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Power Gets You High: The Powerful Are More Inspired by Themselves Than by Others

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Abstract

Inspiration is a source of admirable creation—but where do people get it from? We propose that power allows individuals to draw inspiration from the self. Four studies involving different social settings and operationalizations support this idea. Study 1 revealed that greater power is associated with more self-derived inspiration and less other-derived inspiration. In Study 2, participants with a higher sense of power were more inspired by their own than by their partners' stories in face-to-face conversations, whereas lower power participants were not. In Study 3, higher power people spontaneously generated more inspiring stories involving themselves than did lower power people. Finally, participants in Study 4 felt more inspired after writing about their own experiences than after writing about someone else's, especially after having been primed with high rather than low power. These findings suggest that powerful people prioritize themselves over others in social interaction because this is emotionally rewarding for them.

Keywords

power, inspiration, social interaction, self-prioritization

During his Oscar acceptance speech in March 2014, actor Matthew McConaughey—listed among the 100 most influential people in the world by *Time Magazine* in 2014—recalled someone asking him: ''Who's your hero?'' He replied: ''You know who it is? It's *me* in ten years.'' He explained that he needed a role model to chase after to be inspired and motivated to perform at his best. Apparently, Matthew McConaughey derives inspiration from his future self.

Clearly, the ability to be inspired by oneself is not exclusive to famous actors. We all know people who get carried away when talking about themselves, whether it be about their personal achievements, their possessions, the countries they have visited, or the books they have read. Interestingly, anecdotal observation suggests that these same individuals often have a hard time paying attention to what others have to say. By contrast, other people take delight in listening to the stories of their conversation partners, apparently getting inspired by the experiences, achievements, and ideas of others. What determines whether people are inspired by themselves or by others? Drawing on theorizing and research on power and self-prioritization, we develop and test the hypothesis that the relative degree of inspiration individuals derive from their own versus others' experiences depends on their sense of power.

Inspiration and Its Sources

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (Simpson & Weiner, 1989, p. 1036) defines inspiration as ''a breathing in or infusion of some idea, purpose, etc. into the mind; the suggestion, awakening, or creation of some feeling or impulse, especially of an exalted kind.'' The scholarly conceptualization by Thrash and Elliot (2003) similarly describes inspiration as a state of mind that involves motivation, evocation, and transcendence. The experience may involve a sense of being ''inspired by'' and/or being ''inspired to'' (Thrash & Elliot, 2004). Being inspired by refers to the energizing yet somewhat undifferentiated feeling of being enthused, moved, amazed, and uplifted by something great. Being inspired to entails a more specific sense of motivation that spurs one to direct effort toward the accomplishment of a certain goal—a state that may or may not be part of any particular episode of inspiration (Thrash & Elliot, 2004). Our focus here is on the experience of being inspired by, because this is a more general form of inspiration involving an appreciation of the evocative stimulus in its own right, independent of its relevance to motivational concerns.

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Although inspiration is a familiar experience, its origins are poorly understood (Thrash & Elliot, 2004)—an observation that inspired the current research. In conceptualizing the psychological experience of inspiration, Thrash and Elliot (2003) distinguished between inspiration stemming from sources *outside* versus *within* the self. Outside sources of inspiration may include majestic landscapes, moving pieces of music, or beautiful poems, but also the experiences, achievements, or personalities of other individuals. People may be inspired by qualities of other individuals that are seen as good or beautiful (Haidt & Keltner, 2001) and/or perceived as superior to the self in some way (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997). Inner sources of inspiration, in contrast, include a person's own ideas, achievements, or past experiences (Thrash & Elliot, 2003). Within the social domain, people may thus derive inspiration from themselves and/or from others.

Power and Self-Prioritization

Power can be defined as asymmetric control over valued resources (Fiske, 1993; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). The experience of power shapes people's social lives in profound ways (Fiske, 2010). Due to their preferential control over resources and relative independence from others (Fiske, 1993), high-power individuals tend to experience fewer social constraints and more resource-rich environments compared to their lower power counterparts (Keltner et al., 2003). The experience of independence and control can lead powerholders to adopt rather vainglorious self-concepts and to depreciate the powerless (Kipnis, 1976). Furthermore, the asymmetric control over resources fuels asymmetric experiences of social distance (Magee & Smith, 2013), with higher power individuals experiencing greater social distance from others than lower power individuals (Lammers, Galinsky, Gordijn, & Otten, 2012). Consequently, the powerful tend to prioritize themselves over others in social life (Keltner, Van Kleef, Chen, & Kraus, 2008; Lee & Tiedens, 2001).

This self-prioritization is manifested in various ways. Powerful people tend to act on their own desires and inclinations (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003; Guinote, 2007; Lammers, Galinsky, Gordijn, & Otten, 2008; Magee, Galinsky, & Gruenfeld, 2007) as opposed to those of others (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, Magee, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008). Accordingly, the powerful are more likely than the powerless to interrupt their conversation partners (DePaulo & Friedman, 1998) and to discount expert advice (Tost, Gino, & Larrick, 2012). The powerful also tend to exhibit poor perspective taking (Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006) and emotion recognition (Gonzaga, Keltner, & Ward, 2008), and they are less likely to be influenced by the emotions of others (Anderson, Keltner, & John, 2003; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004; Van Kleef et al., 2008). Finally, powerful people tend to use the self as a reference point when judging others' internal states (Overbeck & Droutman, 2013). In sum, compared to low-power people, the powerful appear to be more focused on the self than on others, to be more influenced by their own internal states, and to show a greater appreciation of the self than of others.

From Power to Inspiration

Extending the theoretical notion of self-prioritization, we propose that power shapes the degree to which individuals draw inspiration from the self versus others. This hypothesis is supported by three interrelated considerations. First, the tendency to inflate one's own importance while depreciating others (Kipnis, 1976), which is at the heart of the self-prioritization syndrome, may lead powerful people to deem their own experiences more inspiring than those of others.

Second, the notion of transcendence that is associated with the experience of being "inspired by" refers to the feeling of being moved by something that is perceived as somehow greater than the self (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997; Thrash & Elliot, 2004). The relatively inflated sense of self that may accompany the experience of power would make it difficult for powerful people to be inspired by others, because they are less likely to recognize others' experiences or achievements as being superior to their own. Indeed, Lockwood and Kunda (1999) found that individuals were less inspired by an outstanding role model after they had been primed with their own academic success.

A third argument is based on the notion of "automatic egotism" (Paulhus & Levitt, 1987) and the self-liberating effects of power (Galinsky et al., 2003; Keltner et al., 2003). Most people hold relatively favorable beliefs about themselves (Miller & Ross, 1975), which make thinking and talking about the self an enjoyable activity (Paulhus & Levitt, 1987). However, people may temper the desire to advertise their own experiences so as to be socially accepted (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Tice, Butler, Muraven, & Stillwell, 1995). Being more independent from others than their lower power counterparts (Fiske, 1993), higher power people tend to worry less about acceptance by others, which may pave the way for relatively uninhibited (public) indulgence in self-related thoughts.

The Present Research

We propose that power shapes the degree to which individuals draw inspiration from the self versus others. Specifically, we hypothesize that (1) higher power people are more inspired by their own experiences than are lower power people and (2) people are more inspired by their own experiences than by those of others to the degree that they have a greater sense of power. We tested these ideas in four studies, which involved a combination of correlational and experimental designs, different social settings, and diverse operationalizations of power and inspiration.

Study 1

Method

Participants and Design

Participants were 239 undergraduate psychology students of the University of Amsterdam (174 women, 64 men, 1 unreported; $M_{age} = 20.73$, $SD_{age} = 6.02$). We used participants' personal

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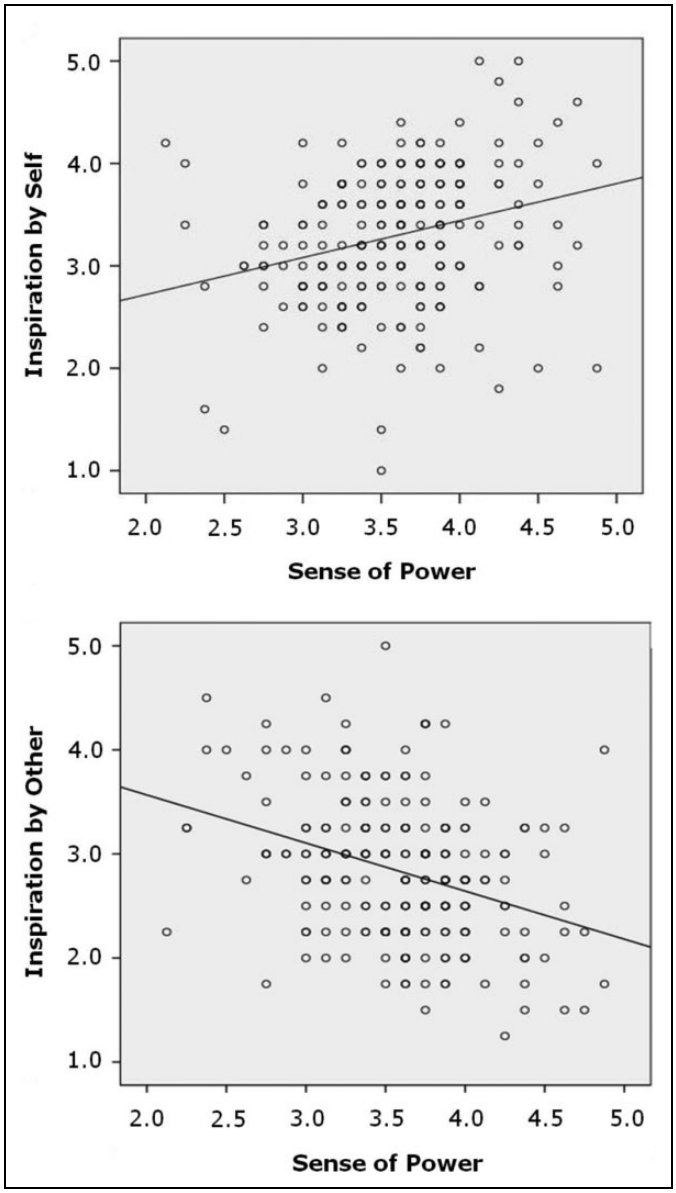

Figure 1. Degree of self-derived inspiration (top panel) and other-derived inspiration (bottom panel) as a function of personal sense of power (Study 1).

sense of power to predict their self-induced versus other-induced inspiration across social interactions. The measures of power and inspiration were separated by several unrelated questionnaires.

Power Measure

Participants' generalized sense of power was measured using the personal sense of power scale (Anderson, John, & Keltner, 2012), which consists of a stem ("In my relationships with others . . . ") and 8 items (e.g., "My wishes do not carry much weight," reverse scored; "I can get others to do what I want"; "Even if I voice them, my views have little sway," reverse scored; "I think I have a great deal of power"). Scores on this scale are correlated with people's actual standing in power hierarchies and predict the same behaviors as structural manipulations of power and manipulations based on semantic priming and autobiographic recall (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Anderson et al., 2012). Participants scored the items on 5-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). The scale's reliability in the present sample was $\alpha = .80$ ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.49$).

Inspiration Measure

We created two scales to tap into participants' feelings of inspiration across social conversations. Inspiration by self was measured with 5 items (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*): "I can get really inspired by talking about the things I experience"; "When talking with other people, I often become enthusiastic about my own ideas"; "I find it inspiring when other people listen to me"; "I get enthusiastic when I talk to other people about my life"; "When I talk with other people, I often get inspired by the things I say" ($\alpha = .82$; $M = 3.30$, $SD = 0.65$). Inspiration by others was measured with 4 items: "I find it inspiring to listen to other people's stories"; "I often find other people's stories more interesting than my own"; "It seems as though other people always experience more exciting things than I do"; "I find it very inspiring to hear about other people's experiences" ($\alpha = .71$; $M = 2.82$, $SD = 0.66$). The scales loaded on separate factors with eigenvalues of 3.55 (inspiration by self) and 1.58 (inspiration by other) and were moderately negatively correlated, $r(239) = -.38$, $p < .001$.

Results and Discussion

Initial analyses revealed that, across levels of power, participants reported deriving greater inspiration from their own experiences ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 0.65$) than from those of others ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 0.66$); $t(238) = 6.61$, $p < .001$.

To test our hypothesis, we regressed the scores on the two separate inspiration measures on the measure of power. As predicted, to the degree that participants had a higher sense of power, they reported getting more inspired by their own experiences, $\beta = .27$, $t(237) = 4.34$, $p < .001$. Furthermore, greater power was associated with less inspiration drawn from others' experiences, $\beta = -.34$, $t(237) = -5.56$, $p < .001$ (see Figure 1).

Next, we conducted a regression analysis with the *difference* between inspiration from self and inspiration from others as the dependent variable ($M = 0.47$, $SD = 1.09$). The more powerful participants felt, the more inspired they indicated being by themselves relative to others, $\beta = .37$, $t(237) = 6.09$, $p < .001$.

These findings provide preliminary support for the idea that powerful people are more inspired by their own experiences than by those of others. However, a potential limitation of Study 1 is that the self-inspiration scale primarily captured the enjoyment of talking about one's own experiences, whereas the other-inspiration scale tapped the enjoyment of listening to others as well as the sense that others experience more interesting things. In Study 2, we remedied this problem by letting participants exchange inspiring experiences in face-to-face, semi-structured

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interactions, which enabled us to use a single scale to measure inspiration by one's own story and inspiration by the other's story.

Study 2

Method

Participants and Design

Participants were 140 psychology students of the University of California, Berkeley (80 women, 60 men; $M_{age} = 20.86$, $SD_{age} = 4.95$). We used participants' sense of power to predict inspiration derived from their own versus their partner's stories in face-to-face conversations.

Power Measure

Participants' sense of power was measured with Anderson, John, and Keltner's (2012) sense of power scale (see Study 1), which was embedded within a larger questionnaire comprising several unrelated scales. Participants scored the statements on 7-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*; $\alpha = .89$; $M = 5.17$, $SD = 0.93$).

Baseline Affect Measure

Prior to the conversations, we measured participants' baseline affect. Participants indicated to what extent they felt each of 45 affective states (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very strongly*). Embedded in the list of adjectives were 4 items designed to measure baseline inspiration: "inspired," "amazed," "uplifted," and "awe" ($\alpha = .87$; $M = 2.40$, $SD = 1.38$). Other adjectives tapped into feelings such as hopefulness, anxiety, empowerment, and happiness.

Conversations

Participants were randomly paired into same-sex dyads and seated face to face in comfortable chairs. The experimenter left the room for the remainder of the experiment and communicated with the dyad via intercom. Two video cameras recorded each participant individually. Participants were prompted to think about an event during the past 5 years that had inspired them a lot (see Thrash & Elliot, 2004). For 3 min, both participants wrote a summary of this event. Participants then took turns discussing their event (as "talker") with the other participant ("listener") for about 5 min each, with emotion ratings obtained after each turn. The order of the roles was randomly determined by means of a coin flip. As talker, participants were instructed to convey the feelings evoked by the event and its impact on their life. As listener, participants were instructed to attempt to gain an understanding of the other's experience.

Coding Speakers' Nonverbal Behaviors and Stories

Two independent raters coded each speaker's nonverbal behavior for enthusiasm and emotional expressivity (two outwardly visible signs of inspiration) using 7-point scales (inter-rater reliabilities were .80 and .67, respectively). The ratings were averaged to create single indices of the speaker's enthusiasm ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.84$) and emotional expressivity ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.75$). Two different coders rated the transcripts of the stories for their interest level ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.07$; inter-rater reliability: .68), and the length of the stories (in seconds) was objectively determined ($M = 237.21$, $SD = 69.50$).

Inspiration Measure

Participants reported on their momentary levels of inspiration after talking themselves and after listening to their partner. In both cases, participants indicated on 7-point scales (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very strongly*) to what extent they felt "inspired," "amazed," "uplifted," and "awe" (talker role: $\alpha = .87$; $M = 3.92$, $SD = 1.65$; and listener role: $\alpha = .88$; $M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.63$). The items were again embedded within a list of nonfocal mood items (see baseline measure). The self-report measure of inspiration was significantly positively correlated with the coder-rated nonverbal signs of enthusiasm, $r(139) = .23$, $p = .006$, and emotional expressivity, $r(139) = .22$, $p = .009$.

Results and Discussion

Exploratory Analyses

Across levels of power and consistent with the previous studies, participants reported deriving greater inspiration from their own experiences ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 1.65$) than from those of others ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.62$), $t(139) = 2.40$, $p = .018$.

Replicating previous findings (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Langner & Keltner, 2008), exploratory regression analyses revealed positive relationships between sense of power and baseline feelings of happiness, hopefulness, empowerment, and pride; and negative relationships with feelings of anxiety, sadness, embarrassment, helplessness, worry, and guilt ($ps < .05$). Analyses on participants' feelings after talking versus listening revealed no effects of power on any of these items (all $ps > .10$), except for anxiety after talking ($\beta = -.20$, $p = .020$) and listening ($\beta = -.18$, $p = .039$), and embarrassment after listening ($\beta = -.19$, $p = .025$). This indicates that considering their own inspiring experiences did not produce a general increase in positive affect among powerful individuals.

As shown in Table 1, there was no relationship between sense of power and baseline inspiration, which is consistent with our assertion that high-power people's inspiration rises only when they get a chance to consider their own uplifting experiences. There were also no effects of power on coder-rated interest of the stories, nor on story length. Accordingly, controlling for these variables did not change the effects reported subsequently.

Hypothesis Testing

We first regressed the two separate inspiration scales on the measure of power. As seen in Table 1, participants reported higher levels of self-induced inspiration (i.e., by talking themselves) to the degree that they had a higher sense of power.

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Table 1. Associations Between Participants' Personal Sense of Power and Their Baseline Inspiration, Story Characteristics, Self-reported Inspiration After Talking and Listening, and Coder-rated Behavioral Signs of Inspiration While Talking (Study 2).

	Effect of personal sense of power		
	β	*t*(138)	*p*
Exploratory analyses			
Baseline inspiration	−.03	−.33	.74
Interest level of stories	.14	1.67	.10
Length of stories	−.04	−.50	.62
Hypothesis testing			
Inspiration after talking	.18	2.13	.035
Inspiration after listening	.02	.25	.806
Inspiration difference score (talk–listen)	.22	2.62	.010
Coder-rated enthusiasm of speaker	.18	2.12	.036
Coder-rated emotional expressivity of speaker	.20	2.37	.019

Note. Results presented in this table are based on regression analysis. We also tested our hypothesis using multi-level modeling to account for possible non-independence of observations stemming from the same dyad (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). These analyses produced very similar effects and significance levels, leading to identical conclusions. We provide the regression results here for ease of presentation and comparison across effects (multi-level analyses do not yield comparable standardized coefficients, precluding direct comparisons with other effects).

Other-induced inspiration (i.e., by listening) was not associated with sense of power.

Second, we conducted a regression analysis with the *difference* between inspiration after talking and inspiration after listening as the dependent variable ($M = 0.38$, $SD = 1.19$). This revealed that the more powerful participants felt, the more inspired they were by their own experiences relative to those of their partner.

Finally, we regressed talkers' nonverbal signs of inspiration on their sense of power. Talkers' sense of power was positively associated with their nonverbal signs of enthusiasm and emotional expressivity (see Table 1). Individuals with a higher sense of power derived greater *visible* inspiration from their own experiences compared to those with a lower sense of power.

Interestingly, the data indicate that even though powerful individuals experienced more positive feelings at baseline, they did not experience greater baseline inspiration. Moreover, although considering their own uplifting experiences boosted inspiration among the powerful, it did not increase positive affect in general. These patterns suggest that the effects of power identified here are unique to inspiration.

Although Studies 1 and 2 consistently showed effects of power on self- versus other-derived inspiration, they do not allow us to disentangle the content of the inspiring events (i.e., whether or not they involved the self) from the act of talking versus listening. To remedy this limitation, we conducted two additional studies. In Study 3, we measured participants' power, asked them to write about an inspiring event, and coded whether they wrote about themselves or not.

Study 3

Method

Participants and Design

Eighty-two undergraduate students of the University of Amsterdam (61 women, 20 men, 1 unreported; $M_{age} = 21.46$, $SD_{age} = 5.72$) participated in the study. We used participants' sense of power to predict the content of their spontaneously generated inspirational stories (i.e., featuring the self or not).

Power Measure

Sense of power was again measured using Anderson et al.'s (2012) scale (see Study 1), which was embedded within a larger questionnaire. Participants responded on 7-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*; current $\alpha = .74$; and $M = 4.83$, $SD = 0.65$).

Writing Task

All participants were invited to write about an event that had greatly inspired them. They described what had happened, what they thought about the situation, and how they felt about it.

Coding of Stories

Two participants failed to write a story, and three stories were not related to inspiration. The final sample thus consisted of 77 participants. Two raters independently coded the content of participants' inspirational stories for whether they featured the self (coded as 1) or not (coded as 0). Inter-rater agreement (90%, Cohen's $\kappa = .79$) was excellent (Landis & Koch, 1977). Differences were resolved through discussion. Illustrative excerpts are presented in Table 2.

Results and Discussion

Logistic regression revealed that participants were more likely to describe an inspiring event that featured the self to the degree that they had a higher sense of power, $\beta = .98$, $SE = .44$, Wald's χ^2 ($df = 1, 77$) $= 5.06$, $p = .024$.

This study indicates that people who feel more powerful are more likely to spontaneously generate inspirational events that feature themselves. This finding helps to disentangle the effect of the source of inspiration (self or not) from the type of communication involved, because all participants were in the writing condition. In our final study, we employed an experimental design to provide causal evidence for the role of power in shaping inspiration.

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Table 2. Sample Experiences in Which Inspiration Was Drawn From the Self Versus Others (Study 3).

Inspiration from self	"I used to be a pilot in the air force. [. . .] It was very inspiring to me that I [. . .] did something which almost no one else could."
	"Last August, I participated in the European Sumo Championships. I unexpectedly ended at third place among the seniors. This experience will always stay with me. I was amazed to be on the podium with a couple of big old bears."
	"When I graduated from high school. I felt like I could handle the world. It gave me lots of energy and made me very happy."
Inspiration from others	"I started a job at a retirement home and that really changed my outlook on the world. It's so special to work with people from that generation. Their stories are beautiful and so simple. People only attach value to the most important things in life. [. . .] Almost everyone is enthusiastic about the life that they had and oftentimes shows gratitude."
	"Some time ago, a friend of mine got into an accident. [. . .] She was immensely positive and strong during her rehabilitation and that has made a great impression on me. I think she is a great example [. . .]."
	"I had just arrived in Australia and was looking for the right bus. A woman came up to me and spontaneously helped me out and started a nice conversation. I found this inspiring because it showed me that there are people out there who are just so nice and good."

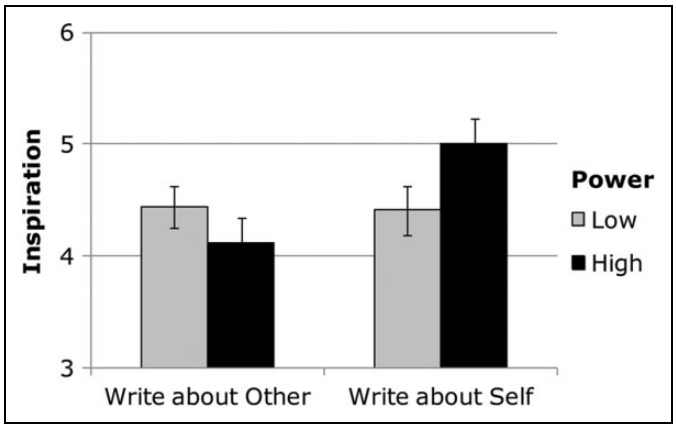

Figure 2. Feelings of inspiration after writing about another person's uplifting experience versus writing about one's own uplifting experience as a function of power (Study 4). Error bars represent standard errors.

Study 4

Method

Participants and Design

Ninety-four undergraduate students of the University of Amsterdam (70 women, 24 men; $M_{age} = 20.07$, $SD_{age} = 2.42$) participated in the experiment. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the conditions of a 2 (power: low vs. high) by 2 (task: writing about own experience vs. writing about another's experience) full-factorial design.

Power Manipulation

We manipulated power by means of a widely used autobiographical recall procedure (see Galinsky et al., 2003, 2006). Participants in the *high-power* conditions were instructed to write about a situation in which they had power over one or more others. Participants in the *low-power* conditions wrote about a situation in which someone else had power over them.

Writing Task

Participants were subsequently prompted to write about an inspiring event. They were either asked to write about an event that had greatly inspired them or to write about an event that they had heard or read about that had greatly inspired someone else and that they had not been part of themselves. Participants described what had happened, what they thought about the situation, and how they felt about it.

Inspiration Measure

Compared to Study 2 (which was conducted in the United States), we included a number of additional inspiration items that capture the everyday use of inspiration words in the Dutch context within which Study 4 was situated. Thus, besides indicating to what extent they felt ''inspired,'' ''amazed,'' ''uplifted,'' and ''awe'' (as in Study 2), participants also reported the degree to which they were "moved," "high," and "enthused" (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*; $\alpha = .84$; $M = 4.50$, $SD = 1.07$).[1]

Results and Discussion

A main effect of task revealed that participants were more inspired after writing about their own experiences ($M = 4.71$, $SD = 1.01$) than after writing about those of others ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 1.09$), $F(1, 90) = 3.99$, $p = .049$, $\eta^2_p = .04$. More importantly, this main effect was qualified by the predicted interaction with power, $F(1, 90) = 4.56$, $p = .035$, $\eta^2_p = .05$ (see Figure 2). Simple-effects analyses revealed that high-power participants were more inspired by their own experiences ($M = 5.01$, $SD = 1.00$) than were low-power participants ($M = 4.41$; $SD = 0.95$), $F(1, 90) = 4.10$, $p = .049$, $\eta^2_p = .09$, whereas power did not affect inspiration drawn from others' experiences ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 1.05$ vs. $M = 4.44$, $SD = 1.12$, respectively), $F(1, 90) = 1.21$, $p = .27$, $\eta^2_p = .02$.

Additional analyses revealed that the tendency to be more inspired by one's own rather than others' experiences was significant in the high-power condition ($M_{self} = 5.01$; $M_{other} = 4.12$), $F(1, 90) = 7.94$, $p = .006$, $\eta^2_p = .17$, but

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not in the low-power condition ($M_{self} = 4.41$, $M_{other} = 4.44$), $F(1, 90) = 0.01$, $p = .92$, $\eta^2_p = .00$.

These findings provide additional support for our hypothesis by showing in an experimental design that higher power people draw greater inspiration from the self than lower power people. Moreover, the data provide further evidence that the results of Studies 1 and 2 were not due to differences in the type of communication involved (listening/reading vs. talking/writing).

An alternative to the current approach would be to ask participants in the inspiration-by-other conditions to write about another person's experience that had inspired themselves. Instead, we decided to prompt participants to write about an event that had inspired another person. We felt that this approach was more complementary to the procedure used in Study 3 in which we asked participants to write about an event that had inspired them and coded whether the stories featured participants themselves or other people. One might wonder whether writing about an inspirational event that happened to the self is inevitably more inspiring than writing about an inspirational event that happened to someone else. Our data suggest that this is not the case. Participants in the high-power conditions were more inspired after writing about their own rather than another person's inspirational experience, but those in the low-power conditions were equally inspired by their own and others' experiences. In short, together the present studies clearly point to the conclusion that power allows people to draw greater inspiration from the self.

General Discussion

Inspiration is vital to human achievement, yet little is known about the social sources from which people derive it. Drawing on the conceptual distinction between inspiration derived from the self versus inspiration derived from others (Thrash & Elliot, 2003) and on theorizing and research on the effects of power on self-prioritization (e.g., Keltner et al., 2008), we hypothesized that powerful individuals (more so than their less powerful counterparts) are preferentially inspired by their own experiences as opposed to those of others. Four studies demonstrate that (1) higher power people are more inspired by their own experiences than are lower power people and (2) higher power people are more inspired by their own experiences than by those of others.

The use of diverse social settings and procedures boosts confidence in the robustness of these findings. Study 1 revealed associations between power and chronic tendencies to derive inspiration from the self versus others across social situations. Study 2 demonstrated that higher power people are more inspired by their own stories than by those of others in face-to-face conversations. In Study 3, higher power people spontaneously generated more inspiring experiences featuring themselves as opposed to others. Finally, Study 4 provided causal evidence by showing experimentally that people primed with high rather than low power derived comparatively greater inspiration from considering their own versus other people's experiences.[2]

In the organization sciences, there has been a long-standing interest in inspirational leadership (e.g., Bass, 1997), which concerns the role of the powerholder as a source of inspiration for *others*. Although not our focal interest, the data of Study 2 allow us to explore whether interacting with a higher power individual is more inspiring than interacting with a lower power individual. Regressing feelings of inspiration after listening to the partner's story on partner's (rather than own) sense of power revealed a weak positive trend (perhaps due to powerful participants' greater visible signs of inspiration), but this did not reach statistical significance ($\beta = .10$, $p = .12$). Thus, we find more robust evidence for the hypothesis that powerful people inspire themselves than for the possibility that they inspire others.

Casual observations and scientific evidence converge on the notion that powerful people are more avid talkers than they are listeners (Hall, Coats, & LeBeau, 2005). Furthermore, studies have shown that powerful people are rather poor perspective takers (Galinsky et al., 2006), less prone to consider other people's emotions (Van Kleef et al., 2004, 2008), and less likely to take expert advice (Tost et al., 2012). The present findings point to a possible explanation for these phenomena: The powerful prefer to entertain their own rather than other people's experiences and ideas, because they are more inspired by their own internal states than by those of others.

Our findings qualify the assertion that high-power people experience more positive affect than low-power people (Keltner et al., 2003). Although we found evidence for such baseline differences with respect to feelings of happiness, hopefulness, empowerment, and pride, there were no baseline differences in inspiration. Powerful people's levels of inspiration rose when considering their own uplifting experiences, but not when considering those of others. In fact, listening to another person's stories may *undermine* powerful people's inspiration (see Study 1), which could explain why the powerful don't exhibit chronically high levels of inspiration. However, as exemplified by Matthew McConaughey's Oscar speech, inspiration is always within reach for the powerful—entertaining their own uplifting experiences is enough to spark the flame.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Notes

1. We use the extended scale in our main analyses. However, analyses involving only the 4 items that were used in Study 2 revealed a similar pattern of results, including the critical interaction between power and task, $F(1, 90) = 6.52$, $p = .012$, and $\eta^2_p = .07$.
2. An earlier version of this article contained an additional experiment that is not reported here. This experiment was similar to Study 4, with the key difference being that participants were either asked

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to write about their own inspirational experiences or to read about those of another person. The results of this study were very similar to those of Study 4, and all the critical effects were significant, most notably the interaction between power and task; $F(1, 333) = 5.37$, $p = .021$, and $\eta^2_p = .02$. Interested readers may obtain further details about this study by contacting the first author.

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