

WHEN WORK DOES NOT ENNOBLE MAN: PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF WORKING OBJECTIFICATION

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The present study aims at expanding research on objectification by exploring the consequences of being objectified in a real work setting. Building on previous literature on this field, we hypothesized that perceptions of being treated as an instrument by one's own foreman would be positively related with workers' tendency to objectify themselves (i.e., to perceive themselves as lacking human mental states). Further, we proposed the two key dimensions of job burnout (i.e., exhaustion and cynicism) as the psychological mechanisms underlying the relationship between other- and self-objectification. A double mediation model supported our expectations: workers' perception of being objectified by their foremen were positively related with increased exhaustion, which in turn heightened the levels of workers' cynicism. In turn, cynicism negatively affected the self-attribution of human mental states. Results are discussed in terms of their theoretical and practical implications.

Key words: Objectification; Workers; Mental states; Job burnout.

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Work is a central aspect of human life: it structures social reality and represents one of the main sources of expression of personal identity and worth sense (Bandura, 1995; Cheney, Zorn, Planalp, & Lair, 2008; Ciulla, 2000; Erikson, 1959). People need to construct positive identities related to their participation in work activities (Dutton, Roberts, & Bednar, 2010). Workplace dignity also emerges from the way people are perceived and treated by others (Lucas, 2011). Thus, if work is a primary means of self-evaluation (Argyle, 1992), what happens when it does not respond to the basic needs for recognition, self-esteem and identity, but rather it transforms workers into mere objects? What are the psychological consequences of being perceived (and treated) as instruments in one's own workplace? In this paper we aimed to address these questions by exploring objectification and its consequences within a real work setting.

WORKING OBJECTIFICATION

Objectification is a form of dehumanization that involves the perception of others — in-

dividuals or social groups — as mere objects (Volpato, 2011). The philosopher Martha Nussbaum (1995, 1999) argues that objectification has different facets, including *fungibility* (the objectified target is perceived as interchangeable with other individuals), *ownership* (perceiving the target as a one's own property), *violability* (harming the objectified target is acceptable), *inertness* (viewing the target as lacking agency), *denial of subjectivity* (perceiving the target as lacking feelings and experience) and *denial of autonomy* (perceiving the target as lacking self-determination). However, *instrumentality* is perhaps the core component that defines objectification: when others are objectified, they are perceived (and treated) as mere instruments, useful tools for one's own purposes. More specifically, instrumental objectification involves a fragmented perception of the target which is "split into parts that serve specific goals and functions for the observer" (Grünefeld, Inesi, Magee, & Galinski, 2008, p. 111).

Several eminent philosophers analyzed this instrumental component of objectification within the work domain, with a particular focus on the capitalistic working system. For instance, Marx (as cited in Tucker, 1978) claimed that work, within the capitalist society, leads to a deformation process of individuals whereby the more the product is enriched, the more the worker is impoverished, transforming her/him into something without spirit, value and dignity, a "nature's bondsman" (Tucker, 1978, p. 73). Further, Marx pointed out that workers can only express their labour through a privately-owned system of industrial production, in which they are perceived as instruments and evaluated merely in terms of their productivity rather than in terms of traits that define humanity, such as intelligence or morality. Coherently with Marx's view, Fromm (1956) argued that modern capitalism endorses a social organization in which workers become a simple "gear tooth." According to Fromm, the modern worker is more like a specialised tool than a human being with her/his own talent: "The worker today serves the machine; she/he requires very limited skill. Even the skilled worker cannot be compared with the one having the skill of an artisan" (Fromm, 1974, p. 115). Accordingly with Marx and Fromm's assumptions, Blauner (1964) identified some key conditions promoting the view of the industrial worker as an instrument, such as lacking of control over the workplace, high repetitiveness of movements and excessive fragmentation of activities. More recently, Nussbaum (1995) explicitly described objectification and its components referring to the modern industrial worker. According to Nussbaum, an individual that works with a machine, following the rhythm of production, doing repetitive and fragmented gestures looks like an extension of the same machine, as a mere interchangeable tool, that cannot make decisions and organize her/his own initiative. Thus, all workers are viewed as equal and their subjectivity, feelings and experience are cancelled.

Although these reflections theoretically support the existence of objectification within the work domain, empirical studies on this field are still in its infancy. Inspired by studies on perceptions of sexually objectified women (e.g., Heflick, Goldenberg, Cooper, & Puvia, 2012; Loughnan et al., 2010; Vaes, Paladino, & Puvia, 2011; see also Gervais, 2013; Vaes, Loughnan, & Puvia, 2014), Andrighetto, Baldissarri, and Volpato (2014) have recently explored the lay people's tendency to objectify industrial workers. Across four studies the authors consistently found that industrial workers, unlike artisans, were explicitly and implicitly perceived more as instruments than human beings and were attributed lesser mental states, especially when their job (vs. their personhood) was made salient. Importantly, the key features of industrial work (i.e., repetitiveness, dependence on the machine, fragmented tasks) all had a significant impact on the objectified perceptions of the target. Of particular relevance for the purposes of the present research,

Gruenfeld and colleagues (2008) went beyond the industrial context and analyzed objectification in different hierarchical work relationships. They reported that power positions alter the ways subordinate social targets are perceived: participants in high power positions — compared with those in low power positions or in baseline conditions — perceived their subordinates as mere instruments; subordinates were exclusively approached on the basis of their usefulness to achieve a goal, regardless of their values and human qualities.

Although these findings shed first light on the process of objectification within work contexts, they considered the perspective of “potential objectifiers” within laboratory settings. We believe the present paper extends these findings for at least two reasons. First, it considers the perspective of subordinate workers (i.e., the potential objectified targets) and explores their psychological reactions as a consequence of perceived objectification. Second, but not less important, unlike previous studies, it explores objectification in a real work setting.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF OBJECTIFICATION

During the last decades a growing body of research has focused on the consequences of objectification. In particular, based on the thought of feminist scholars (e.g., Bartky, 1990; de Beauvoir, 1952; MacKinnon, 1989; Papadaki, 2007) and on objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; see also McKinley & Hyde, 1996), social psychologists have focused their attention on the consequences of objectification within the sexual realm. When sexually objectified, women are treated as bodies, or as a set of body parts, which exist for the instrumental use and enjoyment of others. The main means of objectification is the *objectifying gaze*, which permeates most Western cultural contexts and leads women to internalize the observer’s perspective and to engage in objectification themselves. In other words, a constant perception of being objectified by others (i.e., *the objectifying gaze*) leads women to internalize this perspective and to objectify themselves. Women’s self-objectification has a wide range of negative outcomes (for reviews, see Calogero, Tantleff-Dunn, & Thompson, 2010; Moradi & Huang, 2008), such as increased anxiety and shame (Aubrey, 2007; Monro & Huon, 2005; Quinn, Kallen, & Cathey, 2006), depressive symptoms and eating disorders (Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, & Twenge, 1998; Tiggemann & Kuring, 2004), reduced intellectual performance (Fredrickson et al., 1998).

If the link between other- and self-objectification has been widely explored in relation to gender, it remains still unexplored within the work domain. The present work aims to fill this gap. Consistent with objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; see also McKinley & Hyde, 1996), we hypothesized that perceptions of being objectified would be positively related with workers’ tendency to objectify themselves. More specifically, we assumed that workers with greater perceptions of being treated as instruments would engage in objectification themselves, in terms of a diminished ability to experience different mental states defining human beings (e.g., hearing, reasoning, planning). Further, in an explorative way we analyzed the role of job burnout as the psychological mechanism underlying the relationship between perceived other-objectification (i.e., the perception of being treated as an instrument by one’s own foremen) and self-objectification (i.e., the self-perception as lacking human mental states).

JOB BURNOUT

Job burnout is a psychological syndrome involving a prolonged response to emotional and interpersonal stressors within the workplace. More specifically, it regards the chronic strain that results from an incongruence between the worker and her/his job (Maslach, 2003). Traditionally, burnout is considered as a three-dimensional syndrome (i.e., emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy). Exhaustion is a feeling of overstrain and fatigue resulting from emotional overtaxing work. Cynicism refers to an indifferent attitude toward work, a loss of interest and meaning of work. Professional efficacy instead concerns feelings of competence, successful achievement and accomplishments for one's work (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Although burnout is composed by these different facets, exhaustion is considered as the central manifestation of this syndrome and is therefore the most analyzed dimension. However, exhaustion mainly represents the strain component of burnout. Cynicism instead reflects the critical relation between individuals and their work. Accordingly, several studies conducted in different organizational settings (for a review, see Maslach & Leiter, 2005) reported that exhaustion anticipates cynicism: exhaustion indeed leads workers to distance themselves emotionally and cognitively from their work (i.e., cynicism) as a way to cope with work demands. Instead the role of (in)efficacy in the burnout syndrome is more debated. Some authors state that professional (in)efficacy does not represent "the core of burnout" (Green, Walkey, & Taylor, 1991). Further, it seems that professional (in)efficacy arises from different job characteristics than exhaustion and cynicism: while these latter originate from the presence of work overload and social conflict, the lack of efficacy is often due to a lack of resources (see Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). The relationship of professional efficacy with the other two dimensions is also debated. Some studies show that efficacy correlates relatively low with the other two components, especially if compared with the correlation between exhaustion and cynicism (see Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Further, in some cases, (in)efficacy appears as a consequence of exhaustion, cynicism, or a combination of the two (e.g., Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2002; Cordes, Dougherty, & Blum, 1997; Leiter & Maslach, 1988; Toppinen-Tanner, Kalimo, & Mutanen, 2002). In other cases, research shows that it develops in parallel with the other two dimensions, rather than sequentially (Leiter, 1993; see also Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Lee & Ashfort, 1993, 1996; Maslach & Goldberg, 1998).

In order to explain the relation between workplace and burnout, Maslach and Leiter (1997) proposed a model based on the relationship between the person and the work environment: the greater the gap, or mismatch, between the person and his/her job, the greater the likelihood of burnout. During the last decades, the rapid changes occurred in most work organizations enlarged the gap between workers and their job. Above all, one of the most evident changes concerns the psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995): workers receive less in terms of career opportunities, lifetime employment and job security, but they have to give more in terms of time, effort, skills, and flexibility (Maslach et al., 2001). The violation of the psychological contract undermines the notion of reciprocity between subordinate workers and their job. Such failed reciprocity creates a mismatch between personal aspirations and organization's expectations and consequently enhance the likelihood of burnout.

Based on these assumptions, we hypothesized that the perception of being objectified by one's own foreman would represent an important condition of mismatch between workers and their

job. More specifically, we assumed that perception of being treated as an instrument would contrast with the basic expectation of building a positive human identity for one's own work activity, and thus would lead to an increase of burnout. However, in line with previous studies (Maslach & Leiter, 2005), we expected that increased burnout would be first captured by the exhaustion dimension. Such increased exhaustion would lead workers to distance themselves emotionally and cognitively from work, that is, it would increase their cynicism. This cynical distance from work would reflect and explain the diminished workers' perception of experiencing different mental states during their work activity, that is, it should be associated with the tendency to objectify themselves. Indeed, according to the burnout literature, when workers experience exhaustion and cynicism due to a job-person mismatch, they seem to adopt two main coping strategies: leaving the organization in search of other opportunities (Pick & Leiter, 1991) or bringing personal expectations in line with those of the organization (Stevens & O'Neill, 1983). Developing cynical attitudes toward one's own workplace means that workers adapt themselves to the organization's expectations and behave as the organization wants to, as a tool that is not humanly involved in his work. Therefore, we assumed that workers' cynicism would reflect an alignment of personal aspirations with those of the organization, by interiorizing the objectifying superior's perspective, and thus would be associated with self-objectification, that is with diminished self-attributions of different mental states.

THE PRESENT RESEARCH

The main purpose of the present work is to extend knowledge about the psychological process of objectification by exploring its consequences within the work domain. Unlike previous studies on this field we considered a real work setting. In particular, our research considered employees of a large full-service supermarket. We retained that this work context would fit well with the purposes of our work, because it is usually characterised by work features presumably related with the key conditions of objectification identified by Blauner (1964) or Nussbaum (1995). For instance, some studies reported that the excessive use of service scripts, robotic service work behaviour and standardised service operations creates emotional fatigue for service personnel (Berry, Zeithaml, & Parasuraman, 1990; Hochschild, 1983; Leidner, 1993; Mattila & Enz, 2002), loss of self-esteem, feelings of low self-worth and increased employees' discomfort (Vella, Gountas, & Walker 2009). Further, other studies showed that frontline employees are more likely to experience job burnout because of the high frequency and repetitiveness of their job, especially in terms of emotional exhaustion and cynicism (Johnson, Holdsworth, Hoel, & Zapf, 2013; Singh, 2000).

In the present work we focused on a specific source of working objectification, that is, the perception of being treated as an instrument by one's own superior. Consistent with objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), we assumed that greater perceptions of being objectified would be related with increased employees' tendency to self-objectify, that is, with self-perception of lacking human mental capacities, from the most basic (e.g., hearing) until the most complex (e.g., planning) ones. With the aim of integrating a psychosocial process (i.e., objectification) within work dynamics, we also analyzed the mediator role of job burnout in the relationship between other-objectification (i.e., perception of being objectified by one's own superior) and self-objectification (i.e., self-perception as lacking mental capacities). More specifically, by adopting a double mediation model, we tested the hypothesis that perception of being objectified would be directly related

with the exhaustion dimension of burnout, that is, with an increased feeling of emotional distress due to the work activity. In turn, such emotional distress would be positively related with the employees' tendency to distance cognitively and emotionally from their own work, that is, with increased cynicism. Finally, such emotional distance would be reflected in higher tendencies to self-objectify, assessed in terms of diminished self-attribution of different human mental states.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

One hundred and twenty workers employed in a large full-service supermarket (76 males) participated in the study voluntarily. Participants' age ranged from 19 to 56 years ($M = 32.79$, $SD = 7.83$). Participants were employed in the supermarket from a minimum of six months to a maximum of 35 years. Participants were employed in different supermarket departments, such as fruit and vegetables (22.5%), grocery (15.0%), bakery (13.3%), or gastronomy (10.0%).

One investigator administered individually to each participant a questionnaire outside working hours, presented as a survey on the "mood of the modern workers." Before fulfilling the scales described below, participants were asked some demographics, including age, sex, department and years of employment at the supermarket. At the conclusion of the study, all participants were thanked and fully debriefed.

The Questionnaire

Perception of being objectified. An adaptation of the Objectification Scale by Gruenfeld and colleagues (2008) was used to measure employees' perception of being objectified by their foremen. In particular, the original version of the scale was modified in order to consider the perspective of objectified targets rather than the perspective of "objectifiers." Participants were asked to evaluate their relationship with their superior with nine items ($\alpha = .84$) on a scale from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*completely agree*). Example items were: "My foreman appreciates me even when I am not useful to her/him" (reverse item); "My foreman looking for me only when she/he needs something"; "The importance that my foreman gives me depends entirely on my work skills"; "The relationship with my foreman is based on how much she/he likes me from a human point of view, rather than on how much I am productive" (reverse item). Higher scores on this scale indicated higher levels of perceived objectification.

Burnout. The Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Scale (MBI-GS; Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach, & Jackson, 1996) was used to assess employees' levels of burnout. The MBI-GS is a three-dimensional scale capturing the main constructs of burnout: exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy. Exhaustion was measured with five items (e.g., "I feel burned out from my work"; "I feel tired when I get up in the morning and I have to face another day on the job"; $\alpha = .91$). Cynicism was measured with five items (e.g., "I have become less enthusiastic about my work"; "I have become more cynical about whether my work contributes anything"; $\alpha = .83$). Professional efficacy was measured with six items (e.g., "I feel I am making an effective contri-

bution to what this organization does”; “In my opinion, I am good at my job”; $\alpha = .66$). Items were rated on a 7-point scale from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*daily*).

Self-objectification. To measure employees’ self-objectification we adapted the Mental State Attribution Task (MSA; Haslam, Bain, Loughnan, & Kashima, 2008; Haslam, Kashima, Loughnan, Shi, & Suitner, 2008; Holland & Haslam, 2013), a scale evaluating the attribution of mental capacities to a target (individual or social group). We transformed this scale into a Self-Mental State Attribution Task (SMSA), in order to measure the degree to which respondents perceive themselves as lacking mental states during their work activities. In particular, the SMSA included 20 different mental states related to perceptions (e.g., “During my work I can taste”), wishes (e.g., “During my work I feel wishes”), thoughts (e.g., “During my work I can reason”) and intentions (e.g., “During my work I can plan”). Ratings were made on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*) ($\alpha = .88$). Lower scores on this scale indicated a lower self-attribution of mental states and, consequently, higher levels of self-objectification.

RESULTS

Introductory Analyses

Table 1 presents correlations, means and standard deviations for each variable. As can be seen from the table, on average participants reported relatively high levels of perception of being objectified, exhaustion and professional efficacy, whereas reported moderate levels of cynicism. Further, participants reported moderately high levels of self-attribution of mental states.

TABLE 1
 Correlations, means and standard deviations for each variable

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Perception of objectification	–				
2. Exhaustion	.61***	–			
3. Cynicism	.42***	.72***	–		
4. Professional efficacy	–.16	–.32***	–.31***	–	
5. SMSA	–.19*	–.19**	–.28*	–.09	–
<i>M</i>	5.15	3.55	2.63	4.46	4.76
<i>SD</i>	1.15	1.44	1.36	0.76	0.96

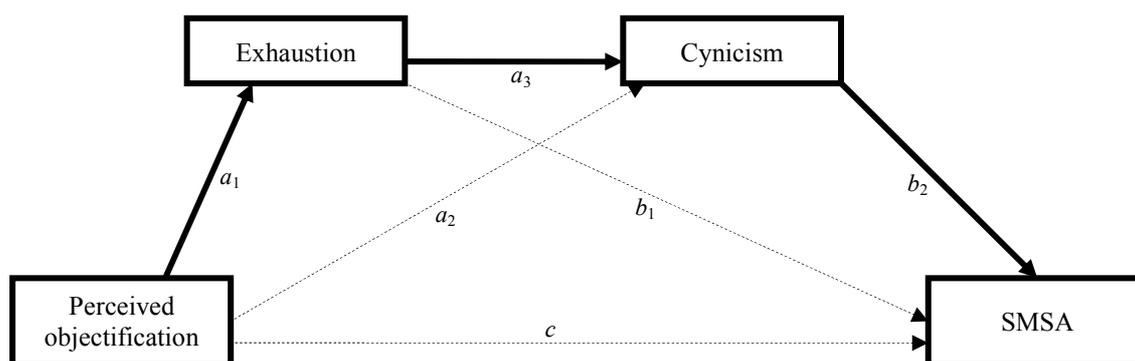
Note. SMSA = Self Mental States Attribution.
 * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

With regard to the relations among variables, perception of being objectified was negatively correlated with SMSA, while it was positively correlated with the burnout dimensions of exhaustion and cynicism. Perception of being objectified instead was unrelated with the burnout dimension of professional efficacy. This latter null relation indirectly confirms previous studies (Leiter, 1993; Maslach & Leiter, 2008) that highlighted the peculiar nature of this dimension, which seems to have different antecedents than exhaustion and cynicism. For this reason, professional efficacy was not included in the main analyses. More importantly, SMSA was negatively

related both with exhaustion and cynicism, while, not surprisingly, exhaustion and cynicism were strongly correlated.

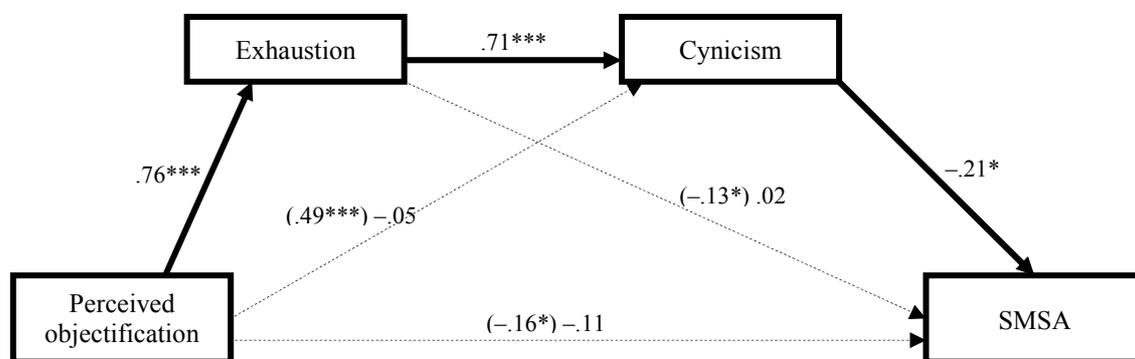
Main Analyses

To examine the main prediction that perception of objectification predicted self-objectification via the burnout dimensions of exhaustion and cynicism, we tested a double mediation model in which workers' perception of being objectified was considered as the predictor variable, exhaustion as the first-level mediator, cynicism as the second-level mediator and SMSA as the outcome variable. The double mediation hypothesis (Figure 1) was verified by using Hayes' (2012) PROCESS macros and the bootstrapping method. This method allowed us to verify whether an indirect effect exists, namely whether the indirect path linking the predictor to the outcome variable is significant. More importantly, it tests whether this indirect path explains total relationship between the predictor and the outcome. Results for our double mediation model are reported in Figure 2. For assessing indirect effects, we used 5,000 resamples and bootstrap confidence intervals.



Note. SMSA = Self Mental States Attribution.

FIGURE 1
 Causal steps in mediation test.



Note. SMSA = Self Mental States Attribution.
 * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

FIGURE 2
 Model testing the indirect effect from perceived objectification to SMSA through exhaustion and cynicism.

The double mediation analysis showed that workers' perception of being objectified by their superior was directly related with exhaustion, $a_1 = .76$, $SE = .09$, $t(1, 118) = 8.39$, $p < .001$: higher levels of objectifying perceptions were associated to higher levels of emotional exhaustion. In turn, exhaustion was related to cynicism, $a_3 = .71$, $SE = .08$, $t(2, 117) = 9.28$, $p < .001$. Finally, high levels of workers' cynicism were significantly related with lower self-attributions of mental states, $b_2 = -.21$, $SE = .09$, $t(3, 116) = -2.37$, $p < .02$, that is, with higher workers' tendencies to self-objectify. As a first support to our double mediation hypothesis, the direct effect of objectification turned out to be non-significant in this model, $c = -.11$, $SE = .09$, $t(3, 116) = -1.18$, *ns*. Crucially, the indirect effect of the perception of being objectified on decreased SMSA via exhaustion and cynicism emerged as significant: the point estimate was $-.12$ and the 95% CI was $[-0.24, -0.03]$, whereas the remaining indirect effects were not significant, supporting a full double mediation model.

Alternative Models

To provide further support for our hypotheses, two alternative models were evaluated. First, we tested a mediation model in which exhaustion and cynicism were same-level mediators of the relationship between perception of being objectified and SMSA. However, mediation analysis revealed that exhaustion was not a reliable mediator of this relationship: the point estimate was $.06$, and the 95% CI was $[-.11, .24]$. Second, we tested a double mediation alternative model in which SMSA was the first-level mediator predicting exhaustion, which, in turn, predicted cynicism (the outcome variable). However, the indirect effect of perception of being objectified on increased cynicism via SMSA and exhaustion emerged as non-significant: the point estimate was $.01$, and the 95% CI was $[-0.008, 0.06]$ thus not supporting this double mediation hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed at expanding research on objectification by exploring the consequences of being objectified within the work domain. We argued that workers' perception of being objectified by their foremen would be positively related with their tendencies to objectify themselves, assessed in terms of diminished experiences of human mental states during their work activity. The underlying mechanisms in between perception of being objectified and self-objectification were assumed to be the two key dimensions of job burnout: (a) emotional exhaustion, which induced (b) greater emotional and cognitive distance from the work (i.e., cynicism). The double mediation analyses as reported in the present study supported our expectations. Workers' perception of being objectified by their superiors was positively related with increased emotional exhaustion, which in turn, consistent with literature on job burnout (e.g., Maslach & Leiter, 2005), heightened levels of workers' cynicism. In turn, cynicism was closely tied to decreased self-attribution of different human mental states (i.e., higher tendencies to self-objectify).

We believe our findings extend and complement previous literature on objectification. The relationship between other-objectification (i.e., perception of being objectified by one's own

superior) and self-objectification (i.e., decreased self-attribution of human mental states) is in line with objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Perceptions of being viewed by others in objectifying ways may lead individuals, over time, to internalize the observer's perspective on the self, and thus engage in objectification themselves. However, if such assumption has been widely verified within the sexual domain, the present work provides first evidence for the existence of this link considering the relationship between employees and their superiors within the work setting. Further, our findings also extend literature on the consequences of job burnout. To date, a number of studies reported that high levels of burnout are positively associated with workers' depression, job dissatisfaction, intention to leave the job, and turnover (Leiter & Maslach, 2004; Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Schaible & Gecas, 2010; Yozgat, Calizkan, & Uru, 2012). Our findings provide support for the idea that such syndrome also leads workers to perceive themselves as lacking human attributes. Finally, our findings might provide an interesting integrated perspective between psychosocial and organizational constructs. The key dimensions of job burnout (i.e., exhaustion and cynicism) appear indeed as crucial mediators of the relationship between other- and self-objectification. In this case, we interpreted perceptions of being treated as instruments by one's own superior as a typical source of job-person mismatch which would exacerbate workers' emotional exhaustion and, as a consequence, the degree of cynicism. To face burnout workers may unconsciously adapt themselves to the situation, interiorising the organization's expectations and consequently the superior's objectifying perspective. The diminished self-attribution of human mental states would represent the internalization of such "objectifying gaze."

Limitations and Future Directions

There are a number of limitations and several directions for future research worth mentioning. First, although the links between our variables are consistent with previous literature, the correlational nature of our data does not allow us to draw causal inferences. It is likely that the relationships between our constructs are bidirectional and dynamics, meaning for example that burnout dimensions would increase perception of being objectified by one's own superior and, in turn, enhance tendencies to self-objectify. A longitudinal study would be an important next step toward determining the directions of these paths, because it would permit stronger inferences about causality of tested links. Second, the outcomes of workers' self-objectification remain unexplored. For instance, it is plausible to expect that higher levels of self-objectification would lead to a wide range of detrimental consequences, such as diminished job performance or decreased personal well-being. Finally, our research focused on a particular source of working objectification (i.e., perception of being objectified by one's own superior) in a specific work setting. We believe it would be interesting to replicate and extend these findings to different work contexts and considering other sources of working objectification. In today labor market, a number of jobs (e.g., call center operators; see Pierantoni, Guarnieri, Rouvery, Piccardo, & Genovesi, 2007) are characterised by fast rhythms of work, severe forms of performances control, a sense of uncertainty inherent to the company organization, and a consequent loss of the meaning of work. Further the new forms of temporary contracts view the workers merely as useful resources replaceable, adaptable, flexible and that cannot act on their own initiative. All these features some-

what recall the Nussbaum's facets of objectification and may thus promote objectified perceptions of workers, as well as increase their tendencies to objectify themselves.

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, our findings support the idea that some works do not respond to the basic needs for individual recognition, social self-esteem and identity; rather, they lead workers to perceive themselves as lacking human characteristics. We believe psychosocial and organizational research should join efforts to increase the understanding of the antecedents and consequences of workers' objectification. In particular, a greater understanding of the impact of this phenomenon on workers' identity is essential in order to prevent the negative consequences of particularly alienating work environments and encourage the development of labour policies aimed at avoiding workers' social exclusion and promoting their well-being.

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