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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Social Distance, Framing, and Judgment: A Construal Level Perspective

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*Drawing upon construal level theory, this research investigates the influence of social distance on individuals' responses to persuasive messages. Experiment 1 (*N = *133) demonstrates that the persuasive impact of a gain frame becomes stronger when people make judgments for socially distant (e.g., others) versus proximal entities (e.g., selves). On the other hand, the persuasive impact of a loss frame remains the same across different levels of social distance. Experiment 2 (*N = *135) shows that the persuasiveness of a societal frame becomes stronger when people make judgments for socially distant versus proximal entities, whereas the persuasiveness of an individual frame is unaffected by social distance. Experiment 3 (*N = *80) provides evidence that mental salience of positive and societal outcomes of an action increases as social distance increases, whereas mental salience of negative and individual outcomes remains the same across different levels of social distance.*

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A tree, when viewed from a far distance, may simply appear to be a pile of green leaves. When observing closely, however, you may see more details: that it has exceptionally large leaves, that it has thick branches, and that it hosts many bird nests. Just as physical distance may influence how we perceive the world, psychological distance, too, can have an impact on our perceptions. Construal level theory (CLT) (Trope & Liberman, 2003) postulates that people construct different mental representations of the same information depending on whether the information pertains to the near future (i.e., psychologically proximal) or the distant future (i.e., psychologically distant). For example, in one study, Liberman and Trope (1998) asked participants to imagine themselves watching TV either tomorrow or next year and describe this activity. Interestingly, those asked to imagine watching TV tomorrow came up with concrete descriptions such as "sitting on the sofa,

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flipping channels," whereas those asked to imagine watching TV next year thought of abstract descriptions such as "being entertained."

According to Trope and his colleagues, the principles of CLT apply to various forms of psychological distance, including the so-called social distance (e.g., self vs. other, in-group vs. out-group). People may construct different mental representations of the same information depending on whether the information pertains to selves or others. In light of CLT, the current research seeks to understand the impact of social distance on individuals' responses to persuasive messages utilizing various frames. Specifically, this research examines whether the persuasive impact of various message frames (i.e., gain frames, loss frames, societal frames, individual frames) differs as a function of the reference group (e.g., selves vs. others) for whom judgments are made after message exposure.

Theoretical background

Construal Level Theory

A basic tenet of CLT (Trope & Liberman, 2003) is that temporal distance influences the way people mentally represent the same information or event. The greater the temporal distance, the more likely are events to be represented in terms of abstract, schematic, and decontextualized features, often referred to as high-level construals. On the other hand, as temporal distance decreases, events are more likely to be represented in terms of concrete, detailed, and contextualized features, often referred to as low-level construals.

In support of these propositions, Liberman and Trope (1998) found that students, when asked to imagine themselves engaging in several activities (e.g., moving into a new apartment) either tomorrow or next year and to describe these activities, generated more high-level construals (e.g., starting a new life) in the distant future condition than in the near future condition. In contrast, more low-level construals (e.g., packing and carrying boxes) were generated in the near future condition than in the distant future condition. In a series of studies, Forster, Friedman, and Liberman (2004) demonstrate that a distant future time perspective facilitates abstract thinking, whereas a near future time perspective facilitates concrete thinking. They found that participants who envisioned their lives and imagined themselves engaging in a task 1 year later as opposed to the next day subsequently performed better on a series of insight tasks requiring abstract thinking. On the other hand, a near future time perspective improved analytical problem-solving skills compared to a distant future time perspective.

Temporal distance is one dimension of what Lewin (1951) called *psychological distance*, which also includes the so-called social distance (e.g., self vs. other, in-group vs. out-group). Although CLT has primarily dealt with temporal distance, CLT can be considered as a unified theory of psychological distance (Trope & Liberman, 2003, p. 403). Thus, we should expect that social distance, like temporal distance, would influence the way people mentally represent the same information or event.

Social distance as a form of psychological distance

In light of CLT, as social distance increases, information will be represented in more abstract, schematic, and decontextualized terms (i.e., high-level construals). On the other hand, as social distance decreases, information will be represented in more concrete, detailed, and contextualized terms (i.e., low-level construals). Consistent with these assumptions, previous research has shown that people tend to explain others' behaviors in dispositional (i.e., high-level, abstract) terms and their own behavior in situational (i.e., low-level, concrete) terms (e.g., Fiedler, Semin, Finkenauer, & Berkel, 1995). Other research has demonstrated that people tend to perceive in-groups and out-groups differently. Compared with in-groups, out-groups are perceived as more homogenous (e.g., Jones, Wood, & Quattrone, 1981), as having more predictable sets of properties (e.g., Linville, Fischer, & Yoon, 1996), and are described in more abstract terms (e.g., Fiedler et al., 1995).

According to CLT, differences in mental representations of events associated with large versus small psychological distance can have significant evaluative consequences. More specifically because high-level construals become more salient as psychological distance increases, we should expect judgments about the event be more determined by high-level construals when psychological distance is large versus small. In contrast, low-level construals should be more influential when psychological distance is small versus large.

These propositions are supported by a number of studies (e.g., Ebert, 2005; Liberman & Trope, 1998; Pennington & Roese, 2003; Ziamou & Veryzer, 2005). For example, Ziamou and Veryzer demonstrate that, in forming judgments about a new product, people put more weight on the product's functionality (i.e., a high-level construal) when the purchase is expected to occur in the distant versus near future. On the other hand, the product's interface design (i.e., a low-level construal) is more influential when the purchase is expected to occur in the near versus distant future.

More relevant to this research, Ebert (2005) investigates the influence of social distance on the way people make judgments. In one of her studies, participants were asked to list the long-term benefits (i.e., high-level construals) and short-term costs (i.e., low-level construals) of a particular course of action. Then half of the participants rated the importance of the long-term benefits and short-term costs for themselves, whereas the other half did the rating for their friends. Interestingly, Ebert found that short-term costs were rated as being much more important when the judgments were made for selves versus friends. Long-term benefits, on the other hand, were perceived as equally important under the two conditions. Consistent with CLT, Ebert's research suggests that low-level construals such as short-term costs of a course of action tend to be more influential in forming judgments for a socially proximal entity (e.g., self) than for a socially distant entity (e.g., a friend).

Gain–loss framing and construal level

Gain–loss framing, sometimes referred to as *message framing* or *goal framing* (Levin, Schneider, & Gaeth, 1998), has recently received considerable attention in the area of

persuasive communication (e.g., Block & Keller, 1995; Davis, 1995; Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990; Meyerowitz & Chaiken, 1987; Mitchell, 2001; Rothman, Bartels, Wlaschin, & Salovey, 2006; Umphrey, 2003; for reviews, see O'Keefe & Jensen, 2006, in press-a, in press-b). Rooted in prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), research on gain–loss framing has mostly been concerned about the relative persuasiveness of a gain versus loss frame. In a persuasive message, a gain frame emphasizes the positive outcomes of compliance (e.g., "If you apply sunscreen, your skin will be protected from the sun's relentless ultraviolet radiation."), whereas a loss frame highlights the negative outcomes of noncompliance (e.g., "If you don't apply sunscreen, your skin will be harmed by the sun's relentless ultraviolet radiation."). A primary finding from previous research is that a loss frame tends to be more persuasive than a gain frame (e.g., Meyerowitz & Chaiken, 1987; Rothman, Salovey, Antone, Keough, & Martin, 1993), although reversed as well as null effects have also been reported (e.g., Block & Keller, 1995; Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990).

Rather than focusing on the relative persuasiveness of a gain versus loss frame, this research approaches gain–loss framing from the perspective of CLT, examining how the effectiveness of each separate frame differs as a function of social distance. Recent studies suggest that a gain frame may differ from a loss frame in terms of construal level (e.g., Eyal, Liberman, & Trope, 2004; Pennington & Roese, 2003). For example, Eyal et al. (2004) speculate that positive attributes associated with a course of action may constitute a higher construal level than negative attributes. The researchers provided support for this posit by demonstrating the subordination of negative attributes (or cons) to positive attributes (or pros), which means that the importance of negative attributes is dependent on the value of positive attributes more than the importance of the positive attributes is dependent on the value of the negative attributes (the notion of asymmetric conditional importance). In an experiment utilizing a 2×2 factorial design, Eyal et al. had college students evaluate the attractiveness of a student loan offer. Half of the participants were told by a specialist that the student loan had either some pros or no pros. They were further asked to indicate their interest in knowing if the loan had any cons. The other half was informed that the loan had either some cons or no cons. They were then asked to indicate their interest in knowing if the loan had any pros. It turned out that participants' interest in knowing more about the cons of the student loan was affected by the initial information about the pros: Interest was considerably lower when there were no pros than when there were some pros. On the other hand, participants' interest in knowing more about the pros of the student loan was not affected by the initial information about the cons: Interest remained high regardless of whether there were no cons or some cons. These findings demonstrated the subordination of cons to pros, that is, the importance of cons depends on whether there are pros more than the importance of pros depends on whether there are cons. Eyal et al. concluded that positive attributes associated with a course of action constitute a higher construal level than negative attributes.

Further supporting the assertion that positive attributes constitute a higher construal level than negative attributes, Eyal et al. found that people generated more

arguments in favor of a social plan when it was expected to be launched in the distant versus near future. In comparison, more arguments against the social plan were generated when the plan was expected to be launched in the near versus distant future. In a similar vein, Pennington and Roese (2003) suggest that positive or promotional outcomes of an event constitute high-level construals, whereas negative or preventional outcomes represent low-level construals. In one of their studies, the researchers asked students to indicate their concerns about an upcoming exam at two time points: 2 weeks before and on the day of the exam. The researchers found that students were more concerned about positive or promotional outcomes (e.g., getting a high score) when giving the ratings 2 weeks before versus on the day of the exam. In comparison, concerns for negative or preventional outcomes (e.g., disappointing oneself) remained the same across the two time points.

It is important to note that both the literature and the current research have adopted a broad treatment of *construals*. By definition, construals should refer representations of information in people's minds. Researchers have implicitly extended the range of construals to encompassing information that exists outside of people's minds when claiming that pros (or promotional outcomes) are high-level construals and cons (or preventional outcomes) are low-level construals. Thus, construals are used here to refer not only to representations of information in people's minds but also to information external to people's minds (e.g., the content of a persuasive message).

In sum, the literature suggests that a gain frame, which focuses on the positive outcomes of compliance with a persuasive message, is associated with a higher construal level than a loss frame, which emphasizes the negative outcomes of noncompliance. Based on CLT, I expected that a gain frame would be more persuasive when judgments are made for socially distant entities (e.g., others) than for socially proximal entities (e.g., selves). I also expected that a loss frame would be more persuasive when judgments are made for socially proximal entities than for socially distant entities. These propositions are summarized herein.

H1: There will be an interaction between social distance and gain–loss framing such that (a) the persuasive impact of a gain frame will increase when people make judgments for a socially distant entity versus a socially proximal entity and (b) the persuasive impact of a loss frame will decrease when people make judgments for a socially distant entity versus a socially proximal entity.

Societal–individual framing and construal level

Societal–individual framing has received less research attention compared to gain–loss framing. A societal frame is defined here as a message strategy that focuses on the implications of complying or not complying with the advocacy for the society in general (e.g., Taking public transit instead of driving a car for daily commute provides cleaner air for people in your community.). An individual frame, on the other hand, emphasizes the consequences of compliance or noncompliance for the

individual (e.g., Taking public transit instead of driving a car for daily commute provides cleaner air for you.).

In general, societal implications seem relatively abstract and decontextualized, whereas personal consequences appear fairly concrete and contextualized. Thus, we may expect that a societal frame be generally associated with a higher construal level than an individual frame. Although no direct evidence is available to support this assertion, recent work by Shah, Kwak, Schmierbach, and Zubric (2004) provides indirect support for the validity of this proposition. Part of Shah et al.'s research was to investigate the relative effect of a societal versus individual frame in a news story on individuals' cognitive complexity. The researchers found that participants generated a more detailed description of the attributes of the central issue after being exposed to a message framed at the individual level than they did after being exposed to a message framed at the societal level. Assuming what the participants thought about was a reflection of the message content, it could be argued that an individual frame was more concrete and detailed than a societal frame and thus was associated with a lower construal level.

Based on the above arguments, I expected that a social frame would be more persuasive when people make judgments for socially distant entities compared to when judgments are made for socially proximal entities. In addition, I expected that an individual frame would be more persuasive when people make judgments for socially proximal versus distant entities. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed.

> H2: There will be an interaction between social distance and societal–individual framing such that (a) the persuasive impact of a societal frame will increase when people make judgments for a socially distant entity versus a socially proximal entity and (b) the persuasive impact of an individual frame will decrease when people make judgments for a socially distant entity versus a socially proximal entity.

The hypotheses were tested in three experiments. The purpose of Experiment 1 was to test H1 that predicted the differential persuasive effect of a gain frame (H1a) and that of a loss frame at different levels of social distance (H1b). The second experiment was conducted to test H2 that posited the differential persuasive effect of a societal frame (H2a) and that of an individual frame at different levels of social distance (H2b). Whereas Experiments 1 and 2 tested the hypotheses using persuasive messages as stimuli, Experiment 3 utilized a thought-listing technique to test the key assumptions underlying the hypotheses.

Experiment 1

Participants and procedure

One hundred and thirty three undergraduate students recruited from introductory communication classes at the University of Wisconsin—Madison participated in the experiment in exchange for extra credits. The experiment was conducted in a research

lab, where students participated in the study in groups. The experiment utilized a 2 (framing: gain vs. loss frame) × 2 (social distance: proximal vs. distant) mixed design, where framing was a between-subjects factor and social distance was a within-subjects factor. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two framing conditions.

Upon arrival at the research lab, participants were given a booklet, which contained a cover story, a persuasive message in the form of a public service advertisement (PSA), and a battery of questions probing message effects, perceived health risk, and brief demographics. The cover story on the first page indicated that the purpose of the study was to understand college students' responses to a health-related PSA. Participants were instructed to view the PSA on the next page at their own pace. After viewing the ad, participants responded to the questionnaire attached at the end of the booklet. Participants were debriefed and thanked after they returned the booklet.

Message topic

The PSA encouraged people to take a hepatitis C test. Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV). The infection is typically spread by contact with the blood of an infected person. Although Hepatitis C is not an uncommon disease—almost 4 million Americans are inflicted with it—there have been relatively few health campaigns about preventing or detecting the disease. The PSA featured a headline and then described the potential risk of contracting HCV. Following this information, an argument was made about the consequence of either taking or not taking a hepatitis C test (see Table 1 for a description of the PSA).

Manipulations

Gain–loss framing was manipulated through different wording of the argument in the PSA. In the gain frame, the argument emphasized the positive outcome of taking a hepatitis C test (i.e., "Remember, if you take a hepatitis C test in time, you may enjoy the benefits of affordable treatment options for early-detected virus."). In the loss frame, the argument focused on the negative outcome of not taking a hepatitis C test (i.e., "Remember, if you do not take a hepatitis C test in time, you may suffer the costs of expensive treatment options for late-detected virus."). Similar manipulations of gain–loss framing have been used in previous studies (e.g., Block & Keller, 1995; Rothman et al., 1993).

Social distance was manipulated in the questionnaire. In the proximal condition, participants were asked to make judgments about hepatitis C tests from the perspective of their best friend. In the distant condition, participants were asked to make judgments from the perspective of an average undergraduate student.

Measures

The key dependent measure was *issue judgment* regarding taking a hepatitis C test. Following the prompt in the proximal social distance condition (i.e., "What would

Table 1 Descriptions of the PSAs

PSA	Description
Hepatitis C Test Promotion (Experiment 1)	This print PSA was created based on a hepatitis C informational brochure distributed online by the CDC. The PSA used the same picture (the image of three individuals: a young male, a middle aged male, and a middle aged female) that was featured in the CDC brochure. The headline of the PSA was "Take A Hepatitis C Test." Following this headline was a paragraph describing the risk of hepatitis C: "Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV), which is found in the blood of persons who have this disease. Unknown to many people, Hepatitis C is highly contagious." Then, an argument was made about the consequence of either taking ("Remember, if you take a hepatitis C test in time, you may enjoy the benefits of affordable treatment options for early-detected virus.") or not taking a hepatitis C test ("Remember, if you do not take a hepatitis C test in time, you may suffer the costs of expensive treatment options for late-detected virus."). In the end, the PSA invited viewers to visit the CDC Web site for more information about hepatitis C.
Public Transit Promotion (Experiment 2)	This print PSA was created based on air pollution information on the Environmental Protection Agency Web site, according to which cars are one of the top contributors to air pollution. The PSA featured a picture showing a wide city street packed with cars and other motor vehicles. Air contamination can be easily seen from the cloudiness of the air above the vehicles. Right below the picture was an argument regarding the benefits of taking public transit that emphasized the health benefits of taking public transit either for the society in general ("Chances are people in your community will have healthier lungs if you take a public transportation instead of keeping driving your own car!") or for the individual ("Chances are you will have a healthier lung if you take a public transportation instead of keeping driving your own car!"). This paragraph then appears right below the argument: "According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), driving a car is the single most polluting thing that most of us do. Clean air is critical for healthy lungs."

Note: CDC = Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; PSA = public service advertisement.

you tell your best friend about hepatitis C tests?") were two items tapping into issue judgment. The first was "that he/she should take a hepatitis C test soon." The second was "that he/she should take a hepatitis C test in the near future." Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with each statement on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale. The same two statements followed the prompt in the distant condition (i.e., "What would you tell an average undergraduate student about hepatitis C tests?"). The two items were averaged to form an index for issue judgment ($\alpha = .97$ across social distance conditions).

Participants' perceived risk of contracting HCV was also measured. Similar to issue judgment, perceived risk was measured at the two levels of social distance. First, participants were asked to indicate the likelihood that their best friend would contract HCV on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale. Then, the same question was asked with regard to an average undergraduate student.

Results

Hypothesis testing

H1 predicted an interaction between social distance and gain–loss framing. Specifically, H1a proposed that a gain frame would be more persuasive when judgments were made for a socially distant versus proximal entity, whereas H1b posited that the reverse would be true for a loss frame. To test H1a and H1b, a mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed, where gain–loss framing served as the between-subjects factor and social distance was the within-subjects factor. The dependent variable was issue judgment.

The analysis revealed a number of significant effects. First, there was a significant main effect of social distance, $F(1, 131) = 8.48$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .05$. Issue judgment was more positive in the distant condition ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.60$) than in the proximal condition ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.50$), indicating that participants in general thought an average undergraduate student should take a hepatitis C test, more so than their best friend. More relevant to the hypotheses, a significant interaction between social distance and gain–loss framing was detected, $F(1, 131) = 7.51$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .05$ (see Figure 1). Additional analyses revealed that the gain frame led to a significantly more favorable issue judgment in the distant condition ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.65$) than in the proximal condition, $M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.58$, $F(1, 64) = 14.92$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .19$. Thus, H1a was supported. On the other hand, no difference in issue judgment was found for the loss frame across the two social distance conditions: distant: $M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.52$; proximal: $M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.41$, $F(1, 67) < 1$. H1b was not supported. Power analysis indicated, however, that the design might fail to detect a small effect (power = .21 assuming $f^2 = .02$ or small effect size, power = .88 assuming $f^2 = .15$ or medium effect size).

On a minor note, the main effect of gain–loss framing was not significant ($F < 1$), which seemed to contradict to prospect theory's posit that losses loom larger than gains (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). However, the finding is not entirely surprising

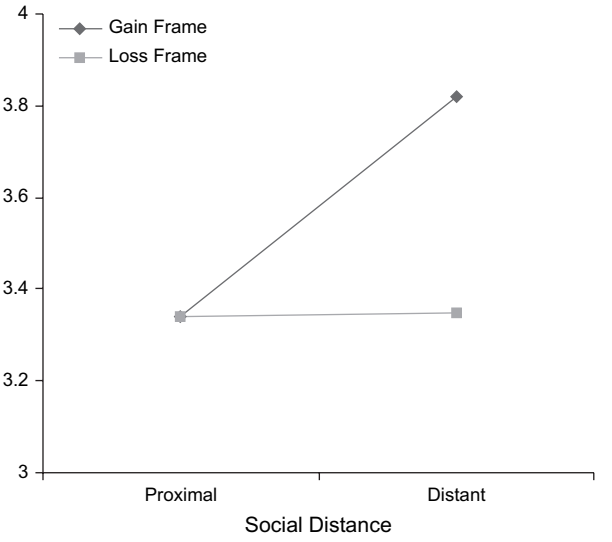

Figure 1 Persuasion as a function of social distance and gain-loss framing.

given that the differential persuasive effect of gain- versus loss-framed messages is relatively unstable in health contexts. Some studies did not observe such an effect (Rothman et al., 2006), perhaps due to the complexity of factors determining people's intention to enact health behaviors.

Exploring an alternative explanation

Previous research has shown that people tend to believe they are less susceptible to health risks than others (i.e., the *self-positivity bias*; Weinstein, 1987). This perceptual bias could also emerge in situations involving two parties that hold different social distance to the self. Specifically, one may perceive less vulnerability to diseases for a socially proximal entity (e.g., one's best friend) than for a socially distant entity (e.g., a stranger). In this experiment, participants might hold a similar self-positivity bias. In other words, participants might perceive less risk of contracting HCV for their best friend than for an average undergraduate student. If so, the differential perceived risk could account for the interaction between social distance and gain–loss framing and the findings supporting H1a.

To examine whether self-positivity bias indeed occurred in the experiment, a mixed ANOVA was performed. Gain–loss framing served as the between-subjects factor and social distance was the within-subjects factor. The dependent variable was perceived risk. The results revealed only one strong main effect of social distance, $F(1, 131) = 99.89$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .43$. Perceived risk was much greater for the socially distant entity (i.e., an average undergraduate student; $M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.19$) than for the socially proximal entity (i.e., one's best friend; $M = 2.57$, $SD = 1.34$).

To explore whether self-positivity bias accounted for the observed interaction between social distance and gain–loss framing, and the findings supporting H1a,

a mixed analysis of covariance was conducted. Gain–loss framing served as the between-subjects factor, social distance was the within-subjects factor, and perceived risk for one's best friend and for an average undergraduate student served as two covariates. The dependent variable was issue judgment. When the two risk perceptions were controlled for, the previous main effect of social distance on issue judgment disappeared ($F < 1$), indicating that perceived risk mediated the main effect of social distance on issue judgment. However, the interaction between social distance and gain–loss framing remained significant, $F(1, 129) = 5.90$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .04$. Additional analyses (with the covariates controlled for) revealed that the gain frame led to a significantly more positive issue judgment in the distant condition ($M = 3.82$, $SE = .19$) than in the proximal condition, $M = 3.34$, $SE = .18$, $F(1, 62) = 14.72$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .19$. No difference in issue judgment was found for the loss frame across the two social distance conditions. Overall, the results suggest that the differential perceived risk associated with different social distance, or self-positivity bias, does not account for the observed interactive effect of social distance and gain–loss framing on issue judgment. These findings lend further support to the validity of the construal level explanation.

Discussion

This experiment found the expected interactive effect of social distance and gain–loss framing on persuasion. The interaction appeared to be primarily driven by a significant difference in judgments for the gain frame across the two social distance conditions. Specifically, under the gain frame, judgments made for a socially distant entity were more positive, compared to the same judgments made for a socially proximal entity. This finding is consistent with CLT's proposition that judgments are more susceptible to the influence of high-level construals as psychological distance increases. Further attesting to the viability of the construal level explanation, additional evidence indicated that the main findings could not be attributed to an alternative explanation involving self-positivity bias. Although perceived risk of contracting the disease was found to be higher for the socially distant than for the socially proximal, this effect did not account for the interaction between social distance and gain–loss framing. It is worthy noting that perceived risk is just one dimension involved in self-positivity bias, which also includes less perceived *severity* of negative events when they occur to selves versus others (Shah, Faber, & Youn, 1999). Whether or not perceived severity could account for the observed interaction needs to be addressed in future studies.

This experiment did not find a differential effect of the loss frame on judgments associated with different levels of social distance. Power analysis showed that, given the current design, the experiment might miss small effects. Thus, methodological improvements such as increasing sample size may prove helpful in detecting the effects. On the other hand, some recent studies applying CLT indicate that low-level construals may be equally salient at different levels of psychological distance. For instance, Pennington and Roese (2003) demonstrated that people's promotional

concerns (i.e., concerns about the positive outcomes of an event), which represent high-level construals, increase as temporal distance increases. In contrast, people's preventional concerns (i.e., concerns about the negative outcomes of an event), which constitute low-level construals, do not vary with temporal distance. Therefore, it could be that the salience of low-level construals is not as affected by psychological distance, compared to the salience of high-level construals.

Regardless, a second experiment was conducted to provide a further test for the overarching proposition that the weights assigned to low-level construals and high-level construals in judgments are both influenced by psychological distance. The second experiment focused on societal–individual framing as a different operationalization of construal level. As argued previously, a societal frame constitutes a high-level construal about the advocated issue, whereas an individual frame represents a low-level construal. It was expected that a societal frame would be more persuasive when judgments were made for a socially distant entity than for a socially proximal entity. The reverse effect was hypothesized for an individual frame.

Experiment 2

Participants and procedure

One hundred and thirty-five undergraduate students recruited from introductory communication classes in the same university participated in this experiment in exchange for extra credits. The procedure was similar to that used in Experiment 1. The experiment was conducted in a research lab, where students participated in the study in groups. It utilized a 2 (framing: societal vs. individual frame) $\times$ 2 (social distance: proximal vs. distant) mixed design, where framing was a between-subjects factor and social distance was a within-subjects factor. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two framing conditions.

Upon arrival at the research lab, participants were given a booklet, which contained a cover story, a persuasive message in the form of a PSA, and a battery of questions probing message effects and brief demographics. The cover story on the first page indicated that the purpose of the study was to understand college students' responses to a public transit PSA. Participants were instructed to view the PSA on the next page at their own pace. After viewing the ad, participants responded to the questionnaire attached at the end of the booklet. Participants were debriefed and thanked after they returned the booklet.

The PSA encouraged people to take public transit instead of driving their own car. The ad presented an argument regarding the health benefits of taking public transit. It was concluded with an Environmental Protection Agency message on car driving and pollution (see Table 1 for a description of the PSA).

Manipulations

Societal–individual framing was manipulated through different wording of the argument in the PSA. In the societal frame, the argument was constructed such that it

emphasized the health benefits of taking public transit for the society in general (i.e., "Chances are people in your community will have healthier lungs if you take a public transportation instead of keeping driving your own car!"). In the individual frame, the consequence of taking public transit was framed at an individual level (i.e., "Chances are you will have a healthier lung if you take a public transportation instead of keeping driving your own car!").

The manipulation of social distance was similar to that used in Experiment 1. The only difference was that, in the proximal condition, participants were asked to make judgments about taking public transit from their own perspective. In the distant condition, they were asked to make judgments from the perspective of an average undergraduate student.

Dependent measure

Similar to Experiment 1, the key dependent measure was issue judgment regarding taking public transit. Following the prompt in the distant condition (i.e., "What would you tell an average undergraduate student about taking a public transportation?") were two items tapping into issue judgment. The first was "that he/she should take a public transportation for his/her daily commute." The second was "that taking a public transportation for his/her daily commute is a good idea." Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with each statement on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale. On two similar items, participants also made judgments about taking public transit from their own perspective. The two items were averaged to form an index for issue judgment ($\alpha = .87$ across social distance conditions).

Results

H2 predicted an interaction between social distance and societal–individual framing. Specifically, H2a proposed that a societal frame would be more persuasive when judgments were made for a socially distant versus proximal entity, whereas H2b posited that the reverse would be true for an individual frame. To test H2a and H2b, a mixed ANOVA was performed, where societal–individual framing served as the between-subjects factor and social distance was the within-subjects factor. The dependent variable was issue judgment.

The analysis revealed a number of significant effects. First, there was a significant main effect of social distance, $F(1, 133) = 5.41$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .04$. Issue judgment was significantly more positive in the distant condition ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 1.54$) than in the proximal condition ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 1.96$). This finding indicates that participants in general thought an average undergraduate student should take public transit, more so than themselves. More relevant to the hypotheses, a significant interaction between social distance and societal–individual framing was detected, $F(1, 133) = 4.36$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .03$; see Figure 2. Additional analyses revealed that the societal frame led to a significantly more favorable issue judgment in the distant condition ($M = 4.84$, $SD = 1.47$) than in the proximal condition, $M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.95$, $F(1, 70) = 9.48$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .11$. Thus, H2a was supported. On the other hand, no difference

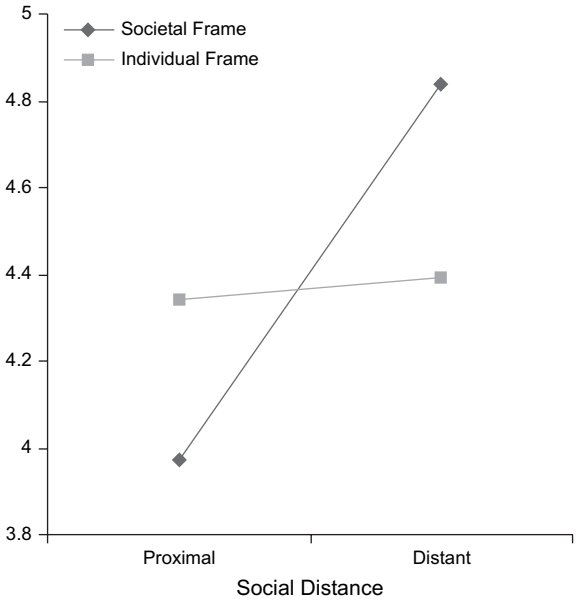

Figure 2 Persuasion as a function of social distance and societal-individual framing.

in issue judgment was found for the individual frame across the two social distance conditions (distant: $M = 4.39$, $SD = 1.60$; proximal: $M = 4.34$, $SD = 1.97$, $F < 1$). H2b was not supported. Power analysis indicated, however, that the design might fail to detect a small effect (power = .20 assuming $f^2 = .02$ or small effect size, power = .86 assuming $f^2 = .15$ or medium effect size).

Discussion

Overall, Experiment 2 produced findings that were consistent with those from Experiment 1. An interactive effect of social distance and societal–individual framing on persuasion was found. The societal frame was more persuasive when judgments were made for a socially distant versus proximal entity. These findings are congruent with CLT, which predicts that the impact of high-level construals on judgments will increase as psychological distance increases.

This experiment did not find evidence for differential effect of the individual frame across the two social distance conditions. The results of a power analysis suggested that the null effect might be due to insufficient statistical power to detect small effects. Assuming the null effect was a reflection of a true null effect, the finding does not support CLT's prediction regarding the differential judgmental effect of low-level construals at different levels of psychological distance. However, it does not contradict CLT. It is possible that whether or not psychological distance exerts an influence on the salience of low-level construals depends on factors such as the operationalization of psychological distance (e.g., social distance or temporal distance) and the operationalization of construal level (e.g., message framing or

feasibility vs. desirability considerations). The same thing may be said for high-level construals.

Both experiments provided compelling evidence that a gain frame and a societal frame used in persuasive messages tend to be more persuasive when judgments are made for socially distant versus proximal entities. In contrast, the persuasiveness of a loss frame and an individual frame is less dependent upon the level of social distance. A key assumption underlying the major hypotheses proposed here was derived from CLT. That is, changes in social distance induce changes in people's mental representations of the same event. High-level construals become more salient as social distance increases, whereas low-level construals become less salient as social distance increases. Based on findings of previous studies (e.g., Eyal et al., 2004; Pennington & Roese, 2003; Shah et al., 2004), this research indicates that positive and societal outcomes of an action constitute a higher construal level than negative and individual outcomes of an action. Thus, the persuasiveness of a gain frame and a societal frame will increase as social distance increases, whereas the persuasiveness of a loss frame and an individual frame is expected to decrease as social distance increases. However, an issue unaddressed in both experiments is the provision of direct empirical evidence that social distance indeed influences the mental salience of positive and societal outcomes of an action as well as negative and individual outcomes of an action in a way that is consistent with the predictions of CLT. A straightforward solution to providing such evidence is an experiment utilizing a thought-listing technique (cf. Eyal et al., 2004; Study 4). Hence, a third experiment was conducted, the goals of which were to find out (a) whether mental salience of positive outcomes of an action increases as social distance increases, (b) whether mental salience of negative outcomes of an action decreases as social distance increases, (c) whether mental salience of societal outcomes of an action increases as social distance increases, and (d) whether mental salience of individual outcomes of an action decreases as social distance increases.

Experiment 3

Participants and procedure

Eighty undergraduate students recruited from introductory communication classes in the same university participated in the experiment in exchange for extra credits. The first task in the experimental design was to select an action or behavior that is familiar to prospective research participants (i.e., college students). People will not have too many thoughts about the outcomes of an unfamiliar action/behavior. The action/behavior should also be able to be linked with all four types of outcomes: positive, negative, societal, and individual. Given these considerations, smoking was chosen as the focal behavior. Potentially, there are two types of positive outcomes (i.e., the positive outcomes of smoking and the positive outcomes of refraining from smoking) and two types of negative outcomes (i.e., the negative outcomes of smoking and the negative outcomes of refraining from smoking) that can be explored. However, the

positive outcomes of refraining from smoking correspond to a gain frame in a persuasive message and the negative outcomes of smoking correspond to a loss frame in a persuasive message, and therefore, they are most relevant to the current research and to persuasive communication. (It would be odd to see a PSA emphasizing the positive outcomes of smoking or the negative outcomes of refraining from smoking.)

The experiment was conducted online. Participants were asked to list the positive outcomes of refraining from smoking and the negative consequences of smoking. They were instructed to put one outcome in one text box. Nine text boxes were provided, but the participants were told that they could list as many outcomes as they wanted. The order in which participants listed positive and negative outcomes was counterbalanced. That is, half of them listed positive outcomes first, whereas the other half listed negative outcomes first. In addition, half of the participants generated the outcomes from their own perspective, whereas the other half generated the outcomes from the perspective of an average undergraduate student. Thus, the experiment had a 2 (social distance: proximal vs. distant) $\times$ 2 (order: positive first vs. negative first) $\times$ 2 (outcome valence: positive vs. negative) mixed design. Social distance and order were between-subjects factors, whereas outcome valence was a within-subjects factor.

Dependent variables

The first two dependent variables were the number of positive outcomes and the number of negative outcomes. Because the participants were asked to put one outcome in one text box, the coding was straightforward. In a few instances there appeared to be more than one outcome in one box (e.g., mouth disease/cancer, increased risk of heart/lung problems). Two independent judges coded the number of outcomes in each category and interjudge agreement was 95%.

The other dependent variables included the number of societal outcomes and the number of individual outcomes. The participants were not explicitly asked to list societal and individual outcomes of smoking and refraining from smoking. However, the expectation was that, given the nature of smoking, both societal and individual outcomes would be generated and they might be under the category of either positive or negative outcomes. This expectation was confirmed. Societal outcomes included statements such as, "(refraining from smoking) won't expose friends/family to second hand smoke," "(smoking) puts others' health in danger," and "(smoking causes) environmental pollution." Individual outcomes were thoughts such as, "(refraining from smoking) helps keep your body in shape," "(smoking leads to) yellow teeth," and "(smoking results in) lung cancer." Two independent judges coded the number of societal and individual outcomes. Interjudge agreement was 86%.

Results

Two key assumptions underlying H1 was that mental salience of positive outcomes of an action increases as social distance increases, whereas mental salience of negative

outcomes decreases as social distance increases. To test these assumptions, a Social Distance (proximal or distant) × Order (positive first or negative first) × Outcome Valence (positive or negative) mixed ANOVA was performed on the number of listed outcomes, with social distance and order as between-subjects factors and outcome valence as a within-subjects factor.

The results revealed a number of significant effects. First, the main effect of outcome valence was significant, $F(1, 76) = 43.82$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .26$, indicating that considerably more negative outcomes of smoking ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.81$) were generated than positive outcomes of refraining from smoking ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.54$). Second, the interaction between outcome valence and order was significant, $F(1, 76) = 23.42$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$. The nature of the interaction was such that, when positive outcomes were the first to be generated, negative outcomes ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 1.79$) moderately outnumbered positive outcomes, $M = 3.60$, $SD = 1.72$, $F(1, 42) = 3.92$, $p = .05$, $\eta^2 = .09$. On the other hand, when negative outcomes were the first to be generated, the number of negative outcomes ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.84$) considerably exceeded the number of positive outcomes, $M = 2.68$, $SD = 1.13$, $F(1, 36) = 35.46$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .50$.

More relevant to testing the assumptions, the two-way interaction between outcome valence and social distance was significant, $F(1, 76) = 5.97$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .04$; see Figure 3. Planned contrasts (with order controlled) were conducted to explore the nature of the two-way interaction between social distance and outcome valence. The results indicated that participants generated more positive outcomes of refraining from smoking when asked to do so from the perspective of an average undergraduate student ($M = 3.49$, $SE = .24$) than when instructed to do so from their own perspective, $M = 2.82$, $SE = .23$, $F(1, 76) = 4.09$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .05$. This finding is consistent with the assumption that mental salience of positive outcomes of an action increases as social distance increases. However, the number of negative outcomes of smoking generated was not affected by social distance (distant: $M = 4.03$, $SE = .31$; proximal: $M = 3.99$, $SE = .28$, $F < 1$). The interaction between social distance and outcome valence was not dependent upon order as the three-way interaction was not significant ($p > .10$). Overall, the findings appear to mirror the results of Experiment 1, where it was found that the persuasiveness of a gain frame increased as social distance increased, whereas the persuasiveness of a loss frame was not affected by social distance.

Two key assumptions underlying H2 are that mental salience of societal outcomes of an action increases as social distance increases; whereas mental salience of individual outcomes of an action decreases as social distance increases. To test these assumptions, a Social Distance (proximal or distant) × Order (positive first or negative first) × Outcome Orientation (individual or societal) mixed ANOVA was performed on the number of listed outcomes, with social distance and order as between-subjects factors, and outcome orientation as a within-subjects factor.

The results revealed only a significant main effect of outcome orientation, $F(1, 76) = 201.98$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .72$. The number of individual outcomes ($M = 6.40$,

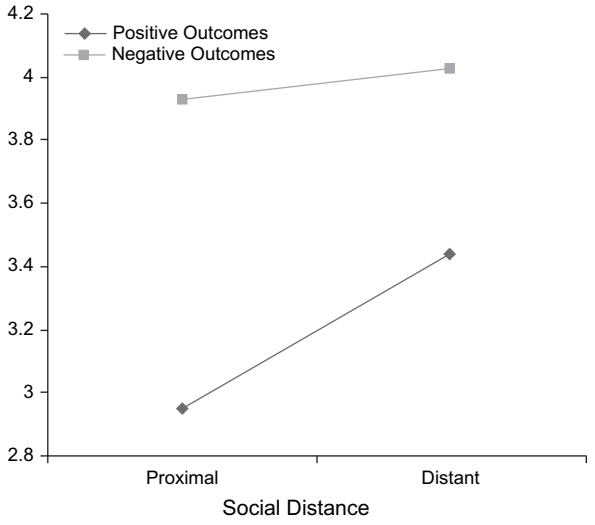

Figure 3 The number of reported outcomes as a function of social distance and outcome valence (positive outcomes of refraining from smoking vs. negative outcomes of smoking).

SD = 3.03) was considerably greater than that of societal outcomes (*M* = .80, *SD* = 1.19). The expected interaction between social distance and outcome orientation was not significant. In the case of testing a priori assumptions, the omnibus interaction test may be skipped and planned contrasts, which compare particular cells within a design and tend to have a greater statistical power, may be used to test the hypotheses (Keppel, 1991). Thus, even though the omnibus interaction was not significant, planned contrasts were conducted to see if the empirical data were consistent with the a priori assumptions. The analyses revealed that participants generated more societal outcomes when asked to do so from the perspective of an average undergraduate student ($M = 1.14$, $SD = 1.44$) than when instructed to do so from their own perspective, $M = .52$, $SD = .87$, $F(1, 76) = 6.09$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .05$; see Figure 4. This finding is consistent with the assumption that mental salience of societal outcomes of an action increases as social distance increases. Apparently, the number of individual outcomes generated was apparently not affected by social distance (distant: $M = 6.33$, $SD = 3.52$; proximal: $M = 6.45$, $SD = 2.60$, $F < 1$). Overall, the findings appear to mirror the results of Experiment 2, where it was found that the persuasiveness of a societal frame increased as social distance increased, whereas the persuasiveness of an individual frame was not affected by social distance.

Discussion

The key assumptions underlying the hypotheses were tested in Experiment 3. Two assumptions that involve high-level construals were supported. Specifically, the results demonstrated that mental salience of high-level construals, such as positive outcomes and societal outcomes of an action, increases as social distance increases. These

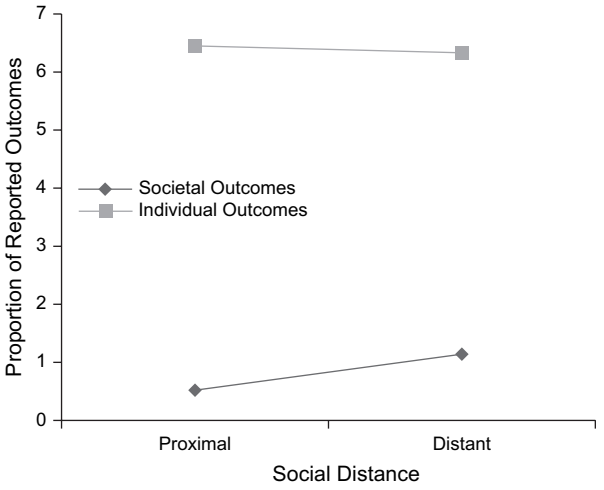

Figure 4 The number of reported outcomes as a function of social distance and outcome orientation (societal outcomes vs. individual outcomes).

findings support the construal level explanation for findings obtained in Experiment 1, where it was shown that the persuasiveness of a gain frame increased as social distance increased, and for results observed in Experiment 2, where it was found that the persuasiveness of a societal frame increased as social distance increased.

The two assumptions involving low-level construals were not supported. In addition, Experiments 1 and 2 did not find any differential persuasive effect of a loss frame and an individual frame at varying levels of social distance. Although low statistical power was a potential factor contributing to the null effects, the consistency in the findings obtained in three experiments nonetheless pointed to the possibility that the salience of low-level construals is not as affected by psychological distance, compared to the salience of high-level construals. Indeed, Pennington and Roese's (2003) studies have demonstrated just this point.

General discussion

Overall findings

CLT has been central in the investigation of the effects of temporal distance on perceptions and judgments. However, it has been utilized rarely to gain a better understanding of the perceptual and judgmental influences of social distance, another common form of psychological distance. This research relates the study of social distance to an important area of research in communication, namely framing in persuasive messages.

Two types of framing were the focus of this research: gain–loss framing and societal–individual framing. Drawing upon previous work, this article proposed that a gain frame and a societal frame both constitute high-level construals and,

according to CLT, will be more influential in judgments made for socially distant entities than for socially proximal entities. Both hypotheses were supported by empirical evidence. Experiment 1 found that a gain frame was more persuasive when people make judgments for their best friend than for an average undergraduate student. Experiment 2 showed that a societal frame was more persuasive when people make judgments for an average undergraduate student than for themselves. Using a thought-listing technique, Experiment 3 demonstrated that mental salience of positive and societal outcomes of an action increased as social distance increased, which were assumptions underlying H1a and H2a. Therefore, these findings support the viability of a construal level explanation for the differential persuasive effects of gain frames and societal frames across varying levels of social distance.

Drawing upon previous research, I also argued that loss frames and individual frames constitute low-level construals and, thus, should be more persuasive when judgments are made for socially proximal entities than for socially distant entities. These predictions were not supported by empirical data. Neither Experiment 1 nor Experiment 2 found any systematic difference in the persuasiveness of the frames across the two social distance conditions. Experiment 3, which used a thought-listing technique to tap into the salience of negative and individual outcomes of an action, similarly did not produce any difference in the mental salience of the outcomes at varying levels of social distance.

Theoretical implications

Overall, findings from the three experiments are consistent with CLT. The findings also indicate the need for a more refined theory. CLT research predicts that the salience of high-level construals will increase, whereas the salience of low-level construals will decrease as psychological distance increases. However, the current studies as well as some previous studies (e.g., Pennington & Roese, 2003) found no significant difference in the salience of low-level construals across different levels of psychological distance. One possible explanation is that low-level construals, being concrete and contextualized, are less sensitive to changes in psychological distance compared to high-level construals. Thus, whether or not psychological distance exerts an influence on the salience of low-level construals may be dependent upon the operationalizations of psychological distance and construal level. Differences in mental salience may emerge when there is sufficient *distance* and when the construal level is sufficiently low (i.e., when the construals are sufficiently concrete and detailed). Although answers to this question lie beyond the scope of this paper, more research is needed to explore the possibilities raised here.

More important to communication research, this inquiry holds relevant implications for framing studies. Over the years, gain–loss framing has received considerable research attention, particularly in the area of health communication. The focus has been on the relative persuasiveness of a gain versus loss frame. It is important to note that most previous research has centered on the impact of gain–loss framing on personal judgments (i.e., judgments made for selves). This research introduces the

notion of psychological distance to the study of gain–loss framing, suggesting that as psychological distance increases (e.g., when judgments are made for others rather than selves), the impact of a gain frame (a high-level construal) will increase, whereas the effect of a loss frame (a low-level construal) will decrease. This implies that the observed relative effect of a gain versus loss frame when only personal judgments are involved could be amplified, diminished, or reversed in judgments made for socially distant entities. Specifically, if a gain frame is found to be more persuasive than a loss frame in personal judgments, the effect could be amplified in judgments made for others. If a loss frame is found to be more persuasive in personal judgments, the effect could be diminished or even reversed in judgments made for socially distant entities.

Research on societal–individual framing has not been as active. This research highlights the possibility that a persuasive message can be framed either at a societal level, focusing on the implications of compliance/noncompliance for the society in general, or at an individual level, emphasizing personal consequences. More importantly, this research suggests that a societal frame differs from an individual frame in terms of construal level. As demonstrated here, a societal frame is generally associated with a high-level construal about the advocated issue and its effect on persuasion increases as psychological distance increases. An individual frame is associated with a low-level construal and its effect remains constant at different levels of psychological distance.

At a broader level, this research complements previous investigation of the perceptual impact of social distance. The field of communication has had a long tradition of studying the effects of social distance on perceptions. Research on the third-person effect (i.e., the general tendency for people to believe that media content has a greater impact on others than on themselves) epitomizes this tradition (Davison, 1983; McLeod, Detenber, & Eveland, 2001; Perloff 1989; Price, Tewksbury, & Huang, 1998). Over the years, researchers have explored different explanations for the third-person effect. The proposed explanations generally fall into one of two categories. Some are motivation-based explanations, suggesting that the third-person effect results from an individual's motivation to enhance self-esteem (Gunther & Thorson, 1992; Meirick, 2005; Perloff, 2002). Others are cognition-based explanations that emphasize the role of cognitions in the third-person effect (Eveland, Nathanson, Detenber, & McLeod, 1999; Gunther 1991; McLeod, Eveland, & Nathanson, 1997). Gunther imported the theory of fundamental attribution error from social psychology to explain the third-person effect. Gunther argued that when judging message impact on others, observers will underestimate the effect of situational factors and perceive more opinion change of those others, but in judging themselves, observers will estimate modest opinion change due to a greater awareness of situational factors.

By approaching the perceptual and judgmental effects of social distance from the perspective of CLT, this research offers a unique angle to view the third-person effect. From the perspective of CLT, the third-person effect may be partly driven by the

different construal level of people's mental representations for their own versus others' behaviors. According to CLT, people tend to form concrete and contextualized representations (i.e., low-level construals) for their own behaviors. However, for others' behaviors, the mental representations tend to be abstract and decontextualized (i.e., high-level construals). As such, people may perceive more complexity in their own behaviors versus others' and believe that their own behaviors are determined by more factors. This could result in a less perceived impact of media content on selves than on others. The construal level account of the third-person effect is in essence consistent with the explanation based on the fundamental attribution error. It is more aligned with cognition-based explanations of the third-person effect than to motivation-based explanations.

Implications for health campaigns

Although most health campaigns are targeted directly at the group of people whose health beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors are to be changed, there has been a growing trend for health messages to indirectly target influence groups (e.g., friends, parents). The purpose of such campaigns is to urge these social groups to exert a positive influence on others, who are the ultimate target audience of the messages. For example, the recent "Friends Watch Out for Friends" campaign launched on the campus of Michigan State University aimed at persuading students to prevent their friends from engaging in high-risk drinking. Despite the amount of research on health communication, there has been scant research on this campaign approach. To what extent are these campaigns effective in motivating people to help others? What message strategies should we use to make a persuasive appeal?

This research indicates that the same message strategy may be differentially effective depending on whether the message recipients act as the ultimate target audience or influence groups. When asked to make judgments for others (i.e., acting as the influence groups), people are more persuaded by high-level construals of the advocated issue such as a gain frame and a societal frame, compared to when asked to make judgments for themselves (i.e., acting as the ultimate target audience). Low-level construals such as a loss frame and an individual frame are less susceptible to role changes.

Limitations and future research

Certain limitations of this research are to be acknowledged. The first limitation pertains to the within-subjects manipulation of social distance in the first two experiments. By asking participants similar questions twice, albeit with different reference groups (i.e., best friend vs. average student, or self vs. average student), the procedure may have artificially increased the response differences. Associated with the within-subjects design is the issue of possible question order effect, which was not explicitly addressed in the first two experiments. Future studies should replicate the studies using a between-subjects design.

A second limitation of this research is the limited number of dependent variables relating to message effects. Although issue judgment as operationalized in this

research is an important indicator of persuasion, there are a number of other dependent variables that are potentially interesting to both academics and practitioners. These include message comprehension, knowledge gain and recall, and affective and cognitive responses. Of course, to systematically investigate the joint effects of framing and social distance on these dependent variables, additional theory-based hypotheses need to be proposed.

Another limitation associated with the first two experiments is the lack of manipulation checks. One could check the success of the framing manipulations by asking participants directly about their perceptions about the message features. For instance, participants in the gain frame condition would be asked to indicate the extent to which they believe the persuasive message focuses on the positive outcomes of performing the advocated behavior. Results of such manipulation checks are usually very predictable (e.g., Block & Keller, 1995; Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990). Although desirable, it may be less important to check the manipulation of social distance. Conforming to the instruction of focusing on oneself or another person when making judgments should not be difficult for participants.

In addition to those highlighted above, this research opens up new avenues for future research. First, more systematic research on how social distance influences the construal level of mental representations is needed. The key research question is how people mentally represent information pertaining to selves and others and whether the two types of representations differ in terms of construal level (e.g., concreteness or abstractness). Second, and more relevant to strategic communication research, future research should continue to test the idea that high-level construals are more salient and, thus, important in making judgments for socially distant versus proximal entities, whereas the reverse is true for low-level construals. In doing so, future studies should either replicate the current studies or utilize different operationalizations of construal level (e.g., another message feature).

Conclusion

In addition to those highlighted above, this research opens up a few avenues for future research. First, more systematic research on how social distance influences the construal level of mental representations is needed. The key research question is how people mentally represent information pertaining to selves and others and whether the two types of representations differ in terms of construal level (e.g., concreteness or abstractness). Second, more relevant to strategic communication research, future research can continue to test the idea that high-level construals are more salient and thus important in making judgments for socially distant versus proximal entities, whereas the reverse is true for low-level construals. In doing so, future studies can either replicate the current studies or utilize different operationalizations of construal level (e.g., another message feature). Understanding how social distance influences people's perceptions and the way they make judgments is an important scientific inquiry. By approaching this issue uniquely from a construal level perspective and relating it to the study of framing effects, this research hopefully serves as

a springboard for future inquiries in the realm of health communication or strategic communication in general.

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Distance sociale, cadrage et jugement: une perspective de niveaux de représentation

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Résumé

Mobilisant la théorie des niveaux de représentation, cette recherche étudie l'influence de la distance sociale sur les réponses de personnes à des messages persuasifs. L'expérience 1 (*N* = 133) démontre que l'impact persuasif d'un cadre de gain est plus fort lorsque les gens exercent leur jugement pour des entités distantes (p. ex. d'autres personnes) par opposition à des entités proximales (p. ex. soi-même). En revanche, l'impact persuasif d'un cadre de perte demeure le même à travers différents niveaux de distance sociale. L'expérience 2 (*N* = 135) démontre que la force de persuasion d'un cadre sociétal est plus forte lorsque les gens exercent leur jugement pour des entités socialement distantes plutôt que pour des entités proximales, tandis que la force de persuasion d'un cadre individuel n'est pas affectée par la distance sociale. L'expérience 3 (*N* = 80) offre une preuve de ce que la prégnance mentale des conséquences positives et sociétales d'une action augmente comme la distance sociale augmente, alors que la prégnance mentale des conséquences négatives et individuelles demeure la même à travers différents niveaux de distance sociale.

Soziale Distanz, Framing und Urteilen: Eine Bedeutungsebenenperspektive

Vorliegender Beitrag untersucht den Einfluss von sozialer Distanz auf Reaktionen zu persuasiven Botschaften unter Rückgriff auf eine Bedeutungsebenentheorie. Experiment 1 (N=133) zeigte, dass der persuasive Einfluss eines Zugewinn-Frames stärker wird, wenn Personen Urteile über sozial entfernte (z.B. andere) vs. sozial nahe Instanzen (z.B. selbst) fällen. Auf der anderen Seite zeigte sich, dass der persuasive Einfluss eines Verlust-Frames keine unterschiedlichen Ergebnisse über verschiedene Ebenen sozialer Distanz hervorbringt. In Experiment 2 (N=135) konnte gezeigt werden, dass die Überzeugungskraft eines sozialen Frames stärker wird, wenn Personen Urteile für sozial entfernte vs. nahe Instanzen machen, während die Überzeugungskraft eines individuellen Frames von der sozialen Distanz unbeeinflusst bleibt. Experiment 3 (N=80) liefert Belege dafür, dass sich die mentale Salienz von positiven und gesellschaftlichen Folgen einer Handlung vergrößert, wenn die soziale Distanz wächst, während die mentale Salienz von negativen und individuellen Folgen über verschiedene Ebenen der sozialen Distanz unverändert bleibt.

La Distancia Social, el Framing, y el Juicio: Una Perspectiva a Nivel Interpretativo

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Resumen

Basada en la teoría de Nivel Interpretativo, esta investigación explora la influencia de la distancia social sobre las respuestas individuales a los mensajes persuasivos. El experimento 1 (N = 133) demuestra que el impacto persuasivo de un encuadre de ganancia se vuelve más poderoso cuando la gente emite juicios sobre entidades socialmente distantes (a saber, otros) versus entidades próximas (a saber, si mismos). Por otro lado, el impacto persuasivo de un encuadre de pérdida se mantiene igual a través de los distintos niveles de distancia social. El experimento 2 (N = 135) muestra que el nivel de persuasión de un encuadre social se vuelve más poderoso cuando la gente emite juicios sobre entidades socialmente distantes versus entidades próximas, mientras que el nivel de persuasión de un encuadre individual no es afectado por la distancia social. El experimento 3 (N = 80) provee evidencia que la notabilidad mental de resultados positivos y sociales de una acción se incrementan a medida que la distancia social aumenta, mientras que la notabilidad mental de los resultados negativos e individuales se mantienen a través de los distintos niveles de distancia social.

社会距离，框架和判断：解释层次观点

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[摘要]

本文以解释层次理论为基础，研究社会距离给个人对说服性信息的影响。实验一(N=133)表明相对于邻近的个体（如自我），人们对有社会距离的个体（如别人）作判断时得益框架的说服力更强。然而，丧失框架在所有社会距离的作用则不变；实验二（N=135）表明，相对于邻近的个体，人们对有社会距离的个体判断时社会框架的说服力更强，而个体框架则不受社会距离影响；实验三（N=80）的证据显示：随着社会距离的增加行为的正面和社会结果的思想显著度也增加，然而，负面的和个人的结果其思想显著度在不同社会距离下则无区别。

사회적 거리감, 프레이밍, 그리고 판단: 해석 수준 전망에 관한 연구

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요약

해석수준이론에 근거하여, 본 연구는 설득적 메시지들에 대한 개인들의 반응에 있어 사회적 거리감의 영향을 연구한 것이다. 실험 1 (N = 133)은 이익 프레임의 설득적 영향은 사람들이 사회적 거리감 (예컨대 타자들)과 가까운 실제들 (예를들어 자기들)에 대한 판단을 내릴때 더욱 강해지는 것으로 나타났다. 한편, 손실프레임의 설득적 영향은 사회적 거리감의 여러 다른 차원들에 걸쳐 같은 정도를 보이는 것으로 나타났다. 실험 2 (N = 135)에서는 사회적 프레임의 설득력은 사람들이 사회적인 거리감대 인접한 대상들에 대한 판단을 내릴때 더욱 강하게 나타나는 반면, 개인적 프레임의 설득력은 사회적 거리감에 의해 영향을 받지 않는다는 것을 보여주고 있다. 실험 3 (N = 80)은 어떤 행위의 긍적적이고 사회적인 결과들의 정신적 현명함은 사회적 거리감이 증가함에 따라 커지는 반면, 부정적이고 개인적인 결과들의 정신적 정신적 현명함은 사회적 거리감의 전반적인 수준에 있어 같은 상태로 남아있음을 보여주고 있다.