

The Power in Being Yourself: The Experience of Authenticity Enhances Power

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Psychology

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

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Summer 2015



## Abstract

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Recent research indicates that power breeds authenticity, suggesting that people associate power with behaving authentically. Extending this notion, we hypothesized that the converse is also true—that the experience of authenticity enhances power. Five experiments (total N = 703) yielded support for this hypothesis. Specifically, participants who recalled an authentic, versus inauthentic, experience reported greater state power (Studies 1-3). Studies 2 and 3 showed further that this authenticity-to-power link was mediated by a reduced fear of rejection for expressing one's true self. Fear of rejection was manipulated in Study 4 to document the causal impact of a reduced fear of rejection on feelings of power. Finally, Study 5 extended the prior studies into the realm of social perception, demonstrating that people infer others' power from their acts of authenticity. Our findings could not be explained by pre-existing power differences that may have led to the authentic or inauthentic behavior in the first place (Studies 1, 2, & 5), nor by authenticity eliciting positive affect (Studies 3 & 5). Implications for the maintenance of power hierarchies, and the use of authenticity as a strategic means through which power can be obtained, are discussed.

## Acknowledgments

It's true what research says: we are bad at forecasting how we will feel. Five years ago, I could not have predicted how much I would love research or fathom how much being at Berkeley would change me. Just as a lot of what I know to be true of myself and of the world has been informed by research, so too has my me-search sparked many research ideas. And it is the kindness of all the people below who have made my education, both personally and professionally, possible.

To my first two friends at Berkeley, Matt Feinberg and Alice Moon: I am so grateful for your friendship. You have set such a high bar for what it means to be a true friend and frankly, ruined me for new friendships in the future—where else will I find spicy-food-loving, groovy-dance-moves-rocking, unconditionally supportive and patient friends like you? I respect you both so much, for your mind and your character, and I'm glad that I will get to live the academic dream vicariously through you.

To my superlatives-do-not-do-her-justice advisor Serena Chen: you have taught me so much. You pushed me to do better and to keep going. You believed in me and my potential, and convinced me that I deserved more than what I was settling for out of fear. You are a role model on leaning-in, even if you might not feel that way. I can truly say that my relational self with you brought me closer to my ideal self, which makes me feel (relationally) authentic → less fearful of rejection → empowered. I will always cherish your mentorship.

To all the students I have taught at Berkeley: thank you for testing my patience time and time again. Joking aside, to the students who genuinely wanted to learn: thank you for your questions, your openness, and your trust in what I had to share. You made me feel that however small, I can make a difference.

To my dad, 甘有爱, and my mom 许耀伊: no one loves me unconditionally the way you guys do. I know I won't be able to whole-heartedly feel just how deep that unconditionally is until I'm a parent myself one day, but I already know how incredibly lucky and happy I am to be your daughter. Out of all the parents in the entire world, I am glad that you are mine. I will always need you, and especially so when I'm feeling small.

To all the friends that I feel blessed to have stayed close with since high school and college: whenever I think about how much people change, it's comforting to know that we have each other. You will forever be the people who knew me when I didn't even know myself. Thank you for still being such an important part of my life.

To my wonderfully generous, intimidatingly smart, and hilariously insightful grad school comrades: how did I get so lucky? Never did I imagine that I would have such a big-hearted, witty, and loving group of people to toss around research ideas and analyze our personal lives with ad nauseam. I have one giant soft spot for all of you.

To my dearest Simon Cartoon: you are the one and only (minus that other Simon Cartoon in Santa Barbara). You are my person, and the only person I know outside of grad school who wants to have the conversations that us grad school nerds have with one another. We learn so much together and with you, I feel safe and excited by the future, even though I will probably be uncertainty-phobic for life. Simply said, I adore you.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Danny Heller, my collaborator on this project, and Yijing Lin, Sanjana Surkund, and Shirley Xiao for their assistance with data coding. And for their invaluable insights, thank you to the members of the Self, Identity, and Relationships Lab and my dissertation committee.

Berkeley, it's been lovely!

## The Power in Being Yourself: The Experience of Authenticity Enhances Power

Wide-ranging research indicates that people's sense of *social power*—their sense of being able to influence others through the control of valued resources (Fiske, 2010; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003)—shapes the worlds people inhabit. The powerful reside in resource-rich environments, are largely self-sufficient, and encounter few social constraints, whereas the powerless live in impoverished environments, characterized by fewer resources, as well as social constraints and potential threats (Keltner et al., 2003; Lammers, Galinsky, Gordijn, & Otten, 2012). What's more, these vastly differing realities experienced by the powerless and the powerful appear to perpetuate power differences, such that power begets power (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Essentially, having power alters the manner in which people think and behave, in ways that support the acquisition and retention of power, just as a lack of power does the converse.

How, then, might an individual low in power experience gains in feelings of power? In the present studies, we examined whether certain kinds of behavior can alter one's sense of power. Specifically, in line with self-perception theory (Bem, 1972), we propose that behaving *authentically*—that is, in line with one's inwardly experienced desires and values (Harter, 2002; Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997), which embodies how the powerful act (Kifer, Heller, Perunovic, & Galinsky, 2013; Kraus, Chen, & Keltner, 2011)—has the potential to enhance one's feelings of power. This was the primary hypothesis guiding the present investigation. In addition, we examined fear of rejection—defined as concern about being rejected by others for expressing one's true self—as a potential mediator of the hypothesized effect of authenticity on power.

### Authenticity and Power

Ample theory and research indicate that authenticity contributes to psychological well-being (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Harter, 2002; Kernis & Goldman, 2005; Rogers, 1961). Indeed, a key assumption of humanistic and positive psychology is that people have a basic need to act in accordance with their true selves (Erickson, 1995; Harter, 2002; Rogers, 1961), a notion that has garnered considerable empirical support (Heppner, Kernis, Nezlek, Foster, Lakey, & Goldman, 2008; Kifer et al., 2013; Schlegel, Hicks, Arndt, & King, 2009; Sheldon et al., 1997; Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, & Joseph, 2008).

Given its central role in well-being (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Rogers, 1961; Yalom, 1980), it is important to uncover ways to promote authenticity. In this vein, researchers have shown that self-concept consistency, defined as congruence between one's self-concept and one's experiences (Rogers, 1961; Kraus et al., 2011), is linked to greater subjective feelings of authenticity. Others have found that meeting basic psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1995; Sheldon & Kasser, 1995) is associated with greater authenticity.

Most relevant to the current investigation is research demonstrating that power increases authenticity (Kifer et al., 2013; Kraus et al., 2011). In particular, it has been argued that the relative self-sufficiency of the powerful frees these individuals to pursue their true desires, goals, and values. Indeed, growing evidence supports a relationship between power and authenticity. Power has been linked to increased expression of one's inner feelings (Hecht & LaFrance, 1998), attitudes and value orientations (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Briñol, Petty, Valle, Rucker, & Becerra, 2007), and personality traits (Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh, 2001; Galinsky, Magee,

Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008). More directly, power has been found to enhance subjective feelings of authenticity (Kifer et al., 2013; Kraus et al., 2011). For example, participants primed to think about a time when they had control and the capacity to influence another person (i.e., high power) reported feeling more authentic than their counterparts who were asked to recall an episode in which someone else had power over them (i.e., low power; Kifer et al., 2013, Study 2a; Kraus et al., 2011, Study 3).

### **Authenticity Enhances Power**

The documented effect of power on authenticity raises the possibility that authenticity is a signal of power, both to the person behaving authentically and to observers. Supporting this, people are able to readily detect power hierarchies and categorize others within such social frameworks (Srivastava & Anderson, 2011; Zitek & Tiedens, 2012), suggesting that they have rich and easily accessible social knowledge of how the powerful behave (Hall, Coats, & LeBeau, 2005). This shared awareness of what it means to have power serves as the basis for self-perception processes to occur, such that people might infer their power from observations of their own, power-related behaviors (Bem, 1972). In effect, regardless of trait levels of power, an individual might derive a sense of power from acting the way a powerful person typically behaves.

Indeed, converging evidence suggests that because certain actions are associated with power (e.g., taking action, abstract thinking, rule breaking), the behaviors themselves come to serve as signals or cues of power for the powerholder him- or herself, as well as for perceivers (Magee, 2009; Ridgeway, Berger, & Smith, 1985; Wakslak, Smith, & Han, 2014; Van Kleef, Homan, Finkenauer, Güendemir, & Stamkou, 2011). For instance, research shows that not only does power promote abstract thinking, but the converse is also true—when people are induced to think abstractly, they experience greater feelings of power (Smith, Wigboldus, & Dijksterhuis, 2008). Extending the logic of such findings, we reasoned that because the powerful—by virtue of their lower dependence and greater resources—can afford to act in accord with their true selves, the concept of power and authenticity is likely mentally associated. As such, authenticity may be a signal, to the self and to others, of having power and thus enhances subjective feelings and perceptions of power.

Further support for an authenticity-to-power link—as well as for the possible mediating role of reduced fear of rejection—comes from research suggesting that low fear of rejection can be inferred from authenticity and that such reduced fears are associated with greater power. More specifically, trait authenticity, as measured by the Authenticity Inventory (Goldman & Kernis, 2004), is inversely correlated with scores on the Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE; Watson & Friend, 1969) scale, a measure that captures chronic anxiety about being evaluated negatively by others—in effect, concerns about rejection (Gillath, Sesko, Shaver, & Chun, 2010, Study 2). Other work proposes that social-evaluative threat and powerlessness go hand in hand (Fiske, 2010; Fiske, Morling, & Stevens, 1996). When an individual fears rejection, it means that others control an important resource—namely, judgment of oneself—and have power over the individual. Predicated on this theorizing, researchers have manipulated high versus low power by putting participants in a position where they are either being judged by (and thus presumably fearful of rejection) or judging another individual (e.g., for a job, Goodwin, Gubin, Fiske, & Yzerbyt, 2000). In the same vein, research suggests that power enhances social distance (Smith & Trope, 2006; Magee & Smith, 2013), which should reduce concerns with others' acceptance or rejection of the self. Consistent with this, greater dispositional power is associated with lower

rejection sensitivity, the proclivity to anxiously expect and perceive rejection from others (Kuehn, Chen, & Gordon, 2015). Moreover, in much the same way that authenticity might shape self-judgments of power through self-perception processes, so too might it inform assessments of one's fear of rejection (Bem, 1972). Considered together, such previously documented associations between authenticity, fear of rejection, and power suggest that fear of rejection may mediate the authenticity-to-power link. Overall, then, we propose that authenticity enhances subjective feelings of power, and that one mediator of this link is a reduced fear of rejection.

While fearing (or not) rejection may *precede* inauthentic (or authentic) behavior, the focus of the present investigation was on how behaving authentically or inauthentically affects individuals' perceptions of their fears of rejection *subsequent* to the behavior. We reasoned that an act of authenticity—regardless of its cause or preceding internal state (see also Johnson, Robinson, & Mitchell, 2004)—likely communicates to the individual that he or she is relatively free of concerns about rejection for expressing his or her true self, which should, in turn, boost the individual's sense of power. Conversely, behaving inauthentically conveys to the individual that he or she has fears of being rejected for who they are, which in turn should dampen the individual's feelings of power. We opted to focus on fear of rejection specifically for expressing one's true self rather than fear of rejection more broadly because authenticity entails being true to oneself despite the potential associated social costs, making it important to zero in on this particular basis for fearing rejection. That is, people might fear rejection for a variety of reasons that are unrelated to the expression of one's true self (e.g., for not being sufficiently competent or attractive). For instance, people might fear rejection in a professional context because of needing to out-compete other job candidates. Thus, in line with self-perception theory, the signal that acting authentically communicates to people ought to be that they do not fear rejection for acting precisely that way, namely, authentically.

Finally, along with enhancing an actor's subjective feelings of power, authenticity should factor into perceivers' judgments about others' power. People who behave authentically, compared to inauthentically, convey to others that they are not fearful of being rejected for doing so, which should in turn enhance others' judgments of their power. In sum, the psychological tendencies and privileged circumstances of the powerful allow for more authentic behavior. As a result, our notions of what it means to be powerful have come to include authenticity, suggesting that authenticity is likely to cue power. Moreover, engaging in authentic behavior implies a relative lack of concern about the social ramifications of one's (authentic) behavior, which fits the profile of being powerful, and suggests that reduced fear of rejection about expressing one's true self may be a key mechanism underlying the authenticity-to-power link.

## Overview of Studies

Across five experiments, we tested our primary hypothesis that authenticity enhances the experience of and perceptions of power, as well as the notion that the authenticity-to-power link may be due, in part, to a reduced fear of rejection. Regarding the latter, we implemented two distinct approaches for testing mediation: the measurement of mediation approach and the experimental causal chain approach (Spencer, Zanna, & Fong, 2005). In Study 1, participants recalled an authentic or inauthentic experience and then reported their feelings of power. Study 2 tested the proposed mediator by measuring fear of rejection about expressing one's true self, and included a neutral control condition to shed light on whether inauthenticity, authenticity, or both drives the effect of authenticity on power. Study 3 aimed to replicate Study 2's mediational and directionality findings and to address the possibility that the effect of authenticity on power is

simply attributable to authenticity eliciting positive affect. Then, in Study 4, to provide evidence for the second part of the hypothesized causal chain (Spencer et al., 2005), we manipulated fear of rejection and measured its effect on power. Lastly, Study 5 tested whether the authenticity-to-power link established in Studies 1-4 is mirrored in social perception, such that people make inferences about other people's power as a function of their authenticity, and also addressed a positive-affect account for its findings.

Across studies, we aimed for a minimum of 50 participants per condition (Simmons, Nelson, & Simonsohn, 2013). For studies conducted on Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk; see Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011), we included attention-check questions (e.g., please leave the answer to this question blank or please select strongly disagree for quality assurance purposes) to weed out inattentive participants. We decided in advance to exclude these participants from our analyses. Given that, on average, 15% of MTurk participants from published papers are excluded for attention reasons (Chandler, Mueller, & Paolacci, 2014), we adjusted the number of participants we recruited accordingly.

### **Study 1: Does authenticity enhance feelings of power?**

In Study 1, we manipulated authenticity by having participants recall a prior situation in which they behaved authentically or inauthentically, and then measured participants' subjective feelings of power afterward. We predicted that authenticity enhances one's experience of power.

#### **Method**

**Participants.** One hundred and thirteen participants were recruited online via MTurk for a study on "experiences and feelings about the self," and were compensated for their participation. Ten participants were excluded from all analyses: eight for failing one or more of three attention-check questions that were embedded in the study materials (e.g., please leave the answer to this question blank, please select strongly disagree for quality assurance purposes), and two for not responding to the writing prompt that served as our authenticity manipulation. The remaining 103 participants (57 females) ranged in age from 18 to 61 years ( $M = 34.65$ ). Seventy-five participants were European American, 15 Asian American, six African American, three Latino/a, one Native American, and three reported they were mixed and/or "other" ethnicities.

**Procedure.** Participants were randomly assigned to recall and write about a particular incident in which they felt authentic (or inauthentic), defined as being (or not being) true to oneself and behaving (or not behaving) in accordance with one's true thoughts, beliefs, personality, or values (for full instructions, see Kifer et al., 2013). They were asked to write for a minimum of two minutes, but given as much time as needed. Next, participants indicated their level of agreement (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*) that they were true to themselves, authentic in the way they acted, and were really being themselves in the incident they wrote about ( $\alpha = .96$ ). These three items were adapted from Fleeson and Wilt (2010) and served as the authenticity manipulation check.

Finally, participants completed our primary dependent measure of state power, consisting of eight items, each beginning with the stem, "Right now, I feel..." Using a 9-point scale, anchored on each end by a descriptor, participants indicated how submissive-dominant, passive-active, unassertive-assertive, timid-firm, uncertain-certain, insecure-confident, dependent-independent, and powerless-powerful they felt (adapted from Smith et al., 2008;  $\alpha = .93$ ). These items were embedded among pairs of non-power-related fillers. Upon completion, participants

were probed for suspicion and debriefed. One participant was aware of our hypothesis. Since exclusion of this participant did not change our results, the following analyses include this participant.

### Results and Discussion

**Authenticity manipulation check.** An independent samples *t*-test on the manipulation-check composite revealed that participants in the authentic condition ( $M = 6.45$ ,  $SD = .70$ ) wrote about a situation in which they felt more authentic than did those in the inauthentic condition ( $M = 2.67$ ,  $SD = 1.44$ ),  $t(101) = 16.88$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 3.36$ . Thus, the manipulation was effective.

**State power.** As hypothesized, participants in the authentic condition ( $M = 6.36$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ) rated themselves as more powerful relative to those in the inauthentic condition ( $M = 5.44$ ,  $SD = 1.60$ ),  $t(101) = 3.04$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $d = .60$ .

**Alternative account: Pre-existing power differences.** Arguably, power differences may already be operating in situations in which people behave authentically versus inauthentically (e.g., individuals are more likely to behave authentically when they have power). This raises the concern that the effect we found of authenticity on power actually reflects pre-existing power differences in the authentic versus inauthentic situations that participants recalled. To assess this possibility, two research assistants, blind to our hypotheses, classified each of the essays participants wrote in response to the prompt for our authenticity manipulation into one of four categories: (1) another person or people mentioned in the essay had power over the participant (low power), (2) another person or people mentioned had equal power to the participant (equal power), (3) the participant had power over others mentioned in the essay (high power), or (4) no other person was mentioned in the essay and as such, power was not applicable. The two coders showed sufficient inter-rater reliability ( $\alpha = .72$ ); disagreements were resolved through discussion.

Examining only those participants who wrote about an instance involving equal power, or where power was irrelevant to the incident (authentic condition,  $n = 43$ ; inauthentic condition,  $n = 38$ ) yielded almost identical findings. As expected, authentic participants ( $M = 6.31$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ) again reported greater state power than inauthentic participants ( $M = 5.36$ ,  $SD = 1.66$ ),  $t(79) = 2.75$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $d = .63$ . In sum, then, Study 1 showed that regardless of the power- or non-power-related circumstances that led to the act of authenticity, recalling a time when one was true to the self enhanced participants' state power.

### Study 2: Does fear of rejection mediate the authenticity-to-power link?

Study 2 aimed to extend Study 1's findings in four ways. First, we included a neutral control condition to begin to shed light on the locus of the effect of authenticity on state power. We did not have a priori hypotheses about this. On the one hand, given the strong Western emphasis on being true to the self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), authenticity might be the default mode under which people operate. This would suggest that the authentic and neutral conditions might generate comparable feelings of state power. On the other hand, the authentic episodes that participants chose to recall in our studies may represent times when participants behaved more authentically than their baseline authenticity, suggesting a difference in state power between the authentic and neutral conditions.

Likewise, there are reasons to both expect and not expect inauthenticity to decrease power relative to the neutral condition. Research showing that negative events tend to carry more

weight than positive events (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001) suggests that inauthenticity is more salient and counter-normative than an authentic or neutral state, and might thus drive effects on state power. Yet people are adept at explaining away their shortcomings and outsourcing blame, and thus may easily dismiss acts of inauthenticity, muting the effect of inauthenticity relative to the neutral condition. Therefore, we were agnostic as to how the control condition would compare to the authentic and inauthentic conditions on state power.

Second, Study 2 examined fear of rejection for expressing one's true self as a potential mechanism underlying the effect of authenticity on power. As noted at the outset, we focused on fear of rejection specifically for expressing one's true self rather than fear of rejection more broadly because fear of rejection can arise from multiple sources, including ones entirely unrelated to expressing one's true self. We reasoned that, relative to expressing one's authentic self, inauthenticity is likely to communicate to the individual an inability or unwillingness to override one's fear of rejection in doing so, which should translate to higher ratings of fear of rejection. In turn, greater fear of rejection for expressing one's true self ought to reduce feelings of power since being relatively free of such fears is a luxury enjoyed by the powerful more than the powerless.

Third, Study 2 enabled another test of the possibility that the effect of authenticity on state power is driven by differences in the situations authentic versus inauthentic participants recalled. Specifically, participants themselves (vs. outside coders, as used in Study 1) were asked to report on any power differentials that existed in the situation they recalled, allowing us to control for these ratings in our main analyses. Finally, we addressed the parallel possibility that the locus of the hypothesized authenticity-to-power effect lies in differences in fear of rejection as a cause of the authentic or inauthentic behaviors participants recalled, rather than in participants' inferences about their fears of rejection in light of the behavior they recalled.

## Method

**Participants.** One hundred and eighty-one participants were recruited online via MTurk for a study on "experiences and feelings about the self," and were compensated for their participation. Eighteen participants failed one or more of the three attention-check questions we included (e.g., please leave the answer to this question blank, please select strongly disagree for quality assurance purposes), and seven did not follow the instructions for the writing prompt that served as our authenticity manipulation, and were thus excluded from all analyses. The remaining 156 participants (86 females) ranged in age from 18 to 67 ( $M = 31.87$ ). One hundred and twenty five participants were European American, 11 Asian American, nine African American, six Latino/a, four reported they were mixed and/or "other" ethnicities, and one did not report anything. In this study, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (authentic, inauthentic, or neutral).

**Procedure.** Participants in the authentic and inauthentic conditions completed the same authenticity manipulation task used in Study 1 while neutral participants were asked to write about their last trip to the grocery store (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003). Then, all participants responded to the three authenticity manipulation-check items used in Study 1 before completing a state fear of rejection measure we adapted from prior work (FNE; Watson & Friend, 1969), and which was used in research showing an association between authenticity and reduced fear of negative evaluation (Gillath et al., 2010). Specifically, participants were asked to rate the extent to which right now, in the present moment, "I would be unable to be my true self out of fear of being rejected," "I would be unable to afford to express my true views," and "I

would be afraid of being rejected if I expressed my true views” (1 = *Not very much* to 7 = *Very much*;  $\alpha = .90$ ).

Next, because the state power measure we used in Study 1 contained the descriptor “submissive-dominant” and has in the past been used to measure power or dominance (Smith et al., 2008), we used a more precise measure of state power in this study. Consistent with how other researchers have elected to measure state power (Park, Streamer, Huang, & Galinsky, 2013; Van Kleef et al., 2011), we asked our participants to rate the extent to which five power-related adjectives—decisive, strong, powerful, in control, and leader-like—characterized them right then (1 = *Not at all* to 9 = *Very much so*;  $\alpha = .90$ ). These items were embedded among five filler adjectives to minimize suspicion. To address the possibility that our effects were simply driven by pre-existing power differences in the recalled situations, we had participants think back to the situation they recalled and to indicate, if applicable, who had more power in that situation (1 = *The other person/people had more power* to 5 = *We had equal power* to 9 = *I had more power*). Finally, participants were probed for suspicion and debriefed. One participant was aware of our hypothesis. Since exclusion of this participant did not change our results, the following analyses include this participant.

## Results and Discussion

**Authenticity manipulation check.** An analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed a significant condition effect for the 3-item manipulation-check composite,  $F(2, 155) = 146.28, p < .001, \eta^2 = .66$ . Planned comparisons showed that participants in the inauthentic condition ( $M = 2.49, SD = 1.75$ ) reported feeling less authentic in the situation they recalled relative to participants in the authentic condition ( $M = 6.50, SD = .65, t(99) = 15.75, p < .001, d = 3.17$ , and the control condition ( $M = 5.83, SD = 1.13, t(108) = 11.90, p < .001, d = 2.29$ ). Participants in the control condition also reported feeling less authentic than those in the authentic condition,  $t(99) = 3.71, p < .001, d = .75$ . Thus, the manipulation was effective insofar as participants in the authentic condition reported feeling the most authentic, followed by those in the control condition, and finally those in the inauthentic condition.

**State power.** An ANOVA revealed a significant condition effect for state power,  $F(2, 155) = 4.35, p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$ . As predicted, and closely replicating Study 1’s key finding, a planned contrast showed that participants in the authentic condition ( $M = 6.51, SD = 1.65$ ) felt more powerful than those in the inauthentic condition ( $M = 5.50, SD = 1.97, t(99) = 2.81, p < .01, d = .56$ ). Since we did not have a priori hypotheses about how the control condition would compare to the authentic and inauthentic conditions, we performed Dunnett’s post-hoc tests to help control for Type I error. The control condition ( $M = 5.63, SD = 1.88$ ) reported less power than the authentic condition,  $p = .03$ , but did not differ from the inauthentic condition,  $p = .92$ .

**State fear of rejection.** An ANOVA revealed a significant condition effect for the fear-of-rejection index,  $F(2, 155) = 3.72, p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$ . A planned contrast showed that, as expected, participants in the authentic condition ( $M = 2.33, SD = 1.41$ ) reported less state fear of rejection than those in the inauthentic condition ( $M = 3.08, SD = 1.70, t(99) = 2.39, p < .05, d = .48$ ). Again, because we did not have a priori hypotheses about how the control condition would compare to the authentic and inauthentic conditions, we performed Dunnett’s post-hoc tests. The control condition ( $M = 2.44, SD = 1.45$ ) reported less state fear of rejection than the inauthentic condition,  $p = .05$ , but did not differ from the authentic condition,  $p = .92$ .

**Mediation.** To test whether ratings of fear of rejection for expressing one’s true self mediated the difference in state power between the authentic and inauthentic conditions, a

bootstrap analysis outlined by Preacher and Hayes (2004) was conducted. Using 5,000 bootstrap resamples (Shrout & Bolger, 2002), a 95% BCa (Bias-Corrected and accelerated) bootstrap confidence interval was calculated and shown to exclude zero [.05, .69], suggesting that reduced fear of rejection partially accounted for the relationship between authenticity and state power (see Figure 1 for a summary of these mediation analyses).

**Alternative account: Pre-existing power differences in the recalled scenario.** First, we examined whether the authentic and inauthentic conditions differed in self-rated power in the recalled situations. Compared to participants in the inauthentic condition ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = 2.89$ ), those in the authentic condition ( $M = 5.09$ ,  $SD = 3.28$ ),  $t(90) = 2.53$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $d = .53$ , reported having had more power in their recalled situations.

Given these self-rated power differences in the recalled situations, we ran the analyses on state power and fear of rejection controlling for these differences. As expected, authentic participants (adjusted  $M = 6.46$ ,  $SD = 1.86$ ) again reported greater state power than inauthentic participants (adjusted  $M = 5.67$ ,  $SD = 1.86$ ),  $t(90) = 2.04$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d = .43$ . Moreover, the authentic condition (adjusted  $M = 2.34$ ,  $SD = 1.54$ ) again reported less fear of rejection than the inauthentic condition (adjusted  $M = 3.00$ ,  $SD = 1.57$ ),  $t(90) = 2.02$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d = .43$ . Following a 5,000 bootstrap resamples analysis (Shrout & Bolger, 2002), a 95% BCa bootstrap confidence interval excluded zero [.01, .72], suggesting that reduced fear of rejection fully mediated the relationship between authenticity and state power (see Figure 2).

**Alternative account: Fear of rejection in the recalled scenario.** Finally, we addressed the possibility that fear of rejection may have been a factor that influenced whether an individual behaved authentically or not in the first place and this is what accounted for our results for state power. Specifically, two research assistants, blind to our hypotheses, coded the essays participants generated in response to our authenticity and inauthenticity prompt for fear of rejection. Coding was done using a 5-point scale (0 = *fear of rejection is not applicable*, such as when a situation does not involve the real or imagined presence of others or when there are other fears that take clear precedence, such as fearing landing in jail; and 1 = *Low fear of rejection* to 4 = *High fear of rejection*). The coders were instructed to focus not on how the participant ultimately behaved, but rather on any fears or concerns about rejection they expressed when describing how the episode unfolded. Because the two coders showed good inter-rater reliability ( $\alpha = .90$ ), their assessments were averaged to form an index of fear of rejection in the recalled scenario.

An independent samples  $t$ -test revealed that participants were less fearful of rejection in the authentic ( $M = .90$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ) compared to inauthentic situations ( $M = 1.66$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ),  $t(99) = 3.54$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = .69$ . Given this difference, we re-ran the analyses on state fear of rejection and state power, this time controlling for initial fear-of-rejection levels. The predicted condition effect on state fear of rejection remained significant,  $t(99) = 2.15$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d = .43$ , with participants in the authentic condition (adjusted  $M = 2.36$ ,  $SD = 1.63$ ) reporting less state fear of rejection than those in the inauthentic condition (adjusted  $M = 3.06$ ,  $SD = 1.63$ ). The predicted condition effect on state power remained significant as well,  $t(99) = 2.12$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d = .43$ , with participants in the authentic condition (adjusted  $M = 6.39$ ,  $SD = 1.87$ ) reporting greater power than those in the inauthentic condition (adjusted  $M = 5.60$ ,  $SD = 1.86$ ).

Thus, authentic participants did not report feeling a reduced fear of rejection relative to inauthentic participants simply because they recalled situations in which they had experienced less of such fears prior to behaving authentically. That is, regardless of fear-of-rejection feelings prior to the authentic act, participants inferred lower fear of rejection from the authentic act *itself*

(see Johnson et al., 2004 for additional support for the primacy of a behavior over associated mental states in inferences of authenticity).

Overall, Study 2 replicated and extended Study 1 by showing that relative to inauthenticity, authenticity leads to a greater sense of power in part due to a reduced fear of rejection for expressing one's true self. Moreover, the power enhancing effect of authenticity held over and above self-rated power differences in the recalled situations and coder-rated fear of rejection prior to the recalled authentic or inauthentic behavior. Finally, the addition of a neutral control condition offered preliminary evidence that the effect of authenticity on power is driven by authenticity insofar as inauthenticity did not reduce power relative to the control condition.

### **Study 3: Is the authenticity-to-power link due to positive affect?**

Study 3 aimed to replicate Study 2's mediation finding and also to address a third possible alternative account for our findings. Regarding the latter, the fact that authenticity breeds positive affect (e.g., Kifer et al., 2013), paired with theory and evidence indicating that positive affect and power are linked (e.g., Keltner et al., 2003), raise the possibility that our key authenticity-to-power finding is driven by authenticity eliciting positive affect rather than authenticity per se. Study 3 included a contentment control condition to address this concern. We expected authenticity to have a unique effect on power, over and above any effect attributable to feelings of positivity.

#### **Method**

**Participants.** One-hundred-and-sixty-four participants were recruited online via MTurk for a study on "experiences and feelings about the self," and were compensated for their participation. Twenty-one participants were excluded from all analyses: 20 for failing one or more of the three attention-check questions that were embedded in the study materials (e.g., please leave the answer to this question blank, please select strongly disagree for quality assurance purposes), and one for not following the instructions for the authenticity manipulation task. The remaining 143 participants (77 females) ranged from 18 to 70 in age ( $M = 32.69$ ). One hundred and sixteen participants were European American, 14 African American, nine Asian American, two Latino/a, and two reported they were mixed and/or "other" ethnicities.

**Procedure.** Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (authentic, inauthentic, contentment). Authentic and inauthentic participants completed the same authenticity manipulation task used in the prior studies, while contentment participants were asked to recall and write about an instance in which they had just eaten a delicious meal and felt full and comfortable (adapted from Griskevicius, Shiota, & Neufeld, 2010). We chose a discrete positive emotion, contentment, for the control condition rather than a more broad positive state such as happiness because we judged that contentment more closely approximates the specificity of the (in)authenticity conditions. Then, all participants responded to the same authenticity manipulation-check items used in the prior studies, along with a pictorial measure of state mood (1 = *unhappy* to 9 = *happy*; Self-Assessment Manikin; Bradley & Lang, 1994). Finally, participants completed the same measures of state fear of rejection and state power used in Study 2 before being probed for suspicion and debriefed. One participant was aware of our hypothesis, but was retained in all analyses since exclusion did not alter results.

## Results and Discussion

**Authenticity and mood manipulation checks.** An ANOVA revealed a significant condition effect on the authenticity manipulation-check composite,  $F(2, 142) = 132.13, p < .001, \eta^2 = .65$ . Participants in the inauthentic condition ( $M = 2.58, SD = 1.81$ ) reported feeling less authentic in the situation they described compared to participants in the authentic ( $M = 6.41, SD = .66$ ),  $t(95) = 13.78, p < .001, d = 2.83$ , and the contentment conditions ( $M = 5.91, SD = 1.00$ ),  $t(92) = 11.08, p < .001, d = 2.31$ . Participants in the contentment condition also reported feeling less authentic than those in the authentic condition,  $t(93) = 2.86, p < .01, d = .59$ .

An ANOVA revealed no significant condition effect on state mood,  $F(2, 142) = 1.64, p > .05, \eta^2 = .02$ . Most importantly, participants in the contentment condition ( $M = 6.35, SD = 1.22$ ) felt as happy following the recall task as participants in the authentic condition ( $M = 6.53, SD = 1.54$ ),  $t(93) < 1$ .

Overall, then, our manipulation had its intended effects. Participants in the authentic condition reported feeling the most authentic, followed by participants in the contentment condition, and then those in the inauthentic condition. Additionally, the authenticity and contentment manipulations produced comparable feelings of positivity. Thus, if our authenticity-to-power finding is simply driven by authenticity eliciting positive affect, then the authentic and contentment conditions ought to show similar levels of state power.

**State power.** An ANOVA revealed a significant condition effect for state power,  $F(2, 142) = 5.20, p < .01, \eta^2 = 0.07$ . As predicted, and replicating our prior studies, planned contrasts showed that participants in the authentic condition ( $M = 6.49, SD = 1.75$ ) reported higher state power than those in the inauthentic ( $M = 5.38, SD = 2.05$ ),  $t(95) = 2.86, p < .01, d = .59$ , and contentment conditions ( $M = 5.56, SD = 1.61$ ),  $t(93) = 2.68, p < .01, d = .56$ . Inauthentic and contentment conditions did not differ,  $t(92) < 1$ .

We also ran the omnibus analysis on state power controlling for state mood. The condition effect on state power remained significant,  $F(2, 142) = 4.37, p = .01, \eta^2 = .06$ . Compared to participants in the authentic condition (adjusted  $M = 6.30, SD = 1.42$ ), those in the inauthentic (adjusted  $M = 5.61, SD = 1.43$ ),  $t(95) = 2.38, p < .05, d = .49$ , and contentment conditions (adjusted  $M = 5.52, SD = 1.42$ ),  $t(93) = 2.68, p < .01, d = .56$ , reported lower state power. Inauthentic and contentment conditions did not differ,  $t(92) < 1$ .

**State fear of rejection.** An ANOVA yielded a significant condition effect on state fear of rejection for expressing one's true self,  $F(2, 142) = 8.12, p < .001, \eta^2 = .10$ . Planned contrasts showed that relative to participants in the inauthentic condition ( $M = 3.17, SD = 1.80$ ), those in the authentic ( $M = 2.40, SD = 1.43$ ),  $t(95) = 2.32, p < .05, d = .48$ , and contentment conditions ( $M = 1.98, SD = 1.00$ ),  $t(92) = 3.94, p < .001, d = .82$ , reported less fear of rejection. The authentic and contentment conditions did not differ,  $t(93) = 1.66, p > .05$ .

**Mediation.** To test whether fear of rejection for expressing one's true self mediated the authenticity-inauthenticity condition differences in power, a bootstrap analysis using 5,000 bootstrap resamples (Shrout & Bolger, 2002) was conducted. A 95% BCa bootstrap confidence interval was shown to exclude zero [.08, .96], suggesting that reduced fear of rejection partially accounted for the authenticity-to-power link (see Figure 3).

Overall, Study 3 provided additional support for our primary hypothesis that authenticity, compared to inauthenticity, leads to greater subjective feelings of power, as well as for our mediational hypothesis that the authenticity-to-power link is attributable to a reduced fear of rejection for expressing one's true self. Moreover, given that the authenticity and contentment manipulations elicited comparable feelings of positivity, yet produced differing levels of state

power, it assures us that authenticity has a unique effect on power that is not simply attributable to it eliciting positivity. Finally, in both this study and Study 2, the control condition (i.e., grocery store trip in Study 2 and contentment in Study 3) reported less state power than the authentic condition, but did not differ from the inauthentic condition. This suggests that authenticity enhances state power rather than inauthenticity reduces state power or both.

#### **Study 4: Does fear of rejection reduce feelings of power?**

The findings from Studies 2 and 3 support the first part of our proposed causal chain (authenticity → fear of rejection), and are consistent with the notion that state fear of rejection is one mediator of the authenticity-to-power link. In Study 4, we directly manipulated fear of rejection to determine whether it is causally related to power (i.e., we tested the second part of our proposed causal chain), supplementing the measurement of mediation approach in the two previous studies with the experimental causal chain approach (Spencer et al., 2005).

#### **Method**

**Participants.** One-hundred-and-thirty-six undergraduates at a large, West Coast university participated in exchange for course credit. Since our goal was to manipulate high or low fear of rejection (see Procedure below), it was critical that participants described an ongoing situation rather than a past, and thus possibly resolved, experience in which their fears about rejection may have dissipated. Therefore, nine participants who described a prior situation in which they had feared rejection were excluded. Additionally, two participants were excluded for off-topic responses (e.g., one participant wrote about his weekend plans) and two more were excluded for responses that were the opposite of their randomly assigned condition. The remaining 123 participants (86 females, 1 unspecified) ranged from 18 to 29 in age ( $M = 20.15$ ). Fifty-one participants were Asian American, 39 European American, 16 Latino/a, four Middle Eastern, three African American, and eight reported they were mixed and/or “other” ethnicities.

**Procedure.** Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (high vs. low fear of rejection), and then asked to describe a particular situation in their life right now in which they are (or are not especially) worried and afraid of rejection.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, participants responded to the prompt:

“Various situations in life pose the potential for rejection. For example, at school when you apply for an extracurricular club or for a particular major; or in your personal life, such as when you ask someone out on a date, or seek help from a friend, there is the potential that you will not succeed or be accepted. These kinds of situations differ in various ways. One of them is how afraid and worried you are about being rejected. Sometimes we are anxious and worried about being rejected, whereas other times we find a way to manage our fears and anxieties about the potential for rejection. In this task, we'd like you to think about a particular situation in your life right now in which you are [are not especially] worried and afraid of rejection. Try to relive this situation in your imagination. Then, using a minimum of 5-7 sentences, please describe this situation in which you are afraid [unafraid] of rejection—what is happening, how you feel, etc.”

Participants were asked to write for a minimum of two minutes, but given as much time as needed.

Upon completion of the fear-of-rejection manipulation task, participants responded to the same three-item fear of rejection measure used in Study 2 with regard to the situation they

described ( $\alpha = .90$ ). This was to ensure that our manipulation affected fear of rejection for expressing one's true self despite not explicitly instructing participants to recall such a situation (so as not to prime authenticity).

Next, participants responded to the same state power adjectives used in Study 2, among which the items authentic, genuine, likable, and unfriendly were also embedded. We had participants report their feelings of authenticity ( $\alpha = .85$ ) to ensure that the effect of fear of rejection on state power was not due to fear of rejection reducing feelings of authenticity. Ratings of warmth (likable and unfriendly reverse-scored,  $\alpha = .43^2$ ) were included to establish the specificity of the fear of rejection-to-power link; that is, we aimed to show that fear of rejection does not simply result in more negative feelings about the self, which are then associated with lower state power. Finally, participants were probed for suspicion and debriefed. No participants expressed awareness of our hypothesis.

### Results and Discussion

**Fear-of-rejection manipulation check.** An independent samples *t*-test on the manipulation-check composite revealed that, as intended, participants in the high fear-of-rejection condition ( $M = 3.81$ ,  $SD = 1.58$ ) wrote about a situation in which they felt more afraid of rejection for expressing their true self than did participants in the low fear-of-rejection condition ( $M = 1.99$ ,  $SD = .95$ ),  $t(121) = 7.62$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.39$ .

**State power.** Supporting our hypothesis, participants in the high fear-of-rejection condition ( $M = 4.97$ ,  $SD = 1.77$ ) reported feeling less powerful than their counterparts in the low fear-of-rejection condition ( $M = 5.76$ ,  $SD = 1.61$ ),  $t(121) = 2.58$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $d = .47$ .

**State authenticity and warmth.** Feelings of authenticity did not differ by condition,  $t(121) = 1.18$ ,  $p = .24$ , which assures us that the effect of fear of rejection on power was not due to fear of rejection reducing feelings of authenticity. Feelings of warmth also did not differ by condition,  $t(121) = 1.18$ ,  $p = .24$ , suggesting a unique effect of fear of rejection on state power rather than fear of rejection resulting in indiscriminately more negative feelings about the self.

For a stronger causal test of the mediational role of the relationship between authenticity and power, Study 4 directly manipulated the proposed mechanism, fear of rejection, and measured its effect on state power. We found that high fear of rejection decreased feelings of power compared to low fear of rejection. Together, Studies 1-4 provide converging evidence for our hypotheses—that authenticity enhances people's subjective experience of power, and that this is due at least in part to individuals' perception of being relatively unconcerned about rejection for expressing their true selves.

### Study 5: Does authenticity enhance power in the eyes of others?

In Study 5, we tested whether the authenticity-to-power link extends to the social perception of power. In other words, are people who behave authentically judged by others to be more powerful? We hypothesized that by behaving authentically, people communicate not only to themselves, but also to others, that they are relatively low in fear of rejection for expressing their true selves, and this in turn makes them appear more powerful. To test this novel prediction, participants were asked to read a vignette about a target person who behaved authentically or inauthentically, and then to make inferences about the person's power. To ensure that the authentic target was not viewed as more powerful than the inauthentic target simply because the former was seen as experiencing more positive affect, we crossed our authenticity manipulation

with a manipulation of positive versus negative affect. Thus, the study used a 2 (behavior: authentic vs. inauthentic) x 2 (affect: felt good vs. bad) between-subjects design.

We hypothesized that for judgments of power, there would be significant main effects of behavior and affect, but importantly no interaction. Specifically, we anticipated that targets who behaved authentically, relative to inauthentically, would be perceived as being more powerful and that this effect would not be qualified by the target's positive affect. Given the link between positive affect and power, we also expected that targets who felt good would be deemed more powerful than targets who felt bad. Similarly, for judgments of fear of rejection for expressing one's true self, we hypothesized that there would be significant main effects of behavior and affect, but no interaction. That is, we expected that mirroring our findings in Studies 2 and 3, an authentic target would be deemed less fearful of rejection than an inauthentic target. We also expected that a target who felt bad, relative to felt good, would be rated as more fearful of rejection insofar as such fears may be subsumed under feeling bad.

### Method

**Participants.** Two-hundred-and-seven participants were recruited online via MTurk for a study on “beliefs and perceptions of others,” and were compensated for their participation. Ten participants failed at least one of three attention-check questions, and 19 participants gave the wrong answer to the questions testing their comprehension of the vignette that served as our manipulation (more details on these exclusions are provided below), and were thus excluded from all analyses. The remaining 178 participants (96 females) ranged from 18 to 72 in age ( $M = 37.13$ ). One hundred and forty-seven participants were European American, 11 Asian American, 10 African American, four Latino/a, one Native American, and five reported they were mixed and/or “other” ethnicities.

**Procedure.** Participants were randomly assigned to read one of four vignettes about a target person who behaved authentically (or inauthentically) and felt good (or bad) about having done so. Careful attention was devoted to keeping the action tendency (i.e., the behavior of speaking) constant across conditions given research showing that action heightens people's perceptions of a target person's power (Magee, 2009). The manipulations were embedded in a rich, descriptive story about the target to increase participant involvement and to conceal the true purpose of the study (See Appendix A for the full vignette). The behavior and affect manipulations were introduced by the target stating, “...The issue was pretty important to me, but I held the opposite position as everyone else. I hesitated for a moment but then decided to go ahead and stay true to my views by saying to the group what I thought about the issue. [I hesitated for a moment and then decided to hold back and hide my views by simply saying to the group that I wasn't sure what I thought about the issue.] Ultimately though, I felt pretty good [bad] about having done so.”

After reading the vignette, participants rated the target on the same fear-of-rejection ( $\alpha = .76$ ) and power ( $\alpha = .90$ ) items used in Study 2, with the items adapted to refer to the target in the vignette, rather than the participant him/herself. Additionally, embedded among the power adjectives, participants rated the target on warmth (i.e., likable, warm, and unfriendly, reverse-scored;  $\alpha = .75$ ) and on authenticity (i.e., authentic and genuine;  $\alpha = .91$ ) using 9-point Likert scales (1 = *Not at all* to 9 = *Very much so*). The warmth items allowed us to rule out a halo effect account of our findings, while the authenticity items served as a check for the authenticity manipulation.

Then, for an additional, but more indirect, measure of target power, participants were

asked to make judgments about the target in two power-relevant and two power-irrelevant situations. In the first power-related scenario, participants judged the target's likelihood of effectively negotiating for a good deal on an apartment (adapted from Magee, Galinsky, & Gruenfeld, 2007, Study 1; 1 = *Not at all likely* to 7 = *Very likely*). In the second power-related scenario, the target was described as leading a team of employees at work and participants rated the legitimacy of the target's power ("This person can make others feel... that they have commitments to meet"; "... that they should satisfy their job requirements"; "... that they have responsibilities to fulfill"; and "... that they have tasks to accomplish," using a scale anchored at 1 = *Definitely not* and 7 = *Definitely*;  $\alpha = .94$ ; Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1989). For the two power-irrelevant scenarios, using scales anchored at 1 = *Not at all likely* and 7 = *Very likely*, participants judged how the target would feel about spending the holidays at home (i.e., enjoy being home, feel nostalgic) and what type of host the target would be for an out-of-town friend (e.g., be able to plan a fun weekend, be a gracious host).

Next, participants answered two multiple-choice reading comprehension questions about the vignette. Specifically, serving as an attention check for the authenticity manipulation, participants were asked if the target (a) expressed his true views to the group, (b) just listened while others shared their views, (c) got defensive about his views and got in an argument with people in the group, or (d) held his tongue and simply said he wasn't sure what he thought about the issue. Nine participants incorrectly indicated that the target held his tongue and refrained from taking a stand on the issue (answer d) in the authentic condition and three participants incorrectly indicated that the target expressed his true views to the group (answer a) in the inauthentic condition. These 12 participants were excluded from the reported analyses.

Serving as an attention check for the affect manipulation, participants were asked if the target (a) felt bad, (b) felt good, (c) felt proud, or (d) felt ashamed. Three participants incorrectly indicated that the target felt bad or ashamed (answers a or d) in the positive affect condition and four participants incorrectly indicated that the target felt good or proud (answers b or c) in the negative affect condition. These seven participants were excluded from the reported analyses. Finally, participants were probed for suspicion and debriefed. No participants expressed awareness of our hypotheses.

## Results and Discussion

**Target authenticity manipulation check.** Both main effects were significant in a 2 (behavior: authentic vs. inauthentic)  $\times$  2 (affect: felt good vs. bad) ANOVA for the authenticity manipulation-check composite. Participants rated the authentic target ( $M = 7.10$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ) as more authentic than the inauthentic target ( $M = 4.88$ ,  $SD = 1.72$ ),  $F(1, 177) = 215.01$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .32$ . The target who felt good ( $M = 6.22$ ,  $SD = 1.88$ ) was also rated as more authentic than the target who felt bad ( $M = 5.68$ ,  $SD = 2.00$ ),  $F(1, 177) = 3.89$ ,  $p = .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . The interaction was not significant,  $F(1, 177) < 1$ .

**Inferences about the target's power.** For the power adjectives, both main effects were significant in the 2  $\times$  2 ANOVA. As predicted, participants rated the authentic target ( $M = 5.87$ ,  $SD = 1.44$ ) as more powerful than the inauthentic target ( $M = 4.20$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ),  $F(1, 177) = 60.97$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .26$ . The target who felt good ( $M = 5.36$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ) was also rated as more powerful relative to the target who felt bad ( $M = 4.65$ ,  $SD = 1.74$ ),  $F(1, 177) = 9.32$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ . As predicted, the interaction was not significant,  $F(1, 177) < 1$ .<sup>3</sup>

For the two indirect measures of target power, only the predicted significant effect of authenticity condition emerged. Specifically, the authentic target ( $M = 5.19$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ) was

deemed to be a more effective negotiator than the inauthentic target ( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD = 1.44$ ),  $F(1, 177) = 27.64$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .14$ . Similarly, the authentic target ( $M = 5.55$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ) was considered to possess more legitimate power than the inauthentic target ( $M = 4.74$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ),  $F(1, 177) = 25.99$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .13$ . Neither the affect main effect, nor the interaction of affect and authenticity, was significant ( $F_s < 1.91$ ).

Since the same pattern of results emerged for all three indices of target power—power adjectives, effectiveness as a negotiator, possession of legitimate power—and they were all highly correlated with one another ( $r_s \geq .62$ ,  $p_s < .001$ ), we standardized and averaged the three measures into one power index ( $\alpha = .93$ ). On this power index, a 2 x 2 ANOVA revealed that, as predicted, participants rated the authentic target ( $M = .42$ ,  $SD = .79$ ) as more powerful than the inauthentic target ( $M = -.40$ ,  $SD = .77$ ),  $F(1, 177) = 49.45$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .22$ . The target who felt good ( $M = .14$ ,  $SD = .85$ ) was rated as more powerful relative to the target who felt bad ( $M = -.14$ ,  $SD = .89$ ),  $F(1, 177) = 4.39$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ . The interaction was not significant,  $F(1, 177) < 1$ .

**Inferences about the target's fear of rejection.** Both main effects were significant in the 2 x 2 ANOVA for the fear of rejection index. As expected, participants rated the authentic target ( $M = 3.21$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ) as less fearful of rejection for being authentic than the inauthentic target ( $M = 5.03$ ,  $SD = .97$ ),  $F(1, 177) = 120.67$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .41$ . The target who felt good ( $M = 3.94$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ) was also rated as less fearful of rejection relative to the target who felt bad ( $M = 4.37$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ),  $F(1, 177) = 5.17$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ . The interaction was not significant,  $F(1, 177) = 1.71$ ,  $p > .05$ .

**Assessing halo effects.** A 2 x 2 ANOVA for the warmth adjectives revealed that neither the main effects, nor the interaction, were significant ( $F_s < 1.47$ ). Additionally, neither the main effects, nor the interaction, were significant in a 2 x 2 ANOVA for judgments of the target in power-irrelevant scenarios (all  $p_s > .05$ ). Together, these results minimize a halo effect interpretation of our key findings.

**Mediation.** To test whether perceived fear of rejection about expressing one's true self mediated the relationship between target authenticity and perceived target power, a bootstrap analysis was conducted. Using 5,000 bootstrap resamples (Shrout & Bolger, 2002), a 95% BCa bootstrap confidence interval was shown to exclude zero [.43, .81], implying that reduced fear of rejection fully accounted for the relationship between authenticity and power (see Figure 4).

In sum, Study 5 showed that the effect of authenticity on power established in Studies 1-4 extends to social perception. Namely, people make inferences about others' power based on their authenticity. Moreover, authenticity signals a reduced fear of rejection for behaving in line with one's true self compared to inauthenticity, which fully explains the condition differences in power inferences. The inclusion of the affect factor in addition to the authenticity factor was to ensure that authenticity informs judgments of power not simply because of its association with positive affect. Importantly, although positive relative to negative affect was found to lead to greater inferences of power—an expected effect given a previously documented link between positive affect and power—there was no interaction between authenticity and affect on power. In other words, the authentic target was not viewed as more powerful than the inauthentic target simply because the former was seen as experiencing more positive affect.

## General Discussion

In light of how crucial authenticity is to well-being (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Kifer et al., 2013; Rogers, 1961; Yalom, 1980), important strides have been made towards understanding what fosters authenticity. One factor that has been identified is an individual's sense of power, such that power enhances subjective feelings of authenticity. Coupled with evidence showing that people have rich mental representations of the powerful (Zitek & Tiedens, 2012), we examined whether authenticity itself is a cue of power. Specifically, we tested if authenticity communicates to the self and to others that one is not fearful of being rejected for expressing one's true self, which in turn enhances power in one's own eyes, as well as those of observers. In other words, we examined the authenticity-to-power link from both an experiential (i.e., an individual's subjective sense of power) and a social perception (i.e., others' judgments of an individual's power) angle.

On the experiential side, we showed repeatedly that authenticity enhanced feelings of power relative to inauthenticity (Studies 1-3). Additionally, we paired a measurement of mediation approach (Studies 2 & 3) with a causal chain mediation approach (Study 4; Spencer et al., 2005) to demonstrate that individuals' perceptions of their fears about rejection for expressing their true selves subsequent to their authentic or inauthentic behavior mediate this authenticity-to-power link. Critically, the effect of authenticity on power could not be explained by power differences that may have steered an individual to behave authentically or inauthentically in the first place, as rated both by impartial coders and by participants themselves (Studies 1 & 2), nor by differential concerns about rejection prior to behaving authentically or inauthentically (Studies 2 & 4). Finally, we dispelled the competing account that the effect of authenticity on power was simply due to authenticity eliciting positive affect, which then resulted in greater power (Study 3). On the social perception side, we found that observers' judgments mirrored people's subjective experiences, such that an individual who behaved authentically was judged to be more powerful, due to authenticity signaling less fear of rejection for expressing one's true self (Study 5). Moreover, similar to the experiential side, the effect of authenticity on power was unique from that of positive affect on power.

### Implications

In conjunction with previous research (Kifer et al., 2013; Kraus et al., 2011), the current set of studies demonstrates that there is a bi-directional relationship between authenticity and power. Being powerless restricts the extent to which people express their true self, which in turn thwarts feeling and being seen as powerful. Essentially, authenticity appears to be one way in which power is self-reinforcing (see also Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Smith et al., 2008; Van Kleef et al., 2011), and thus may contribute over time to the maintenance of power hierarchies. But considered another way, our results also suggest that authenticity may offer a behavioral means by which to gain power. Whereas research on what leads to rises in power has traditionally focused on fixed characteristics of the individual such as gender, race, physical attributes, and personality traits (Anderson & Brion, 2014; Anderson, John, Keltner, & Kring, 2001; Anderson & Kilduff, 2009), the current set of studies aligns with more recent work in looking at *behaviors* that alter feelings and perceptions of power (Smith et al., 2008; Wakslak et al., 2014; Van Kleef et al., 2011), for people dispositionally low and high in power.

At face value, these findings may appear to conflict with research indicating that greater self-monitoring—adapting one's behavior to fit the social context (Snyder, 1974), which can be

construed as inauthentic—is associated with greater power (Bourdieu, 1984; Day, Schleicher, Unckless, & Hiller, 2002; Flynn, Reagans, Amanatullah, & Ames, 2006; Kilduff & Day, 1994). However, to the best of our knowledge, there is no evidence that high self-monitors experience lower feelings of authenticity. In fact, high self-monitors may conceive of the self in more context-specific ways or have a broader self-concept and feel equally or more authentic than their low self-monitoring peers.

In addition to these contributions to the power literature, our work advances the authenticity literature. Most notably, although we know a fair amount about the benefits of trait authenticity—including higher self-esteem and life satisfaction, along with lower anxiety, stress, and depression (Neff & Harter, 2002; Sheldon et al., 1997; Wood et al., 2008)—the same cannot be said for state authenticity. To the best of our knowledge, only two studies have produced experimental evidence of its effects (it leads to reduced feelings of immorality and impurity, and greater well-being; Gino, Kouchaki, & Galinsky, 2015; Kifer et al., 2013). One other study has documented that daily fluctuations in authenticity and self-esteem are linked (Heppner et al., 2008). There is good reason to believe that state authenticity is a distinct and meaningful construct in need of more attention. As evidenced by Fleeson and Wilt (2010)'s diary study, authenticity and inauthenticity are not simply default states. In fact, there is only a small inverse correlation between frequencies of authentic and inauthentic experiences ( $r = -.21, p = .03$ ; Lenton, Bruder, Slabu, & Sedikides, 2013), suggesting that individuals commonly experience both conditions over a span of time. Simply assessing trait authenticity thus neglects the more intricate and fluid experience of authenticity. In testing the novel idea that state authenticity reduces fear of rejection about behaving authentically and enhances sense of power, our work adds considerable knowledge regarding its dynamic effects.

### **Future Directions**

Future research should extend the investigation of the effects of authenticity to other hierarchical dimensions beyond power, including status—the social respect, recognition, and importance afforded to an individual by others (Fiske, 2010; Magee & Galinsky, 2008)—and examine whether or not an authentic target will also be granted higher status. It is possible that extreme authentic behavior (e.g., an extreme dissenting opinion) will lead to divergent effects across different hierarchical dimensions—for example, it may enhance power but reduce status.

Future research should also explore additional potential mediators of the authenticity-to-power link, such as self-concept clarity (Campbell, 1990), the extent to which self-beliefs are clearly defined, internally consistent, and stable. Authenticity may convey to the self and to others that one has a clear and consistent sense of self to abide by, which in turn may inform feelings and perceptions of social power. Consistent with this notion, the powerful are better at prioritizing and acting on their goals and preferences (Guinote, 2007).

Finally, future research should identify boundary conditions for the authenticity-to-power link. For instance, does behaving authentically within close relationships have the same power-enhancing properties as being authentic in less close relationships? Given that there are different norms for emotion expression across contexts (Butler & Gross, 2004; Grandey, Rafaeli, Ravid, Wirtz, Steiner, 2010), the same behavior (e.g., authentically expressing one's viewpoint) in different contexts (e.g., with a coworker vs. with a close friend) may affect an individual's momentary feelings of power differently. Take, for example, a person high in neuroticism who feels compelled to suppress her emotions at work. Although this behavior might make her feel inauthentic, it is possible that it does not negatively affect her feelings of power because the

behavior is deemed necessary, appropriate, and/or useful for the workplace. On the other hand, if the person feels unable to self-disclose her emotions with a friend, such inauthenticity might result in greater feelings of powerlessness.

Another potential boundary condition is the outcome of behaving in(authenticity). That is, does behaving authentically enhance feelings of power regardless of the outcomes of this behavior? For example, if one's authentic behavior is met with negative consequences, will it still have the same empowering effect? It may be the case that while authentic behavior produces momentary boosts in power, if there are negative consequences to one behaving authentically, then in the long run such authenticity could reduce power. Further research is needed to explore this possibility.

In a somewhat similar vein, does authentic behavior that fits with social norms have the same power-enhancing properties as norm-violating authentic behavior? Given the effect of norm-violating behavior on boosting power (Van Kleef et al., 2011), we sought to explore if the effect of authenticity on power is independent of such norm violation effects. As a preliminary exploration of this question, we had two research assistants, blind to our hypotheses, code the essays participants in Studies 1-3 generated in response to our authenticity and inauthenticity prompts for the presence (1) or absence (0) of norm-violating behavior, defined as acts that infringe on principles of proper and acceptable behavior. The two coders showed sufficient inter-rater reliability ( $\alpha = .72$ ) and disagreements were resolved through ratings by a third coder. Across these studies, 10% of the authentic experiences and 29% of the inauthentic experiences participants recalled were judged to be norm violating,  $\chi^2(2, N = 301) = 18.52, p < .001$ . Given that more inauthentic relative to authentic experiences were judged to be norm violating and yet inauthenticity resulted in reduced feelings of power, it assures us that our authenticity-to-power findings are not due to authenticity being more norm violating and thus more empowering. For feelings of state power, which we standardized in each of the three studies (because the studies used different measures of power), there was no main effect for norm violation,  $F(1, 298) = 1.50, p > .05$ , and no significant interaction between norm violation and authenticity condition,  $F(1, 298) < 1$ . This suggests that norm-violating authenticity is no more empowering than non-norm-violating authenticity.

On a different note, because we did not measure authentic and inauthentic behaviors as they happened in the moment, our test of the effect of (in)authenticity on power may not have been as strong as the actual phenomenon. Thus, for example, it is possible that in-the-moment acts of inauthenticity reduce power relative to a neutral state, but our operationalization of inauthenticity was unable to capture it. Although future research should explore other state manipulations of authenticity, we believe our method is meaningful and reliable. Priming through recall can activate experiences stored in memory and mirror the effects of actual experiences occurring in the moment (Philippot, Schaefer, & Herbette, 2003; Woike, 1995). Following the tradition of various areas in social psychology, we examined the effects of a psychological state by relying on the recall of a relevant past experience. For example, to manipulate state power, researchers often have participants recall a time when they felt powerful or powerless (Galinsky et al., 2003); to elicit discrete emotional states, participants are asked to recall an instance in which they felt a particular way (Bradley, Mogg, & Lee, 1997); and to manipulate feelings of social acceptance, participants are asked to describe an experience in which they were rejected by others (Molden, Lucas, Gardner, Dean, & Knowles, 2009). Thus, our method of manipulating state authenticity—having participants recall a time when they behaved authentically or not (see also Kifer et al., 2013)—paves the way for future research on

the casual effects of authenticity.

Ultimately, while more work is needed to identify the conditions under which authenticity might not benefit the self or even be socially detrimental, the current investigation points to the perks of being one's authentic self: a dampened fear of rejection for expressing one's true self and an elevated sense of power.

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### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> We manipulated fear of rejection without explicitly mentioning “being consistent with one’s true self” to avoid priming authenticity.

<sup>2</sup> Although the reliability estimate is relatively low, it is similar to the estimates reported for other two-item measures (e.g., Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003). The results remained the same when each item was examined individually, and also held in Study 5 in which a more reliable scale was used.

<sup>3</sup> A curious reader might be wondering, if someone behaved authentically but then felt bad about it, couldn’t that be construed as being fearful or nervous and thus signal a lack of power? To explore this possibility, we conducted a Dunnett’s post-hoc test on the contrast between the authentic/felt good and authentic/felt bad conditions. Although the authentic target who felt bad was perceived as more fearful of rejection ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ) than the authentic target who felt good ( $M = 2.93$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ),  $p = .04$ , the two targets were not perceived as differentially powerful on the power index,  $p = .67$ . The condition differences in fear of rejection might be explained by fearful falling within the broad category of feeling bad. Again, what is critical here is that the two conditions did not differ in judgments of power.

Figure 1. Fear of rejection partially mediates the relationship between authenticity and power, Study 2. Coefficients are standardized. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

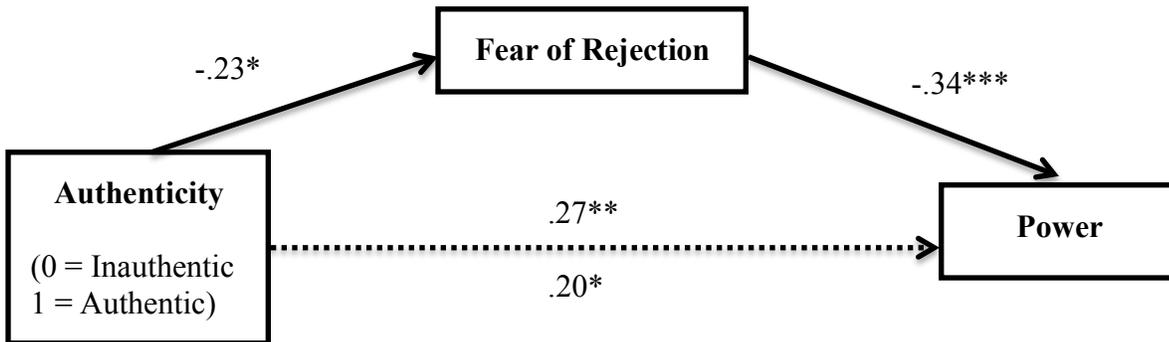


Figure 2. Controlling for self-rated power differences in the recalled situation, fear of rejection fully mediates the relationship between authenticity and power, Study 2. Coefficients are standardized. \* $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

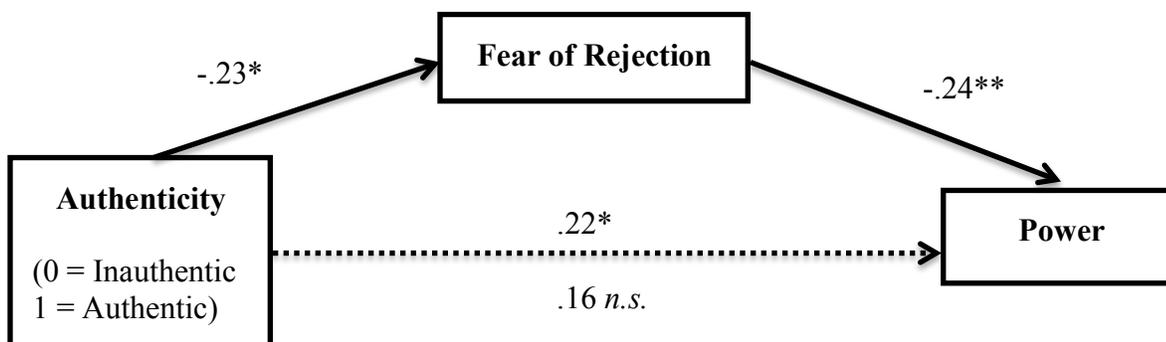


Figure 3. Fear of rejection partially mediates the relationship between authenticity and power, Study 3. Coefficients are standardized. † = .06. \* $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

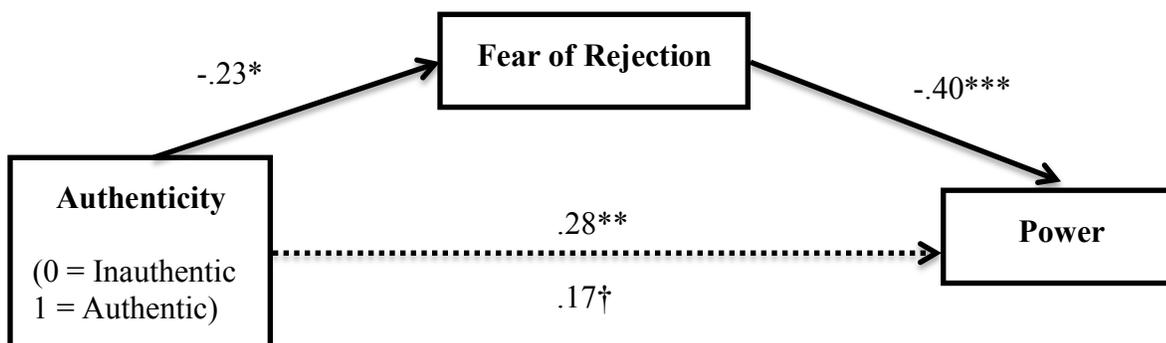
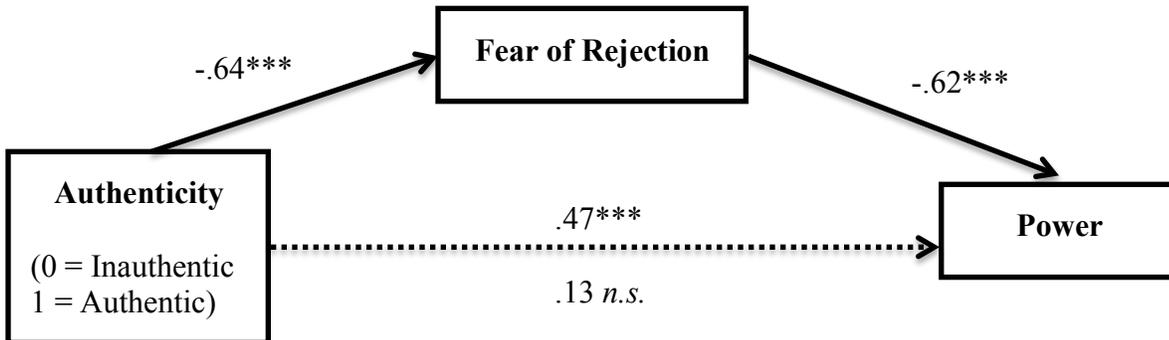


Figure 4. Fear of rejection fully mediates the relationship between authenticity and power, Study 5. Coefficients are standardized. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .



### Appendix A. Vignette used in Study 5.

I was born and raised in Chicago and moved to Seattle a few years ago for my job. Over the years, I've come to feel more and more at home in Seattle. I enjoy exploring all that Seattle has to offer, from the food to outdoor adventures. I have also met many interesting people here and I like hanging out with different circles of friends, from people at work to those I met through common hobbies.

This past weekend, I was at a friend's house for a potluck dinner. The food was delicious, and I made my signature chili for the occasion. At one point, a group of us were talking about politics. When one particularly sensitive issue came up, everyone seemed to take the same stance. People were enthusiastically agreeing with one another and seemed really into the conversation.

One person noticed that I wasn't really talking much and so asked me what I thought. The issue was pretty important to me, but I held the opposite position as everyone else. *I hesitated for a moment but then decided to go ahead and stay true to my views by saying to the group what I thought about the issue. [I hesitated for a moment and then decided to hold back and hide my views by simply saying to the group that I wasn't sure what I thought about the issue.]* Ultimately though, I felt pretty good [bad] about having done so.