting the graduate student consider attending a conference, the professor was to suggest that the student try controlling for additional variables in a statistical analysis to see if a desired result becomes significant (essentially, a suggestion to p-hack). Now imagine the student were to run this analysis and eventually publish it. The professor should once again believe they *caused* the unreliable result to be published. The professor, confident in their ability to publish findings, made a suggestion that led to the publication. Without this suggestion, the student would likely have given up on the result. However, as in the first case, the professor is unlikely to believe they were *responsible* for the publication of the unreliable result. Once again, the professor believes they were only making a suggestion—that the graduate student had agency and could have decided not to engage in such behavior if they wished. While outside observers and the student may see the professor's role differently—according to research, both would likely attribute greater responsibility to the professor, as the authority figure in this case (Gibson et al., 2018; Kennedy & Anderson, 2017; Sanders et al., 1996; Shultz et al., 1987) —the professor is unlikely to recognize how large their suggestion loomed in the student's decision, hence overestimating the student's agency, and underestimating their own responsibility, in this situation.

6 | WHY DOES THIS DISTINCTION IN POWERFUL PEOPLE'S PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE OF INFLUENCE MATTER?

Why does it matter how someone in a position of power views their role in determining others' behavior—particularly in terms of a distinction that can seem semantic? We believe this distinction can play an important role in powerful people's willingness to accept accountability for, and to bring about, unethical behavior.

6.1 | An increase in unethical behavior with a decrease in accountability

One potential implication of this dynamic is that it could lead to a greater incidence of unethical behavior. People in power often feel emboldened, disinhibited, and not subject to traditional societal constraints (Galinsky et al., 2008). They are also more inclined to see their role as one who proposes provocative, edgy, or brazen ideas (Smith & Trope, 2006). This makes people in power more likely to suggest unethical behavior, either as a way of entertaining risky ideas or as a way of daring to voice what they actually want. This tendency is further strengthened if powerful people do not believe they would be responsible should those ideas be implemented. As mentioned above, believing others to share their capacity to refuse or ignore suggestions, powerful people may suggest questionable behaviors in part because they assume that more steady or prudent minds—e.g., the legal department, the accounting department, someone else in the room—will reject them as needed and will reject them if they are really all that bad. In ascribing an agency to others that is not there, powerful people imagine a system of checks and balances that does not exist. This imagined system frees them to suggest dubious ideas.

At the same time, this fictive system of checks and balances can also reduce accountability when powerful people do cause, and/or feel they caused, unethical behavior—not only in terms of how responsible powerful people feel

for that behavior but also the extent to which they are held responsible for that behavior by others. For instance, legal sanctions are in large part based on attributions of responsibility (Hamilton, 1980; Hamilton & Sanders, 1995; Hart & Honoré, 1985; Sanders et al., 1996). However, such attributions may be influenced by one's role in a given situation and the amount of power an individual possesses in that role (cf., Pettit & Sivanathan, 2012; Pitesa & Thau, 2013b). For individuals in positions of low power, having caused someone's behavior necessarily means one must take a certain degree of responsibility for it, but this is not the case for individuals in positions of high power. Consequently, individuals in positions of low power may have no doubt that the CEO who suggested to a subordinate that they use a questionable accounting practice was responsible for the subordinate's behavior (see also Pitesa & Thau, 2014). However, individuals in positions of high power may not share this assumption, even if they are willing to concede that the CEO's action was indeed the cause of the subordinate's behavior. Altogether, this may result in different outcomes for a CEO who is sanctioned by their high-power peers for playing a role in corporate misconduct, as opposed to one sanctioned by a trial jury of predominantly lower-power individuals.

Jeffrey Pfeffer's book, *Dying for a Paycheck* (2018), could also be interpreted as an illustration of this dynamic. In the book, Pfeffer describes companies making (often implicitly) increasingly injurious demands of their employees—a commitment to work that increasingly results in isolation, emotional and psychological stress, and a variety of related health problems. Even if one argued that these behaviors are not unethical, they certainly seem at least detrimental. Nonetheless, because they see humans as agentic and the stewards of their own well-being, those in power who make these demands may not feel responsible for the effects on those who satisfy them. They may feel it is a choice to make certain sacrifices for certain successes and that if it was really so bad, these employees could always make adjustments or else just get another job.

6.2 | Unintendedly strict limitations on the freedom of others

Another implication concerns the means of control powerful individuals may resort to as a result of these attributions. The research reviewed here suggests that people in positions of power are likely to exaggerate others' willingness and ability to contradict or say "no" to their requests. Consequently, they may resort to unduly strong control tactics to limit the imagined freedom to "do otherwise" they erroneously believe their subordinates possess. Consistent with this prediction, Kipnis (1972) found that the more power individuals in an organization had, the more attempts they made to control others' behavior. A corollary of this prediction is that people in positions of power may rely more heavily on economic rewards and sanctions without fully appreciating that feelings of social obligation—e.g., a desire not to break with social norms by saying "no" to one's boss—are often more effective means of influence (Bohns et al., 2016).

As noted by Galinsky (2015), "When you're in charge, your whisper may feel like a shout." Nonetheless, projecting their own deafness onto others, powerful people may raise their voices more and more because they fail to realize how loud they already sound to those around them (cf., Gibson, 2018).

7 | OTHER REASONS POWERFUL PEOPLE MIGHT DENY RESPONSIBILITY FOR UNDESIRABLE DECISIONS AND OUTCOMES

Certainly, there are alternative explanations for why a powerful person might deny responsibility for someone else's undesirable behavior—why a CEO, for example, would not claim responsibility for widespread accounting fraud that took place under their watch. Such denial may reflect self-protective motivations. Further, acknowledging one's causal role while simultaneously denying one's responsibility for such events may appear simply to be a form of moral hypocrisy. Below we discuss these alternative explanations.

7.1 | Motivated reasoning

An alternative explanation for our predictions is that dissociating responsibility from causality simply allows powerful people who have instigated unethical behavior to deny their responsibility for such behavior in the face of evidence indicating their role in orchestrating it. Indeed, powerful people may disingenuously disavow wrongdoing and engage in "excuse-making" in order to protect their reputations (e.g., Effron & Miller, 2011, 2015; Fast & Tiedens, 2010). For example, work has shown that people in positions of high power engage in more counterfactual thinking following a failure (Scholl & Sassenberg, 2014), and counterfactual excuses are a key means through which people deny responsibility for wrongdoing and preserve their self-image (Markman & Tetlock, 2000).

Similar arguments have been made with respect to actors' disavowals of responsibility in arguing that they were "just following orders" (Gibson, 2018). For example, in a rhetorical analysis of post-experiment interviews with participants from the original Milgram studies, Gibson et al. (2018) argued that participants' displacement of responsibility onto the experimenter was essentially motivated reasoning—post-hoc, self-serving justifications for their behavior in the study. However, recent research using brain imaging in a modern replication of the Milgram studies instead suggests that rather than serving as convenient post-hoc justifications, such explanations in fact reflect participants' experiential reality—i.e., participants actually feel as if they have less agency when following an experimenter's directives (Caspar et al., 2016). In the same way, individuals in positions of power who issue orders or make suggestions to subordinates to engage in illicit behaviors may genuinely feel as if they are not responsible for the ultimate consequences of those actions because they overestimate the subordinate's experience of agency.

7.2 | Moral hypocrisy

Another possible explanation for the predictions in the current paper is that acknowledging causality while denying responsibility is a form of moral hypocrisy, and that power leads to greater moral hypocrisy (Batson, Kobrynowicz, Dinnerstein, Kampf, & Wilson, 1997; Effron & Miller, 2015; Lammers, Stapel, & Galinsky, 2010). Moral hypocrisy refers to the practice of imposing strict moral standards on others, but not oneself. Research has found that power increases a tendency towards moral hypocrisy (Lammers et al., 2010). For example, in one study participants primed with high power were both more likely to condemn other participants for a moral transgression than those primed with low power and simultaneously more likely to behave unethically by cheating than those primed with low power. A seemingly similar hypocritical pattern is being argued here: Individuals in high power positions should simultaneously be more likely to claim causality for another person's unethical behavior *and* be more likely to deny responsibility for that behavior.

The important distinction between work on the effects of power on moral hypocrisy and our claims is that research on moral hypocrisy is primarily concerned with people's assessment of the acceptability or appropriateness of moral transgressions that have been committed freely, rather than their assessment of who is *responsible* for a behavior committed in the midst of social pressure. The predictions made by the current paper may be related to, but are nonetheless distinct from, assessments of the acceptability of the behavior in question.

8 | CONCLUSION

At first glance, the relationship between power and perceived influence seems simple: It seems power should necessarily increase one's perception of one's influence over others. However, research on the psychological consequences of possessing power suggests that this relationship is likely to be more complicated than it initially appears. Influence can be perceived as causing others' behavior or being responsible for it, and research suggests that it is only the former attribution that is likely to increase with increased power. Although feeling powerful may increase the perception that one has caused and/or can cause others' behavior, it may actually decrease the perception that one is ultimately

responsible for others' behavior. Such a dissociation may lead powerful people to deny responsibility for others' behavior that they clearly orchestrated, while simultaneously making them more likely to orchestrate—and believe they orchestrated—others' behavior in the first place.

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