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Poisoned Praise

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Poisoned Praise: Discounted Praise Backfires and Undermines Subordinate Impressions in the Minds of the Powerful

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Abstract:	High-power people frequently receive compliments from subordinates, yet little is known about how high-power people respond to praise. The current research addresses this gap in the empirical literature by testing the primary hypothesis that high-power people discount others' praise more than equal- and low-power people. Secondary hypotheses also tested whether high-power people's tendency to discount positive feedback would paradoxically heighten negative perceptions of others. Evidence from two experiments (one pre-registered) reveals that high-power participants discounted feedback from others more than low- and equal-power participants. However, high-power people's tendency to discount feedback only produced negative partner perceptions when positive feedback, but not neutral feedback, was discounted. These results suggest that compliments may sometimes backfire and lead high-power people to discount praise and form negative impressions of subordinates.

Abstract

High-power people frequently receive compliments from subordinates, yet little is known about how high-power people respond to praise. The current research addresses this gap in the empirical literature by testing the primary hypothesis that high-power people discount others' praise more than equal- and low-power people. Secondary hypotheses also tested whether high-power people's tendency to discount positive feedback would paradoxically heighten negative perceptions of others. Evidence from two experiments (one pre-registered) reveals that high-power participants discounted feedback from others more than low- and equal-power participants. However, high-power people's tendency to discount feedback only produced negative partner perceptions when positive feedback, but not neutral feedback, was discounted. These results suggest that compliments may sometimes backfire and lead high-power people to discount praise and form negative impressions of subordinates.

Keywords: attributional ambiguity, power, hierarchy, positive feedback, ingratiation

Poisoned Praise: Discounted Praise Backfires and Undermines Subordinate Impressions in the Minds of the Powerful

Flattery and knavery are blood relations.
—Abraham Lincoln

Positive social regard is a hallmark of the high-power experience (e.g., Pfeffer, 2010), yet little is known about how high-power people interpret praise from those below them in the social hierarchy. Moreover, existing indirect evidence paints conflicting pictures of how high-power people might respond to subordinates' praise. According to research that finds powerful people struggle to take others' perspectives and overestimate subordinates' positive regard (e.g., Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006; Kunstman & Maner, 2011), powerful people may accept and relish praise from subordinates. Alternatively, powerful people's tendency to disregard social information from others (e.g., Galinsky et al., 2006; Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008; van Kleef, Oveis, van der Löwe, LuoKogan, Goetz, & Keltner, 2008), coupled with their knowledge of subordinates' dependence (Magee & Smith, 2013), may make subordinates' praise attributionally ambiguous (Crocker & Major, 1989). The powerful may wonder whether subordinates' compliments reflect genuine liking and respect, or rather are attempts to improve their personal outcomes. As a result of this ambiguity, the powerful may, in the words of Lincoln, see flattery as knavery. Consequently, powerful people may discount subordinates' praise and paradoxically form negative impressions of subordinates.

In two experiments, the present research addressed this gap in the power literature. We integrate recent research on power's effects on cynicism (Inesi, Gruenfeld, & Galinsky, 2012) with attributional ambiguity theory (e.g., Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major, 1991; Major, Kunstman, Malta, Sawyer, Townsend, & Mendes, 2016) to test the primary hypothesis that high-power people would discount, not relish, subordinates' praise. Secondary hypotheses explored

whether discounting would also backfire and create negative impressions of subordinates in the minds of the powerful.[1]

Power's Effect on Perceptions of Praise

Power, operationalized as asymmetric resource control (e.g., Keltner et al., 2003), confers many benefits to those who possess it. For example, powerful people are frequently admired and praised, particularly by subordinates (e.g., Pfeffer, 2010; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980). However, existing research makes competing predictions for how high-power people might respond to subordinates' praise. From one perspective, increased optimism, over-attention to social rewards, and an increased tendency to self-enhance (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Anderson & Galinsky, 2006; Georgesen & Harris, 1998) might lead powerful people to embrace subordinates' praise, while powerful people's deficits in perspective taking, tendencies to self-anchor, and focus on past personal success may prevent them from considering potential ulterior motives for such praise (Galinsky et al., 2006; Overbeck & Droutman, 2013; van Kleef, Oveis, Homans, van der Löwe, & Keltner, 2015). Hence, high-power people may accept and enjoy positive feedback from subordinates.

Alternatively, other research suggests that high-power people would discount praise from subordinates. There is abundant evidence that powerful people discount others' advice and dismiss others' opinions (Galinsky et al., 2008; See, Morrison, Rothman, & Soll, 2011; Tost, Gino, & Larrick, 2012), which suggests they may not value subordinates' praise. Moreover, since the powerful are theorized to recognize both subordinates' dependence and their desire to improve their standing in the social hierarchy (Magee & Smith, 2013), high-power people might view subordinates' praise with cynicism. For example, Inesi and colleagues (2012) found that favors and other generous acts led to more cynicism among high-power people, relative to an

equal-power or baseline condition, reducing trust, thankfulness, and relationship commitment. Thus, there is good reason to predict that high-power people may respond cynically to subordinates' praise, discounting it and consequently forming negative impressions of their subordinates.

Attributional Ambiguity and Discounting

Additional support for the prediction that high-power people will discount subordinates' praise comes from attributional ambiguity theory (see Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002, for review). According to this theory, the presence of salient external attributions creates ambiguity that can lead any feedback to be discounted, or attributed more to factors external to the self than factors internal to the self (Crocker et al., 1991; Major, Kaiser, & McCoy, 2003; Major, Quinton, & Schmader, 2003). For instance, Crocker and Major (1989) theorized that people of color (POC) may protect their self-esteem by attributing Whites' negative judgements to racial prejudice rather than personal ability (i.e., discounting feedback). Positive responses may also be discounted when external attributions create ambiguity regarding others' motives, potentially leaving recipients feeling manipulated, patronized, and demeaned (Major & Kunstman, 2013). Indeed, attributionally ambiguous praise has negative effects for both recipients and providers. For instance, attributionally ambiguous praise from Whites elicits threat responses from POC (e.g., Crocker et al., 1991; Mendes, Major, McCoy, & Blascovich, 2008). Furthermore, for POC suspicious of Whites' motives, such praise also leads feedback providers to be perceived as fake and disingenuous (Major et al., 2016). Combined with the previously discussed research suggesting high-power people disregard others' opinions and frequently make cynical attributions for others' generosity (e.g., Galinsky et al., 2008; Inesi et al., 2012), this

preponderance of evidence led us to hypothesize that high-power people would discount praise and potentially form negative impressions of the subordinates who provide it.

Contribution of the Current Work

The current work advances research on power and attributional ambiguity in several ways. First, by exploring how high-power people respond to praise, this research investigates a pervasive but empirically unexamined consequence of power. Moreover, the work addresses alternative predictions for how high-power people respond to praise (e.g. Georgesen & Harris, 1998; Inesi et al., 2012). Hence, the current research advances scholarship on power by resolving competing predictions for a ubiquitous but previously unexplored aspect of the high-power experience.

Second, the current work extends research on power's cynical effects (Inesi et al., 2012) by exploring how high-power people respond to praise. Understanding power's effects on praise is critical because compliments directly implicate the recipient's self-concept. For example, subordinates' praise may affirm a manager's desire to be a good leader. Thus, discounting praise requires powerful people to reject information that fulfills fundamental self-enhancement motives, which are heightened by power (Georgesen & Harris, 1998), and consequently lose an opportunity to improve self-esteem. By examining responses to praise, the current work pits self-protective concerns with manipulation against self-serving motives to self-enhance.

Third, this work also advances research on power and cynicism by testing power's effect on person perception. Although past work explored power's cynical effects on relationship perceptions (e.g., relationship commitment; Inesi et al., 2012), it is unclear whether cynicism also taints perceptions of others. Since subordinates often give powerful others positive

feedback in part to improve their standing (e.g., Kipnis et al., 1980), power's effects on subordinate impressions are relevant and important.

Fourth, the current work provides more information on the relationship between power and cynicism by testing whether it is the high-power experience, rather than the activation of thoughts associated with hierarchy per se, which elicits cynicism. In previous work on power and cynicism (i.e., Inesi et al., 2012; Inesi, Lee, & Rios, 2014), not a single experiment featured a low-power comparison condition. Hence, it could be that reminders of hierarchy generally, rather than high-power experiences specifically, lead to cynicism (see Schaerer, du Plessis, Yap, & Thau, 2016, for a discussion of the general issue of missing conditions in power research). Furthermore, though the power literature has focused primarily on effects of high power, sometimes effects of low power have been found to be stronger (e.g., Smith & Hofmann, 2016). Both experiments in the current work include low-power conditions to address these issues.

Fifth, the current work extends research on attributional ambiguity into the realm of interpersonal hierarchies and high-power people. Previously this theory was tested exclusively in the context of intergroup hierarchies, where there is more attributional ambiguity surrounding praise directed at members of low-status, stigmatized groups (Crocker et al., 1991). In contrast, in interpersonal hierarchies attributional ambiguity is greatest for high-power people. Thus, the current work synthesizes research on interpersonal power with intergroup theories of hierarchy to test whether attributional processes common to intergroup dynamics also play a pivotal role in shaping the responses of the powerful.

Overview of Research

The present work integrates interpersonal power research with attributional ambiguity theory to test the primary hypothesis that high-power people discount praise more than low- and

equal-power others. Secondary hypotheses tested whether discounted praise has negative effects on perceptions of subordinates: the more high-power people discount praise, the more negatively they view their subordinates. In Experiment 1, participants were randomly assigned to high-, low-, or equal-power roles relative to an ostensible partner who praised participants' work. To provide a rigorous, a priori test of our predictions, we pre-registered our hypotheses, materials, and full analytic strategy (see link below).

Experiment 2 then tested whether power's effect on discounting was specific to praise or reflected a more general tendency for high-power people to disregard others' opinions (Galinsky et al., 2008; Tost et al., 2012). To test these hypotheses, we manipulated whether participants received positive or neutral feedback from their partners. To the extent discounting is specific to praise, high-power participants should discount positive feedback but not neutral feedback. Alternatively, if discounting is a generalized response to others, high-power people may discount both positive and neural feedback.

Experiment 1

To test our primary discounting and secondary person-perception hypotheses, participants were assigned to high-, low-, or equal-power roles relative to an ostensible partner. Participants then received positive feedback from their partner on a "getting to know you" writing task. We predicted that high-power participants would discount praise more than low- and equal-power participants. We also explored whether high-power participants ironically formed more negative impressions of their partner relative to those in the low- and equal-power conditions.

Method

Pre-registered materials and analytic plan are at https://osf.io/qzjmy/?view_only=ed34916fa0dc4fda831804496570a00d.

Sample Size, Data Stopping, and Participants

Sample size was determined by generating effect size estimates from research on attributional ambiguity and power (e.g., Inesi et al., 2012; Major et al., 2016; Z_r=.29), yielding an a priori sample size of 120 participants (80% power; α=.05; G*Power; Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). One hundred and thirty-four undergraduates participated for course credit. Thirteen participants were excluded from analyses for correctly identifying their partner was fictitious. Analyses were conducted on the remaining 121 participants (53% female; 84% White; M_{age}=18.82; SD_{age}=1.02).

Design

Participants were assigned to one of three roles: Boss (high-power), Subordinate (low-power), or Partner (equal-power). High-power participants believed they controlled the distribution of rewards (i.e., raffle money, bonus research credits) and expected to evaluate their partner (i.e., the Subordinate). Low-power participants believed their partner (i.e., the Boss) controlled the study's bonuses and expected to be evaluated by their partner. Equal-power participants expected to work and share equally in the study's rewards, and evaluations were not mentioned. In reality, partners did not exist and their responses were computer automated.

Following a "getting to know your partner" cover story, participants completed an impression formation task, describing how their personality was like one of three animals (cheetah, elephant, or monkey). Participants then received positive essay feedback. Specifically, partners indicated their desire to be close with participants and praised participants (see Appendix for full feedback and Mendes et al. [2008] for similar procedure). Discounting and partner perceptions were then measured.

Materials

See Supplemental Materials for all measures from both studies.

Attribution/Discounting. Participants indicated on 7-point scales (1=*Not at All*, 7=*Very Much*) how much they thought eight factors influenced their partner's feedback. The external attribution index featured five items (e.g., "S/he wants me to like her/him";α=.78) and the internal attribution index had three items (e.g., "My creative ability," "My personality"; α=.67). In keeping with attributional ambiguity research (e.g., Major et al., 2003), a discounting score was calculated by subtracting the internal attribution index from the external attribution index.

Partner Perceptions. Participants rated partners on 17 traits (1=*Not at All*; 7=*Very Much*). Nine items formed the negative trait index (e.g., jealous, fake;α=.88) and eight items formed the positive trait index (e.g., competent, genuine;α=.88).

Results

Manipulation Check

A one-way ANOVA on an item tapping participants' feelings of superiority revealed that the experimental manipulation was successful. High-power participants (M=4.11, SD=1.91) felt more superior than low-power (M=3.29, SD=1.66; p=.041) and equal-power participants (M=2.93, SD=1.70; p=.002), $F(2,117)=5.06$, p=.008, η_P^2=.08.

Discounting

A one-way ANOVA with condition as a between-subjects factor revealed a main effect of power on the discounting index, $F(2,118)=8.64$, $p<.001$, η_P^2=.13 (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics). High-power participants discounted positive feedback more than low- and equal-power participants. Equal-power participants discounted feedback marginally less than low-power participants.

Table 1

	CONDITION			LSD FOLLOW-UP COMPARISONS					
	High-Power	Low-Power	Equal-Power	HP v. LP		HP v. EP		LP v. EP	
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	*p-value*	*Cohen's d*	*p-value*	*Cohen's d*	*p-value*	*Cohen's d*
Attributions									
Discounting	-0.30 (1.59)	-1.09 (1.44)	-1.74 (1.75)	.030	0.52	<.001	0.86	.079	0.41
Partner Perceptions									
Negative Traits	2.33 (0.99)	1.91 (0.75)	2.02 (0.80)	.033	0.48	.097	0.34	.583	-0.14
Positive Traits	5.61 (0.97)	5.81 (0.63)	5.73 (0.66)	.243	-0.25	.499	-0.15	.653	0.13

Note. SD = standard deviation, HP v. LP = comparison between high and low power participants.

Partner Perceptions

We conducted a mixed-model ANOVA on participants' ratings of their partners with condition as a between-subjects factor and partner trait valence (positive/negative) as a within-subjects factor. There was a significant main effect of trait valence, $F(1,117)=674.28$, $p<.001$, $\eta_P^2=.85$, but not condition, $F(2,117)=1.64$, $p=.199$. Although the interaction between condition and trait valence was not significant, $F(2,117)=1.74$, $p=.179$, $\eta_P^2=.03$, a priori follow-ups revealed a marginal effect of condition on negative trait ascriptions, $F(2,117)=2.63$, $p=.077$ $\eta_P^2=.04$. High-power participants ascribed significantly more negative traits to their partners than low-power participants, and marginally more negative traits than equal-power participants, with low- and equal-power participants not differing. Condition did not affect positive trait ascriptions, $F<1$.

Mediation Analyses

To test whether discounting mediated positive feedback's effect on perceptions of the partner's negative traits we followed recommendations outlined by Hayes (2013). We established that the discounting variable significantly predicted the outcome variable while simultaneously reducing the magnitude of condition's effect on the dependent variable. Condition's indirect effect was tested with Prodclin (MacKinnon, Fritz, Williams, & Lockwood, 2007), which computes an asymmetric confidence interval around the point estimate of the indirect effect. The above procedures provided evidence that discounting mediated power's effect on perceptions of the partners' negative traits (Figure 1).

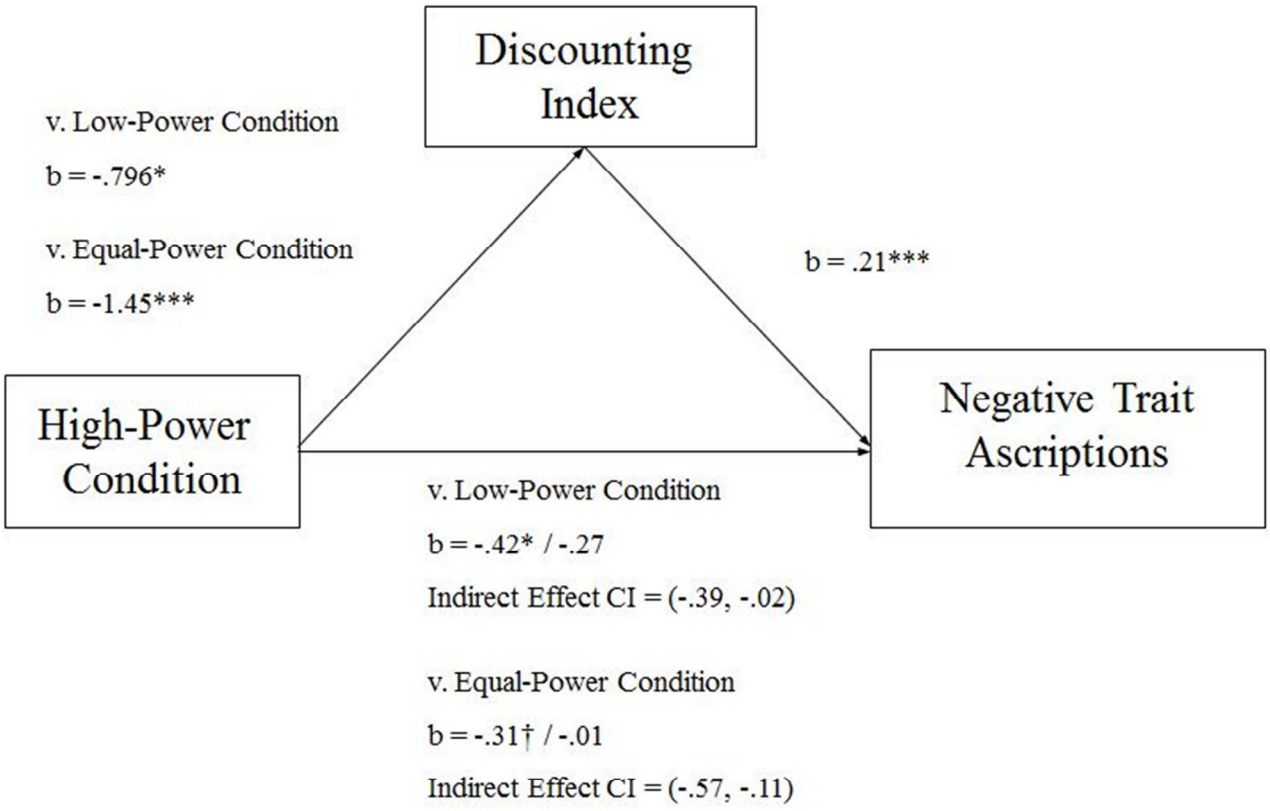

Figure 1. The discounting index mediated power's effect on negative trait ascriptions. The more high-power participants discounted feedback, the more negative traits they ascribed to their partner. Values before slash represent the direct effect of power on negative trait ascriptions before the inclusion of the discounting mediator in the regression equation. b = unstandardized regression coefficients, CI = 95% confidence interval.

† .097, * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .010$, *** $p \leq .001$.

Discussion

The current results provide strong support for our primary discounting hypothesis and mixed support for our secondary person-perception hypothesis. After receiving praise from their partner, high-power participants discounted positive feedback more than low- and equal-power participants. Also consistent with attributional ambiguity theory, when external attributions for

positive feedback were expected to be minimal (e.g., the low- and equal-power conditions), participants did not significantly differ in their tendency to discount praise. High-power participants also had significantly more negative perceptions of their partner than low-power partners, but viewed their partners only marginally more negatively than equal-power participants. Consistent with hypotheses, discounting mediated power's effects on negative trait ascriptions: the more high-power participants discounted their partners' praise, the more negatively they viewed their partners. Condition did not affect perceptions of positive traits.

However, in Experiment 1 all participants were praised. Thus, it is unclear whether discounting is a distinct reaction to subordinates' praise, or indicative of a generalized tendency for high-power people to broadly disregard feedback from others. To test these alternative hypotheses, in Experiment 2 we manipulated both participants' power and the type of feedback received from participants' alleged partners.

Experiment 2

The current experiment had three goals. First, it sought to replicate power's effects on discounting and partner perceptions. Second, it tested competing hypotheses regarding the discounting effect. Specifically, we tested whether increased discounting by high-power people was a unique reaction to praise or generalized to other forms of feedback. Consistent with this latter idea, attributional ambiguity theory argues that the presence of salient external attributions for feedback should lead it to be discounted, regardless of that feedback's valence and content (e.g., Crocker et al., 1991). Additionally, high-power people frequently disregard others' emotions, opinions, and perspectives (e.g., Galinsky et al., 2006, 2008; van Kleef et al., 2008). Hence, it may be that high-power people discount all feedback from others.

Third, the current work tested the relationship between discounting and partner perceptions. Although those in power may generally discount others' feedback, we hypothesized that only discounted positive feedback would negatively affect person perception because only praise was theorized to activate ingratiation concerns among high-power people. High-power people are aware of subordinates' desires to improve their organizational outcomes (Magee & Smith, 2013) and view subordinates' generosity with cynicism (Inesi et al., 2012). Thus, to the extent that praise is viewed as ingratiation, subordinates are likely to be viewed negatively. In keeping with this prediction, organizational research finds that when superiors perceive employees' behavior as ingratiating, employees are negatively evaluated and denied organizational rewards (Eastman, 1994). Therefore, we hypothesized that discounted praise would lead high-power participants to view their partner more negatively than low-power participants.

To achieve these goals, we manipulated participants' power level (high/low) and the type of feedback they received from their partners (positive/neutral) and then measured discounting and partner perceptions. Although we were agnostic as to whether power's effect on discounting would be specific to positive feedback or generalize to the neutral feedback condition, we hypothesized that only discounted praise would negatively affect partner perceptions.

Method

Participant Sample, Data Stopping, Exclusion Criteria

In hopes of producing a sample with 30-40 participants per experimental cell (i.e., 120-160 total participants; Simmons, Nelson, & Simonsohn, 2011), data were collected for one semester (N=168). Data from 28 participants were excluded from analyses because of computer

crashes (n=3) or participants inferring their partner was fictitious (n=25), resulting in a final sample of 140 participants (74% female; 80% White;M_{age}=18.60; SD_{age}=.95).

Design

Participants were randomly assigned to high- or low-power roles using Experiment 1's procedure. They completed the same essay task and then received either positive or neutral feedback from their partner. Positive feedback was that of Experiment 1. For neutral feedback, the partner selected the scale mid-point on items measuring willingness to meet the participant and wrote that s/he thought the participant's essay was "fine" and was "curious what it will be like to work together on the next task" (complete feedback in Appendix). Discounting and partner perceptions were then measured.

Materials

Attribution/Discounting. Participants completed Experiment 1's measures of external (α=.80) and internal (α=.71) attributions and the same discounting index was calculated.

Partner Perceptions. Participants rated partners on the 17 traits from Experiment 1. Negative (α=.88) and positive (α=.89) trait indices were computed.

Results

Manipulation Check

A univariate ANOVA on participants' feelings of superiority with condition (high-/low-power) and feedback type (positive/neutral) as between-subjects factors revealed that the power manipulation was successful. High-power participants (M=3.75, SD=1.76) felt more superior than low-power participants (M=2.62, SD=1.77), $F(1,136)=13.32$, $p<.001$, $\eta_P^2=.09$. Participants in the positive feedback condition also reported feeling more superior than those in the neutral

feedback condition, $F(1,136)=5.58$, $p=.020$, $\eta_P^2=.04$. The interaction between power condition and feedback type was not significant ($F<1.00$, $p=.448$).

Discounting

The discounting index was analyzed with a univariate ANOVA with condition (high-/low-power) and feedback type (positive/neutral) as between-subjects factors (see Table 2 for descriptive statistics). High-power participants discounted feedback more than low-power participants, $F(1,136)=7.53$, $p=.007$, $\eta_P^2=.05$. Participants who received neutral feedback also discounted feedback more than those who received positive feedback, $F(1,136)=5.88$, $p=.017$, $\eta_P^2=.04$. The interaction between condition and feedback type was not significant ($F<1.00$, $p=.633$).

Partner Perceptions

We conducted a mixed-model ANOVA on partner perceptions with condition (high-/low-power) and feedback type (positive/neutral) as between-subjects factors and partner trait valence (positive/negative) as a within-subjects factor (see Table 2 for descriptive statistics). There was a main effect of valence, $F(1,136)=562.64$, $p<.001$, $\eta_P^2=.81$, a main effect of feedback type, $F(1,136)=21.35$, $p<.001$, $\eta_P^2=.14$, and a valence by feedback interaction, $F(1,136)=30.12$, $p<.001$, $\eta_P^2=.18$, all subsumed by an interaction between condition, feedback type, and valence, $F(1,136)=5.77$, $p=.018$, $\eta_P^2=.04$. In the positive feedback condition, high-power participants rated their partners higher on negative traits, $F(1,136)=5.32$, $p=.023$, $\eta_P^2=.04$, and lower on positive traits, $F(1,136)=6.81$, $p=.010$, $\eta_P^2=.05$, than low-power participants. However, in the neutral feedback condition, there was no effect of power on perceptions of the partner

(Fs<1.00,ps>.458). In other words, high-power participants thought less of their partner than low-power participants only when the partner praised them.

Table 2

Measure	Feedback	Power	Trait Valence	Mean	SD
Discounting	Positive	High	--	-0.67	2.03
		Low	--	-1.49	1.38
	Neutral	High	--	-0.18	1.29
		Low	--	-0.75	1.09
Partner Perceptions	Positive	High	Positive	5.43	0.70
			Negative	2.32	0.83
		Low	Positive	5.92	0.71
			Negative	1.80	0.77
	Neutral	High	Positive	4.69	0.82
			Negative	2.35	0.95
		Low	Positive	4.69	0.82
			Negative	2.50	0.97

Note. SD = standard deviation

Moderated Mediation Analysis

PROCESS Model 14 with 5,000 bootstrapped samples (Hayes, 2013) tested if discounting mediated the interactive effect of power and feedback on negative and positive trait ascriptions. In the positive feedback condition, discounting mediated the relationship between power and negative trait ascriptions, b=-.13, SE=.06, 95% CI=[-.28,-.04], and power and positive trait ascriptions, b=.11, SE=.05, 95% CI=[.03,.22] (Figures 2&3). This effect did not extend to the neutral feedback conditions for negative, b=-.07, SE=.07, 95% CI=[-.24,.06], or positive trait ascriptions, b=-.002, SE=.06, 95% CI=[-.14,.12]. Together these findings suggest that although

high-power participants discounted all partner feedback more than low-power participants, only the discounting of positive feedback led to negative perceptions of the partners.

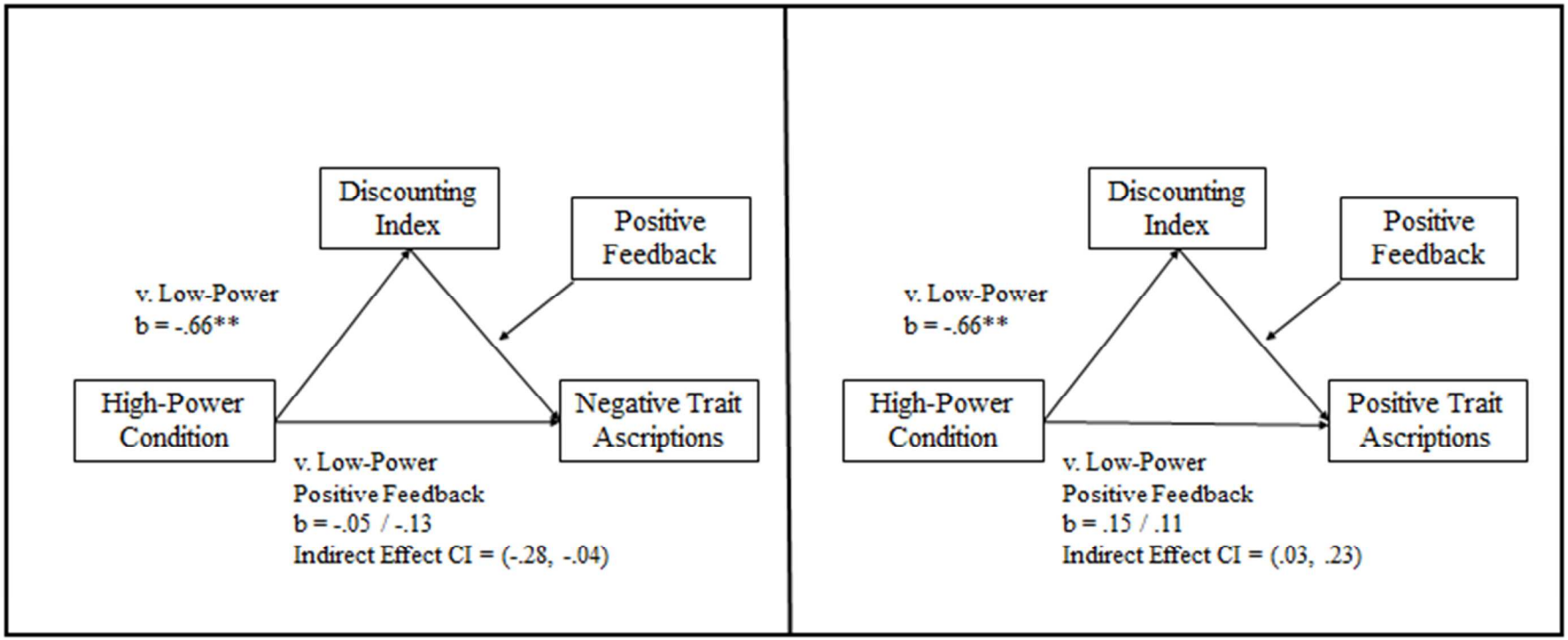

Figure 2. The discounting index mediated the interactive effect of power and feedback type on negative (left panel) and positive (right panel) trait ascriptions. In the positive feedback conditions, the more high-power participants discounted feedback, the more negative traits they ascribed their partner and the less positive traits they ascribed their partner. Power's effect on negative and positive trait ascriptions did not extend to the neutral feedback conditions. Although high-power led to greater discounting in both the neutral and positive feedback conditions, only discounted praise led to more negative partner paerceptions. Values before slash represent the direct effect of power on negative and positive trait ascriptions. b = unstandardized regression coefficients, CI = 95% confidence interval. ** p<.01.

Discussion

In keeping with the generalized discounting hypothesis, high-power participants discounted both positive and neutral feedback from their partners more than low-power participants. However, only discounted praise tainted high-power participants' perceptions of their partners. When praised, high-power participants formed significantly more negative and less positive impressions of their partners compared to low-power participants. Moreover, these perception effects were mediated by discounting. Meanwhile, discounting neutral feedback had no effect on partner perceptions.

These results replicate and extend the findings of Experiment 1. First, they provide additional evidence that high-power people discount subordinates' praise to the detriment of subordinates. Second, they provide evidence that although high-power people discount both neutral and positive feedback, it is only when praise is discounted that perceptions of subordinates suffer. That is, discounting only predicted negative partner perceptions when high-power people were praised by their partner.

General Discussion

Praise and admiration are ubiquitous to the high-power experience. However, empirical research has not directly explored how power affects people's response to praise and relevant indirect evidence supports conflicting predictions. Our results suggest that a general tendency for high-power individuals to discount subordinates' feedback can have unique and ironic negative consequences when subordinates praise their superiors. Across two experiments, when praised by partners, high-power participants discounted positive feedback and subsequently formed more negative impressions of their partners than low-power participants. These results provide

convergent support for our primary discounting and secondary person-perception hypotheses. Although high-power people discounted both neutral and positive feedback, only discounted praise negatively affected partner perceptions. The more high-power people discounted positive feedback, the more negative their impressions of their partners. These results address a common but unexplored aspect of the high-power experience and suggest attempts at flattery by subordinates can backfire and paradoxically lead superiors to view their subordinates negatively.

Implications

The present studies advance research on power and attributional ambiguity in several ways. First, they address a common but empirically unexplored aspect of the high-power experience and resolve conflicting predictions for how high-power people are expected to respond to praise from subordinates. In contrast to research that emphasizes the narcissistic qualities of the powerful (e.g., Kunstman & Maner, 2011; van Kleef et al., 2015) these results illustrate that high-power people are not universally swayed by praise and may instead think critically about others' motives when deciding whether to accept or discount flattering words from others.

Second, the current work extends research on power and cynicism by illustrating that power's capacity to corrupt relationships is not limited to generous acts from others (Inesi et al., 2012), but also extends to compliments and praise that directly implicate the achievements and self-concepts of the powerful. Since positive feedback is predicated on the recipients' achievements, discounting praise requires individuals to take less credit for their success and view themselves less favorably. Consequently, discounting positive feedback requires individuals to overcome powerful motives to self-enhance (e.g., Kunda, 1990), which are increased among the powerful (Georgesen & Harris, 1998), in favor of potentially self-protective

motives to avoid ingratiation, manipulation, and deception (Kipnis et al., 1980). These results suggest that at least when attributional ambiguity is high, self-protective skepticism trumps naïve self-enhancement in the minds of the powerful.

Third, these studies advance research on power and cynicism by providing evidence that it is high power specifically that leads to cynical responses to subordinates' praise. No previous experiments examining cynicism and power included a low-power comparison group (Inesi et al., 2012; 2014). Hence, it was unclear whether cynicism was increased by the high-power experience specifically or reminders of hierarchy generally (Schaerer et al., 2016). By including low-power comparison groups in both experiments, as well as an equal-power condition in Experiment 1, the present work provides confirmatory evidence that only high-power individuals, not low-power individuals, respond cynically by discounting praise and subsequently forming negative impressions of their partners. These independent results bolster previous evidence connecting power and cynicism (Inesi et al., 2012; 2014).

Fourth, these studies also advance research on power and cynicism by providing evidence that power's cynical effects extend to person perception. Although past research found power undermines several markers of relationship quality (e.g., commitment, trust; Inesi et al., 2012), it has not tested whether power also negatively affects perceptions of others. The current work not only extends research on power and cynicism into the realm of person perception, but it also provides evidence for power's ironic effect on responses to praise. Discounted praise paradoxically leads high-power people to form negative impressions of subordinates.

Fifth, these studies advance attributional ambiguity theory by providing evidence that attributional ambiguity shapes responses within interpersonal hierarchies. To our knowledge, not only is the current work the first to test attributional ambiguity theory outside of an intergroup

context, but the present findings also highlight key differences in how attributional ambiguity functions in these two domains. In intergroup hierarchies, perceived ulterior motives often undermine praise directed at members of stigmatized and low-status groups (e.g., Major et al., 2016; Kunstman, Tuscherer, Trawalter, & Lloyd, 2016). In contrast, the present research suggests that in interpersonal hierarchies, attributionally ambiguous praise has more negative effects on high-power people, rather than low-power people. High-power people were most likely to discount feedback and form negative impressions of positive feedback providers. These results simultaneously reinforce the important role of attributional processes for understanding responses to praise in hierarchical social relations and extend attributional ambiguity theory's applicability to interpersonal power dynamics.

Limitations and Future Directions

Limitations of the current work provide avenues for future research. First, although the current results provide evidence that high-power people discount both positive and neutral feedback, it is unclear whether they also discount negative feedback. In the intergroup domain, attributional ambiguity serves a protective function by allowing members of low-status groups to attribute negative responses from outgroup members to discrimination (Crocker & Major, 1989; Major et al., 2003). Similarly, high-power people might use attributional ambiguity to deflect negative feedback from others. For instance, those in power might attribute criticism to others' jealousy and incompetence, thereby reducing potential threats to well-being. Research testing these ideas would provide better understanding of the factors that influence when high-power (versus low-power) perceivers are less trusting of their partners (e.g., Inesi et al., 2012; Karremans & Smith, 2010).

In the present work, we focused on effects of participants' power level. Hence, low- and high-power participants always interacted with a partner in the opposite power role. However, the power level of the feedback provider may also be manipulated. In attributionally ambiguous situations, high-power partners may be more believable than low-power partners (Smith & Overbeck, 2014). Future research might independently vary the power of the recipient and provider of feedback to test these effects separately.

The current experiment found that subordinates' praise had negative effects on those in power during a brief encounter. Within organizations, superiors interact with subordinates over long periods of time in multiple professional and social contexts, and these complex contextual factors may influence responses to subordinates' praise. For instance, when organizational rewards are salient (e.g., when yearly raises and bonuses are calculated), praise from subordinates may be especially attributionally ambiguous and consequently aversive to leaders.

Future research might also test the moderating conditions that lead high-power people to accept praise and sometimes overestimate positive regard from others (e.g., Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Kunstman & Maner, 2011). Just as salient external factors increase the likelihood that praise is discounted, so too might amplifying the salience of internal factors, particularly self-relevant needs and motives, increase the likelihood that subordinates' praise is accepted. For example, following a series of mistakes, a manager may be especially eager to accept subordinates' compliments that affirm her competence. Future research might explore how situational (e.g., threats to competence) and dispositional (e.g., self-defining traits) factors affect the internal attributions necessary to accept rather than discount subordinates' praise.

Concluding Remarks

When praised by low-power people, those in power may question whether such praise signals respect or ingratiation. Our results suggest that high-power people often favor the latter explanation, discounting feedback generally and praise specifically, to their subordinates' detriment. This tendency to see knavery in flattery illustrates the complexity of social relationships for those in power. Although positive feedback typically offers a welcomed opportunity to self-enhance, attributional ambiguity poisons praise for the powerful and leads subordinates' compliments to backfire; paradoxically creating negative impressions in the minds of the powerful.

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Footnotes

[1]The experiments presented in the current work also included exploratory measures of self-esteem, emotions, perceptions of feedback, and social distance. Of these measures, self-esteem and emotion effects observed in Experiment 1 did not replicate in Experiment 2, and the effects of power on perceptions of feedback's authenticity were marginal in both studies (Fs<3.25, .10≥ps≤.077). Power had no effect on social distance in either experiment. To avoid overstating these smaller (e.g., perceived authenticity) and sometimes inconsistent (e.g., emotion) effects, complete analyses and descriptive statistics are available in the Supplemental Materials. Experiment data can be found on Open Science Framework (https://osf.io/ukw2h/). The lead author can also be contacted for data and syntax.

Appendix

Essay Feedback from Partner Positive Feedback (Experiments 1 & 2)

Now that you've read the other participant's essay, form an impression of her(him) in your mind. What do you think s/he is like?

Please respond to the items with the scale below and complete the short response essay. The other participant **WILL** see your response and use it to form an impression of you.

When you are ready to send your impression to the other participant, click the box below.

	Not at all						Very Much
I would like to work closely with the other participant.	○	○	○	○	○	◉	○
I could see myself being friends with this person.	○	○	○	○	○	○	◉
I would like to get to know the other participant better.	○	○	○	○	○	○	◉

In a couple sentences, what is your current impression of the other participant?

Remember, the other participant **WILL** see your response.

You picked the Monkey, nice! I'm really impressed. I had never thought about what a "Monkey" personality might be like. Your essay was really great. YOu seem like a really fun person. I can't wait to meet!

Essay Feedback from Partner Neutral Feedback (Experiment 2)

Now that you've read the other participant's essay, form an impression of her(him) in your mind. What do you think s/he is like?

Please respond to the items with the scale below and complete the short response essay. The other participants **WILL** see your response and use it to form an impression of you.

When you are ready to send your impression of the other participant, click the button below.

	Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
I would like to work closely with the other participant.	○	○	○	◉	○	○	○
I could see myself being friends with the other participant.	○	○	○	◉	○	○	○
I would like to get to know the other participant better.	○	○	○	○	◉	○	○

In a couple of sentences, what is your current impression of the other participant?

Remember the participant **WILL** see your response.

You picked the Monkey, nice! You gave examples of how your personality was like a Monkey. YOur essay was fine. I am curious what it will be like to work with you on the next task.

Supplemental Materials

Poisoned Praise: Discounted Praise Backfires and Creates Negative Subordinate Impressions in the Minds of the Powerful

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Supplemental Measures and Results

I. In addition to the manuscript's primary discounting and secondary person perception hypotheses, Experiments 1 and 2 also included exploratory measures of emotions, perceptions of feedback, and self-esteem that yielded inconsistent (e.g., emotions, self-esteem) or marginal effects (e.g., perceptions of feedback). To aid readers in comparing effects between experiments, these supplemental results are organized by DV: Emotions, perceptions of feedback, and self-esteem. Omnibus analyses and power relevant results are presented below each heading. Interested parties may also find complete data files and syntax at (OSF: https://osf.io/ukw2h/) or by contacting the lead author (jonathan.kunstman@miamioh.edu).

II. Below these summarized results, we present an alternate approach to analyzing the attribution data presented in Experiments 1 and 2 in which external and internal attributions are entered as independent factors in a mixed-model ANOVA (as opposed to computing the discounting difference score common to attributional ambiguity research; e.g., Major et al., 2002; 2003).

III. Finally, we include a list of survey items discussed in the manuscript and these supplemental analyses.

I. Analyses of Emotions, Perceptions of Feedback, Emotions

Emotions were assessed with 18 items on 7-point scales (1=*Does not apply at all*, 7=*Applies very much*). Items were combined to form four different indices: two positive socially engaging emotions (sociable, respectful; Study 1: α=.73, Study 2: α=.71), three negative socially engaging emotions (ashamed, embarrassed, indebted; Study 1: α=.56; Study 2: α=.77), two positive socially disengaging emotions (proud, superior; Study 1: α=.57; Study 2: α=.58), and three negative socially disengaging emotions (irritated, frustrated, angry; Study 1: α=.88; Study 2: α=.90).

Study 1

We conducted a mixed-model ANOVA on participants' ratings of emotions, with condition (high-/low-/equal-power) as a between-subjects factor and emotion valence (positive/negative) and sociality (socially engaging/socially disengaging) as within-subjects factors. This analysis revealed that high-power participants reported stronger negative socially engaging and disengaging emotions than participants in the low-power and equal power conditions. For positive disengaging emotions, high- and low-power participants both reported more positive socially disengaging emotions than equal-power participants.

Emotions	Power	Mean	SD
Positive Engaging	High	5.44	1.32
	Low	5.54	0.85
	Equal	5.66	0.10
Positive Disengaging	High	4.41	1.42
	Low	4.21	1.21
	Equal	3.67	1.48
Negative Engaging	High	2.01	0.10
	Low	1.50	0.68
	Equal	1.65	0.80
Negative Disengaging	High	1.46	0.85
	Low	1.75	1.22
	Equal	1.19	0.55

Note. SD = standard deviation

Measure	Mean	SD	df	Error df	F	p-value	partial η^2
Emotions							
Between Subjects							
High Power	3.34	1.19	2	117	2.90	.059	.05
Low Power	3.12	0.80					
Equal Power	3.04	0.92					
Within Subjects							
Positive Valence	4.82	1.25	1	117	801.79	<.001	.87
Negative Valence	1.52	0.79					
Engaging Sociality	3.64	0.97	1	117	166.69	<.001	.59
Disengaging Sociality	2.70	1.07					
Power * Valence			2	117	0.79	.457	.01
Power * Sociality			2	117	4.10	.019	.07
Power * Engaging Sociality			2	117	2.15	.121	.04
Power * Disengaging Sociality			2	117	4.43	.014	.07
High Power * Sociality			1	117	44.49	<.001	.28
Low Power * Sociality			1	117	33.47	<.001	.22
Equal Power * Sociality			1	117	93.07	<.001	.44
Valence * Sociality			1	117	46.93	<.001	.29
Valence * Engaging Sociality			1	119	721.30	<.001	.86
Valence * Disengaging Sociality			1	119	416.89	<.001	.78
Positive Valence * Sociality			1	119	117.80	<.001	.50
Negative Valence * Sociality			1	119	37.08	<.001	.24
Power * Valence * Sociality			2	117	4.03	.020	.06

Note. SD = standard deviation

Study 2

We conducted a mixed-model ANOVA on participants' ratings of emotions, with feedback type (positive, neutral) and power (high-/low-power) as between-subjects factors and emotion valence (positive/negative) and sociality (socially engaging/socially disengaging) as within-subjects factors. The only significant effect related to power was a main effect of condition, such that high-power participants reported overall stronger emotions than low-power participants.

Emotions	Power	Feedback	Mean	SD
Positive Engaging	High	Positive	5.50	0.98
		Neutral	4.65	1.49
	Low	Positive	4.65	1.49
		Neutral	4.00	1.48
Positive Disengaging	High	Positive	4.51	1.19
		Neutral	3.65	1.32
	Low	Positive	4.07	1.61
		Neutral	2.78	1.34
Negative Engaging	High	Positive	1.96	1.01
		Neutral	1.83	0.95
	Low	Positive	1.57	0.92
		Neutral	1.86	0.99
Negative Disengaging	High	Positive	1.46	0.85
		Neutral	1.75	1.22
	Low	Positive	1.19	0.55
		Neutral	1.60	0.91

Note. SD = standard deviation

Measure	df	Error df	F	p-value	partial η^2
Emotions					
Between Subjects					
Power	1	136	8.45	.004	.06
Feedback	1	136	14.25	<.001	.10
Within Subjects					
Valence	1	136	521.16	<.001	.79
Sociality	1	136	88.73	<.001	.40
Feedback * Power	1	136	0.28	.598	<.01
Feedback * Valence	1	136	32.28	<.001	.19
Positive Feedback * Valence	1	138	363.28	<.001	.73
Neutral Feedback * Valence	1	138	163.28	<.001	.54
Feedback * Positive Valence	1	138	33.47	<.001	.20
Feedback * Neutral Valence	1	138	1.92	.168	.01
Feedback * Sociality	1	136	1.33	.251	.01
Power * Valence	1	136	1.68	.198	.01
Power * Sociality	1	136	1.17	.281	.01
Valence * Sociality	1	136	30.46	<.001	.18
Positive Valence * Sociality	1	139	75.17	<.001	.35
Negative Valence * Sociality	1	139	14.29	<.001	.09
Valence * Engaging Sociality	1	139	389.11	<.001	.74
Valence * Disengaging Sociality	1	139	226.70	<.001	.62
Feedback * Power * Valence	1	136	2.81	.096	.02
Feedback * Power * Sociality	1	136	0.03	.869	<.01
Feedback * Valence * Sociality	1	136	0.40	.527	<.01
Power * Valence * Sociality	1	136	0.90	.346	.01
Feedback * Power * Valence * Sociality	1	136	0.63	.430	.01

Note. SD = standard deviation

Perceptions of Partner Feedback

Participants reported whether they viewed their partner's feedback as accurate, genuine, and valuable using 7-point scales (1=*Not at All*, 7=*Very Much*).

Study 1

To assess participants' perceptions that their partners' feedback was accurate, genuine, and valued, we conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) in which experimental condition was entered as a between-subjects factor. The only effect to approach significance was on the perceptions that feedback was genuine. High-power participants perceived feedback as marginally less genuine than participants in the low- and equal-power conditions.

									HP v. LP		HP v. EP		LP v. EP	
Measure	Condition	Mean	SD	df	Error df	F	p-value	partial η^2	p-value	Cohen's D	p-value	Cohen's D	p-value	Cohen's D
Genuine Feedback														
Power				2	118	2.38	.097	.04	.036	-.48	.151	-.29	.481	.19
	High	5.57	1.68											
	Low	6.22	0.96											
	Equal	6.00	1.32											
Value Feedback														
Power				1	118	1.10	.337	.02	.166	-.32	.277	-.22	.739	.08
	High	5.61	1.53											
	Low	6.03	1.06											
	Equal	5.93	1.30											
Accurate Feedback														
Power				1	118	1.39	.253	.02	.443	-.17	.098	-.36	.410	-.20
	High	5.61	1.33											
	Low	5.83	1.23											
	Equal	6.07	1.23											

Note. SD = standard deviation, HP v. LP = comparison between high and low power participants.

Study 2

To assess participants' perceptions that their partners' feedback was accurate, genuine, and valued, we conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) in which feedback and power conditions were entered as a between-subjects factors. High-power participants again perceived feedback as marginally less genuine than low-power participants.

Measure	Condition	Mean	SD	df	Error df	F	p-value	partial η^2
Value Feedback								
Feedback * Power				1	136	<0.01	.951	<.01
Feedback	Positive	6.06	1.15	1	136	23.84	<.001	.15
	Neutral	4.92	1.50					
Power	High	5.56	1.38	1	136	0.97	.326	.01
	Low	5.29	1.56					
Genuine Feedback								
Feedback * Power				1	136	0.43	.516	<.01
Feedback	Positive	5.78	1.13	1	136	9.21	.003	.06
	Neutral	5.14	1.39					
Power	High	5.27	1.31	1	136	3.17	.077	.02
	Low	5.62	1.31					
Accurate Feedback								
Feedback * Power				1	136	0.52	.474	<.01
Feedback	Positive	6.00	1.00	1	136	33.28	<.001	.20
	Neutral	4.75	1.47					
Power	High	5.27	1.46	1	136	0.56	.455	<.01
	Low	5.37	1.39					

				High vs. Low Power		
	Condition	Mean	SD	MS	p-value	Cohen's D
Value Feedback						
Positive Feedback	High	6.17	0.89	.24	.482	0.20
	Low	5.93	1.41			
Neutral Feedback	High	5.02	1.51	.21	.491	0.14
	Low	4.81	1.51			
Genuine Feedback						
Positive Feedback	High	5.54	0.22	-.53	.104	-2.30
	Low	6.07	0.24			
Neutral Feedback	High	5.03	0.20	-.29	.400	-1.17
	Low	5.27	0.21			
Accurate Feedback						
Positive Feedback	High	5.86	1.00	-.32	.326	-0.32
	Low	6.18	0.98			
Neutral Feedback	High	4.75	1.60	-.01	.982	-0.01
	Low	4.76	1.34			

Note. SD = standard deviation, ms = mean difference

Self-Esteem

The 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965; α=.89) was used to measure baseline self-esteem. Participants indicated their level of agreement on 4-point scales (1=*Strongly Disagree*, 4=*Strongly Agree*; e.g., "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself"). Post-feedback self-esteem was measured with Heatherton and Polivy's (1991) index of state social self-esteem (e.g., "I am worried about what other people think of me"; α=.89) using 5-point scales (1=*Not at All*, 5=*Extremely*). Items were recoded such that higher scores reflected greater self-esteem.

Study 1

To test power's effect on self-esteem, we conducted a simultaneous multiple regression analysis (following Aiken & West, 1991) with condition (dummy-coded to treat the high-power condition as the reference group) as a predictor of social self-esteem. Baseline self-esteem (mean-centered) was entered as a covariate. This analysis revealed that following praise, self-esteem increased more for low-power participants than high-power participants. However, there was no difference in the self-esteem increase for high-power and equal power participants.

Variable	b	SE(b)	t	p-value
Constant	1.15	.50	2.30	.023
Baseline Self-Esteem	0.84	0.15	5.72	<.001
High and Low Power Comparison	0.35	0.15	2.25	.026
High and Equal Power Comparison	-0.102	0.15	-0.69	.491

Note. SE = standard error, baseline self-esteem added as covariate

Study 2

To test the effect of power and feedback on self-esteem, we tested for an interaction between power and feedback as a predictor of social self-esteem. Baseline self-esteem (mean-centered) was entered as a covariate. Neither power condition nor feedback type had an effect on self-esteem.

Variable	b	SE(b)	t	p-value
Constant	0.83	0.62	1.32	.188
Baseline Self-Esteem	1.18	0.10	11.47	<.001
Feedback	-0.36	0.33	-1.05	.296
Power	-0.45	.36	-1.25	.212
Feedback * Power	0.20	0.22	0.90	.371

Note. SE = standard error, baseline self-esteem added as covariate

Mediation Analyses

To test whether discounting mediated positive feedback's effect on feedback's perceived genuineness and negative socially engaging and disengaging emotions we followed recommendations outlined by Hayes (2013).We establish that the discounting variable significantly predicted the outcome variable, while simultaneously reducing the magnitude of condition's effect on the dependent variable. Second, we formally tested condition's indirect effect with PROCESS (Hayes, 2012), a procedure that computes an asymmetric confidence interval around the point estimate of the indirect effect. Unstandardized regression coefficients for discounting, its resultant effect on outcome variables, changes in the effect of condition dummy codes, and associated confidence intervals (CI) can be found below. The above procedures provided evidence that discounted praise mediated power's effect on feedback's perceived genuineness (Figure 1) and negative socially engaging emotions (Figure 2).

Study 1

Summary of Regression Analyses

	Discounting Index			Perceived Genuineness of Praise			Negative Socially Engaging Emotions		
Step 1	b	SE	p-value	b	SE	p-value	b	SE	p-value
High and Low Power Comparison	-0.80	0.36	.030	0.65	0.31	.036	-0.51	0.18	.010
High and Equal Power Comparison	-1.45	0.35	<.001	0.43	0.30	.151	-0.36	.18	.048
Step 2									
High and Low Power Comparison	--	--	--	0.38	0.29	.190	-0.42	0.19	.026
High and Equal Power Comparison	--	--	--	-0.06	0.29	.836	-0.19	0.19	.328
Discounting Index Mediator	--	--	--	-0.34	0.07	<.001	0.12	0.05	.010

Note. b = unstandardized regression coefficient, SE = standard error

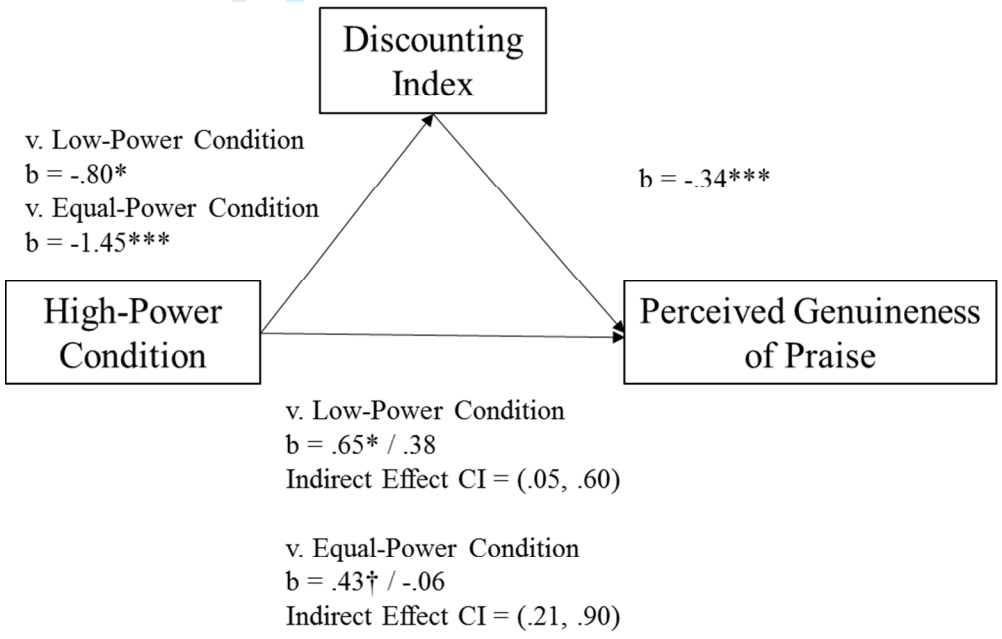

Figure 1. The discounting index mediated power's negative effect on the perceived genuineness of praise. The more high-power participants discounted feedback, the less they believed praise was genuine. b=unstandardized regression coefficients, †=.151, *= $p \leq .05$, **=$p \leq .010$, ***=$p \leq .001$

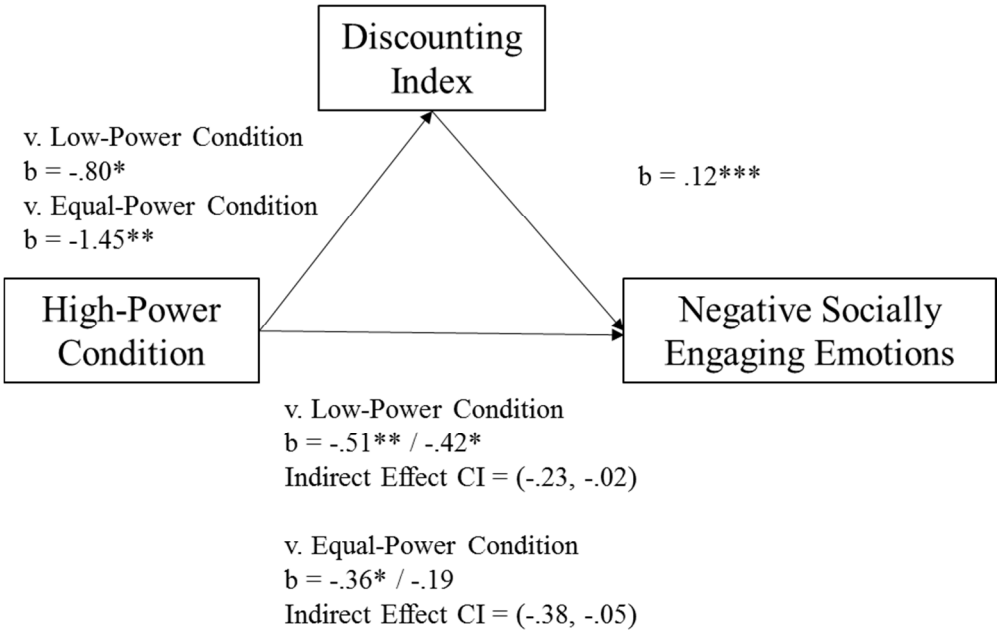

Figure 2. The discounting index mediated power's effect on negative socially engaging emotions. The more high-power participants discounted feedback, the more negative socially engaging emotions they experienced. b=unstandardized regression coefficients, *= $p \leq .05$, **=$p \leq .010$, ***=$p \leq .001$.

II. Attribution Analyses including External and Internal Attributions as Independent Factors

Study 1.

We also considered external and internal attributions simultaneously in a single analysis by conducting a mixed-model ANOVA with condition (high-/low-/equal-power) as a between-subjects factor and attribution type (external/internal) as a within-subjects factor. This analysis yielded main effects of condition $F(2,118)=4.70$, $p=.011$, $\eta_P^2=.074$, and attribution type, $F(1,118)=50.711$, $p<.001$, $\eta_P^2=.30$, qualified by a significant interaction $F(2,118)=8.64$, $p<.001$, $\eta_P^2=0.13$. LSD comparisons indicated high-power participants made significantly stronger external attributions ($M=4.47$, $SD=1.20$) than equal-power participants ($M=3.32$, $SD=1.18$; $p<.001$) and trended toward making stronger external attributions for positive feedback than low-power participants ($M=4.11$, $SD=.95$; $p=.16$). Low-power participants also made significantly stronger external attributions than equal-power participants ($p=.003$). Analyses on internal attributions revealed only that high-power participants ($M=4.77$, $SD=1.17$) made marginally weaker internal attributions than low-power participants ($M=5.20$, $SD=.97$; $p=.072$).

Study 2

Attributions could also be analyzed with a mixed-model ANOVA in which condition (high-power/low-power) and feedback type (positive/neutral) are entered as between-subjects factors and attribution type (external/internal) is entered as a within-subjects factor. This analysis yielded significant main effects of attribution, $F(1,136)=37.21$, $p<.001$, $\eta_P^2=.22$, and feedback condition $F(1,136)=24.51$, $p<.001$, $\eta_P^2=.15$, a feedback by attribute interaction, $F(1,136)=5.79$, $p=.017$, $\eta_P^2=.041$, and a power condition by attribute interaction, $F(1,136)=7.53$, $p=.007$, $\eta_P^2=.052$. Most relevant to the current power results, follow-up contrasts revealed that high-power participants ($M=4.23$, $SD=1.11$) made marginally more external attributions than low-power participants ($M=3.91$, $SD=1.28$; $p=.12$), whereas high-power participants ($M=4.64$, $SD=1.21$) made significantly less internal attributions than low-power participants ($M=4.98$, $SD=1.04$; $p=.033$).

III. Survey Materials for Experiments 1 and 2

Attribution items (Internal – 1-3, External = 4-8)
We are interested in your current perception of your partner and what you believe motivated your partner's feedback. Please respond to the following items with the scale below.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at All Very Much

To what extent do you believe the following factors influenced your partner's feedback?

1. My creative ability.
2. My personality.
3. My ideas and writing style.
4. Her/his rank in the experiment.
5. S/he wants the bonus rewards split fairly.
6. S/he wants to get on my good side.
7. S/he is afraid to miss out on the experiment's bonuses.
8. S/he wants me to like her(him).

Partner Perception Items (Positive Traits = 1-4, 6, 7, 9, 12; Negative Traits = 5, 8, 10, 11, 13-17).

People are surprising good at making first impressions of others. Based on what you know of your partner so far, what do you think s/he is like? Use the scale below to describe your partner's traits.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at All Very Much

1. Smart
2. Competent
3. Sociable
4. Genuine
5. Fake
6. Caring
7. Trustworthy
8. Jealous
9. Honest
10. Dishonest
11. Cold
12. Warm
13. Careless
14. Superficial
15. Manipulative
16. Incompetent
17. Status-seeking

Emotion Items

We are interested in how you felt when you got feedback from your partner. Please read each of the feeling words below and circle the number on the scale that indicates the extent to which each word applies to how you are feeling right now. Don't spend much time thinking about each word, just give a quick, gut-level response.

	does not apply at all						**applies very much**
1. Proud	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Superior	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Respected	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Embarrassed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Ashamed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Guilty	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Disgusted	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Angry	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Frustrated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Sad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Sociable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Compassionate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Empathic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Indebted	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Independent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Grateful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Thankful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Irritated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Perceptions of Feedback

We are interested in your current perception of your partner and what you believe motivated your partner's feedback. Please respond to the following items with the scale below.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All						Very Much

1. I believe my partner's feedback was genuine.
2. I believe my partner's feedback was accurate.
3. I valued my partner's feedback.

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (1965): Baseline

Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree using the scale below.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
2. At times I think I am no good at all.
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
6. I certainly feel useless at times.
7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Heatherton and Polivy's (1991) social self-esteem scale: Post-feedback Self-esteem

Please respond to the following items with the scale below.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	a little bit	Somewhat	Very Much	Extremely

1. I am worried about whether I am regarded as a success or failure.
2. I feel self-conscious.
3. I feel displeased with myself.
4. I am worried about what other people think of me.
5. I feel inferior to others at this moment.
6. I feel concerned about the impression I am making.
7. I am worried about looking foolish.