# CULTURAL VALUES AND AUTHORITY RELATIONS
## The Psychology of Conflict Resolution Across Cultures

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The findings of 4 studies suggest that cultural values about power distance influence the way that people react to third-party authorities in a manner predicted by the relational model of authority (T. R. Tyler & E. A. Lind, 1992). Power-distance values reflect beliefs about the appropriate power relationship between authorities and their subordinates. As predicted, when making evaluations of authorities, those lower in their power-distance values placed more weight on the quality of their treatment by authorities. In contrast, those with higher power-distance values focused more strongly on the favorability of their outcomes. These findings suggest that the degree to which authorities can gain acceptance for themselves and their decisions through providing dignified, respectful treatment is influenced by the cultural values of the disputants. Informal "alternative" dispute resolution procedures, such as mediation, are more likely to be effective among those who have low power-distance values.

Psychologists have increasingly recognized the important role that culture and cultural values have in shaping conflict and conflict resolution. As a consequence, a core question for the field of legal psychology is becoming the degree to which the psychological values of the people within a particular society lead certain forms of legal authority to be more or less effective in maintaining social order by resolving disputes among individuals or groups (Damaska, 1986; Haley, 1991; Upham, 1987; Yoon, 1990). This study addressed this question by focusing on the influence of a particular dimension of psychocultural values—power dis-

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tance—on the basis of people's reactions to the conflict-resolution efforts of third-party authorities.

Disputants can potentially react to the conflict resolution efforts of third parties in several ways. One is to evaluate the degree to which they receive favorable or desired outcomes. Another basis is to evaluate how they have been treated by the authorities during the conflict resolution process (i.e., by considering the "relational" issues of neutrality, trustworthiness, and respect for their rights; see Tyler & Lind, 1992).

We have argued that, because authorities are seldom able to provide all parties to a dispute with all the material outcomes they want or feel they deserve, authorities benefit when those with whom they deal react to them by evaluating the treatment they receive from those third parties, instead of the favorability of their outcomes (Tyler, Smith, & Huo, 1996). Authorities can treat all parties respectfully, they can treat everyone the same, and they can behave in a trustworthy manner toward all. Hence, the ability of authorities, in legal contexts and elsewhere, to effectively manage disputes is enhanced when they are evaluated in relational, rather than outcome, terms (Tyler, 1997b).

The relational model of authority predicts that in most circumstances judgments about neutrality, trustworthiness, and respect for rights are more important than instrumental considerations in determining both which authorities and procedures are preferred and how those authorities and procedures are evaluated. Our concern is with the degree to which the importance of relational issues to the evaluation of authorities varies depending on the cultural values of the people over whom an authority is exercising its power. Previous studies, which have looked for differences linked to the cultural or ethnic background of disputants, have found remarkably few differences in the basis on which people react to the decisions of legal authorities (Lind, Tyler, & Huo, 1997; Tyler, 1988; Tyler, 1996). In other words, demographic characteristics, such as ethnicity, age, sex, and so forth, have not been found to shape the basis on which people react to authorities.

In this article we extend the consideration of this issue by looking not at cultural membership, that is, ethnicity or nationality, but at a specific culture-related value that seems especially likely to influence reactions to authority. In doing so we move the study into more familiar ground for psychologists. The value dimension we studied is an individual difference dimension that varies both within and across cultures, and we studied the psychological dynamics of that value dimension. The assumption underlying most cross-cultural research in social psychology is that general cultural values influence individuals' attitudes and behaviors within particular social situations. Psychologists have identified a number of value dimensions that appear to vary across and within cultures; values such as individualism–collectivism, power distance, masculinity–femininity, and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1980; Schwartz, 1992). The assumption is that these values represent general perspectives on what is good or desirable in life. Such general perspectives are further suggested to develop out of membership within particular cultures.

The argument that the values of the population influence the viability of varying forms of authority is supported by several studies examining the

influence of general civic values on the attitudes and behaviors of citizens. These studies show that the beliefs and values of ordinary citizens within a society influence the viability of democratic government (Dahl, 1971, 1989). This argument has recently been tested and supported by research in the former Soviet Union, which demonstrated that support for democratic values leads to an unwillingness to support an illegal coup (Gibson, 1996). Similarly, it has been found that support for the general norms of democracy leads to greater political tolerance for allowing the expression of disliked opinions, an important component of democracy (Sullivan, Piereson, & Marcus, 1982). This article makes a similar argument, but focuses on basic cultural values, rather than political values.

Cultural values are suggested to influence people's reactions to conflict and to the conflict-resolution efforts of third parties (see Leung, 1987; Leung, Au, Fernandez-Dols, & Iwawaki, 1992; Leung, Bond, Carment, Krishman, & Liebrand, 1990; Leung & Lind, 1986; Leung & Morris, 2001; Tyler, Boeckmann, Smith, & Huo, 1997). This argument implies that within particular cultures the cultural values of the population should make some forms of regulation and conflict resolution more effective than others. This general cross-cultural argument suggests that differences in the type of legal authority found across cultures might be linked to the values of the citizens within those different societies.

Our goal in this study was to test this general argument by exploring the impact of one value dimension—power distance—within one type of social setting—dispute or problem resolution by third parties. The focus of our analysis is on the psychology of authority relations. We examine the basis on which people who vary in their evaluations of the appropriate power distance between subordinates and authorities differ in the weight given to relational issues in their reactions to third-party authorities. Power distance is a value dimension originally identified by Hofstede (1980). It reflects the degree to which people prefer an autocratic or consultative style of authority. Those low in power distance prefer consultation and discussion and view subordinate disagreement with and criticism of authorities as appropriate and desirable. Those high in power distance prefer autocratic leadership and dislike disagreement or criticism on the part of subordinates. Although most research on cultural values has focused on individualism–collectivism, Hofstede's original research on social values found that differences in power-distance values were the most important of the four cultural value dimensions identified in his analysis.

Cross-cultural studies in social psychology, such as the work of Hofstede (1980), have used basic cultural dimensions such as power distance to characterize entire cultures. In a typical study two or more sites will be said to differ in terms of some dimension, and differences in mean levels of response between respondents at the two sites—for example, the average responses of Americans versus the Japanese—will be attributed to differences in the overall levels of the cultural dimension. There has been little attention given to variation within sites. In our analyses involving power distance, however, we use comparisons based on

individual responses to the power-distance measures rather than aggregate comparisons based on culture per se.[1]

This individual level, psychological approach to cultural values is not without precedent. Although past studies have often used value scores to identify the characteristics of entire cultures (see, e.g., Triandis, 1989a, 1989b), researchers have also recognized that value orientations can be used to reflect the characteristics of individuals (see Betancourt & Lopez, 1993; Triandis, 1995). Such a psychological analysis is more sensitive to the possible effects of cultural values on the behavior of particular people than are analyses that treat all of the members of a culture as the same.

The relational model of authority suggests that there should be an interaction between the cultural value of power distance and the basis on which people evaluate authorities, with those differing in power-distance values placing differential weight on the quality of their treatment by authorities when they are evaluating those authorities. People who are low in power distance are predicted to place greater weight on relational factors that are linked to the quality of their treatment by authorities, as opposed to weighing heavily the favorability of their outcomes. In contrast, people who are high in power distance are predicted to place less weight on relational factors and more weight on outcomes than do people low in power distance.

Why? Our argument is that beliefs about the appropriate power distance between authorities and subordinates should shape the nature of people's relationship with authorities. The relational model suggests that people care more strongly about relational aspects of their treatment by authorities when they have personalized connections with authorities and the institutions they represent (Smith and Tyler, 1997; Tyler, Degoey, & Smith, 1996). People with low power-distance orientations have stronger personal connections to authorities, viewing authorities as more like themselves. In such personalized relationships, subordinates have a stronger social bond with the authority. In contrast to low power-distance people, people with high power-distance orientations are likely to have role-constrained interactions with authorities, as occur in cultures in which authority relations are more strongly regimented by the relative positions of the superior and the subordinate. In such formal relationships, people will feel that they have more limited and remote personal connections with authorities, feeling that "those at the top of the social structure . . . are very different from those at the bottom" (Triandis, 1995, p. 30).

The prediction outlined suggests that power distance should determine *when* treatment by authorities is more or less important in the evaluation of authorities.

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[1]We began each study by examining mean levels of power distance within each culture being studied. We consider, for example, whether Japanese respondents generally indicate higher power-distance values than Americans, as predicted by Hofstede's (1980) theory. But this analysis was designed only to demonstrate that there are the expected variations in power distance across the sites. The main thrust of our analyses was based on each participant's individual power-distance score. Even if the Japanese are generally higher in power distance than are Americans, there will be variations among people within each culture. An analysis based on the power-distance values of each particular respondent, irrespective of their culture, allows a more sensitive investigation of the psychological implications of the value dimension to be performed.

Our approach extends other recent efforts to identify conditions under which relational issues are more or less important (Huo, Smith, Tyler, & Lind, 1996; Lind et al., 1997; Smith & Tyler, 1996; Smith, Tyler, Huo, Ortiz, & Lind, 1998; Tyler & Degoey, 1995; Tyler & Degoey, 1996; Tyler, Lind, & Huo, 1996; Tyler, Lind, Ohbuchi, Sugawara, & Huo, 1998).

If correct, the argument that relational issues matter more to those low in power distance suggests that cultures such as the United States should be particularly able to sustain legal authority by providing citizens with fair treatment. In a society, such as the United States, in which most people hold low power-distance values, people should be especially concerned about how they are treated by authorities, so authorities can more effectively bridge differences and gain acceptance for their decisions by treating all parties to a dispute with dignity and respect. In contrast, in cultures in which people generally hold higher power-distance values, people will be less concerned about the quality of their treatment by authorities. This suggests that in these societies other approaches to effectively resolving problems and disputes must be found.[2]

## Does Power Distance Moderate the Influence of Quality of Treatment on Reactions to Authorities?

The prediction that there will be an interaction between power distance and the importance of relational concerns in authority evaluation was tested in four studies. The studies involved distinct cultures that were selected to maximize individual-level variations in power distance and to test the generalizability of our hypothesis. The first three studies involve cross-national comparisons. The fourth study examined intracultural differences by making comparisons across different ethnic groups within the United States.

The central hypothesis tested in this analysis was that power distance interacts with judgments about treatment when authorities are being evaluated. In particular, those low on power distance are hypothesized to place greater weight on treatment by authorities, relative to outcome favorability, than are those high on power distance.

By proposing and testing an interaction hypothesis, we are defining the empirical issue in a way that minimizes two methodological concerns that arise when the influence of relational concerns or power-distance values is considered through an examination of the correlations between variables. In the case of relational judgments it is possible to argue that the strength of the influence of relational concerns is at least partially due to wording similarities between

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[2]Our argument that reactions to authorities may differ as a result of cultural values should be distinguished from the suggestion that people define the meaning of justice in different terms depending on their cultural values (see Tyler, Boeckmann, Smith, & Huo, 1997, for more on this point). This argument has not been supported by research (Lind, Erickson, Friedland, & Dickenberger, 1978; Sugawara & Huo, 1994; Tyler, Boeckmann, Smith, & Huo, 1977; Tyler & Smith, 1997). In this analysis, we did not explore the psychology of procedural justice—which is defined by the group-value model (Lind & Tyler, 1988). Instead, we focus on the psychology of authority relations—which is defined by the relational model of authority (Tyler & Lind, 1992). Our concern is with the basis on which people evaluate and defer to authorities.

experience-specific judgments (e.g., "The authority treated me honestly.") and overall judgments about authorities (e.g., "The authority was ethical."). In the case of power distance, the magnitude of power-distance effects may depend on the validity of the power-distance scale being used in the analysis. However, the interaction prediction should not be affected by these issues, as in each case the effects are constant across the variable being studied. Hence, any support for the interaction prediction that a differential strength of the effect of relational concerns occurs at varying levels of power distance should be distinct from these methodological issues.

The four studies are outlined in Table 1. Details about who was interviewed and the questions asked of them are presented in the Appendix. In the first two studies, cross-national samples of students were asked to consider a recent actual dispute in which a third party was involved. Study 1 used data on authority relations collected from students in the United States, Germany, and Hong Kong. Only a subset of participants who indicated that they had used a third party to resolve this conflict were considered. Study 2 used data on authority relations collected among American and Japanese students asked to recall a conflict with a teacher. The issue of concern in Studies 1 and 2 was the influence of quality of treatment on evaluations of third-party authorities.

Studies 3 and 4 involved interviews with employees in work organizations. Study 3 used a cross-national sample of employees, whereas Study 4 used a multiethnic sample of employees collected within the United States. In both Studies 3 and 4, we examined recent situations in which employees had been involved in disputes either with their work supervisor or in which their work supervisor acted as a third party. The analysis explores the influence of quality of

Table 1

*Studies Examining the Moderating Role of Power-Distance Values*

| Variable | Study 1 | Study 2 | Study 3 | Study 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Population | Students | Students | Employees | Employees |
| Issue | Dispute with another person | Dispute with professor | Experience with supervisor | Experience with supervisor |
| No. interviewed | 185[a] | 346 | 344 | 305 |
| Composition (n) | United States (324) Germany (244) Hong Kong (206) | United States (181) Japan (165) | Hong Kong (292) Germany (52) | United States: As.-Am. (117) Af.-Am. (45) Hisp. (58) Eur.-Am. (56) Other (25) |
| Power-distance scale | Scale A | Scale A | Scale B | Scale B |
| Dependent variable | Evaluation of the third party | Evaluation of the third party | Willingness to accept decision | Willingness to accept decision |

*Note.* As.-Am. = Asian American; Af.-Am. = African American; Hisp. = Hispanic; Eur.-Am. = European American.
[a]A total of 774 students were interviewed. Those who took their dispute to a third party (n = 185) were used in the analysis.

Table 2

*Influences on Postexperience Judgments About Authorities:*
*Regression Analysis*

| Measure | Evaluations of the third party | | Willingness to accept decisions | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Study 1 | Study 2 | Study 3 | Study 4 |
| Instrumental index (A) | −.42** | .39** | .25*** | .22** |
| Relational index (B) | .68*** | .57*** | .67*** | .66*** |
| Power distance (C) | −.06 | .05 | −.02 | .01 |
| A × C | .34* | .08 | .08 | .29** |
| B × C | −.30* | −.12* | −.14* | −.25*** |
| Adjusted $R^2$ (%) | 14** | 71** | 69** | 75** |

*Note.* Dummy variables were included in each regression analysis to control on the influence of the nationality/ethnicity of the respondents.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

treatment on the willingness to accept third-party decisions about how to resolve the dispute.

## Results

The issue addressed was the basis of people's reactions to their actual dealings with authorities. Regression analyses were conducted to examine the basis for students' postexperience evaluations of authorities. The results in Table 2 indicate that power-distance values interacted with relational indexes in shaping evaluations of the third party.

The nature of those interactions is shown in Table 3. They indicate that people place less weight on instrumental indexes, and greater weight on relational concerns, when they have low power-distance scores.[3]

## Discussion

The findings of these studies provide strong support for the predictions made on the basis of the relational model of authority. Those participants who are low in their power-distance values react more strongly to whether or not they are well treated by authorities when making evaluations of those authorities.

These findings are robust in several ways. First, they occur across four samples, two of students and two of employees. Second, they occur across two dependent variables: the evaluation of third-party authorities and the willingness to accept third-party decisions. Finally, they occur with two different power-

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[3]The negative $\beta$ weights for the instrumental index found in Study 1 would seem to suggest that people evaluate the authority more favorably when they receive a more negative outcome. This is an artifact of the strong influence of the relational index in the equation. In fact, in the overall equation, the correlation between outcome favorability and evaluations is $r = .16$, whereas the correlation between relational judgments and evaluations is $r = .68$. In the subgroup analyses the correlation between outcome favorability and evaluations is always nonsignificant, $r = .04$ in the high power-distance group and $r = .12$ in the low power-distance group.

Table 3

*Influences on Postexperience Judgments About Authorities: Subgroup Analysis*

| Measure | Evaluations of the third party | | | | Willingness to accept decisions | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Study 1 | | Study 2 | | Study 3 | | Study 4 | |
| | HPD | LPD | HPD | LPD | HPD | LPD | HPD | LPD |
| Instrumental index | −.14 | −.22 | .51** | .37** | .44** | .23** | .59** | .22** |
| Relational index | .25† | .47** | .41** | .55** | .40** | .66*** | .31** | .71*** |
| Adjusted $R^2$ (%) | 3† | 14** | 68** | 74** | 72** | 68** | 73** | 80** |

*Note.* Entries are beta weights for equations in which both instrumental and relational indices were entered at the same time. Dummy variables were included to control for nationality or ethnicity. HPD = high power distance. LPD = low power distance.
†$p < .10$, marginally significant. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

distance scales. Hence, it seems very clear that those who are lower in their power-distance values are more affected by how they are treated by third parties.

Although the findings outlined suggest that power-distance values influence authority relations, that finding raises a more basic issue of what power-distance values are. Hofstede's (1980) original empirical effort to identify cultural values used factor analysis to identify distinct clusters of values. One such cluster included questions about subordinates' views on the desirability of different styles of authority (autocratic–consultive), the degree to which subordinates felt comfortable disagreeing with their supervisor, and subordinates' views about the styles of authority actually used by authorities. Subsequent developments of power distance have focused on the desirability of varying forms of authority, which most directly reflects the idea of a normative social value.

One problem with the analyses reported lies in the measurement of power distance. The scales used are weak. Our effort to operationalize power distance using items from the Hofstede (1980) approach, as adapted by K. Leung (personal communication, March 10, 1990) and through items from the Schwartz value inventory (Schwartz, 1992) produces a scale that is of only moderate validity. Studies 3 and 4 addressed this problem by using a new version of the power-distance scale, this one formulated on the basis of Hofstede's (1980) conceptual framework. Unfortunately, this scale also has only moderate validity. As we have noted, because we tested an interaction hypothesis, the weakness of the scale does not influence the validity of our test of the interaction hypothesis. However, that weakness does suggest that power distance needs to be more clearly defined and measured. It may be that, as is true of individualism–collectivism (Triandis, 1995), power distance actually involves several subscales.

Whereas the power-distance scales used in these studies are too short for formal factor analysis, they can be analyzed conceptually. When the scale used in Study 4 is considered, three ideas emerge: (a) preference for hierarchy ("An organization is most effective if it is clear who is the leader and who is the subordinate"), (b) the belief that subordinates should be loyal to and obey authorities ("In order for an organization to function, employees should follow their supervisor's orders without question," "There are few qualities more admirable in an employee than dedication and loyalty to his or her company," and "If

employees trust management wholeheartedly, the organization will be most successful"), and (c) preference for an autocratic style of exercising authority ("Employees should participate more in the decisions made by management (reversed)" and "A supervisor who consults too much with his subordinates is perceived as weak"). Preference for hierarchy and loyalty were related ($r = .74$), whereas preference for an autocratic system of exercising authority was more distinct (mean $r = .16$).

This analysis suggests that there are potentially distinct elements in the social value of power distance. An important task for future research is to develop these and other possible subscales and better define the meaning of power distance. Rather than treating people's views about appropriate forms of subordinate–superior relationships as a unitary dimension of power distance it is important to elaborate various aspects of this relationship.

## Power Distance and Authority Relations

This study focused on a particular issue—the role of power-distance values in moderating the impact of treatment by authorities on reactions to authorities. This role was found to be important, because those low in power distance consistently care more about how they are treated by authorities.

If we consider the three conceptual aspects of power distance outlined above, we can examine which elements of power distance interact with the quality of treatment people receive from authorities. This analysis is shown in Table 4. It indicates that it is judgments about the value of loyalty and obedience that moderate the influence of treatment on reactions to authorities. Those who feel that loyalty and obedience are more important, are *less* influenced by how they are treated by authorities. No significant interaction was found with either preference for hierarchy or preference for an autocratic style of leadership.

Why do power-distance values moderate the importance of treatment? The argument based on the already outlined relational model is that people with low power-distance values have stronger social connections with authorities and the institutions they represent, whereas those with high power-distance connections are more impersonal and role constrained. Because it is low power distance, and a lack of value placed on loyalty or obedience, that is linked to placing more

Table 4
*Power-Distance Subscales Reflecting Different Aspects of the Construct*

| Variable | Loyalty and obligation | Preference for hierarchy | Style of exercising authority |
|---|---|---|---|
| Instrumental judgments (A) | .32** | .39** | .55** |
| Relational judgments (B) | .56** | .52** | .39** |
| Power-distance subscale (C) | .03 | −.01 | −.03 |
| A × C | .20* | .12 | .09 |
| B × C | −.15† | −.12 | .12 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ (%) | 74** | 73** | 73** |

*Note.* Entries are beta weights for equations in which both instrumental and relational indices were entered at the same time. The data are from Study 4.
†$p < .10$, marginally significant.   *$p < .05$.   **$p < .01$.   ***$p < .001$.

importance on the quality of the treatment people receive from authorities, this argument suggests that people who feel that loyalty and obedience are more important should have weaker social connections to authorities and the societies or organizations they represent.

Using data from Study 4, it is possible to directly test this argument. To do so, we created three scales reflecting the social connection between subordinates and the authority or organization (see Appendix for scale items). These scales represent (a) the degree to which people draw their sense of self from their connection to the organization and (b) the degree to which people feel a commitment to the organization. The influence of these two scales was compared with that of resource dependence, a scale reflecting the extent to which subordinates feel an instrumental connection to the organization (Tyler & Lind, 1992).

A regression analysis using the three indexes outlined to predict loyalty suggests that low power distance is linked to drawing one's sense of self from the organization ($\beta = .13, p < .05$) and to commitment to the organization ($\beta = .27, p < .001$), but not to the quality of the resources received from the organization ($\beta = -.02$, $ns$). Taken together these judgments explain 11% of the variance in loyalty. The results suggest that those low in power distance are more likely to say that they define themselves in terms of their work organization and that they identify strongly with their organization. Hence, the argument of the relational model is strongly supported. On the other hand, there is no evidence that power distance is related to people's instrumental connections with their work organization. This suggests that power-distance values are not important because they shape how dependent people feel on societies or organizations for resources.

## General Discussion

The core issue addressed in this article is the degree to which cultural values shape the viability of various forms of legal culture. We empirically addressed this broad conceptual issue by considering one subset of the question: whether one set of cultural values, those describing norms about appropriate power-distance relationships, shape the viability of one form of legal culture—in this case the ability of the legal system to resolve disputes through mediation and other informal procedures.

The relational model of authority dynamics suggests that authorities can bridge conflicts among individuals and groups through relational strategies for the effective exercise of authority; that is, by treating all those involved in disputes with neutrality, dignity, and respect, leading all disputants to infer that the authorities with whom they are dealing are trustworthy and benevolent (see Huo et al., 1996; Smith & Tyler, 1996; Tyler, 1989, 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1997d, 1998; Tyler & Belliveau, 1996; Tyler & Degoey, 1995; Tyler & Lind, 1992, 2001; Tyler & Mitchell, 1994; Tyler, Smith, & Huo, 1996). Although extensive research supports the viability of relational strategies for exercising authority, that research has generally been conducted within societies like the United States, which has low power-distance cultural values. This is important because a low power-distance culture is one in which people have social connections to authorities, and such social connections are central to the effectiveness of relational strategies for exercising authority.

Prior studies have shown that the relational model may have a limited range of effectiveness. It works less effectively in situations in which social connections with authorities are weaker. For example, the relational model describes authority relations less completely when the authorities involved are not group members (Smith, Tyler, Huo, Ortiz, & Lind, 1998; Tyler et al., 1998) or when the people involved do not identify with the groups the authorities represent (Huo et al., 1996; Smith & Tyler, 1996). This raises the possibility that the relational model will describe authority relations less completely when the people studied have higher power-distance values.

The findings of all four studies support the hypothesis that the relational model describes the psychology of authority relations better when the people being studied have lower power-distance values. As predicted by the relational model itself, lower power-distance values lead to heightened concern with relational issues when judging the actions of authorities. Consequently, the relational model of authority describes a model for the effective exercise of legal authority that works less effectively within cultures or organizations dominated by high power-distance values.

More broadly, the findings of the studies reported suggest that the effectiveness of particular strategies for exercising legal authority varies depending on the cultural values of the population within a particular society. Whereas relational approaches to the exercise of legal authority are widely shown to work within the low power-distance-value–dominated American society, the same strategies will be less effective in gaining voluntary compliance with decisions made by legal authorities following relational strategies in societies dominated by high power-distance cultural values.

## Power Distance and Alternative Dispute Resolution

One of the more important developments in the field of conflict resolution is the creation of a variety of alternatives to the resolution of conflicts through the formal legal system and the courts. These procedures, which include a wide variety of forms of mediation and arbitration, have been collectively labeled *alternative dispute resolution* procedures. One important dimension along which these procedures vary is the degree to which they vest power in third party authorities, as opposed to allowing the parties to the dispute to maintain control. Mediation gives authorities the power to suggest solutions. The issue is whether people voluntarily accept those solutions. Arbitration gives authorities the power to impose solutions.

These findings on power-distance values suggest that procedures with low third-party decision control, such as mediation, will not be equally effective for all parties. These procedures will be most effective among those who accept the decisions of third parties when those decisions are fairly made. These are the people who are low in their power-distance values. People high in power-distance values judge decisions more strongly in terms of their favorability. Hence, they will reject decisions that do not favor them. A conflict involving high power-distance people will have trouble in mediation, because such parties will reject a settlement that does not favor them. In contrast, a conflict between two low power-distance people could potentially do well in mediation, as long as the

mediator treats the parties fairly. In that case, both would be likely to accept the decision voluntarily because they were fairly treated by the authority. Hence, the power-distance values of the disputants dictate the likelihood that a particular forum will lead to a successful conflict resolution.

One important implication of these findings is that those involved in designing dispute-resolution centers could preselect procedures that would be most effective in resolving particular conflicts using the measurement of the disputant's power-distance values. This preselection would involve directing those high on power distance to procedures in which the third party has more power to impose settlements, procedures such as arbitration. On the other hand, those low in power distance could be directed to procedures that are more informal, such as mediation. Such efforts to fit the forum to the disputant are not new, but these findings provide some new guidance about how to undertake this task.

If those with high power-distance values are not as strongly influenced by the quality of the treatment they receive, how can their disputes be resolved? Approaches to managing disputes that might work better with high power-distance disputants include encouraging people to suppress conflicts and/or generally defer to authorities. Some cross-cultural psychologists have argued that Japanese and Chinese culture encourages people to suppress conflict, because conflict is viewed as undermining social harmony (Bond, Wan, Leung, & Giacalone, 1985; Haley, 1991; Ho & Chiu, 1994; Hsu, 1948; Leung & Bond, 1984; Upham, 1987), whereas Confusion philosophy, which is important in Chinese culture, encourages the unquestioning obedience to authority (Chiu, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c) and to role obligations (Young, 1981). Similar arguments have been made about Korean culture (Yoon, 1990).

The suggestion that the disputes of those with high power-distance values might be managed by emphasizing the importance of deference to authority accords well with the Study 4 findings about the meaning of power distance. Those high in their power-distance values feel more strongly that authorities ought to be obeyed. Hence, they should accept decisions reached through dispute-resolution procedures that give power to authorities, procedures such as arbitration and formal trials. They should respond well to procedures that involve giving respect *to* the status and responsibilities of the authorities. On the other hand, those low in power-distance values are more accepting of procedures from which they feel they receive fair treatment and respect for their status and rights *from* authorities. This argues for the value of informal procedures such as mediation when dealing with this group.

These findings suggest that there are two effective authority systems: those respectful to disputants and those respectful to authorities. It may be that the key issue is not which procedure is used, but whether the procedure matches the values of the disputants. If so, then the most difficult problem for the legal system will occur with disputes among people of differing social values. What procedure is appropriate for a dispute between a high-power person and a low-power person? These findings suggest that it is in this situation that the most difficult problems are likely to be found, because no procedure will gain acceptance from both parties at the same time. This conclusion is exaggerated, as quality of treatment remains a factor at all levels of power-distance values. However, it is clear that a mixed dispute will pose greater problems than a dispute among either

high or low power-distance disputants. In a mixed dispute, people will not respond to the same aspects of third-party behavior. Those high in power distance will respond to authoritative pronouncements from distant authorities, that is, by showing respect to authorities. Those low in power distance will respond to efforts from responsive and caring authorities, that is, to receiving respect from authorities.

## Why Do Power Distance Values Moderate Relational Influences?

As we have noted, the findings of Study 4 suggest that the variation in the effectiveness of relational strategies occurs because of the mechanism hypothesized by the relational model. Those lower in power-distance values are found to have a stronger social connection with authorities and the organizations they represent. Those lower in power distance are more likely to say that they draw their sense of self from their group memberships and to feel committed to the group. In contrast, there is no evidence that those lower in power-distance values feel they need their jobs more than others do, are more likely to feel that they must stay in their jobs, or evaluate their supervisors as having more or less favorable views about their job performance. Hence, power distance values appear important for social reasons; namely, because they change the strength of the social connection between individuals and authorities.[4]

## Implications for the Relational Model of Authority

This study is part of a research program designed to test predictions drawn from the relational model of authority about *when* relational concerns will be more or less central to subordinates' evaluations of authorities. On the basis of the relational model, we predicted that social orientation with respect to authority relations, as reflected in participants' power-distance values, should influence the basis of reactions to authorities. This prediction was confirmed in all four studies. Thus, the findings strongly support the predictions of the relational model of authority.

The results of the studies reported above provide a new class of support for the relational model of authority. Past research has focused on demonstrating the validity of the relational model by showing that reactions to authorities involved in resolving conflicts are strongly affected by the neutrality, trustworthiness, and interpersonal quality of the treatment received from those authorities. In other words, previous studies validate the relational model by showing that relational

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[4]There is also another aspect of the findings that supports the relational argument about the mechanisms that lead to power-distance effects. The relational model suggests that those low in power distance should be more open to information from authorities. Hence, they should change more than do those who are higher in power distance. The findings of the studies support this prediction. If we consider the total adjusted $R^2$ values for the studies, which reflect the degree to which judgments about the experience influenced the dependent variables, the average $R^2$ was 54% for those high in power distance and 59% for those low in power distance. In other words, those low in power distance were more responsive to their experiences, at least insofar as we have captured the experience with our relational and instrumental measures. They were more affected by their experiences with authorities, as would be expected on the basis of the relational model. However, this difference is not large and was not found in Study 3.

concerns are generally important to the acceptance of authorities and their decisions. The studies reported here validate the relational model in a different way: by examining *when* relational concerns are more or less important.

## Implications of Power Distance

The second key finding in these studies is that the social orientation of the person toward authorities shapes the psychology of authority relations. Although the concept of power distance is drawn from studies of varying cultures, power distance is operationalized as a psychological characteristic. In other words, power distance is treated here as a characteristic of people, which is shaped by the culture within which they live. By virtue of that culture, people are more or less likely to have particular cultural values, but the level of those values varies among individuals within every culture. This study views cultural values at the individual level.

The findings of all four studies suggest that the views about authorities held by individuals influence their reactions to their experiences with real-world authorities. People with a preference for low power distance focus more on relational concerns when deciding (a) how to react to third parties with whom they are dealing and (b) whether to accept the decisions of those third parties. These findings show that people with varying cultural backgrounds differ in their conceptions of how to evaluate and react to authorities. The characteristics of the people making such evaluations clearly matter in determining reactions to authorities.

Our findings on the consequences of differences in power-distance orientation provide information that sheds new light on recent efforts to identify *who* will care most strongly about relational issues. Previous research has not been very successful in identifying person-based effects on authority processes. For example, one study (Tyler, 1988) looked for individual and group differences in how citizens dealt with police officers and judges, whereas a later study (Tyler, 1994a) explored the same question in the context of people's evaluations of Congress. In both cases people were differentiated by their demographic characteristics—age, sex, ethnicity, education, income, ideology (liberal–conservative), and political party membership. Neither study found differences in the role of relational concerns in defining the meaning of procedural justice.

The finding reported here suggests that exploring the impact of social orientations, along dimensions such as power distance, may be a more promising approach than looking across demographic dimensions in authority relations.[5] Especially promising, we believe, are social orientation dimensions that are directly related to how authority is viewed. Power distance is one such dimension.

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[5] It may also be the case that a key difference between this study and the prior studies outlined is the focus of concern. The prior studies explored the influence of relational judgments on evaluations of the fairness of a procedure. This study, in contrast, examined the influence of relational judgments on the willingness to accept decisions made by authorities. Recent research suggests that these two judgments are distinct (Tyler, 1996). Hence, the lack of prior findings concerning demographic influences on the meaning of procedural justice may not indicate that demographic influences would not have been found if the dependent variable in the prior studies noted was the basis on which people decided whether or not to accept the decisions of authorities.

One key aspect of future efforts to understand the effects of power distance on social behavior clearly has to be research establishing how to measure power distance. In this study power distance was operationalized in two ways, both derived from Hofstede (1980, 1991). In addition, items created by Schwartz (1992) were used in Studies 1 and 2. However, in all four studies the internal validity of the scale was low, ranging from 0.5 to 0.6. Further, other studies operationalizing basic cultural dimensions using different scales derived from Hofstede also found low indices of validity (see Triandis, 1995). These findings suggest that power distance may be a multidimensional construct that needs to be measured through a more sophisticated scale, which identifies and distinguishes among the different facets of this construct. Such an effort to develop a more complex representation of power distance would follow the course of recent research on individualism–collectivism. Scales developed to measure that construct were also found to be low in overall validity. This issue has been addressed by developing a more multidimensional conception of individualism–collectivism (Triandis, 1995).

Because the argument presented in this analysis tests an interaction prediction—that low power distance will lead to greater concern about relational issues—the moderate levels of validity found for the power-distance scale should not invalidate the findings outlined. Problems with the validity of the scale are a constant that should influence the interaction of power distance with relational judgments at all levels of power distance. If the scale were, for example, sufficiently weak, it should have no influence on the importance that people place on relational concerns. However, as the measurement of power distance becomes more sophisticated, it seems likely that the strength of the interaction effects found will increase and their nature will be further clarified. In other words, it will be possible to say more clearly what it is about power-distance values that affects the basis on which authorities are evaluated.

Our preliminary findings suggest that power distance shapes people's social connection to authorities and the organizations they represent. Those low in power distance feel that they draw more of their sense of self from the organization, and feel more committed to that organization. However, power distance does not influence people's instrumental judgments about their job.

It is also important to note that there are larger questions that this study does not address about the meaning of power distance. As originally conceived by Hofstede (1980) and as developed in subsequent research on cultural values, cultural values are viewed as general judgments about what is right or desirable. These judgments are suggested to be communicated through membership in particular cultures. However, this study does not address the question of where power-distance values come from. They may represent cultural values or the values of particular organizations. Further, it is clear that there is considerable within-site variation in these basic values. Hence, whatever cultural or organizational influences shape power distance are weak in magnitude. An important task for future research is to clarify the nature of basic social values, such as power-distance values.

Although further work on the concept of power distance is clearly needed, these findings suggest that such an effort is likely to yield findings of important practical value. It is clear that not all people react in the same way to third-party

conflict resolution procedures. Some people are very willing to accept third-party decisions when those decisions are fairly made. Others focus more directly on what they gain or lose from the decision. Power distance values map this difference. Hence, those low in power distance, who focus more strongly on fairness of treatment, can be directed toward mediation and other informal dispute resolution techniques. Those high in power distance, who focus more on outcome favorability, require procedures in which authorities have more power to dictate outcomes.

## Conclusion

The findings reported here show, convincingly we believe, that the basis on which people make an evaluation of authorities differs depending on subordinates' social value orientations. These findings suggest that the psychology of authority relations is unlikely to produce a single model describing mechanisms for the effective exercise of legal authority. Instead, the basis of such evaluations is intertwined with the social values of those evaluating authorities. Without understanding the cultural values held by subordinates, it is not possible to understand the basis on which authorities can function effectively.

Cross-cultural studies of authority, whether of informal authorities or of formal authorities and rules, such as legal rules and institutions, have been concerned with the potential influence of cultural values on authority relations (Chase, 1996). To the extent that cultural values influence how people decide whether or not to defer to the authorities who handle problems or resolve disputes, the forms of legal authority that are effective within particular societies will change. Further, the ability of societies to maintain the legitimacy of their legal and other authority systems or to change their legal procedures will depend on the degree to which their existing or proposed procedures do or do not accord with cultural values. Legal systems at odds with cultural values should find it more difficult to gain compliance, and to an even greater degree consent and deference, from the members of particular societies. Hence, cultural values constrain and shape the nature of possible authority systems (Damaska, 1986; Yoon, 1990).

A recent example of such an argument in the American case is provided by Robinson and Darley (1995), who examined discrepancies between public morality and formal law within the United States. They argued that discrepancies threaten the viability of the legal system, because people are less willing to follow rules that do not accord with their own values about what is right and wrong (see Tyler, 1990). The similar argument being made here is that people are less willing to defer to authorities whose behavior does not accord with the attributes they value—with those valued attributes changing on the basis of their underlying cultural values.

Lastly, if cultural values influence views about how to solve problems or resolve disputes, this suggests that disputes occurring across cultures should be more difficult to resolve, because those who are disputing might differ in their cultural values and, consequently, in the basis of their judgments about the authorities who are attempting to resolve their differences with others. For example, in a dispute between two people, one person—with low power-distance values—might evaluate the authority involved by judging their treatment by that

authority, whereas the other person—with high power-distance values—might evaluate the authority involved by judging the favorability of their outcome.

An interesting question posed by cross-cultural conflict resolution is whether there are particular cultural values that are more or less facilitative of effective third-party conflict resolution, or whether it is simply important that the parties to a dispute have a consensus about the values that they hold (Gibson & Sanders, 1997). It may be that many forms of authority can be effective in regulating social interactions, with particular forms being especially effective when citizens hold a certain set of cultural values. For example, relational mechanisms may work with those low in power distance, and other mechanisms may work equally well with those high in power distance.[6]

On the other hand, it may be true that some forms of legal authority are simply more effective than others. For example, it may be true that the relational mechanisms of authority that have been identified in studies of American legal culture are generally more effective than are forms of authority that depend on conflict avoidance or unquestioning obedience to authorities and/or role obligations (i.e., forms of authority more typical of societies such as Japan, Korea, or China). This is an empirical question beyond the scope of this study.[7]

Legal scholars have already raised questions about whether any form of legal authority will be universally more effective (Yoon, 1990). The findings of this study provide empirical support for this argument. They suggest that examinations of the relative effectiveness of forms of legal authority must take into account a consideration of the cultural values of those being studied. It cannot be assumed that a single form of legal authority will be equally desirable or effective within all societies. Instead, it is important to take into consideration the cultural values of the population.

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[6]This argument is similar to the suggestion within political science that many forms of government are potentially viable, with particular forms being especially viable within the context of certain cultural or social values. A society in which the population shares a belief in the rule of law, for example, may find democracy to be a viable form of government, whereas within other societies in which people lack such beliefs, democracy may not be an equally viable form of government. However, in such a setting other, nondemocratic, forms of government may be viable in fulfilling political functions.

[7]An example of a study that empirically compares the effectiveness of varying types of legal authorities is Tyler (1990). Tyler (1990) argued that legal systems work more effectively if there are attitudes within the population suggesting that authorities are legitimate and ought to be obeyed. He suggests that the effectiveness of legal authorities benefits from such attitudes of legitimacy among the population, attitudes that lead people to voluntarily defer to the decisions of legal authorities. He contrasts a population with such supportive attitudes to one in which people only accept legal decisions when compelled to through the threat of punishment. Tyler argued that legal authority works more effectively when supportive attitudes are present. Similarly, in contrasting legal rationality to charismatic and traditional authority within the context of Western capitalist societies Weber argued that legal rationality facilitated the development of modern capitalism because it was a generally superior form of legal authority (Bendix, 1977). That superiority developed from its greater predictability, with decisions based on clear and understandable rules. These approaches to legal authority have assumed that a single form of legal authority will be generally more effective than others.

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# Appendix

## Study 1

Participants were undergraduates from three countries. The total sample size was 774 people—324 from the United States, 244 from Germany, and 206 from Hong Kong. Each disputant described reactions to a past real-world dispute in which he or she had been involved. Half of the participants were asked to recall a conflict with someone of their own ethnicity and half were asked to recall a conflict with someone of a different ethnicity. Participants were asked about a real past incident. Of the 774 participants, 185 described an incident for which they actually used mediation or arbitration (i.e., in which a third party authority was involved). This analysis is of those respondents.

### Power Distance

Power distance was assessed using four items adapted by Leung from Hofstede's cultural dimension of power distance (K. Leung, personal communication, March 10, 1990) and two items from the Schwartz value survey (Schwartz, 1992). The four adapted Hofstede (1980) items were "It is best for our society to let the elites decide what is good for us," "Conflict among people is minimized if everyone has equal rights in society," "If followers trust their leaders wholeheartedly, the group will be most successful," and "An organization is most effective if it is clear who is the leader and who is the follower." The two items from the Schwartz inventory (Schwartz, 1992) asked participants to indicate the personal importance of social power (control over others) and authority (the right to lead). These six items were combined after a factor analysis of the hierarchy items and all of the Schwartz values indicated that these items formed a single factor ($\alpha = .66$).

An examination of the mean power-distance value scores of each culture indicates that the three cultures differed as expected. The highest power distance was found in Hong Kong ($M = 3.15$), the lowest in Germany ($M = 2.27$), and an intermediate level in the United States ($M = 2.61$). Comparison of the means indicated that Hong Kong was significantly higher than Germany, $t(448) = 14.38$, $p < .001$, and the United States, $t(528) = 9.03$, $p < .001$. Further, the United States was higher than Germany, $t(566) = 5.58$, $p < .001$.

### Instrumental Judgments

Three items were used to assess the instrumental evaluations of the dispute-resolution efforts of the third party. asking whether the participants got what they wanted, whether they had control over the outcome, and whether the outcome was favorable to them ($\alpha = .78$).

### Relational Judgments

Eight items were used to assess the relational evaluations of the dispute resolution efforts of the third party. The items focused on what happened during the dispute-resolution session. Participants were asked if relevant issues were brought into the open, if they were treated with dignity, if their rights were respected, if they could state their views, if facts were considered, if the third party tried to be fair, if their arguments were considered, and if they were given opportunities to participate in the procedure ($\alpha = .90$).

### Evaluation of the Third Party

The dependent variable was the participant's general evaluation of the third party. Participants were asked to rate the third party on six dimensions: "equally fair to everyone," "helpful," "unbiased," "fair," "trustworthy," "polite," and "honest" ($\alpha = .88$).

## Study 2

In Study 2 American and Japanese college students described and rated interactions with their professors. American and Japanese students were included in the sample because the cross-cultural literature suggests that these two cultures differ fundamentally in their values and social orientations, including power distance (see Hofstede, 1980, 1991; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Americans are generally thought to be oriented toward more egalitarian authority–subordinate relations (low power distance), and the Japanese are thought to be oriented toward more hierarchical authority–subordinate relations (high power distance; Hofstede, 1980). The American respondents were 181 undergraduate students at the University of California, Berkeley. The Japanese respondents were 165 undergraduate students at Tohoku University in Sendai, Japan. Respondents at both sites participated in the study in return for course credit.

The respondents were asked to recall the last time they consulted with a professor about a problem. They were reminded that students may consult with professors about a variety of issues including the following: getting help with questions raised in class, getting help with general problems of student life, settling disagreements about how class assignments should be done, discussing issues of the amount and due dates of class assignments, raising concerns about grading, and seeking help in resolving conflicts with others. Respondents who were unable to recall such an experience with a college professor were directed to describe a similar experience with a high school teacher.

Respondents were asked to provide a written description of the experience they had recalled and then to respond to a variety of questions about that particular experience, including evaluations of (a) their outcome, (b) how they were treated by the professor, and (c) their perceptions of the legitimacy of the professor's authority. Next, respondents were directed to think about their own opinions and feelings. They then responded to items assessing their power-distance orientation.

### Power Distance

A factor analysis of the six items used to measure power distance in Study 1 revealed a single factor using five of the six items. Those items were "It is best to let elites decide what is good for us," "Trusting leaders leads to group success," "Effective organizations have a clear leader," and two Schwartz values—social power and authority. The five items were combined into an index of power distance ($\alpha$ = .61).

A comparison of the two samples supports the view that American and Japanese students differ in their values and social orientations. The Japanese students had higher power-distance scores, $t(342)$ = 5.39, $p$ < .001.

### Instrumental Judgments

Instrumental judgments of the reported experience with a professor were measured using 5-point scales assessing agreement with the following statements: "I was satisfied with the outcome," "The outcome was favorable to me," "The authority shared control," and "The outcome was worse than I expected (reversed)" ($\alpha$ = .86).

### Relational Judgments

Relational judgments of the reported experience with a professor were measured using 5-point scales assessing agreement with the following statements: "I was given an opportunity to state my views," "My views were considered," "The authority tried to do what was best for me," "They treated me politely," and "The methods used were unbiased" ($\alpha$ = .87).

## Evaluations of the Professor

Evaluations of the professor were measured using 5-point scales assessing (a) willingness to voluntarily accept the decisions made by third party and (b) agreement with the following general descriptions of the professor: "even-handed," "ethical," and "helpful" ($\alpha = .89$).

# Study 3

Study 3 respondents were employees in Hong Kong and in Germany. Each respondent reported a personal experience in which they either took a dispute to their supervisor or had a disagreement or conflict with their supervisor. They answered questions about relational and instrumental aspects of their supervisor's handling of that dispute, as well as questions about their willingness to accept the decisions made by their supervisor. The Hong Kong respondents were 292 workers who were recruited while riding a commuter ferry to participate in a study of employee–supervisor relationships. The German respondents were 52 workers recruited from an automobile manufacturing plant.

The questionnaire was described to the respondents as a study of employees' experiences with their supervisors. Respondents were asked to think of their immediate work supervisor. They then read a passage that suggested that people talk with their supervisors for many reasons including the following: making decisions or settling disagreements about how work should be done; discussion issues of pay, promotions, work hours, or other such issues; and getting help in resolving a dispute with a customer, coworker, or the supervisor. The respondents were asked to provide a written description of the experience they had the last time they went to their supervisor for help in resolving one of the issues described or any other issue that mattered to them.

After describing the experience, participants responded to specific questions about that particular experience including evaluations of how they were treated by their supervisor and the favorability of their outcome. The dependent variable was their willingness to accept their supervisor's decision. Finally, they were told that the researchers were interested in their views about the employee's proper role in an organization and they responded to statements that assessed their power-distance orientation in the work setting.

## Power Distance

The items used to assess power-distance orientation were adapted from Hofstede's international work survey (Hofstede, 1980). Power-distance orientation was measured with 4-point scales assessing agreement with the following statements: "In order for an organization to function, employees should follow their supervisors' orders without question," "Employees should participate more in the decisions made by management" (reversed), "A supervisor who consults too much with his subordinates is perceived as weak," "There are few qualities more admirable in an employee than dedication and loyalty to his/her company," "An organization is most effective if it is clear who is the leader and who is the subordinate," and "If employees trust management wholeheartedly, the organization will be most successful." These six items were combined to yield a single power-distance orientation scale with an alpha of .54.

As expected, German workers were significantly lower in their power-distance scores than were workers in Hong Kong, $t(340) = 3.38$, $p < .001$.

## Instrumental Judgments

Instrumental judgments of the reported experience with a work supervisor were measured using 5-point scales assessing agreement with the following questions: "Overall, how satisfied were you with the outcome?" "How favorable was the outcome to you?" "In

terms of your outcome, how much did you gain or lose?" and "How much influence did you have over the decisions made by your supervisor?" The four items were combined to yield an instrumental judgment scale with an alpha of .79.

## Relational Judgments

Relational judgments of the reported experience with a work supervisor were measured using 4-point scales assessing agreement with the following questions: "How politely were you treated by your supervisor?" "How much concern was shown by your supervisor for your rights?" "To what extent did your supervisor get all the information needed to make good decisions about how to handle the issues involved?" "How hard did your supervisor try to bring the issues into the open so that they could be resolved?" "How honest was your supervisor in what he or she said to you?" "How much of an opportunity were you given to describe your problem before any decisions were made about how to handle it?" "How much consideration was given to your views when decisions were made about how to handle the problem?" "How hard did your supervisor try to do the right thing by you?" and "How hard did your supervisor try to take account of your needs in the situation?" The nine items were combined to yield a relational judgment scale with an alpha of .91.

## Willingness to Accept Decisions

Respondents were asked "If this problem occurs again in the future, are you willing to resolve it in a similar way?" and "To what extent were you willing to voluntarily accept the decision your supervisor made?" ($\alpha = .73$).

## Study 4

Study 4 replicated Study 3 using a new sample drawn from one overarching cultural context—the United States—but drawn from four general ethnic and racial categories. The respondents were employees at a public sector organization. As in Study three, the respondents reported on experiences they had at work involving their supervisors. Those experiences could involve problems at work, disputes among employees, and/or disputes with the supervisor. As in Study 3, power-distance orientation was assessed using measures we adapted from Hofstede's international work survey (Hofstede, 1980).

The respondents in Study 4 were employees at a public sector organization who were members of four ethnically based work associations. Completed surveys were received from 29% of the employees in the sample. The final data set consisted of 305 surveys from 117 Asian Americans, 58 Chicano or Latino Americans, 56 European Americans, 45 African Americans, and 25 surveys from people who indicated that they were members of some other group or that they belonged to more than one ethnic category.

The survey approach was chosen to develop a multiethnic data set. Four ethnically based work associations agreed to participate in a study of employee–supervisor relations and provided mailing lists of their membership to the researchers. The written survey instrument was mailed to each of the individuals in the mailing lists followed by a reminder letter and a second mailing of the survey.

Although the use of a mail questionnaire led to a low response rate (29%), those who responded had several desired characteristics. First, they identified with their ethnic group membership in that they belonged to voluntary ethnically based work associations. In fact, on average, those in the sample did indicate that they identified more with their ethnic subgroup than with the larger group (the work organization as a whole), $t(212) = 4.03$, $p < .01$. Ethnicity as a social category was very salient among those who participated in the study. Second, those who responded felt strongly about their experiences with their

supervisor. A large proportion of respondents indicated feeling frustrated (54%), irritated (45%), and angry (40%). The ability of authorities to maintain legitimacy is clearly tested when authorities are confronted with strong negative reactions to personal experiences (Tyler, 1990).

The introduction to the survey and its instructions were similar to those used for Study 3. Respondents were asked to report about an experience they had with their work supervisor in dealing with an important issue. In addition to providing responses to questions about how they were treated by their supervisor, and the favorability of the outcome they received, respondents indicated their willingness to accept the decisions made and their power-distance orientation.

### Power Distance

The items used to assess power-distance orientation were adapted from Hofstede's international work survey (Hofstede, 1980). The items used in this study were the same ones described in Study 3. The alpha for the power-distance scale in this sample was .55.

### Instrumental Judgments

Instrumental judgments of the reported experience with the work supervisor were measured using 5-point scales assessing agreement with the following questions: "Overall, how satisfied were you with the outcome?" "How favorable was the outcome to you?" "In terms of your outcome, how much did you gain or lose?" and "How much influence did you have over the decisions made by your supervisor?" The four items were combined to yield an instrumental judgment scale with an alpha of .90.

### Relational Judgments

Relational judgments of the reported experience with a work supervisor were measured using 4-point scales assessing agreement with the following questions: "How politely were you treated by your supervisor?" "How much concern was shown by your supervisor for your rights?" "To what extent did your supervisor get all the information needed to make good decisions about how to handle the issues involved?" "How hard did your supervisor try to bring the issues into the open so that they could be resolved?" "How honest was your supervisor in what he or she said to you?" "How much of an opportunity were you given to describe your problem before any decisions were made about how to handle it?" "How much consideration was given to your views when decisions were made about how to handle the problem?" "How hard did your supervisor try to do the right thing by you?" "How dignified was your supervisor's treatment of you?" "How hard did your supervisor try to explain the reasons behind his or her decision(s)?" "How likely do you think it is that the reasons your supervisor gave for his or her decisions were the real reasons for making those decisions?" "How hard did your supervisor try to take account of your needs in the situation?" and "Did the methods used by your supervisor favor one person over another or were they equally fair to everyone involved?" The 13 items were combined to yield a relational judgment scale with an alpha of .90.

### Willingness to Accept Decisions

Two questions were asked: "If this problem or issue were to occur again in the future, how willing are you to see it be resolved in a similar way?" and "How willing were you to voluntarily accept the decisions your supervisor made?" ($\alpha = .70$).

## Why Does Power Distance Moderate the Impact of Treatment?

### Sources of Sense of Self

We asked participants "How important are 'your work' and 'the organization you work for' to the way that you think of yourself as a person?"

### Commitment

The following questions were asked about commitment: "I talk up the organization I work for to my friends as a good place to work," "I would accept almost any type of job assignment to keep working where I work now," "I find that my values and the values of the organization I work for are very similar," "I am proud to tell others that I am part of the organization I work for," "The organization I work for really inspires me to do the very best job I can," "I cannot think of another organization I would rather work for," "All in all, I am satisfied with my job," "I would recommend to close friends that they join the organization I work for," "It would be hard for me to find another job I liked as much as the one I have now," "I am proud to think of myself as a member of the organization I work for," "When someone praises the accomplishments of my organization, I feel it is a personal compliment to me," and "I find that my values and the values of most people at work are often very different."

### Instrumental Connection

A seven-item scale was used to assess this instrumental connection: "I feel secure about my position where I work," "I can count on my supervisor to help me out when I need it," "My supervisor is willing to help me solve problems," "My supervisor is willing to let me change jobs," "I sometimes do things at work that I do not agree with because I cannot afford to lose my job (reversed)," "I often think about quitting my job (reversed)," and "I will probably look for a job outside my current organization in the next year (reversed)."