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Objects of Desire: Subordinate Ingratiation Triggers Self-Objectification Among the Powerful

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Abstract

We propose that powerful individuals can become victims of self-objectification, whereby power-relevant attributes become more important to their self-definition and lead to behavior consistent with that self-definition. This process is triggered by the receipt of ostensibly kind acts from subordinates, which are interpreted by power-holders as objectifying acts of ingratiation. In Studies 1 and 2, high-power participants rated power-relevant attributes as more important to their self-definition, but only after a triggering event (i.e., receiving a favor, reading a scenario about a subordinate who voices agreement with his boss's ideas). In Studies 3 and 4, high-power participants who received a favor were more likely than others to believe that they are objectified for their power-relevant attributes. As a result, they rated power-relevant attributes as more important to their self-definition (Study 3) and were willing to pay more for products associated with power, but not for products unrelated to power (Study 4).

Keywords: power, self-objectification, subordinate, ingratiation, favor, instrumentality

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“What I am and can do is ... not at all determined by my individuality... As an individual I am lame, but money provides me with twenty-four legs. Therefore I am not lame.”

- Karl Marx, *The Holy Family*, describing “capitalist self-estrangement”

Many people are attracted to power because it promises the possibility of pursuing one's own goals, unfettered by compromise and acquiescence to the desires of others. Consistent with this claim, recent research has demonstrated various ways in which power liberates (see Fiske, 2010). For example, high-power individuals are more likely to pursue personally held goals (Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh, 2001) and to rely on their own opinions and attitudes rather than being influenced by external forces (Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008). The introductory quotation, however, suggests a contrasting dynamic. Rather than being liberating, power may impose certain attributes onto the self-concept. In the current research we build on this latter perspective to suggest that, under certain conditions, power-holders self-objectify, meaning that they increasingly define themselves through personal attributes that are relevant to power and instrumentally useful to others, and engage in actions that are consistent with this self-definition. Furthermore, we predict that this process is triggered by certain actions of their subordinates, rather than being a constant feature of power-holders..

We develop our predictions on four key points. First, power-holders are often targets of instrumental approach and use by lower-power individuals. Second, the manner in which lower-power individuals instrumentally approach power-holders is often indirect, including ingratiation and other ostensible acts of kindness. Third, power-holders are aware that the acts of kindness they receive may be instrumentally motivated, suggesting that they are aware of being objectified by lower-power individuals. Fourth, power-holders internalize this objectifying third-person perspective, leading to self-objectification.

The current research provides two key contributions. First, it presents a new way of thinking about the processes of objectification and self-objectification. Typically, lower-power and lower-status groups are considered as the victims of both objectification and self-objectification (Gruenfeld, Inesi, Magee, & Galinsky, 2008; Marx, 1964). Here, we show that the reverse pattern can also emerge: Power-holders internalize the perspective of instrumentally motivated subordinates and self-objectify on personal attributes that are power-relevant. Second, the current research sheds a new light on the social psychology of power. Because power-holders doubt the motives behind the kind acts they receive from subordinates, they are more likely to self-objectify when triggered by subordinate ingratiation. Thus, rather than liberating the self (Chen, et al., 2001; Fiske, 2010; Galinsky, et al., 2008), power can impose certain objectifying attributes onto the self-concept.

Self-Objectification

Objectification is typically defined as the process by which a part of a person is separated out from the whole and is seen as capable of representing him or her (Bartky, 1990). While most often referenced in the context of gender dynamics, objectification has also been used to describe employers' treatment of workers (Marx, 1964) and power-holders' treatment of subordinates (Gruenfeld, et al., 2008), among other topics. Objectified attributes (e.g., productivity, physical attractiveness) tend to reflect agency rather than communion because the objectifier is not so much interested in a relationship with the target, but rather seeks to make instrumental use of the relevant attribute. Indeed, Wojciszke and Abele (2008) found that when one person depends on another for goal attainment, agentic qualities become more important in interpersonal perception. In Marx's example of objectification, capitalists depend on workers for their output, and so the workers' productivity (an agentic attribute) becomes the objectified attribute.

Self-objectification occurs when an objectifying third-person perspective is internalized, such that individuals are more likely to perceive *themselves* as an objectifier would. Fredrickson and colleagues

(Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, & Twenge, 1998) proposed that an objectifying perspective on the self can be communicated directly through interpersonal interactions as well as indirectly through media or observations of others. With repeated exposure to such messages, objectified individuals eventually absorb this objectifying perspective into the self-concept (Biddle, 1986; Cooley, 1964; Harter, 1987; Mead, 1934; Wheeler, DeMarree, & Petty, 2007).

Triggers of Self-Objectification

Self-objectification is not necessarily always accessible or active, given that it is absorbed into the self-concept. Although self-objectification was initially conceptualized as an individual difference variable, Fredrickson and colleagues (1998) also theorized that, above and beyond individual differences, certain situations would act as triggers of self-objectification. Specifically, they proposed that situations that accentuate an awareness of an observer's objectifying perspective on the self would activate self-objectification. For example, women who were asked to put on a swimsuit (vs. a sweater) or who were targets of a sexualized gaze (Fredrickson, et al., 1998; Gervais, Vescio, & Allen, 2011) were especially likely to sexually self-objectify. The notion that situations can activate different aspects of the self is also consistent with the idea that the self-concept is malleable and can shift according to subtle situational cues (Baumeister, 1998; Markus & Kunda, 1986; Wheeler, et al., 2007).

Measuring Self-Objectification

A variety of procedures have been used to test self-objectification. The most frequently used method is to demonstrate that self-objectifying individuals rate the objectified attributes as more important to their self-definition. For example, women placed greater importance on appearance-related physical attributes (e.g., weight, measurements, sex appeal) in their physical self-concept when they were exposed to sexism (a trigger of sexual self-objectification, Calogero & Jost, 2011). Also, women were more likely to describe their physical self-concept through statements about their body shape and size

after trying on a swimsuit (another trigger of sexual self-objectification) versus a sweater (Fredrickson, et al., 1998).

Another means of demonstrating self-objectification is through behavioral change. Research has shown that people engage in behaviors that are reflective of and consistent with their self-definition, including ways of dressing, standing, and talking (Oyserman, 2009)¹. In the domain of sexual self-objectification, a series of studies has shown that when women sexually self-objectify either chronically or as a result of a situational trigger, they wear tighter-fitting clothing, eat fewer cookies and spend more time doing cardio-based exercise (Noll & Fredrickson, 1998; Prichard & Tiggemann, 2005, 2008).

Power and Self-Objectification

Although self-objectification has traditionally been examined in lower-status groups (e.g., women), we propose that the powerful too can self-objectify in certain situations. In the following sections, we outline a theory of when and why the powerful self-objectify.

The Powerful as Objects

Power is typically defined as relative control over valued resources, which in turn leads to increased interpersonal influence (Emerson, 1962; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). This definition brings to mind images of power-holders who use their subordinates to achieve goals: The powerful act and the subordinates react to accomplish the desires of the powerful (Fiske, 2010; Gruenfeld, et al., 2008; Marx, 1964). However, the reverse pattern also occurs: Subordinates often attempt to manipulate and use power-holders to accomplish their own goals (Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980; Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990; Yukl & Falbe, 1990). Specifically, subordinates may try to gain access to the resources that the powerful control. For example, a subordinate may try to influence his boss to give him an early promotion. A survey by Kipnis and colleagues (1980) illustrates this point well: The authors asked respondents (employees in an organization) to describe why they tried to influence their co-workers, who had more, equal or less power than the respondents. For those attempting to influence a co-worker with

more power, their reasons were predominantly (58%) selfish: They were motivated by a desire to obtain personal benefits. In comparison, those attempting to influence equal-power or lower-power co-workers were less likely to be selfishly motivated (10% and 0% respectively). Of course, attempts to ingratiate the powerful are not confined to work situations, and can emerge in any situation in which one person has more power than another.

Influence Attempts: Direct Versus Indirect

The manner in which lower-power individuals attempt to use power-holders to achieve their own instrumental goals is less direct than traditional models of objectification. In traditional models (Emerson, 1962), a power-holder approaches a useful, lower-power individual and requests a specific outcome in exchange for access to the power-holder's resources (e.g., give me the output I want, and I will pay you more). Were lower-power individuals to demand or ask for access to the power-holder's resources, they would likely be met with rejection, as they have little to offer in return (Emerson, 1962; Molm, 1990). Thus, subordinates rely relatively more on indirect influence tactics to access power-holders' resources². In one study (Kipnis, et al., 1980), for example, bosses were approximately twice as likely as subordinates to use assertive influence tactics (e.g., "simply ordered the person to do what was asked"), whereas bosses and subordinates were equally likely to use ingratiation, suggesting that subordinates rely much more heavily on indirect tactics such as ingratiation than on assertive tactics. Ingratiation has been defined as "a class of strategic behaviors illicitly designed to influence a particular other person concerning the attractiveness of one's personal qualities" (Jones, 1964, p. 11), although such behaviors may not be consciously enacted (Jones & Wortman, 1973). Ingratiation tactics that are instrumentally used by subordinates to achieve their personal goals include: doing favors for the boss (e.g., working late, doing his/her share of the work), praising the boss, agreeing with the boss, or making the boss feel important (Gordon, 1996; Jones & Wortman, 1973; Kipnis, et al., 1980; Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990; Wayne & Liden, 1995).

While these acts of ingratiation may be effective if the power-holder believes they are driven by selfless motives (Berscheid & Walster, 1978; Cialdini, 2001; Gordon, 1996), research suggests that this may not always be the case. Power presents the possibility that subordinate kindness may actually be a cloaked attempt to gain access to the resources controlled by the powerful. Power-holders are aware of this alternative, more instrumental attribution and as a result are more suspicious of the kind acts they receive. For example, in a recent set of studies, participants who received a favor from a co-worker were less likely to trust subordinate versus peer favor-givers, because they believed the former were more instrumentally motivated (Inesi, Gruenfeld, & Galinsky, 2012).

If power-holders tend to believe that the acts of ostensible kindness they receive are instrumentally motivated (i.e., ingratiation), then they may come to believe that their value in others' eyes is linked to their power. In other words, they might come to believe that others objectify them for their power-relevant attributes. If power-holders do feel objectified in this way, then they should be more likely to attribute specific acts of ingratiation to instrumental motives linked to their own power and, more generally, should be more likely to believe that others like them for their power-relevant attributes.

The *Self-Objectification* of the Powerful

Following the logic laid out by Fredrickson and colleagues regarding sexual self-objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Fredrickson, et al., 1998), we propose that once individuals believe that they are objectified by others, they may eventually internalize this perspective and self-objectify (Biddle, 1986; Cooley, 1964; Harter, 1987; Mead, 1934). Through repeated episodes in which power-holders believe others objectify them, they may ultimately come to associate this objectifying perspective with the self (Wheeler, et al., 2007). Thus, personal attributes that are related to power become a more important part of their self-concept, implying self-objectification.

Further, and consistent with the notion that certain aspects of the self-concept are more or less accessible depending on the situation (Markus & Kunda, 1986; Wheeler, et al., 2007), we predict that

self-objectification is not necessarily a constant state of power-holders, but can be triggered by certain, predictable situations. Just as women's sexual self-objectification can be heightened by situations that make salient a third party's sexual evaluation of their body (Calogero, 2004; Fredrickson, et al., 1998; Gapinski, Brownell, & LaFrance, 2003), power-holders' self-objectification should be triggered by what they see as acts of ingratiation, which raise the possibility that they are being objectified for their power.

The characteristics of the triggering event are important because they distinguish processes of self-objectification from less objectifying alternatives. For example, it is possible that subordinate ingratiation simply activates a personally important aspect of the self (i.e., one's power), independent of its instrumental use to others. Presumably, however, any subordinate interaction or reminder of one's power would activate this personally important aspect of the self-concept. To the extent that power-relevant attributes become more important in response to subordinate ingratiation – but not after other subordinate interactions – this would reveal the objectifying nature of this process; that is, the attributes are important to the self *because* they are instrumentally useful to others. In sum, we predict that subordinate ingratiation will trigger self-objectification among the powerful, such that they will be more likely than others to self-define on power-relevant attributes and engage in actions that are consistent with this self-definition.

Importantly, our theory is based on power-holders' *beliefs* about a subordinate's actions: the true motives of the subordinate may or may not be instrumental in nature. Past research has shown that those in power are more likely to believe that a favor is driven by instrumental motives, even when it is actually driven by benevolent, communal motives (Inesi, et al., 2012, Study 1). Thus, even those acts of kindness that are driven by non-instrumental motives should trigger self-objectification among the powerful. Because we believe that it is the power-holders' beliefs about the action that matter in self-objectification, we term subordinate actions ingratiation; however, such actions may not always be instrumentally motivated. We discuss this further in the General Discussion.

The theory outlined above also suggests that power-holders will self-objectify more than others only on attributes that are specifically linked to power and that may be instrumentally useful to others. They should not self-objectify more than others on attributes that may be seen as valuable, but that are not specifically linked to power. For example, kindness, trustworthiness and considerateness are valuable communal attributes in general for facilitating interpersonal attraction (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Wojciszke, Abele, & Baryla, 2009), but cannot be used in the service of subordinates' instrumental goals. Therefore, power-holders who self-objectify should rate power-relevant attributes, but not valuable attributes that are power-irrelevant (e.g., communal attributes), as more important to their self-definition.

Overview of Research

In a pilot study, we identified a series of attributes that are predictive of power and thus should be particularly sensitive to self-objectification among the powerful (power-relevant attributes). We distinguished these from other attributes that are valuable, but that are not power-relevant (communal attributes). We then tested the prediction that power leads to self-objectification across four studies. In Studies 1 and 2, power was manipulated by having participants recall an actual co-worker who was either subordinate to the participant or a peer. Next, participants were either exposed to a trigger (a favor in Study 1 and opinion conformity in Study 2) or were not. We predicted an interaction: Power-holders would rate attributes that are relevant to power as more important to their self-definition after a trigger, and this would not be true for equal-power participants. Further, we predicted that this pattern would not emerge for communal attributes. Studies 3 and 4 further investigated this phenomenon in a laboratory setting by testing the underlying process as well as the consequences of self-objectification on behavior. Power was manipulated through roles in a work simulation, and participants either received an actual favor from a confederate co-worker (subordinate or peer), or did not receive a favor. Across both studies, participants were asked to report the extent to which they felt objectified by others and then answered questions designed to test self-objectification (self-definition in Study 3 and willingness to pay for high-

status consumer products in Study 4). We predicted that high-power participants who had been triggered would feel more objectified than others and that this would mediate self-objectification.

Pilot Study

According to our theory, self-objectifying power-holders will rate power-relevant attributes as more important to their self-definition. Therefore, as a first step in studying the process of self-objectification among the powerful, we sought to identify a set of personal attributes that are linked to power across different types of situations and populations. These attributes included wealth, intelligence, physical attractiveness and power itself. Wealth is a commonly-used and fungible reward and is thus considered a basic source of reward power (French & Raven, 1959). We selected intelligence because it is a source of expert power (French & Raven, 1959): More intelligent people have the potential to influence the behavior of those who know less. Finally, English environmentalist John Ray once said that “Beauty is power; a smile is its sword.” Indeed, research has found that greater influence and status are granted to physically attractive individuals (Anderson, John, Keltner, & Kring, 2001; Ashmore & Longo, 1995). This may be because attractive people make more positive impressions on others (Riggio, 1986) and are seen as having better social skills (Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991).

A second goal of the pilot study was to create a separate set of personal attributes that would represent a comparison set to the power-relevant attributes. According to our theory, those in power should self-objectify on power-relevant attributes, but *not* on other attributes. Therefore, we selected communal attributes (kindness, ability to listen, considerateness, reliability, and trustworthiness) because they are considered desirable, but should be less predictive of power.

We tested to what extent each of these attributes was predictive of power, and whether they loaded onto separate factors.³

Method

Participants. Fifty-nine adults (37 men, $M_{age} = 34.14$, $SD_{age} = 11.63$) participated through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (mTurk), an online crowd-sourcing mechanism through which people above 18 years old can choose to participate in studies in return for payment (see Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011 for subject pool details). They were paid \$0.40.

Design and procedure. Participants were presented with nine attributes in randomized order and were asked to what extent each was predictive of power. Various scholars have defined social power as the ability to control other people (Fiske & Dépret, 1996; French & Raven, 1959). Therefore, the question was worded as follows: "To what extent would each of the following attributes enable a person to have control over other people?" (5-point scale: 1 = *not at all*, 5 = *to a great extent*). The power-relevant attributes were power, wealth, intelligence, and looks/beauty; the communal attributes were kindness, ability to listen, considerateness, reliability, and trustworthiness.

Results and Discussion

Following Hinkin (1998) and Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, and Strahan (1999), we conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on the nine items with maximum likelihood extraction and direct oblimin rotation (to allow for correlation among items). Results based on the scree plot and eigenvalue (Fabrigar, et al., 1999; Russell, 2002) supported a two-factor solution. The first factor represented the power-relevant attributes (item loadings were power = .67, wealth = .85, and looks/beauty = .69; all communal attributes loaded < .1 on this factor), and the second factor represented the communal attributes, (item loadings were kindness = .78, ability to listen = .81, considerateness = .83, reliability = .89, and trustworthiness = .84; power, looks/beauty, and wealth loaded < .12 on this factor). Surprisingly, intelligence did not load highly onto either factor (power-relevant factor loading = .48, communal factor loading, = .22). Based on these results, we created a three-item composite for power-relevant attributes ($\alpha = .74$) and a five-item composite for communal attributes ($\alpha = .92$).

A paired-samples t-test revealed that the power-relevant attributes composite ($M = 4.40$; $SD = .68$) was more predictive of power than the communal attributes composite ($M = 2.72$; $SD = 1.00$), $t(58) = 11.90$, $p < .001$.

In the following studies, we used these sets of attributes to test the prediction that power-holders self-objectify. We applied the following exclusion criteria across the four studies: We removed participants who failed to report their correct role in the power manipulation, those who reported not being fluent in English, and those whose responses on the dependent measures were considered outliers, as defined by McClelland (2000). As the first two studies were conducted online, we could not monitor their attentiveness to the stimuli. Therefore, we excluded participants who failed a basic attention check question.⁴

Study 1

A defining feature of self-objectification is that the objectified attributes become more important in defining the self (Fredrickson, et al., 1998). Therefore, to test the relationship between power and self-objectification, we manipulated power and the presence versus absence of a triggering situation prior to asking participants how they defined themselves. We predicted that high-power participants would rate power-relevant attributes as more important to their self-definition in the presence of a trigger compared to in the absence of one. We predicted no effect of a trigger on equal-power participants. We also predicted that, in the presence of a trigger, high-power participants would rate power-relevant attributes as more important to their self-definition than equal-power participants would, and that this effect of power would be weaker in the absence of a trigger. Finally, we predicted that the same interaction would not emerge for attributes that are valuable but power-irrelevant. Thus, there would be no difference in the importance of communal attributes to self-definition.

Method

Participants. One hundred and forty-nine adults (70 men; $M_{age} = 34.74$, $SD_{age} = 12.28$) participated in exchange for \$.70 on mTurk.

Design and procedure. The study followed a 2 (power: equal vs. high) x 2 (co-worker action: no trigger vs. trigger) between-participants design.

Participants were randomly assigned to describe a work relationship with either a subordinate (*high-power* condition) or a peer (*equal-power* condition) with whom they currently worked or had worked before (Gruenfeld, et al., 2008; Inesi, et al., 2012).

Participants were then randomly assigned to imagine one of two possible interactions had occurred with the person they had described (Inesi, et al., 2012). In the *trigger* condition, they read the following:

A couple of days ago, you were swamped with work and were going to have to stay late. Your subordinate [peer] offered to help you out for a couple hours by proof-reading some documents you had been working on that needed to be checked for typos. You accepted his/her offer. Because of your subordinate's [peer's] help, you didn't have to stay late at work that night.

Participants in the *no trigger* condition read the following:

A couple of days ago, you and your subordinate [peer] were working hard on a document that was due the next morning. Together, you looked at what was left to be done and agreed on who would do what tasks between yourself and your subordinate [peer]. You both completed the tasks and were able to turn in the document on time.

After imagining the above situation, all participants responded to a series of items about their self-definition, as described below. Then they answered a series of demographic questions, plus two attention check items.

Measures

Self-definition. In order to examine to what extent participants defined themselves through power-relevant and communal attributes, we asked them: “How important is each of the following attributes in defining who you are as a person?” (5-point scale: 1 = *not at all important*, 5 = *very important*). The pilot-tested attributes described above were presented: Power-relevant drivers of self-definition (power, wealth, and looks/beauty, $\alpha = .67$) and communal drivers of self-definition (kindness, ability to listen, considerateness, reliability, and trustworthiness, $\alpha = .83$). The eight attributes were randomly ordered.

Results

Participant gender did not interact with any of the manipulated variables to predict our outcomes measures, and thus we will not discuss it further.

Importance of power-relevant attributes to self-definition⁵. A 2 power x 2 co-worker action analysis of variance (ANOVA) on the importance of power-relevant attributes to self-definition revealed only an interaction between power and co-worker action, $F(1, 145) = 4.29, p = .040, \eta_p^2 = .03$: There was neither a main effect of power, $F(1, 145) = 1.51, p = .222, \eta_p^2 = .01$, nor a main effect of co-worker action, $F(1, 145) = 1.46, p = .229, \eta_p^2 = .01$. See Table 1 for means across studies. Follow-up contrasts showed that high-power participants were more likely to use power-relevant attributes to define the self after a favor compared to after a work exchange, $F(1, 145) = 5.28, p = .023, \eta_p^2 = .04$. The same was not true for equal-power participants, $F < 1$. Also, after a trigger, high-power participants were more likely than equal-power participants to use power-relevant attributes to define the self, $F(1, 145) = 5.54, p = .020, \eta_p^2 = .04$. However, in the absence of a trigger, there was no effect of power condition on the tendency to use power-relevant attributes to define the self, $F < 1$.

Importance of communal attributes to self-definition. A 2 power x 2 co-worker action ANOVA on the importance of communal attributes to self-definition revealed no significant effects [main

effect of power, $F(1, 145) = .91, p = .343, \eta_p^2 = .01$; main effect of co-worker action, $F(1, 145) = 2.19, p = .141, \eta_p^2 = .02$; interaction, $F(1, 145) = .36, p = .551, \eta_p^2 < .01$].

Discussion

The results from Study 1 provided initial support for the prediction that certain interpersonal interactions trigger self-objectification among the powerful. High-power participants rated power-relevant attributes as more important to their self-definition than other participants did – but only after a favor. Thus, it is not that power-relevant attributes are generally more important to powerful people compared to others. Rather, certain interactions with subordinates trigger this self-objectifying perspective. Further, and consistent with our theory, the pattern of means showed that a favor, compared to a work exchange, *increased* the importance of power-relevant attributes in defining the self for those in positions of power but had no effect on those not in positions of power. Finally, the same pattern did not emerge for communal attributes. Thus, it is not the case that power-holders are more likely to report all attributes as more central to their self-concept after receiving a favor. Rather, the favor appears to suggest to power-holders the possibility that they are approached and valued specifically for their power-relevant attributes, which triggers an objectifying definition of the self.

A strength of our design is that we chose a work interaction as our no-trigger condition, rather than simply the absence of an interaction. In this way, an attribution process regarding the co-workers' actions could be triggered across conditions. The attribution for why a co-worker completes his or her required work should theoretically not be affected by hierarchical role, whereas we have proposed that hierarchical role will affect attributions for favors. Therefore, because high-power participants are more likely to self-define through power-relevant attributes after a favor, but not after a work exchange, this suggests that the perception of one's instrumental usefulness *to others* plays a key role in the process. Further, this design helps to rule out the possibility that our effects may be the result of a favor simply activating a personally important aspect of the participants' self-concept. That is, it is possible that one's

power-related attributes may be important to the self-concept, even in the absence of their instrumental use by others, and the favor may simply cue this. However, a work interaction with a subordinate (i.e., our no-trigger condition) would presumably trigger the same aspect of the self-concept. Since our effect only emerges after a favor, but not after a work interaction, then this pattern is more consistent with self-objectification.

It is interesting to note that participants considered communal attributes to be more self-defining than power-relevant attributes. Even high-power participants who self-objectified were still more likely to self-define through communal attributes compared to power-relevant attributes. We believe this occurred because in general, communal attributes are more socially desirable than power-relevant ones (see Abele & Wojciszke, 2007 for a related discussion on the difference between agency and communion). It is also worth noting that the importance of power-relevant attributes to self-definition was not negatively correlated with the importance of communal attributes: As one increased, the other did not decrease. However, because these two sets of attributes are conceptually independent (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002), we did not expect that they would be negatively correlated. It is for this reason that we measured them on independent scales, rather than using, for example, a ranking method.

Study 2

We have theorized that acts of ingratiation from a subordinate will trigger self-objectification among the powerful. In support of this prediction, high-power participants in Study 1 who received a favor from a subordinate rated power-relevant attributes as more important to their self-definition. In Study 2, we sought to replicate this finding with a different trigger to provide further support for our theory and demonstrate generalizability. Prior research (Gordon, 1996; Jones & Wortman, 1973) has identified a series of ingratiation tactics that subordinates use with their bosses including opinion conformity, other enhancement, self-presentation, and rendering favors. We built upon these ideas in Study 2 to develop our new trigger, in this case, opinion conformity.

A second goal of Study 2 was to demonstrate that a power-holder need not directly experience the trigger in order for self-objectification to occur. Rather, a power-holder can simply observe another powerful individual in a triggering situation and self-objectify as a result. If true, this would significantly broaden the set of situations in which power-holders self-objectify. There is a precedent for triggering self-objectification through observation only (Aubrey, 2006; Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002; Harper & Tiggemann, 2008; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003; Morry & Staska, 2001). In the sexual self-objectification literature, researchers have shown that women who looked at images of women with thin, attractive bodies were more likely to self-objectify than women who looked at images that do not contain humans (Harper & Tiggeman, 2008). Another study showed that the more women looked at mass media that objectifies women's bodies (e.g., magazines, television programs), the more likely they were to self-objectify; the same relationship was not true for men who look at mass media that objectifies male bodies (Morry & Staska, 2001).

We conceptually replicated this idea in Study 2 by having participants read a story about either a male employee who voices agreement with a colleague's idea (e.g., Jake voices agreement with Tom's idea; trigger condition) or a male employee who voices agreement with an idea that he and a colleague had come up with together (e.g., Jake voices agreement with his and Tom's combined idea; non-trigger condition). We selected this design because agreement is voiced across conditions, but the extent to which it appears to be an ingratiation tactic is greater in the former condition.

Method

Participants. One-hundred and seventeen adults (59 men, $M_{age} = 31.66$, $SD_{age} = 10.96$) participated in exchange for \$.50 on Mturk.

Design and procedure. The study followed a 2 (power: equal vs. high) x 2 (co-worker action: no trigger vs. trigger) between-participants design with a floating control condition, described below.

We manipulated power in the same way as in Study 1, by having participants recall a work relationship with either a subordinate (*high-power* condition) or a peer (*equal-power* condition).

Then as an ostensibly unrelated task, participants were randomly assigned to read a scenario in which an individual either voices agreement with an idea that he and a colleague came up with together (non-trigger) or voices agreement with a colleague's idea (trigger). Following previous work (Harper & Tiggemann, 2008; Morry & Staska, 2001), and consistent with Study 1, we also varied the hierarchical nature of the relationship in accordance with the power condition. That is, participants in the high-power condition read a scenario whereby a subordinate voiced support for his supervisor's idea (or for a joint idea), while those in the equal-power condition read a scenario about a worker who provided support for an equal-powered co-worker's idea (or for a joint idea).

In the *trigger* condition, high-power [equal-power] participants read the following:

Tom is a high-level director [consultant] in the HR division of Henman Consulting Company. The HR Division has regular business meetings, where people in the division share their work progress and some ideas. These days Tom has noticed that when he presents an idea, Jake, one of his subordinates [peers, e.g. another consultant], often voices agreement.

For example, at one meeting, when Tom presented a business proposal he made, Jake said, "This is a great proposal. I would definitely support this proposal." At another meeting, Tom said, "I find that the company's IT system is somewhat outdated. I think my finding should be shared with other divisions." Again, Jake agreed, "I totally agree with you."

Participants in the *no trigger* condition read an identical passage, except that the business proposal and the IT system findings were described as joint work completed by both Tom and Jake.

In the floating control condition, we had equal-power participants read the high-power version of the *trigger* scenario, in which a subordinate voiced support for his supervisor's idea. We included this as a

floating control because it tests whether anyone who is exposed to a subordinate voicing support for his boss's idea would self-objectify on power-relevant attributes, or if only those already in power would do so.

After reading one of the scenarios, all participants responded to the same items about their self-definition as in Study 1 (power-relevant items, $\alpha = .67$; communal items, $\alpha = .79$), provided demographic information, and answered attention check questions.

Results

Gender did not interact with any of the manipulated variables to predict our outcome measures.

Importance of power-relevant attributes to self-definition. A 2 power x 2 co-worker action ANOVA on the importance of power-relevant attributes to self-definition revealed only an interaction between power and co-worker action, $F(1, 90) = 5.27, p = .024, \eta_p^2 = .06$: There was neither a main effect of power, $F(1, 90) = 1.09, p = .300, \eta_p^2 = .01$, nor a main effect of co-worker action, $F(1, 90) = 3.09, p = .082, \eta_p^2 = .03$. See Table 1 for means. Follow-up contrasts showed that high-power participants rated power-relevant attributes as more important to their self-definition after a trigger compared to in the absence of a trigger, $F(1, 90) = 7.72, p = .007, \eta_p^2 = .08$. The same was not true for equal-power participants, $F < 1$. Also, after a trigger, high-power participants rated power-relevant attributes as more important to their self-definition compared to equal-power participants, $F(1, 90) = 5.46, p = .022, \eta_p^2 = .06$. However, in the absence of a trigger, there was no effect of power condition on the importance of power-relevant attributes to self-definition, $F < 1$.

Finally, we compared the floating control condition to the other four cells of the 2 power x 2 co-worker action design. Dunnett's post hoc test (with the floating control condition as the control, $M = 2.28, SD = .96$) revealed that the floating control condition was only different from the high-power/trigger cell, $p = .009$. Thus, it is not the case that anyone who is exposed to opinion conformity from a subordinate to a supervisor will self-objectify on power-relevant traits: Only those already in power will.

Importance of communal attributes to self-definition. A 2 power x 2 co-worker action ANOVA on the importance of communal attributes to self-definition revealed no significant effects [main effect of power, $F(1, 90) = 2.58, p = .111, \eta_p^2 = .03$; main effect of co-worker action, $F(1, 90) = 1.62, p = .206, \eta_p^2 = .02$; interaction, $F(1, 90) = 1.22, p = .273, \eta_p^2 = .01$]. Furthermore, the floating control condition was not different from any of the four cells, all p 's $> .66$.

Study 3

Thus far, we have shown that two different types of ingratiation trigger self-objectification among the powerful, but not among peers. In Study 3, we sought to expand on these findings in two ways. First, we wanted to provide evidence of the mechanism driving this effect. According to Fredrickson and colleagues (1998), self-objectification occurs when an individual internalizes an external, objectifying perspective on the self; for example, women realize that they are sexually objectified by others and eventually internalize this perspective, which is sexual self-objectification. Thus, beliefs about being objectified by others should drive self-objectification. To test this process in the context of power and self-objectification, we manipulated power and trigger and then asked participants two sets of questions. First, to measure situation-specific beliefs about being objectified by others, we asked participants why they believed their co-worker acted the way he or she did. Specifically, they reported the extent to which the co-worker's actions were driven by instrumental motives related to their own (the participant's) role on the team. Second, we asked more general questions about why participants think people like them.

We also asked participants about their self-definition, as in Studies 1 and 2. We predicted a pattern of moderated mediation: In the presence of a trigger (but not in the absence of one), high-power participants would feel more objectified by others than equal-power participants would, and that this would mediate the importance of power-relevant attributes to their self-definition.

A second goal of Study 3 was to test our predictions in the context of a real experience of ingratiation. Therefore, participants in Study 3 came into the laboratory and were assigned to work with

another participant, who was actually a confederate. This confederate was either their subordinate or their peer. In the course of their work, the confederate then either offered the participant a favor (trigger condition) or simply did what the experimenter asked (no-trigger condition).

Method

Participants. Seventy-one participants (30 men; $M_{age} = 29.62$, $SD_{age} = 9.25$) took part in a laboratory study in exchange for £10. They were recruited through a listserv managed by a behavioral laboratory in London, United Kingdom.

Design and procedure. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the 2 (power: equal vs. high) x 2 (co-worker action: no trigger vs. trigger) conditions.

Upon arrival, each participant was directed to a study room, where a confederate - ostensibly another participant - was waiting. The confederate was always the same sex as the participant. Thus, we had one male and one female confederate, who were approximately the same age (29 years old), the same ethnicity (White) and from the same country (U.S.A.). We chose to have a same-sex confederate because we were concerned that gender norms and stereotypes would affect responses to the favor manipulation (Eagly & Crowley, 1986).

The participant and the confederate were told that they would be working together on a Creative Agency Simulation, in which they would complete several tasks, some in the same location and others in different locations.

Participants were first asked to complete a short survey, which was described as a leadership questionnaire that would be used to assign roles on the team. A similar questionnaire including a series of personality trait items has been used in prior research to assign leadership roles in what the participants see as a legitimate manner (see Anderson & Berdahl, 2002, Study 2; Lammers, Galinsky, Gordijn, & Otten, 2008, Experiment 4). We modified these items slightly to remove any that were relevant to power,

as they might influence responses to our dependent measures. After the questionnaires were completed, the experimenter spent about a minute looking at them. In the *high-power* condition, the experimenter said:

“Based on your scores on this questionnaire, you (pointing to the participant) will be the boss, while you (pointing to the confederate) will be the worker, while working on several tasks in this Agency. The boss will evaluate the worker’s performance after each task, but the worker won’t have such a chance. The boss now gets 10 raffle tickets, and will decide how to distribute the tickets between the two of you to enter a cash prize draw at the end of the experiment.”

In the *equal-power* condition, the experimenter said:

“Based on your scores on this questionnaire, you both (pointing to both the participant and the confederate) will be teammates, while working on several tasks in this Agency. Teammates will work in an equal relationship for each task. Each of the teammates now gets 5 raffle tickets to enter a prize draw at the end of the experiment.”

Participants were asked to create and wear a role-relevant nametag, and to read role instructions (Pitesa & Thau, 2013). We reinforced the power manipulation by having participants complete a second, role-relevant task. Participants were given a sheet of paper with a list of eight pre-tests to be completed. Next to each pre-test name were the experimenter’s name and the time required to complete the pre-test. The total time required was 18 minutes. Participants were told that they would have to divide and complete the pre-tests between them as the final task of the experiment (see Gruenfeld, et al., 2008, Experiment 3). High-power participants were told that, at the end of the study, they would select those pre-tests they wanted to do, and their worker would do the remaining pre-tests. In the equal-power condition, they were told that they would decide together who would do what tasks.

Finally, the experimenter asked the participant and the confederate to interact with each other for a few minutes within their assigned roles. We did this so that one of the dependent measures (beliefs about the co-worker action) would make sense across the trigger and non-trigger (see details below in Measures). During this time, the participant and the confederate generally asked each other's names and talked about working in this agency, including what the future tasks and cash prize draw would be like. We instructed the confederates to make the length and content of all discussions similar across conditions. Then, the experimenter stated that one person would have to go to a distant office (5 minutes' walk, including some stairs) to begin the first task.

In the *trigger* condition, the experimenter asked the participant and the confederate which of them would be willing to go to the distant office. At this point, the confederate volunteered to move to the distant office. Only one participant offered to leave before the confederate was able to, and this participant was removed from the dataset. No participants rejected the favor from the confederate.

In the *no trigger* condition, the experimenter told the participant and the confederate that she would flip a coin to decide which of them would go to the distant office. No matter how the coin landed, the experimenter said the following: "It's heads [tails] so that means you (pointing the confederate) will go to the distant office."

After the confederate left, the experimenter told participants that before beginning the first task in different locations they would do a 10-minute survey, which included our main dependent measures.

Measures

Beliefs about being objectified by others. Participants were asked two sets of questions. The first two referred to their beliefs about being objectified in the situation. Specifically, they were asked on a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *extremely*): "Thus far, to what extent do you believe that the other participant's actions were motivated by your respective roles on the team?", and "Thus far, to what extent do you believe that the other participant's actions were motivated by the hope that you would repay

him/her in some way?" ($r = .50, p < .001$). Next, participants were asked to report why they believed people liked them in general. Specifically they were asked to indicate the extent to which each of the following statements is true of them on a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all true*, 5 = *very true*): "People like me because of my..." We included the same attributes as in Studies 1 and 2 (power-relevant drivers of liking: power, wealth, and looks/beauty, $\alpha = .71$; communal drivers of liking: kindness, ability to listen, considerateness, reliability, and trustworthiness, $\alpha = .73$). Participants' beliefs about being objectified in the situation were correlated with the power-relevant drivers of liking, $r = .42, p < .001$, but not with communal drivers of liking, $r = .01, p = .926$. Therefore, we combined beliefs about being objectified in the situation with the power-relevant drivers of liking to create a single composite *beliefs about being objectified by others* ($\alpha = .74$).⁶

Importance of attributes to self-definition. These items were identical to those in Studies 1 and 2 (importance of power-relevant attributes to self-definition, $\alpha = .88$; importance of communal attributes to self-definition, $\alpha = .65$).

After completing all main dependent measures, participants completed two attention check items and a power manipulation check. They were asked on a 7-point scale (1 = *extremely powerless*, 4 = *neither powerful nor powerless*, 7 = *extremely powerful*): "After you were assigned your role and wrote about a similar past experience, how powerful did you feel?" After completing this survey, all participants were debriefed individually by the experimenter.

Results

Gender did not interact with any of the manipulated variables to predict our outcome measures.

Manipulation check. A 2 power x 2 co-worker action ANOVA on the manipulation check revealed only a main effect of power, $F(1, 67) = 55.98, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .46$, such that high-power participants ($M = 5.52, SD = 1.09$) felt more powerful than equal-power participants did ($M = 4.05, SD = .52$).

Beliefs about being objectified by others. Recall that this measure is a composite of beliefs about being objectified in the situation and power-relevant drivers of liking, which were combined because they are significantly correlated. A 2 power \times 2 co-worker action ANOVA revealed main effects of power, $F(1, 67) = 7.43, p = .008, \eta_p^2 = .10$, and of co-worker action, $F(1, 67) = 22.23, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .25$. There was also an interaction between power and co-worker action, $F(1, 67) = 25.43, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .28$. Follow-up contrasts revealed that high-power participants were more likely to believe that they are objectified by others when the confederate went to the distant office as a favor (a trigger) compared to when he or she went because it was required by the experimenter (no trigger), $F(1, 67) = 43.60, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .39$. In the equal-power condition, co-worker action did not affect participants' beliefs about being objectified by others, $F < 1$. Further, after receiving a favor, high-power participants believed they were objectified by others more than equal-power participants did, $F(1, 67) = 26.47, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .28$. In the no trigger condition, there was a marginal effect of power in the opposite direction, $F(1, 67) = 3.12, p = .082, \eta_p^2 = .05$.

A 2 power \times 2 co-worker action ANOVA on communal drivers of liking revealed no significant effects, all F 's < 1 .

Importance of power-relevant and communal attributes to self-definition. A 2 power \times 2 co-worker action ANOVA on the importance of power-relevant attributes to self-definition revealed main effects of power, $F(1, 67) = 5.06, p = .028, \eta_p^2 = .07$, and of co-worker action, $F(1, 67) = 8.80, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = .12$. There was also an interaction between power and co-worker action, $F(1, 67) = 6.33, p = .014, \eta_p^2 = .09$. Follow-up contrasts revealed that high-power participants rated power-relevant attributes as more important to their self-definition when the confederate (i.e., their subordinate) left the room as a favor compared to when the confederate was required by the experimenter to leave the room, $F(1, 67) = 13.76, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .17$. In the equal-power condition, co-worker action did not affect the importance of power-relevant attributes to self-definition, $F < 1$. Also, in the trigger condition, high-power participants rated power-relevant attributes as more important to their self-definition than equal-power participants

did, $F(1, 67) = 9.95, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .13$. In the no-trigger condition, power did not affect the importance of power-relevant attributes to self-definition, $F < 1$.

A 2 power \times 2 co-worker action ANOVA on the importance of communal attributes to self-definition revealed no significant effects, all F 's < 1 .

Moderated mediation. We predicted that the interaction between power and co-worker action in predicting the importance of power-relevant attributes to self-definition would be mediated by beliefs about being objectified by others. To test the hypothesized moderated mediation model, we ran a hierarchical regression analysis to estimate individual paths. When we regressed the importance of power-relevant attributes to self-definition onto manipulated power (1 = high-power, 0 = equal-power), manipulated co-worker action (1 = trigger, 0 = no-trigger), and their interaction, only the interaction term was a significant predictor, $\beta = .43, t(67) = 2.52, p = .014$. When we entered beliefs about being objectified by others, the effect of the interaction term dropped to non-significance, $\beta = .03, t(66) = 1.19, p = .849$, while the effect of beliefs about being objectified by others was significant, $\beta = .53, t(67) = 4.20, p < .001$. Bootstrapping using Hayes's (2012) PROCESS model (Model 8, 1,000 iterations) confirmed that the moderated mediation model was significant (effect = 1.16), 95% CI [.52, 1.97]. The results suggested that the pattern of mediation was stronger in the trigger condition (effect = .89), 95% CI [.39, 1.47] than in the non-trigger condition (effect = -.27), 95% CI [-.69, .03].

Study 4

In Study 4, we sought to extend our investigation of power and self-objectification to a behavioral dependent measure. We reasoned that, if, in the presence of a trigger, power increases the importance of power-relevant attributes to self-definition (Studies 1-3), then they might also prefer products that are consistent with this self-definition. This prediction is derived from past work on consumer behavior, which suggests and demonstrates that people prefer identity-consistent products (Aaker, 1997, 1999; Kassarijian, 1971; Oyserman, 2009). Therefore, we predicted that, in the presence of a trigger, high-

power individuals should be willing to pay more than others for high-status goods, but not for neutral-status goods. Extending our understanding of self-objectification into behavior is important and interesting because it means that self-objectification is not simply an intrapsychic process, but has real effects on how power-holders interact with the world.

A second goal of this study was to provide further evidence for the mechanism linking power and self-objectification. Building on the findings of Study 3, we predicted that, after receiving a favor, high-power participants would be willing to pay more for high-status goods (but not for lower-status goods) *because* they believe others objectify them.

Method

Participants. Fifty-two men ($M_{\text{age}} = 27.08$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 9.62$) took part in a one-hour laboratory study in exchange for £10. They were recruited through a listserv managed by a behavioral lab in London, United Kingdom. We recruited only male participants because most of the items in the consumer products questionnaire described below (e.g., silk tie, cuff links) were targeted toward men.

Design and procedure. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two possible conditions in this 2 (power: equal vs. high) between-participants design. The cover story for Study 4 was nearly identical to Study 3, with a few exceptions. First, in the *high-power* condition, the experimenter assigned power by looking at her clipboard and telling the participants that, according to the information she was given, the participant would be the boss and the confederate would be the subordinate. Thus, it appeared that the role assignment between the participant and the confederate was randomly determined. In the *equal-power* condition, participants were told that they would be teammates on the task. A second difference was that we used a different task to reinforce the power manipulation. Unlike the “divide tasks” exercise used in Study 3, participants in Study 4 wrote about a past experience that was similar to their assigned role. In the *high-power* condition, this task was identical to that of Galinsky and colleagues (2006), and in the *equal-power* condition, they were asked to write about a time they had worked with

someone in a non-hierarchical manner (see Gruenfeld, et al., 2008 for a similar task). Thus, our power manipulation included the ability to evaluate another individual and to provide or withhold rewards and this was reinforced with the recall task. A final difference between Study 3 and Study 4 is that all participants received a favor from the confederate.

Measures

Beliefs about being objectified by others. Consistent with Study 3, participants were asked about their beliefs about being objectified in the situation with the confederate and about being objectified more generally. They were first asked who left the room to work in the “distant office” for the telecommuter task. After reporting that the other participant left the room (all participants answered this question correctly), they were asked questions similar to those in Study 3, but more focused on the favor (since there was no non-favor condition). All participants were asked “To what extent do you believe this person left the room because of your respective roles on the team?”, and “To what extent do you believe that this person left the room so that you would feel compelled to repay this action in some way?” (5-point scale: 1 = *not at all*, 5 = *extremely*; $r = .59, p < .001$). Next, participants completed the drivers of liking items from Study 3 (power-relevant drivers of liking: power, wealth, and looks/beauty, $\alpha = .68$; communal drivers of liking: kindness, ability to listen, considerateness, reliability, and trustworthiness, $\alpha = .76$).

Beliefs about being objectified in the situation were significantly positively correlated with the power-relevant drivers of liking, $r = .31, p = .026$, but not with communal drivers of liking, $r = .15, p = .306$. Therefore, as in Study 3, we combined the beliefs about being objectified in the situation with the power-relevant drivers of liking to create a composite belief about being objectified by others ($\alpha = .69$).

Willingness to pay (WTP). The next set of questions was described as a consumer products questionnaire. Participants were asked how much they would be willing to pay for a series of 10 products. These items were shown by Rucker and Galinsky (2008) to be either strongly associated with status (silk

tie, executive pen, briefcase, cuff links, fur coat) or weakly associated with status (ballpoint pen, washer, dryer, van, fabric sofa). Because these products represent a variety of price tiers, we used the same interval scale as in Rucker and Galinsky (2008). Participants were asked, “How much would you be willing to pay for the product featured?” and responded on a 12-point scale, where 1 = 10% of the retail price of the item, 2 = 20% of the retail price of the item, and increasing intervals of 10% per scale point up to 12 = 120% of the retail price. Given that we only had male participants, we predicted that the fur coat would not be perceived as a sign of status. Therefore, we did not include it in the final composite *WTP for high-status goods*, $\alpha = .75$. The products that were weakly associated with status were combined to form a composite measure of *WTP for neutral-status goods*, $\alpha = .67$. Finally, participants completed the power manipulation check question from Study 3.

Results

Manipulation check. A 2 (power: equal vs. high) one-way ANOVA on the manipulation check revealed a significant effect, $F(1, 50) = 4.57, p = .037, \eta_p^2 = .08$, such that high-power participants ($M = 4.69, SD = 1.01$) felt more powerful than equal-power participants did ($M = 4.19, SD = .63$).

Beliefs about being objectified by others. A one-way ANOVA on beliefs about being objectified by others revealed a significant effect of power condition, $F(1, 50) = 34.98, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .41$. High-power participants were more likely than equal-power participants to believe that others objectify them. There was no effect of power on communal drivers of liking, $F(1, 50) = 1.75, p = .192, \eta_p^2 = .03$,

WTP. We tested the effect of power condition on WTP for high-status goods with a one-way ANOVA, controlling for WTP for neutral-status goods. We controlled for WTP for neutral-status goods because we wanted to account for the variance attributable to individual differences in WTP across all types of goods. A marginal effect of power emerged, $F(1, 49) = 3.15, p = .082, \eta_p^2 = .06$, such that high-power participants were willing to pay more than equal-power participants were. A significant effect of

the covariate, WTP for neutral-status goods, emerged, $F(1, 49) = 6.56, p = .014, \eta_p^2 = .12$, indicating that, consistent with our rationale for including the covariate, there was a positive relationship between WTP for high- and neutral-status goods.

We also tested the effect of power on WTP for neutral-status goods controlling for WTP for high-status goods, and the result was not significant, $F(1, 49) = 1.68, p = .202, \eta_p^2 = .03$.

Mediation. We predicted that high-power participants would feel more objectified by others, and that this would increase WTP for high-status goods. The results reported above indicate that power has a direct effect on both beliefs about being objectified by others and WTP for high-status goods. In addition, beliefs about being objectified by others was a significant predictor of WTP for high-status goods, $\beta = .44, t(50) = 3.425, p = .001$. To test mediation, we regressed WTP for high-status goods onto manipulated power (1 = high-power, 0 = equal-power) and beliefs about being objectified by others. We also entered WTP for neutral-status goods into the model as a covariate. Although beliefs about being objectified by others, $\beta = .57, t(48) = 3.72, p = .001$, remained significant, the power variable dropped to non-significance, $\beta = -.13, t(48) = -.83, p = .411$. The covariate also remained significant, $\beta = .38, t(48) = 3.21, p = .002$. We further tested mediation using Hayes's (2012) PROCESS macro (Model 4, 1000 iterations) to construct a 95% confidence interval (CI) for the indirect effect using bootstrapping procedures. The indirect effect was significant, effect = 1.46, with zero falling outside of the 95% CI [.71, 2.53].

General Discussion

Across four studies, we provided support for the relationship between power and self-objectification. We demonstrated that power increases the importance of power-relevant attributes to self-definition (Studies 1-3), but only after a triggering event that suggests ingratiation (i.e., a favor in Studies 1 and 3 and a scenario describing a subordinate who voices agreement with his boss's ideas in Study 2). Studies 3 and 4 showed that, after receiving a favor from a confederate, high-power individuals are more likely to believe that they are objectified by others, which led them to place greater importance on power-

relevant attributes in their self-definition (Study 3), and made them more willing to pay for products related to power and status (but not for products unrelated to power) (Study 4).

Theoretical Implications

Our findings provide several notable contributions. First, we extend beyond typical models of objectification and self-objectification. Previous research has shown that lower-power individuals can fall victim to self-objectification: Power-holders objectify lower-power individuals, who then internalize this perspective and self-objectify. Here, we provided evidence for the reverse process. Power-holders believe that they are objectified by their subordinates and, as a result, are more likely to self-objectify on power-relevant attributes. Importantly, this only occurs in the presence of specific subordinate actions, meaning that subordinates can trigger self-objectification among the powerful. Although we operationalized power through work roles in our studies, we believe that the same dynamic can emerge in all hierarchical relationships (e.g., teacher and student, parent and child).

In demonstrating this process, we extend objectification theory (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997) outside the realm of sexual self-objectification. Much valuable research has investigated the process by which women in particular internalize a third-person perspective on their bodies, leading to a host of detrimental outcomes (see Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008). By adapting the theory and measures to hierarchical relationships, we showed that a comparable process can occur in the domain of power.

The possibility that power-holders self-objectify also represents a departure from current findings in the psychology of power. Much recent work suggests that power frees people from interpersonal and situational pressure and allows the true self to emerge (see Fiske, 2010 for a review; although see Guinote, 2008, for an exception). Here, we showed that subordinate ingratiation leads to an increase in the importance of objectified attributes in power-holders' self-definition, which also has implications for behavior. The possibility that an external factor (i.e., a subordinate) can impose specific attributes onto the very way that power-holders define themselves and the actions they pursue, paints a very different

picture from the one suggested by existing research. While we do not believe our findings contradict existing work, we hope they present an opportunity for a new and different perspective on how power affects the self-concept.

Finally, we believe our findings speak to research on power and relationship development (Inesi, et al., 2012; Inesi & Rios, 2013; Lammers, Galinsky, Gordijn, & Otten, 2012; Morgenthau, 1962; Van Kleef et al., 2008), in that they suggest a cycle that may impede the development of interpersonal relationships. Ostensible acts of kindness, which are generally interpreted as selfless expressions of caring for the other person, are instead coded as ingratiation, leaving power-holders feeling objectified, and ultimately triggering self-objectification. Thus, instead of feeling closer to others after what may in fact be kind acts, power-holders seek to reinforce their power relative to others, which only serves to re-start the cycle upon receipt of the next act of kindness. At the same time, there may be some benefits to this process in that power-holders are able to maintain a stream of ingratiation from instrumental subordinates. We elaborate on this below.

Future Directions

We see several future directions for the current research. First, it would be interesting to test the downstream consequences associated with power-related self-objectification. The sexual self-objectification literature has demonstrated numerous effects of the process, including body shame, depression, and diminished cognitive performance (Breines, Crocker, & Garcia, 2008; Gervais, et al., 2011; Tiggemann & Kuring, 2004). Although some of these are specific to body monitoring and would not apply to power-related self-objectification, others, such as cognitive effects, may extend to hierarchical relationships. Relatedly, another area for future research would be to understand the potential functional properties of self-objectification. Prior research has shown that women who place a high value on their appearance experience a boost in self-esteem when they are paid a compliment, but only under conditions of mortality salience (Goldenberg, Cooper, Heflick, Routledge, & Arndt, 2011). In Study 4, we

demonstrated that high-power individuals were willing to pay more for items that display status. It could be that owning and displaying such objects is functional because it serves not only to confirm a salient identity, but also to remind others of (and maintain) their position in the hierarchy. Such objects may encourage even more favors, compliments and other acts of ingratiation from subordinates.

In our studies, we operationalized power-relevant attributes through wealth, physical attractiveness and power, and assumed that they would be attractive to instrumental subordinates. However, there are other personal attributes that are associated with (although not necessarily predictive of) power that may be less likely to be used instrumentally by subordinates. For example, independence and dominance are related to power, but less directly useful to other people than, for example, wealth is. It would be interesting to test whether, after a trigger, power-holders would also be more likely to self-define on these attributes or, as we would predict, whether the effect is exclusive to those attributes that can be used by others.

Another area for future research would be to test additional triggers of the self-objectification process among the powerful. Although we described the many indirect means that lower-power individuals may use to gain access to power-holders' resources, we only tested favor-giving and opinion conformity as triggers of self-objectification. Future research may test whether other influence tactics (e.g., self-presentation, other-enhancement) or additional triggers outside ingratiation would have similar effects. We have posited that the mere awareness that one's power is instrumentally useful to others triggers self-objectification. Therefore, it is possible that even a subordinate's request for a favor that benefits him or her, but not the supervisor, and is not relational in nature, may have the same effect. For example, if a subordinate asks his or her supervisor for placement on a more attractive project, for a better compensation package, or even for a letter of recommendation, then these may also trigger self-objectification in the supervisor.

Finally, future research could investigate to what extent self-objectification among powerful individuals is an automatic process. In Study 2, we showed that power-holders need not experience ingratiation directly in order to trigger self-objectification. Rather, they can simply read about a triggering scenario and demonstrate the same effects. However, we did not test whether a person who is not in power, but merely feels powerful, might be more likely to self-objectify in the presence of a trigger. That is, the combination of activating the power construct plus the experience of a favor might trigger the episodic memory associated with instrumental motives, which in turn might increase self-objectification. Indeed, recent research has demonstrated findings consistent with such processes. For example, in one study, participants were asked to recall a recent favor. Then, either a high-power or a baseline mindset was activated in all participants through a semantic prime. Finally, participants were asked to answer how instrumentally motivated they thought the previously-recalled favor was. Participants who completed the high-power prime were more likely to attribute the favor to instrumental motives than those who completed the neutral-power prime, even though there was no difference in objective power between the favor-giver and favor-receiver across conditions (Inesi, et al., 2012, Study 1). These results suggest that the receipt of a favor may trigger self-objectification through power-relevant attributes - even in the absence of objective power - simply because the person receiving the favor feels powerful in that moment.

Conclusion

In 1972, Kipnis wrote that "...those who hold power tend to value it above all other values, and restlessly pursue additional power throughout their lives. The corruption refers here to the fact that power becomes an end in itself" (1972, p. 34) Although his commentary was meant to capture the ways in which power leads to the exploitation of the less powerful, it may also reflect the process of self-objectification among the powerful. Our research shows that those subordinates who are at risk of being exploited may unknowingly be the triggers of this behavior. Thus, what Kipnis described as a restless pursuit of power may in fact be an attempt to affirm a self-definition that has been activated by subordinate ingratiation.

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Footnotes

¹ Oyserman (2009) uses the term “identity” rather than “self-definition.” Because self-definition is closely related to identity and because we measure self-definition in our studies, we used the former term to avoid introducing too many concepts.

² This is not intended to suggest that subordinates fail to do what the power-holder asks to gain access to the rewards. Rather, we are describing additional, less direct tactics.

³ Although we initially thought about comparing power-relevant attributes with “neutral” attributes, rather than communal attributes, we found that all nine attributes we considered seemed to fall into either a warmth (which is related to communality) or a competence (which is related to power and status) dimension (Cuddy, Glick, & Beninger, 2011; Fiske, et al., 2002). Therefore, we decided to explicitly compare power-relevant attributes to communal attributes.

⁴ Across studies, when we include the excluded participants, the results are in the same direction, but drop in significance.

⁵ Across the studies reported in this manuscript, controlling for communal items (i.e., the importance of communal attributes to self-definition in Studies 1, 2 and 3; communal drivers of liking in Studies 3 and 4) did not affect the results. In many cases, it actually made them stronger. The only exception is Study 3, in which the results for the importance of power-relevant attributes to self-definition dropped in significance when controlling for the importance of communal attributes to self-definition. However, the pattern of means in that study was consistent with predictions.

⁶ In both Studies 3 and 4, if beliefs about co-worker action and power-relevant drivers of liking are analyzed as separate variables, the predicted interaction and simple effects are significant. Further, both of them separately mediate self-definition (Study 3) and willingness to

pay for high-status goods (Study 4), although beliefs about co-worker action are a weaker mediator than power-relevant drivers of liking across both studies. We combined these items across Studies 3 and 4 to reduce complexity and for conceptual clarity.

Highlights

- >Four studies demonstrate that power can lead to self-objectification
- >The powerful self-objectify on power-relevant attributes but not on other attributes
- >Self-objectification affects self-definition and behavior
- >Self-objectification is triggered by subordinate ingratiation