Reports

The power to be me: Power elevates self-concept consistency and authenticity

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ABSTRACT

Consistency in the self-concept across social contexts has been linked to various positive outcomes, including felt authenticity and well-being. Based on theories of social power (e.g., Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003), we predicted that high-power individuals, disposed to greater control of their environments and freedom of self-expression, would exhibit greater self-concept consistency relative to their low-power counterparts. Across three studies, measured and manipulated high-power participants showed elevated self-concept consistency in terms of greater coherence and consistency in their spontaneous self-descriptions (Studies 1 and 2), and less variability in trait ratings of themselves across different contexts (Study 3), relative to low-power participants. Moreover, high-power participants' tendency to be more consistent in their self-concept explained their higher reports of authenticity relative to low-power participants (Study 3). Discussion focuses on the implications of these findings for health and well-being, and for power differences in other cultural contexts.

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Introduction

How people think and feel about themselves depends largely on the social context (James, 1890; Swann & Bosson, 2010). Changing one's self-conceptions in different social settings could involve hiding important values and goals (e.g., aspirations to be a musician that are not supported by one's parents). In contrast, expressing the self regardless of changes in the context could promote the sense that one is known and understood by others (Swann, 1990). In this research, we sought to understand how possessing elevated social power—that is, the enhanced control of the environment and freedom of self-expression that power allows (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003)—impacts consistency in the self-concept, and in turn, one's well-being.

Drawing upon research suggesting that high-power individuals, relative to their low-power counterparts, are characterized by greater freedom to resist situational influences (Galinsky et al., 2008) and greater capacity to behave in a fashion that is consistent with their internal traits (Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh, 2001), we expected high-power individuals to exhibit greater consistency in their self-concept across different contexts. Moreover, we hypothesized that this power-based difference in self-concept consistency would predict greater felt authenticity among high-power individuals relative to their low-power counterparts.

Self-concept consistency and social power

Self-concept consistency typically refers to the consistency with which people view aspects of themselves (e.g., traits, motives, goals) across varying contexts (e.g., Block, 1961; Donahue, Robins, Roberts, & John, 1993; Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardy, 1997). That is, a person who views himself or herself differently in different contexts (e.g., shy at work but not at home) is thought to have low self-concept consistency. Self-concept consistency is influenced by a number of social factors including the immediate social environment (e.g., Block, 1961; Donahue et al., 1993), cultural background (e.g., English & Chen, 2007; Markus & Kitayama, 1991), and the types of relationship partners with whom one interacts (e.g., Chen, Boucher, & Tapias, 2006). In the present investigation, we examined power-based differences in self-concept consistency.

Though the literature on how power influences social behavior and cognition is vast (for a review, see Guinote & Vescio, 2010), little attention has been given to how power impacts the self-concept (for an exception, see Tiedens & Jimenez, 2003). Researchers typically define social power as "an individual's relative capacity to modify others' states by withholding resources or administering punishments" (Keltner et al., 2003, p. 265). In essence, elevated power allows individuals to have elevated control over others' outcomes and increased freedom to make decisions according to their own goals and motivations. Reflecting the elevated control and freedom that come with power, we hypothesized that the self-concepts of high-power individuals should exhibit elevated consistency across contexts. In contrast, low-power individuals' relative lack of control and freedom suggests that the situation is a stronger determinant of their actions

and inferences. Accordingly, we hypothesized that low-power individuals are likely to exhibit less consistency in their self-concepts, as they may shift the self-concept based on changes in the external context.

Indirect evidence supports the above hypotheses. Research suggests that high-power individuals' thoughts and actions are governed more by internal thoughts and goals than by the external context (e.g., Galinsky et al., 2008; Keltner et al., 2003). For example, high-power primed individuals are more likely to persist at behaviors consistent with their internal goals (Guinote, 2007a; b). In a related vein, Keltner et al. (2003) argue that high-power individuals' actions focus disproportionately on obtaining personal rewards while ignoring situational constraints on action. For example, high-power individuals—measured in terms of trait dominance—reported experiencing more positive mood than low-power individuals, reflecting their focus on positive reward states (Watson & Clark, 1997). Even when high-power individuals do shift their behavior according to changes in the social context, these shifts are often in the service of high-power individuals' goals (Guinote, 2007c). For example, high-power primed individuals are more likely to plan behavior consistent with the context (e.g., planning leisure activities during weekends but work-related activities during weekdays), relative to low-power participants (Guinote, 2008, Study 1). In short, high-power individuals are particularly adept at engaging in behaviors that serve their goals and motives.

In contrast, low-power individuals' lack of control and reduced freedom lead these individuals to be disproportionately influenced by the external context. For example, relative to high-power primed participants, participants primed to feel low levels of power were more likely to conform—for example, by drawing pictures during an art task that were judged to be more similar to a provided sample picture—suggesting that they were influenced disproportionately by the social context (Galinsky et al., 2008). Similarly, research on patterns of social interaction suggests that low-power individuals are less likely to interrupt others (Depaulo & Friedman, 1998). Perceptually, low-power individuals are more likely to focus on the external context. For example, individuals reporting low subjective socioeconomic status—a demographic variable associated with control and economic freedom (Oakes & Rossi, 2003)—were more likely to explain economic inequality in society and everyday social events in terms of uncontrollable external factors (e.g., political influence), relative to their internally focused, upper-class counterparts (Kraus, Piff, & Keltner, 2009).

The above research suggests that high-power individuals tend to engage in thought and action consistent with their internal states and to function relatively independent of the social context. Based on this work, our first hypothesis was that relative to low-power individuals, high-power individuals would show greater consistency in their self-concept across contexts. More specifically, whereas low-power individuals will shift how they see themselves depending on the social context (e.g., when with family vs. co-workers), high-power individuals will see the self as relatively consistent across these varying social contexts. Whereas previous research has examined power-based variability in self-presentations and behavior within a given context (Guinote, Judd, & Brauer, 2002), or trait influences on behavior among individuals differing in power (Chen et al., 2001), the present research is the first, in our estimation, to examine how power shapes consistency in the self-concept across different situations. Understanding how the self-concept shifts across situations is an important area of research because it has direct implications for overall well-being.

Social power, self-concept consistency, and authenticity

It is possible that the hypothesized self-concept consistency of high-power individuals is associated with negative outcomes. For example, failing to adapt themselves to changes in the social context could lead high-power individuals to be overconfident (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006) or to express attitudes that are inapplicable to the situation (Fiske, 1993). Existing work, however, suggests that there may be some psychological benefits associated with increased self-concept consistency, such as greater felt authenticity—defined as a positive feeling state arising from engaging in actions with a sense of choice and self-expression (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Sheldon et al., 1997). In other words, people feel authentic when they are able to express aspects of their self-concept (e.g., values, goals, traits). Research shows that the subjective feeling of authenticity is associated with elevated mood (Bettencourt & Sheldon, 2001), reduced psychological distress (Kernis & Goldman, 2006), higher subjective well-being and life-satisfaction (Sheldon et al., 1997), and greater meaning in life (Schlegel, Hicks, Arndt, & King, 2009).

Our second hypothesis was that the greater self-concept consistency seen among high-power individuals would be associated with greater authenticity. In essence, we expected elevated power to allow individuals to "be themselves" across different social contexts, and by implication, to experience associated increases in authenticity. Supporting this prediction, research shows that people with highly consistent trait ratings of themselves across different contexts report elevated mean levels of authenticity (Sheldon et al., 1997). Other work has shown that individuals who construe themselves as relatively independent from others—as high-power individuals are likely to do—reported greater self-concept consistency across contexts and greater feelings of authenticity, whereas the relationship between self-concept consistency and authenticity was weaker for individuals who construed themselves in more relationally dependent terms (Cross, Gore, & Morris, 2003). Taken together, the above research suggests that high-power individuals are likely to experience greater psychological authenticity as a result of their greater self-concept consistency.

The present research

Across three studies, we tested the predictions that, relative to low-power individuals, high-power individuals (1) would exhibit more consistency in their self-concept, and (2) would experience greater feelings of authenticity as a result of this consistency. To do so, we operationalized power using both trait- and manipulation-based measures of the construct (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006), and assessed self-concept consistency in terms of both semantic coherence in spontaneous self-descriptions and variability in trait ratings of the self across different contexts (e.g., Cousins, 1989; English & Chen, 2007).

Throughout our analyses, we took steps to account for variables that may explain the associations between power, self-concept consistency, and authenticity. Specifically, we controlled for ethnic background given research suggesting that East Asian individuals show reduced self-concept consistency across contexts (English & Chen, 2007). We also controlled for trait extraversion and neuroticism because these personality dimensions have been shown to covary with elevated social status (e.g., Anderson, John, Keltner, & Kring, 2001). Finally, we controlled for self-esteem given its associations with elevated social power (e.g., Wojciszke & Struzynska-Kujalowicz, 2007) and well-being (Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001). In sum, our research is among the first to examine power-based influences on the self-concept, and to examine how power leads to an important aspect of overall well-being—felt authenticity.

Study 1: Trait power and coherence of spontaneous self-descriptions

In Study 1, we sought initial evidence for a link between power and self-concept consistency by measuring trait levels of social power (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006; Anderson, John, & Keltner, in press) and

assessing self-concept consistency in terms of the semantic coherence of participants' spontaneously written self-descriptions (Cousins, 1989). To the degree that people construe themselves consistently across contexts, their self-descriptions are likely to be similar in meaning to each other, that is, to cohere together. Conversely, if people see themselves differently across different contexts, their descriptions of themselves are likely to be less coherent; some perhaps even contradictory with one another.

Method

Participants

One hundred ten university students participated in the study for course credit. Five were excluded for not completing the self-concept measures. The analyses were conducted on the remaining sample. Most participants were female ($n = 70$). The distribution of self-identified ethnicity was as follows: Asian American ($n = 49$), European American ($n = 29$), Latino/a ($n = 14$), other or multiple ethnicities ($n = 9$), and African American ($n = 4$). Across studies, gender did not moderate the results and thus will not be discussed further.

Measures

Sense of power. We measured trait social power with an 8-item scale used in prior research (Anderson et al., in press). Using 7-point Likert scales (1 = *disagree strongly*, 7 = *agree strongly*), participants rated their agreement with each item with regard to their "relationships in general." Example items include: "My wishes don't carry much weight" (reverse scored) and "I feel like I have a great deal of power" ($M = 4.82$, $SD = 0.83$; $\alpha = .72$).

Personality. We assessed extraversion and neuroticism using the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI; Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003). Participants indicated responses using 7-point Likert scales (1 = *disagree strongly*, 7 = *agree strongly*). An example item from the extraversion scale ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 1.45$) is "I see myself as extraverted, enthusiastic," and one from the neuroticism scale ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 1.43$) is "I see myself as calm, emotionally stable" (reverse scored).

Self-concept consistency. To assess the self-concept, participants completed a version of the Twenty Statements Test (Cousins, 1989). Specifically, they were asked to write 20 single-sentence statements about themselves. Four coders, naïve to the study hypotheses, read through each participant's set of 20 statements and rated the consistency or coherence of each set using a 4-point scale (0 = *inconsistent*, 3 = *high consistency*). More specifically, they were asked to "make a judgment about how all the statements cohere; that is, how they tell a coherent and sensible story about the participant." For example, separate statements saying the person is organized, dependable, conscientious, and tends to plan events would increase ratings of consistency and coherence, whereas separate statements saying a person is reserved and loud would lower these ratings. Coders' ratings were reliable ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 0.44$; $\alpha = .78$).

Self-esteem. We utilized two measures of self-esteem. The first was a single item measure of global self-esteem (Robins et al., 2001) that asked participants to indicate how much they agreed with the statement "I have high self-esteem" using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*; $M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.90$). For the second measure, our coders rated the favorability of each of participants' statements from the Twenty Statements Test using a 3-point scale (−1 = *unfavorable*, 0 = *neutral*, 1 = *favorable*). We summed coder ratings of favorability for each participant ($M = 5.19$, $SD = 3.71$; $\alpha = .89$). We used a single measure of self-esteem in our analyses based on the standardized average of the two separate self-esteem indices ($M = 0.02$, $SD = 0.85$).

Results and discussion

First, we determined if power was positively associated with greater self-concept consistency for spontaneously generated written self-descriptions. Consistent with our expectations, elevated trait power was significantly positively correlated with greater consistency across participants' self-descriptions, $r(103) = .28$, $p < .01$.[1]

Next, we sought to rule out potential alternative explanations for our findings. Specifically, we first conducted a linear regression where we regressed consistency of self-descriptions on trait power, ethnicity (coded "1" for Asian American and "0" for non-Asian American), and the interaction between ethnicity and trait power. In this analysis, trait power emerged as a significant predictor of the consistency of participants' self-descriptions, $\beta = .35$, $t(101) = 3.10$, $p < .01$. No other effects were significant ($ps > .15$). Similar linear regressions including trait extraversion and neuroticism and their respective interactions as predictors also yielded significant effects for trait power on self-concept consistency, $\beta s = .25$ to .27, $ts(101) = 2.34$ to 2.69, $ps < .05$. No other effects were significant ($ps > .37$). Finally, a linear regression including self-esteem and its interaction with social power yielded the predicted effect of power on self-concept consistency $\beta = .22$, $t(101) = 2.11$, $p < .05$. Independent of this relationship, self-esteem was marginally positively associated with self-concept consistency $\beta = .20$, $t(101) = 1.85$, $p = .07$, aligning with previous research suggesting that reductions in self-esteem covary with reductions in self-concept clarity (e.g., Nezlek & Plesko, 2001). The interaction was not significant ($ps > .37$). Overall, Study 1's results provide initial evidence that high-power individuals display greater consistency in their self-concepts relative to their low-power counterparts, and this association is independent of ethnicity, personality, and self-esteem.

Study 2: Power and self-concept consistency across contexts

In Study 2, we assessed participants' self-concept consistency using a well-validated measure of the construct (Cross et al., 2003; English & Chen, 2007; Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Stake, Huff, & Zand, 1995): variability in participants' self-descriptions across different social contexts. We predicted that high trait power would be associated with less variability in participants' trait ratings (i.e., higher self-concept consistency) relative to low-power participants.

Method

Participants

Ninety-five adults were recruited to complete a survey through a national retail website's online data collection service in exchange for monetary compensation. The majority ($n = 57$) of participants were female, and the mean age was approximately 35. Participants primarily self-identified as European American ($n = 78$), Asian American ($n = 4$), Latino/a ($n = 4$), African American ($n = 5$), or some other ethnic category ($n = 12$; participants were permitted to indicate multiple ethnic categories).

Procedure

Upon entering the survey, participants were instructed to think of two different websites in counterbalanced order—a romantic relationship website such as EHarmony.com and a social networking website such as Facebook.com. We used online social websites as our contexts because they are increasingly used as a forum for people to

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[1] Correlational analyses revealed that both power (word count $r = -.01$, *ns*; abstract $r = .02$, *ns*) and self-concept consistency (word count $r = .08$, *ns*; abstract $r = .06$, *ns*) were unrelated to word count and the level of coded abstraction (Rhee, Uleman, Lee, & Roman, 1995) in participants' spontaneous self-descriptions. These analyses suggest that the association between power and self-concept consistency was independent of the complexity of self-statements.

express the self to others (e.g., Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006). For each website, participants provided single-sentence open-ended written descriptions of themselves on a number of important attributes (see below; Kraus & Chen, 2009; Swann, Bossom, & Pelham, 2002). Following these descriptions, participants filled out the same trait power scale (Anderson et al., in press; $M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.79$) and self-esteem scale (Robins et al., 2001; $M = 5.10$, $SD = 1.52$) used in Study 1.

Self-concept consistency

Participants described themselves on the two websites using five dimensions of the Self-Attributes Questionnaire (SAQ; Pelham & Swann, 1989). Specifically, participants were asked to describe their intellectual ability, social skills, artistic ability, leadership ability, and musical ability in open-ended responses. Participants were permitted to type as much or as little as they wanted. Four coders, naïve to the condition and the hypotheses of the study, coded participants open-ended responses in terms of the extent to which these responses reflected the particular SAQ attribute using 5-point Likert scales (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *very much*). Coder responses averaged across all five responses were reliable ($\alpha = .78$), and all coder ratings were averaged to create an overall coder assessment for each SAQ attribute.

To index self-concept consistency, we computed the variance between each participants coded SAQ attribute across the two social websites, then we averaged across all five attributes to create an overall composite of variability in participants' self-concepts ($M = 0.29$, $SD = 0.28$). Lower scores indicate greater consistency in self-descriptions between the two websites.

Results and discussion

We hypothesized that powerful people would show greater consistency in their self-concepts across contexts—reflected in lower variability in participants' self-concept ratings across contexts. To conduct this analysis we used a linear regression predicting our measure of self-concept consistency with trait power, self-esteem, and their interaction. As expected, the analysis yielded only a significant effect of power on self-concept consistency, $\beta = -.25$, $t(87) = -2.22$, $p < .05$. No other effects were significant ($ps > .60$). In sum, high power is associated with greater self-concept consistency not only in terms of the coherence of participants' spontaneous self-descriptions (Study 1), but also in terms of the variability of their spontaneous self-descriptions across two different social contexts (Study 2).

Study 3: Manipulated power, self-concept consistency, and authenticity

Study 3 extended the results from the first two studies in two key respects. First, as power is a complex construct with multiple demographic correlates (e.g., personality, ethnicity, occupational status), we manipulated the construct, therefore allowing us to assess the causal effects of power. Second, to test our second hypothesis, we assessed felt authenticity with the expectation that the greater self-concept consistency of high-power participants would lead these individuals to report greater authenticity.

Method

Participants

One hundred thirty participants from a national online adult sample whose average age was 33 participated in the study for monetary compensation through an online retail website. Participants were mostly female ($n = 76$), and the majority of them self-identified as European American ($n = 107$), followed by Native American ($n = 10$), Asian American ($n = 11$), Latino/a ($n = 5$), African American ($n = 3$), and other ($n = 10$). Participants were allowed to choose more than one ethnic category. The experiment took approximately 20 min to complete online.

Procedure

Power manipulation. We manipulated power using a written experimental procedure adapted from previous research (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003). In this procedure, participants were asked to think of a time when they had a great deal of control and influence over another person (high power), when other people had control and influence over their own outcomes (low power), or when they ate their last meal (neutral).[2] Participants were then asked to type about this experience for 5 min. In previous research, studies using this manipulation have yielded results consistent with manipulations involving actual power roles (e.g., Anderson & Galinsky, 2006; Galinsky et al., 2008). As manipulation checks, participants responded to two items using 7-point Likert scales (1 = *disagree strongly*, 7 = *agree strongly*): "Right now I feel I have a great deal of power" and "Right now, I feel like my wishes don't carry much weight (reverse scored)" ($\alpha = .70$).

Self-concept consistency. Participants were asked to rate themselves on the five factors of the Big Five using the TIPI (Gosling et al., 2003), and did so across three contexts: when with their parents, at work, and in a social gathering. Each facet of the Big Five was then calculated for each participant in each context. To index self-concept consistency, we examined the variation in participants' self-concept ratings across the three contexts. Self-concept consistency was indexed as the average of the variation in participants' self-concept ratings across contexts ($M = 1.03$, $SD = 0.82$), with higher scores indicating greater variability in the self-concept across contexts (i.e., lower self-concept consistency).

Authenticity. Felt authenticity was indexed using 4 items adapted from past research (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Participants indicated how much they agreed with each item "right at this moment" using 7-point Likert scales (1 = *disagree strongly*, 7 = *agree strongly*). The items were: "I feel like I can be myself with others," "I feel like it is easy to express my true attitudes and feelings during interactions with others," "I feel like I'm artificial in my interactions with others," and "I feel like I would change myself to get along with others." The last two items were reverse scored, and all items were averaged ($M = 4.78$, $SD = 1.19$; $\alpha = .73$).

Self-esteem. To index self-esteem, the positivity of participants' ratings on each facet of the Big Five was computed in each context, with scores on the neuroticism dimension reversed such that higher scores indicated greater emotional stability. These favorability scores were then averaged across dimensions, then averaged again across the three contexts to create an overall favorability score for participants' trait ratings ($M = 4.90$, $SD = 0.75$).

Results and discussion

We first determined the success of our manipulation of social power by subjecting the manipulation check items to a one-way analysis of variance with a planned linear contrast. As expected, the linear contrast was significant, $F(1, 126) = 4.12$, $p < .05$, as participants in the low-power condition ($M = 3.91$) scored lower on the power manipulation check than their high-power counterparts ($M = 4.49$), with neutral participants falling in between ($M = 4.23$).

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[2] The neutral condition was added after collection of the high- and low-power conditions. However, participants were recruited from the same source for all three conditions.

For our first hypothesis, we expected that high-power primed participants would show greater self-concept consistency across the three contexts relative to their low-power counterparts. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a linear regression predicting self-concept consistency from our power manipulation (coded as "−1" for low power, "0" for neutral, and "1" for high power), our index of self-esteem, and their interaction. Supporting our hypothesis, the power manipulation was significantly negatively associated with the measure of self-concept consistency, $\beta = -.20$, $t(119) = -2.24$, $p < .05$, such that as power increased participants showed less variability in their self-concept ratings across contexts, indicating elevated self-concept consistency (see Fig. 1). As in Study 1, self-esteem was marginally associated with self-concept consistency, $\beta = -.16$, $t(119) = -1.82$, $p = .07$, such that participants with high self-esteem also showed elevated self-concept consistency (e.g., Nezlek & Plesko, 2001). The interaction was not significant ($p > .50$).

For our second hypothesis, we predicted high-power primed participants would report greater authenticity relative to their low-power primed counterparts, and this difference would be attributable to their elevated self-concept consistency. To test this hypothesis, we first conducted a linear regression predicting authenticity from our power manipulation, self-esteem, and their interaction. This analysis yielded the predicted association between power and authenticity, $\beta = .17$, $t(119) = 2.25$, $p < .05$. Self-esteem was also related to authenticity $\beta = .48$, $t(119) = 6.19$, $p < .05$, but this association was independent of social power. The interaction was not significant ($p > .50$).

Next, we conducted a mediation analysis (Baron & Kenny, 1986) with the power manipulation as our independent variable, authenticity as the outcome variable, and self-concept consistency as the mediator. As can be seen in Fig. 2, the relationship between manipulated power and authenticity was significant, $t(121) = 2.04$, $p < .05$. However, when accounting for the significant relationship between self-concept consistency and authenticity $t(120) = -2.49$, $p < .05$, the originally significant relationship between manipulated power and authenticity became non-significant, $t(120) = 1.55$, $p = .13$. Moreover, using a bootstrapping procedure to test mediation in small samples (Preacher & Hayes, 2004), the 95% confidence interval of the indirect effect of manipulated power on authenticity through self-concept consistency was between .01 and .17, indicating a significant indirect effect. These results support our second hypothesis that elevated power leads to greater authenticity because it increases self-concept consistency.

General discussion

Elevated social power is associated with increased control, freedom, and internal trait influences on one's actions, whereas diminished social power is associated with reduced control and more situational constraints on behavior (e.g., Chen et al., 2001; Côté et al.,
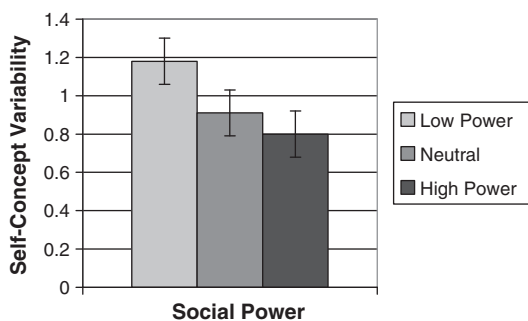

Fig. 1. Variability in self-concept across contexts as a function of manipulated social power, and controlling for self-esteem. Lower scores indicate greater self-concept consistency across contexts.
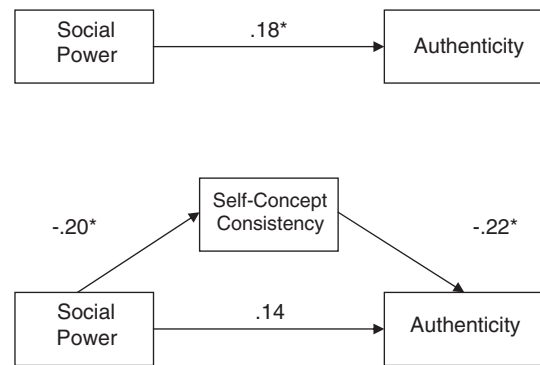

Fig. 2. Model of the relationship between manipulated power and psychological authenticity, explained by variability in the self-concept across contexts. Numbers indicate standardized beta weights and asterisks indicate that $p < .05$.

in press; Galinsky et al., 2008). Across three studies, we tested the prediction that high-power individuals—disposed to greater control and freedom—would show elevated consistency in their self-concept relative to their low-power counterparts. Supporting this hypothesis, high-power participants' spontaneous self-descriptions were judged to be more coherent (Study 1), and their trait ratings of themselves less variable across different social contexts (Studies 2 and 3), relative to low-power participants. Moreover, greater self-concept consistency among high-power primed participants explained why these individuals reported heightened authenticity (Study 3).

Importantly, the present results were obtained using both measured and manipulated power, providing evidence that higher trait levels of power predict greater self-concept consistency, and that experiences of elevated power enhance self-concept consistency and authenticity. Moreover, power-based self-concept consistency was independent of ethnic differences associated with self-concept consistency across contexts (English & Chen, 2007), personality characteristics associated with elevated status (Anderson et al., 2001), and self-esteem across the three studies.

Caveats and future directions

Several caveats, and the future directions they suggest, should be noted. Among them, the present research assessed or manipulated only trait or situational power, not both at once (e.g., a person with high trait power in a position of high power). Some research on power has looked at the consequences of trait and situational power jointly. For example, Chen, Langner, and Mendoza-Denton (2009) found that when a person's trait power matched his or her role power (i.e., high trait power/high power role or low trait power/low power role), the person's self-reported emotions and personality attributes were better discerned by others (e.g., an interaction partner) than when the person's trait and role power mismatched (i.e., high trait power/low role power or low trait power/high role power). Self-concept coherence and consistency across contexts, assessed in the present studies, and correspondence between internal states and perceptions of one's behavior, as assessed in Chen et al. (2009), are clearly distinct forms of consistency. Nonetheless, it would be interesting for future research to examine potential links between self-concept consistency and the match or mismatch between a person's trait and situational power. Related to this point, future research would do well to consider whether high-power individuals actually show behavior indicating self-concept consistency or if these individuals simply perceive themselves to be more consistent across contexts, relative to low-power individuals.

Second, though our manipulation of power demonstrated that people with elevated power have greater self-concept consistency relative to people with low power, the locus of this effect is not entirely clear. That is, because no differences were observed between

the neutral condition and high or low power, we cannot determine whether high power elevates self-concept consistency, low power diminishes this consistency, or both. Future research is needed to address this important question in more depth.

Third, in the present research, we suggest that elevated power leads to greater authenticity through increases in self-concept consistency. This model is consistent with several studies suggesting that increased self-concept consistency leads to greater felt authenticity (English, 2009; Schlegel et al., 2009). Nevertheless, it is possible that greater feelings of authenticity could, in some cases, reinforce a person's self-concept consistency across contexts (see Sheldon et al., 1997). Preliminary evidence from Study 3 is actually suggestive of this possibility: the effect of power on self-concept consistency is reduced to marginally significant $\beta = -.16$, $t(120) = -1.75$, $p = .08$, when accounting for felt authenticity. Future research would do well to investigate the interplay between power, self-concept consistency, and authenticity. For example, would feedback that disrupts one's feelings of authenticity (e.g., a high-power person is demoted at work) reduce self-concept consistency? And if so, would reduced authenticity impact the self-concepts of high- and low-power individuals in the same fashion?

Our research suggests a novel way in which power may elevate overall well-being—namely, through increased self-concept consistency and authenticity. Nevertheless, the precise mechanisms underlying power's influence on self-concept consistency are in need of future exploration. It is possible, for instance, that high-power individuals show elevated self-concept consistency because they are blissfully unaware of the social context (Kraus et al., 2009). It is also plausible that power frees individuals from having to suppress important aspects of their identity to meet others' standards and values, and it is this suppression process that diminishes well-being.

On a different note, it will be important for future research to examine the link between power and the self-concept in other cultural contexts. As discussed previously, individuals from East Asian cultures show less consistency in their self-concepts across contexts relative to Westerners (English & Chen, 2007). One possibility is that high-power individuals in East Asian cultures will show similarly elevated levels of self-concept consistency across contexts, but may not benefit in terms of greater felt authenticity. That is, unlike Westerners, East Asians' greater tolerance of ambiguity and contradiction (e.g., Peng & Nisbett, 1999) may protect low-power individuals from East Asian cultures from feeling inauthentic as a result of their reduced self-concept consistency.

Finally, as noted, it is possible that being consistent in one's self-concept across contexts may at times be detrimental for high-power individuals. For example, overconfidence in perception, shown by people of elevated power (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006), could result from consistently seeing oneself as capable and knowledgeable across all contexts. In addition, it will be important to determine how high-power individuals respond to feedback that violates the consistency in their self-beliefs. For example, perhaps high-power individuals would be more likely to seek evaluations that confirm their consistent self-beliefs across contexts, and to discount inconsistent feedback, in order to maintain prediction and control of their social environment (Swann, 1990).

Social power influences thought, emotion, and behavior across contexts. The present research adds to the existing literature by suggesting that power also has a unique influence on the self-concept, leading individuals to experience elevated consistency in their self-concept. In this way, people's power-based dispositions and roles shape how the self is perceived and experienced in different contexts, and determine feelings of authenticity and well-being.

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