

POWER & SELF-PERCEPTION

HOW DOES POWER SHAPE THE WAY WE SEE OURSELVES?

The Books

POWER may be defined as a 'potentiality to exert influence and to stay uninfluenced from others' (Lewin, 1951) or as 'the capacity to control one's own and others' resources and outcomes' Magee, Galinsky, and Gruenfeld (2007, p 202)

Individuals are said to hold an INDEPENDENT self-construal when they feel unique and different from other individuals. (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Individuals are said to hold an INTERDEPENDENT self-construal when they feel highly connected with other individuals and they feel that relationships are really important (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Individuals hold BOTH and independent self-construal and an interdependent self-construal, which they use depending on the situation and their environment.

Research on LEADERSHIP STYLES suggest that male and female adopt different types of leadership style. Ashmore, del Boca and Wohlers (1986) suggest that while male leaders value achievement, female leaders value relationships. Both types of leadership styles may be the consequence of the different effect of power on self-construal on male and female.

Work on SEX STEREOTYPES have suggested that men are expected to display more aggressive and independent personality traits, and women more caring and relationships skills. Kray, Thompson and Galinsky (2001). My work suggests that these stereotypes may come from different types of self-construals.

The Thesis

My research investigates the relation between power and two components of self-perception: the independent self and the interdependent self.

4 studies show that power increases men and women's perception of independence, but that the relation between power and interdependence differ for men and women. Men perceive themselves as less interdependent when they receive power, while women perceive themselves as more interdependent when they receive power.

This research provides a better understanding of the literature on **leadership style** - why do male and female leaders behave differently? - and **gender differences** - why do men and women conform to certain sex stereotypes?

The Fieldwork

In **STUDY 1**, participants were asked to rate themselves on the self-construal scale (Singelis, 1994) - measuring both their level of independent and interdependent self-construal, - and on a power scale, measuring their levels of power. Correlational analysis were conducted and revealed an association between perceived power and the level of independent self-construal.

In **STUDY 2**, doctor and nurses working in a retirement home completed the self-construal scale. Analysis of variance revealed a similar positive association between organisational status - doctor VS nurse - and perception of independence. Results also revealed an interaction effect between sex and power. Female doctors reported being more interdependent than female nurses, while male doctors reported being less interdependent than male nurses.

In **STUDY 3**, participants were primed to feel powerful or powerless using a 'virtual lottery gain' task. This task consisted in asking respondents how they would feel and what they would do if they would win £ 10 (low power prime) or £5 M (high power prime) in the national lottery. Upon completion of either the low power or high power lottery tasks, respondents took the self-construal questionnaire. Analysis of variance revealed similar patterns to those obtained in the two previous studies.

In **STUDY 4**, similar procedures as in study 3 were used, but a minority population was used. Results further corroborated those obtained in the three previous studies, ruling out the potential confounding effect of minority on the sex & power relation.