

Serving the Self From the Seat of Power: Goals and Threats Predict Leaders' Self-Interested Behavior

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Why do some leaders use their position to amass personal prestige and resources, and others to benefit the team, the organization, or society? This article synthesizes new, cross-disciplinary research showing that self-serving leader behavior is predictable based on the function and nature of power—an essential component of leadership. First, because power increases goal-oriented behavior; it amplifies the tendency of self-focused goals to yield self-interested behavior. Self-focused goals may arise from a variety of sources; evidence is reviewed for the role of traits (e.g., low agreeableness), values (e.g., self-enhancement), self-construal (e.g., independence), and motivation (e.g., personalized power motivation). Second, because power is generally desirable, leaders whose power is threatened (e.g., self-doubts, positional instability) will turn their focus to maintaining that power—even at others' expense. These ideas have important implications for research and for organizational efforts to develop leaders who will improve others' outcomes rather than merely benefit themselves.

Keywords: *power; leadership; self-serving behavior; self-interested behavior; self-focused goals; other-focused goals; threats to power*

A position of leadership brings power to its occupant—the power to steer the direction of a group, to decide whether others get plum assignments or international transfers or demotions, and to use available resources as the leader sees fit. Each time power is placed in the

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hands of a new leader, organizations—and especially subordinate members of those organizations—must trust and hope that the leader will use his or her power wisely and thoughtfully. By many definitions, the wise use of power involves exercising it in service of goals that are shared by subordinates and by the organization as a whole (such as group achievement), rather than in service of the leader's own goals (such as personal wealth or status; House & Howell, 1992; Maslow, 1942; McClelland, 1975). Research confirms, not surprisingly, that leadership that focuses on achieving shared goals improves outcomes for subordinates and for organizations (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Hu & Liden, 2011; Hunter et al., 2013; Schaubroeck, Lam, & Peng, 2011), whereas leadership that focuses on achieving the leader's own goals worsens these outcomes (Carmeli & Sheaffer, 2009; Peterson, Galvin, & Lange, 2012).

But what causes self-serving leadership behavior in the first place? Why do some leaders use their power to achieve personal ends, rather than to improve outcomes for subordinates, the organization, or the community? The present article investigates these questions. Working from abundant new empirical research, I develop a framework to predict when and why leaders use their power for personal gain.

The present model, outlined in more detail in the following pages, focuses on the interactions between power and self-focused goals, and between power and threat, as antecedents to self-interested behavior among leaders. First, I suggest that because power amplifies the pursuit of goals, the power that is an inherent part of leadership roles will cause individuals with self-focused goals—but not those without—to enact more self-interested behaviors when they become leaders. Second, I suggest that because positions of leadership are desirable and hedonically pleasurable, leaders facing threats to their power will prioritize self-interested actions that secure their own power over behaviors that serve shared goals.

Self-Interested Leader Behavior

As used in the present article, the terms *self-serving* or *self-interested leader behaviors* include any action in which a leader uses his or her power with the primary intention to benefit the self. Whether the behavior harms others (subordinates, the organization, or society as a whole) is theoretically orthogonal to this definition (de Dreu & Nauta, 2009; Einarsen, Aasland, & Skogstad, 2007; Gerbasi & Prentice, 2013). Some self-serving leadership behaviors might help others, such as when a manager seeking a performance bonus works to increase his team's productivity, yielding bonuses for the team members as well as the manager. Other self-serving leadership behaviors might appear to have neutral effects on others, at least directly, such as when a supervisor chooses one supplier over a comparable alternative in the hopes of receiving concert tickets as a personal thank-you gift. Or self-serving leadership behaviors might directly harm others, as when a team leader takes credit for the work of her subordinates.

I suggest, however, that regardless of whether the direct and immediate impact of leaders' behaviors on others is positive, negative, or neutral, leaders who regularly prioritize their own needs and goals ultimately will have a negative long-term net impact on their organization. The manager who primarily works in pursuit of a personal performance bonus (rather than out of a desire to see the team or organization succeed) may on a given day also help

realize organizational goals, but it is inevitable that on other days his financial interests will conflict with those of the organization (Avolio & Locke, 2002). The supervisor who chooses a qualified supplier based on an expectation of a personal gift may for similar reasons later choose a supplier who is less qualified than an alternative, thus harming the organization. Thus, organizations will not, in the long run, benefit from leaders who view their position of power primarily as a platform for the pursuit of personal goals.

Connecting Power and Leadership

This article brings together research on the concepts of *power* and *leadership*. These concepts historically have been studied in different research arenas, using divergent methodologies. Moreover, they carry different surface-level connotations. The word "power," for instance, tends to connote dark aims and destructive outcomes (Foster & Rusbult, 1999), suggesting that anyone who holds power must be untrustworthy and corruptible. Indeed, empirical work has shown that power can prompt selfishness, moral hypocrisy, harsher punishments, and abuse (De Cremer & van Dijk, 2005; Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006; Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973; Lammers, Stapel, & Galinsky, 2010; Wiltermuth & Flynn, 2013). In contrast, "leader" suggests positive images of a person who is able to use his or her position to move a group toward the realization of shared goals. Consistent with this, the leadership literature has focused (albeit not exclusively) on concepts such as servant or transformational leadership in which the leader develops and nurtures the follower and improves organizational outcomes (e.g., Bass, 1990; van Dierendonck, 2011).

The differences also have been methodological and disciplinary, with power research characteristically using experimental designs that are carried out in a psychology laboratory, and leadership research characteristically using field-based, correlational designs. New research, however, demonstrates the permeability of these traditional boundaries. It is now not unusual to see, for instance, the investigation of power in field studies by management scholars (e.g., Chin, Hambrick, & Treviño, 2013; Pitesa & Thau, 2013a, 2013b) or the study of leadership in lab settings by psychologists (e.g., Abrams, de Moura, & Travaglino, 2013; Cornelis, Van Hiel, De Cremer, & Mayer, 2013). Similar observations about the growing numbers of power and leadership researchers reaching across disciplines have recently been made by Flynn and colleagues (Flynn, 2010; Flynn, Gruenfeld, Molm, & Polzer, 2011) and by Thomas, Martin, and Riggio (2013).

The present article capitalizes on this momentum. I propose that in spite of apparent differences, the power and leadership research traditions have significant conceptual overlap. For one, all organizational leaders have power, defined as control over valued resources (Fiske & Berdahl, 2007; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). As such, power is a central, definitional element of leadership and one of its underlying causal mechanisms. Moreover, Van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013) recently argued strongly that, going forward, the management field would be better served by focusing on the constituent elements, processes, or mechanisms of leadership (such as, for example, the process of articulating a vision to followers) rather than on leadership as a unitary construct. Here, I investigate power as one such element of leadership. An understanding of how the specific mechanism of power changes human behavior will inform the broad construct of leadership and provide insight into why leaders do what they do.

Theoretical Argument

The present article draws upon both laboratory and field research on power and leadership, from both management and psychology. The abundance of new and compelling research in both areas allows for review and theoretical integration for the first time. Furthermore, as I will show, these literatures have convergent stories to tell about when and why leaders act in their own self-interests.

Here, I suggest that power is in fact not universally corrupting but instead interacts with identifiable characteristics of the individual leader and the organizational environment to produce self-interested behavior in some leaders (but not others). Specifically, the present model proposes that the antecedents of self-serving behavior among leaders arise from two central characteristics of power—that *power facilitates goal pursuit* and that *powerholders want to remain in power*.

Power Facilitates Goal Pursuit

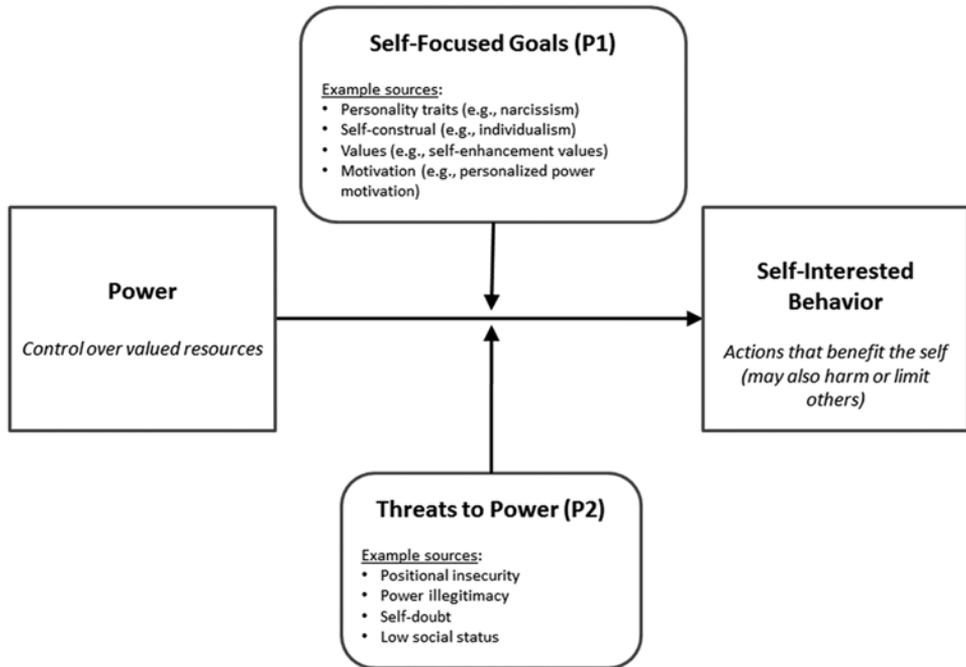
It is well understood that the relationship between holding a goal and acting in pursuit of that goal is robust (Azjen, 1991; Heath, Larrick, & Wu, 1999; Locke, Shaw, Saari, & Latham, 1981); in general, humans go after things they want and like (Ferguson & Bargh, 2004). Yet the goal-action relationship has also been shown to be moderated by a large number of factors.

One of these is power. Extensive evidence demonstrates that powerholders, in particular, tend to act quickly and decisively in pursuit of their goals. Those without power, in contrast, may spend a longer period deliberating or may be more easily distracted by goal-irrelevant information (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003; Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008; Gruenfeld, Inesi, Magee, & Galinsky, 2008; Guinote, 2007; Karremans & Smith, 2010; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003; Magee & Smith, 2013; Slabu & Guinote, 2010; Smith, Jostmann, Galinsky, & van Dijk, 2008), yielding a weaker relationship between goals and goal-relevant behavior among those lacking power. For example, in one study, participants who had been randomly assigned to a managerial (versus subordinate) role persisted longer on a puzzle for which they could earn money, and tried more unique courses of action to solve it (Guinote, 2007, Study 3). In another, participants exposed to a power prime were more likely to turn off a bothersome fan that had been left on in the room where they were working, whereas participants not primed were more likely to leave the fan on (presumably hindering their work; Galinsky et al., 2003, Study 2). It is argued that the effect of power on goal orientation occurs because power provides a boost to executive function processes; for example, power may increase the ability to keep a goal front and center in working memory while performing peripheral tasks (Smith et al., 2008).

In other words, leaders—who are, by definition, wielders of power—are more likely to assertively pursue what they want, compared to nonleaders. This suggests that the content of leaders' goals—*what* they are trying to achieve, consciously or nonconsciously—is of critical importance in predicting their behavior. Moreover, goals need not even be consciously recognized in order to affect behavior (Bargh, Gollwitzer, & Oettingen, 2010).

I suggest that power will not lead inevitably to self-interested behavior—as suggested by the view that “power corrupts”—but rather that the effects of power on self-interested behavior will depend on the nature of the person's goals (see Figure 1). Specifically, power will

Figure 1
Power Interacts With Self-Focused Goals and Threats to Predict Self-Interested Behavior



have a positive effect on self-interested behavior among individuals whose goals are self-focused in nature—arising from, for instance, traits, values, or motivations that prioritize the self. On the other hand, power is not expected to lead to self-interested behavior—in fact, it should have a negative effect on such behaviors—when the powerholder lacks self-focused aims or goals. In other words, power is hypothesized to interact with self-focused goals in a disordinal fashion to predict self-interested behavior.

Proposition 1: The effect of power on self-interested behavior will be moderated by the presence of self-focused goals, such that among individuals high in self-focused goals, power will increase self-interested behavior, whereas among individuals low in self-focused goals, power will decrease self-interested behavior.

The idea that power will have the effect of polarizing behavior based on individual differences (in this case, the presence of self-focused goals) is consistent with past theorizing in psychology that power “makes you more like yourself” (Galinsky, Rus, & Lammers, 2011). Because leaders are less obliged to conform to the wishes of others, compared to nonleaders, they are more likely to act in line with their dispositions or personal desires than are those without power or a leadership role, whose behavior is more externally constrained (Galinsky et al., 2008; Hirsh, Galinsky, & Zhong, 2011; Kraus, Chen, & Keltner, 2011). For instance, Chin et al. (2013) found that the more power a CEO wields, the stronger the relationship between his or

her personal political ideology and politically relevant actions of the company (such as corporate social responsibility policies or political contributions). That is, CEOs' personal values translated more strongly to corporate actions when the CEO had high rather than low power.

Powerholders Want to Remain in Power

It is well known that humans persist in actions and maintain states that feel pleasurable, independent of the potential for instrumental rewards (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Young, 1952) and even in spite of costs, as in the case of addiction or overeating (Berridge & Aldridge, 2008; Stroebe, Mensink, Aarts, Schut, & Kruglanski, 2008).

Evidence suggests that power is one such hedonically pleasurable state (Anderson, Kraus, Galinsky, & Keltner, 2012; Drake & Mitchell, 1977; Keltner et al., 2003; Kraus et al., 2011). People who wield power experience more positive emotions and optimism (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006; Berdahl & Martorana, 2006), enjoy a greater sense of control (Anderson, John, & Keltner, 2012; Fast, Gruenfeld, Sivanathan, & Galinsky, 2009; Inesi, Botti, Dubois, Rucker, & Galinsky, 2011), and feel more authentic to who they are (Kifer, Heller, Perunovic, & Galinsky, 2013; Kraus et al., 2011). In organizational contexts, employees at higher organizational levels are happier, healthier, less stressed, and more satisfied with their jobs (Brown, Gardner, Oswald, & Qian, 2008; Marmot, 2004; Oshagbemi, 1997; Robie, Ryan, Schmeider, Parra, & Smith, 1998; Sherman et al., 2012), compared to those at lower levels. Not least, power typically yields social status and material resources such as higher pay for the powerholder (Magee & Galinsky, 2008) and can satisfy fundamental human needs for control (Leotti, Iyengar, & Ochsner, 2010; Maslow, 1943). Indeed, there is evidence for the material and health benefits of higher rank among a number of nonhuman species as well as among humans (de Waal, 1998; Sapolsky, 2005).

It follows from these findings that positions of higher rank are inherently desirable, and that most people would prefer to be in a state of high rather than low power (although for exceptions, see Anderson, Willer, Kilduff, & Brown, 2012). In addition, past research and theorizing on loss aversion suggests that people's motivations to maintain an existing position of power (i.e., avoid a loss) will surpass their motivation to achieve more power than they have currently (experience a gain, Kermer, Driver-Linn, Wilson, & Gilbert, 2006; Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). In sum, most powerholders are presumed to be strongly motivated to keep their power.

Individuals in leadership positions are therefore expected to be highly attentive to potential threats to their power, in order that they might continue to hold their positions and retain influence and control. I suggest that for leaders facing threats to their leadership roles, retaining a hold on power will jump to the top priority. It may be more difficult to focus on the needs of others when one's own positional security is in doubt. Thus, leaders under threat may be especially likely to demonstrate self-interested behavior—particularly self-interested behavior that helps to secure their own hold on power, such as lauding one's own accomplishments or undermining an ambitious subordinate. In contrast, leaders whose power is unthreatened and whose role is secure may be better positioned to downgrade personal goals in pursuit of other-centered aims (see Figure 1).

Proposition 2: Power will have a positive effect on self-interested behavior when that power is under threat, but will not affect self-interested behavior when that power is not under threat.

Summary of Theoretical Argument

In summary, I propose that two central factors are key antecedents to self-interested behavior among leaders: (a) self-focused goals and (b) threats to leaders' power. In the following sections, I detail supporting evidence for this model. Some of the reviewed studies, particularly those conducted in the lab, use a four-cell design—for instance, measuring the self-interested behavior of individuals with or without self-focused goals who either have power or do not. In contrast, other studies, particularly those conducted in the field, provide evidence for a portion of the model, such as differences in the behavior of leaders who are self-focused (or threatened) versus not self-focused (or not threatened). All, however, provide support for the idea that self-interested behavior will be seen most often among power-holders who have self-focused goals or who are facing a threat to their power.

Self-Focused Goals

Self-focused goals, or goals to achieve resources and outcomes that benefit the self, may arise from a variety of sources. In this section, I focus on four such sources—personality traits, self-construals, core values, and motivations. I suggest that for each source of goals, possessing power or a leadership role will increase the likelihood that self-focused goals yield self-interested behavior.

Importantly, this list is not intended to be fully inclusive of all potential sources of self-focused goals; rather, it is reflective of the empirical evidence gathered to date. Additional evidence and further operationalizations of self-focus are expected to emerge in the future. Moreover, I do not intend to suggest that the constructs of traits, self-construals, values, and motivations discussed below are mutually exclusive nor independent. It is well understood, for instance, that biological factors influence traits (John & Gosling, 2000) and motivations (Stanton & Schultheiss, 2009), that values and motivations can arise from personality traits (Hofer et al., 2010; Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, & Knafo, 2002) and self-construal from cultural values (Cross, Hardin, & Gercek-Swing, 2011), and that all four constructs are formed by (and form in turn) cultural environments and life experiences (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998; Heine, 2010; Helson & Soto, 2005). Nonetheless, I have organized the evidence below in terms of traits, self-construals, values, and motivations in keeping with the research traditions on these topics.

Self-Focused Personality Traits

Here, I suggest that individuals with traits that prioritize the self (namely, low levels of agreeableness, honesty-humility, or guilt-proneness; or high levels of narcissism) will be more likely to behave in a self-interested manner, and, further, that this relationship will be particularly strong for individuals in a position of power or leadership. Evidence speaking to this hypothesis is reviewed.

Agreeableness. The Big 5 personality trait of agreeableness, which captures interpersonal warmth and concern (John & Srivastava, 1999), is causally connected to prosocial versus prosocial behavior (Caprara, Alessandri, & Eisenberg, 2012). Individuals with low (versus high) levels of agreeableness are more self-interested, domineering, and aggressive

(Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, & Hair, 1996; Meier, Robinson, & Wilkowski, 2006), as well as less cooperative and helpful to others (Graziano, Habashi, Sheese, & Tobin, 2007; Koole, Jager, van den Berg, Vlek, & Hofstee, 2001). As described above, I predict that these relationships should be strengthened by power, such that the tendency for individuals low in agreeableness to show more self-interested behavior should be more robust among powerful than powerless individuals. In support of this idea, Côté et al. (2011) found that the positive relationship between agreeableness and the ability to detect emotions from others' facial expressions was stronger for individuals who held higher rather than lower ranks in their organization. In other words, the high-power, low-agreeable individuals had the weakest ability to detect others' emotions—a critical precondition for interpersonal sensitivity. In another line of work, men low on agreeableness were more likely than high-agreeable men to say that, if assured they couldn't be punished, they would consider using a position of power to obtain sexual favors from a subordinate (Lee, Gizzarone, & Ashton, 2003).

Several studies have reported a positive relationship between agreeableness and the use of a servant or ethical leadership style by managers (de Vries, 2012; Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2011; Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009; Washington, Sutton, & Feild, 2006; Xu, Yu, & Shi, 2011), such that managers high in agreeableness were more likely to be described by their subordinates as having “the best interests of employees in mind” or as “not seek[ing] recognition or rewards in serving others.” In contrast, Chan and Drasgow (2001) reported that low-agreeableness individuals had more “calculative” leadership motivation, or the desire to lead for self-benefitting purposes.

Honesty-humility. Another perspective on personality traits holds that a six-factor model, rather than the more commonly studied Big 5, more fully captures dispositional variability (Ashton & Lee, 2007). In this model, the trait of honesty-humility measures tendencies toward honesty and sincerity (versus Machiavellianism) via such items as “I wouldn't use flattery to get a raise or promotion at work, even if I thought it would succeed” and humility or self-deprecation (versus egocentrism) via such items as “I think that I am entitled to more respect than the average person is” (Ashton & Lee, 2009). Overall, honesty-humility negatively predicts, and Machiavellianism positively predicts, unethical actions (Grover & Enz, 2005; Lee, Ashton, & de Vries, 2005).

Moreover, consistent with present theorizing, the relationship between low honesty-humility and self-interested behavior appears stronger for individuals in power than those not in power. For instance, participants low in honesty-humility kept more resources for themselves in a series of economic games when they were in a more powerful position than their partner, but not otherwise (Hilbig & Zettler, 2009). In another study, those low in honesty-humility were more likely to use a position of power to make a self-benefitting business decision, such as choosing to pursue a personally profitable but environmentally damaging mining project, and to report that they might use a supervisory role to extract sexual favors from a subordinate (Ashton & Lee, 2008). Similarly, Lee et al. (2003) found that sexual coercion from a position of power was negatively predicted by honesty-humility. Finally, managers low on honesty-humility were less likely to be described by their employees as using an ethical leadership style (de Vries, 2012), whereas Machiavellian managers were more likely to be described by their employees as abusive (Kiazad, Restubog, Zagenczyk, Kiewitz, & Tang, 2010).

Guilt or sense of responsibility. New research suggests that the dispositional tendency to experience guilt, a negative emotion that intuitively seems maladaptive, is in fact socially functional. Guilt-prone individuals experience more negative feelings in response to committing socially unacceptable behaviors, and thus are less likely to commit such behaviors (Cohen, Panter, & Turan, 2012). For instance, participants with low guilt proneness were more likely to take unethical actions such as lying to another participant in order to keep more money for themselves (Cohen, Panter, & Turan, 2013; Cohen, Wolf, Panter, & Insko, 2011).

Once again, this negative relationship between trait (guilt proneness) and behavior (self-interested behavior) should be even stronger for those in a position of power. Suggestive of this, Schaumberg and Flynn (2012) reported that managers low in guilt proneness had a weaker sense of responsibility to others, and this in turn led them to be viewed by subordinates as less capable leaders, relative to more guilt-prone managers. Moreover, in a prisoner's dilemma game, less guilt-prone leaders were less cooperative than were more guilt-prone leaders (particularly when the leaders were less accountable to their own team members; Pinter, Insko, Wildschut, Kirchner, Montoya, & Wolf, 2007). In sum, leaders and powerholders who are chronically less prone to feeling guilt may be less "burdened" by a sense of responsibility to behave in line with others' interests.

Indeed, a related research stream links a low sense of responsibility to self-serving behaviors and motivations among powerholders. De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008) found that CEOs who rarely mentioned ideas of responsibility in interviews were more likely to be seen by their subordinates as exercising despotic leadership, or as leadership that primarily serves the leader's self-interest. And in work by Anderson and Galinsky (2006) and by Winter and colleagues (Winter, 1988; Winter & Barenbaum, 1985), individuals who spontaneously mentioned responsibility themes in expressive text—or who had had early training in responsibility, such as by having had younger siblings—were more likely to channel their desires for power into socially responsible outlets (e.g., running for office rather than becoming sexually aggressive) that were less likely to harm others.

Narcissism. Narcissism, which includes excessively positive self-views and low empathy, is robustly predictive of relationship dysfunction, workplace deviance, unethical behavior, and aggression (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Campbell & Foster, 2002; Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Several articles have documented these tendencies among narcissistic leaders, consistent with the idea that narcissism will be more freely expressed by those in high-power rather than low-power roles. For instance, Blickle, Schlegel, Fassbender, and Klein (2006) reported a higher rate of narcissism among managers who had been convicted of white-collar crimes (e.g., embezzlement) than in a comparison group of managers. Similarly, Watts and colleagues (in press) found that among U.S. presidents, narcissism was positively associated with having behaved unethically while in office.

In a lab study in which participants took on the role of a CEO facing a commons dilemma (Campbell, Bush, Brunell, & Shelton, 2005), more narcissistic CEOs harvested more resources for themselves from the common pool early on (compared to those lower in narcissism), thus obtaining greater self-benefit at the expense of the common good. Finally, in a study of Israeli military commanders (Popper, 2002), those high in narcissism were viewed by their direct reports as exercising more personalized charismatic leadership, a leadership

style that involves using personal dominance to serve the leader's self-interest (House & Howell, 1992).

These findings regarding the relationship between narcissism and self-serving leadership behaviors are particularly problematic in light of the tendency of narcissists to emerge as leaders in new groups (Brunell et al., 2008). That is, narcissists appear to be particularly attracted to the status and esteem that a powerful role can bring, but, once in power, also are more likely to prioritize their own interests rather than others'.

Summary. As described here, individuals with self-focused personality traits such as low agreeableness, low honesty-humility, low guilt proneness, or narcissism will express these traits more freely from a position of power, resulting in more self-interested behavior when self-focused individuals become leaders.

Independent Self-Construal

In addition to their core personality traits, individuals also vary in terms of how they construe and define the self, with significant consequences for behavior (Swann & Bosson, 2010). One important individual difference in self-views is the degree to which a person typically sees him- or herself as an independent agent, separate from others and focused on individual needs and goals, versus interdependent, defined by his or her relationships and social connections, and concerned with the needs and goals of others. People with relatively independent (vs. interdependent) self-views prioritize competition and standing out from others over cooperation and fitting in with others (Brockner, Chen, Mannix, Leung, & Skarlicki, 2000; Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and are especially likely to act to benefit the self in situations when self-interests conflict with others' interests.

As with personality traits, it is expected that independent self-views will be more freely expressed from a powerful (relative to a powerless) position. Thus, those who typically construe themselves as individual agents are hypothesized to be especially likely to act in their own interests from positions of power.

In support of this idea, high-level managers who were high on individual identity and low on collective identity were most likely to acknowledge that they had recently behaved abusively toward their own subordinates (Johnson, Venus, Lanaj, Mao, & Chang, 2012). Another study found that for managers high on self-focus (a related construct), there was a positive relationship between how much power the managers wielded in their organization and their tendency toward self-interested behaviors, such as taking credit for team accomplishments. That is, the higher up they were in their organization, the more they focused on their own needs. In contrast, for managers low in self-focus, the relationship between power and self-interest was negative—the higher up they were in their organization, the *less* they focused on their own needs (Wisse & Rus, 2012). Similarly, in the interpersonal domain, among participants who were low on a measure of interdependent self-construal, the degree to which they reported being more powerful than their relationship partner negatively predicted the likelihood that they regularly took their partner's perspective, whereas power did not affect perspective-taking for participants high on interdependent self-construal (Gordon & Chen, 2013, Study 2). Finally, in a set of lab studies, participants with independent self-views behaved less fairly to others when they were given power, compared to participants with

interdependent self-views (Blader & Chen, 2012). Specifically, independent individuals in power treated a negotiation partner less fairly, delivered layoff news less sensitively, and made less equitable decisions when allocating a bonus to subordinates.

Other work has explored different ways of operationalizing an independent self, such as by distinguishing between individuals who are exchange oriented, or who maintain relationships primarily for instrumental benefit (i.e., a tit-for-tat exchange), versus those who are communally oriented, or who maintain relationships for their own sake, without expecting immediate repayment for every good deed (Clark & Mills, 2011). Evidence suggests that exchange-oriented and communal-oriented individuals respond differently to power. For instance, exchange-oriented participants who were exposed to power primes were more selfish colleagues—assigning a smaller proportion of work to themselves and leaving more for another person—compared to exchange-oriented participants not exposed to power. In contrast, communal-oriented individuals exposed to the same power primes were *less* selfish, taking on more work for themselves, than were communal-oriented individuals not exposed to power (Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh, 2001). Similarly, Lee-Chai, Chen, and Chartrand (2001) reported that exchange-oriented individuals placed in a supervisory role were less attentive to their subordinates, evaluated subordinates less equitably, and kept more of a shared bonus pool for themselves, relative to those with a more communal orientation.

Additional supportive findings come from the surprising area of adult-attachment research. Infants who have more independent, less connected relationships with their caregivers have poorer adult relationships, decades later (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2012). Relevant to the present model, Davidovitz, Mikulincer, Shaver, Izsak, and Popper (2007) suggested that the downstream consequences of attachment style might also include individuals' relationship to power. Their data showed that individuals with more insecure, independent (anxious or avoidant) attachment styles in relationships had more self-serving motivations for power (e.g., "to win respect and admiration"), and fewer other-serving motivations for power (e.g., "to bring about changes in society"), compared to those with more secure, interdependent attachments (also see Maslow, 1942; Popper, 2002).

Individualism. Several theorists have suggested that the cultural construct of individualism-collectivism, which characterizes cultures as differing in the degree to which their members emphasize individual achievement and differentiation (individualism) versus group accomplishment and identity (collectivism), may offer insight into how people from different cultural contexts respond to positions of leadership. Might leaders in individualistic cultural contexts, where individual accomplishment is so highly valued, be especially likely to pursue personal rather than collective goals from the seat of power?

To test this, two lines of research explored how cultural context influences how leaders distribute shared resources. Managers from Israel (Kopelman, 2009) and students from the United States (Zhong, Magee, Maddux, & Galinsky, 2006), both relatively individualistic contexts, took more resources for themselves in a commons-dilemma game when placed in a high-power (versus low-power) position. In contrast, managers from Hong Kong (Kopelman, 2009) and students from East Asia (Zhong et al., 2006), both relatively collectivistic contexts, took *fewer* resources for themselves when in a high-power compared to a low-power position. Importantly, in Kopelman's study, managers from both cultures reported a greater sense of resource entitlement when in high-power relative to low-power positions—that is, both Israeli and Hong Kong managers believed that, as higher status agents, they deserved more resources.

Yet these beliefs predicted self-serving actions only for the Israeli managers, not for those from Hong Kong. In other words, the managers from a relatively individualistic culture acted on their sense of entitlement, whereas the managers from a relatively collectivistic culture recognized their superior position but did not use it to benefit themselves. Instead, they were *less* self-benefiting when they had power than when they did not. Consistent with this differential response to power across cultures, Zhong et al. (2006) found in a separate experiment that subliminal exposure to power-relevant words facilitated the identification of entitlement words (e.g., deserve, merit, earn, entitlement) among European-American students, whereas the power exposure facilitated instead the identification of responsibility words (e.g., responsibility, duty, obligation, dependable) among Asian-American students.

In essence, these data suggest that an individualistic cultural context, via its prioritization of personal agency and accomplishment, may facilitate self-serving behavior among leaders. However, it would be an enormous oversimplification to infer that entire countries or cultures will consistently cultivate more self-serving leaders than others. Recent scholarship advocates for viewing culture as both a country-level influence and as an individual difference that varies across person and context (Brockner, 2003; Oyserman & Lee, 2008). That is, even within a given country, some people will be more individualistic than others. The prediction therefore follows that more individualistic people—regardless of their nation of origin—should be expected to display more self-serving leadership behaviors, compared to those who are more collectivistic in their orientation.

Several studies support the role of person-level individualism-collectivism in understanding responses to power. In one, individualism was positively associated (and collectivism negatively associated) with calculative leadership motivation, or desiring to lead in order to gain personal advantages (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). Notably, this relationship was found within cultures, in both the United States and Singapore. Similarly, within diverse samples of European Americans, Asians, Asian Americans, U.S. Latinos, and Middle Easterners, individualism (particularly the vertical component of individualism, which captures competitiveness and status striving) positively predicted various measures of the likelihood of abusing one's power, such as taking advantage of a lower power partner in a business dispute (Torelli & Shavitt, 2010). Power abuse was in turn negatively correlated with collectivism (particularly the horizontal component of collectivism, which captures the collective pursuit of goals shared with peers). Once again, these relationships were comparably sized across cultural groups.

Summary. People who have a chronic sense of independence from others are less likely to consider others when making decisions, and this tendency is exacerbated by power. As described here, leaders with an independent (versus interdependent) self-construal, an exchange (versus communal) orientation toward relationships, greater independence in their relationships, or a tendency toward individualism (versus collectivism), whether across or within cultures, appear especially likely to focus on personal needs from the seat of power.

Self-Oriented Values

The previous two sections described individual differences in personality traits (such as low agreeableness) and in self-construals (such as individualism). Here, I explore individual differences at the level of core values. Values provide individuals with guidance in evaluating

the desirability of their own and others' behavior (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). Relevant to the present discussion, individuals differ in the extent to which they view it as desirable to enhance the self (such as by achieving power, wealth, public accomplishments, or pleasure; Van Lange, Otten, De Bruin, & Joireman, 1997) and, orthogonally, the extent to which they view it as desirable to transcend the self (such as by acting for the benefit of close others or society as a whole; Schwartz et al., 2012) or to maintain a caring and compassionate self-view (termed moral identity internalization; Aquino & Reed, 2002). As above, I predict that self-oriented values will be particularly likely to translate to self-interested behavior among those wielding power or a leadership role, relative to nonleaders.

Self-enhancement and prosocial values. Several articles have explored the consequences of holding self-enhancement values for the behavior of leaders and powerholders. In one study, being in a position of power decreased the size of the offers that people with self-enhancement values made to their partners in an ultimatum game (thus yielding larger final payouts for themselves), whereas power *increased* the size of the offers made by people with self-transcendent values, relative to when they were assigned to lower power positions (Lönnqvist, Walkowitz, Verkasalo, & Wichardt, 2011). A similar pattern emerged in a study using the allocation of a shared bonus as the dependent variable (van Dijk & De Cremer, 2006); here, the effects were mediated by entitlement perceptions. That is, power caused people with self-enhancement values—but not those with self-transcendent values—to view themselves as more deserving than their partners, which led them to keep a greater portion of the bonus for themselves.

Likewise, Illies and Reiter-Palmon (2008) reported that among participants acting as managers in a series of business decisions, the solutions generated by managers with self-enhancement values were especially likely to display what was termed “destructive leadership,” or the prioritizing of short-term, self-benefiting outcomes over long-term organizational goals. And among relationship partners, individuals with a competitive value orientation showed a negative relationship between their power and the likelihood that they would take their partner's perspective, whereas there was no effect of relationship power on partner perspective taking among individuals with a more cooperative value orientation (Gordon & Chen, 2013, Study 3). Last, in a field study, Blickle and colleagues (2006) found that self-enhancement values were higher among managers convicted of white-collar crimes, compared to a matched sample of managers.

Moral identity. Drawing from Aquino and Reed's (2002) concept of moral identity internalization, or valuing being a caring and compassionate person, DeCelles, DeRue, Margolis, and Ceranic (2012) found that moral identity, like self-enhancement values, moderated the effects of power on resource decisions. Specifically, participants low on moral identity took more resources for themselves in a dictator game and a commons dilemma when primed with high rather than low power. In contrast, individuals high on moral identity responded to the high-power prime by taking *fewer* resources for themselves. In two field studies, managers with low moral identity were seen by their subordinates as offering fewer voice opportunities (i.e., not listening to employees or taking their needs and opinions into account; Brebels, De Cremer, Van Dijke, & Van Hiel, 2011) and as less ethical leaders (Mayer, Aquino, Greenbaum, & Kuenzi, 2012).

Summary. This pattern of findings suggests that individuals who place a higher value on personal achievement rather than assistance to others (self-enhancement values), or who place less value on being a caring individual (low moral identity), express these values more strongly from a position of high relative to low power. That is, leaders with self-enhancement values or a low moral identity tend to use their position to acquire resources for themselves.

Motivation for Personal Power

This fourth section explores individual differences in the motivation to obtain power or dominance. Some individuals want power more than others. But how does the desire for power relate to a leader's behavior once power is achieved? A common lay view holds that the very desire for power is suspect (Foster & Rusbult, 1999), that any person who has a strong desire for the leader role must invariably have self-interested aims. This section reports on the evidence for this view.

The desire for dominance. Some empirical evidence indeed implicates dominance motivation, or the desire to hold a position of power and influence over others, in self-serving leadership behaviors. Because individuals high in dominance motivation strongly value power, they may do more to keep it—even to the point of harming others. In a series of studies, Maner and Mead (2010) investigated the implications of dominance motivation for leaders whose hold on power was tenuous, contingent on continued high performance. In such circumstances, leaders high in dominance motivation were likely to see talented subordinates as threats to their own power, rather than as assets to the group, and tended to act against them in response. For instance, high-dominance-motivation leaders were especially likely to keep information necessary for problem-solving to themselves, exclude subordinates from the team, give subordinates poor evaluations, or banish them to lowly positions. Each of these behaviors had the effect of making the leader look good by boosting his or her comparative individual performance, but hurting the group's performance by suppressing the contributions of talented team members.

Another set of studies has operationalized the desire for dominance in the form of social dominance orientation (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Social dominance orientation is most commonly conceptualized as a desire for group-level dominance (such as the desire for one's racial group to hold a higher position than other racial groups), but it may also relate to the desire to hold a higher position at the individual level (Son Hing, Bobocel, Zanna, & McBride, 2007).

Moreover, individuals high (versus low) in social dominance orientation appear to respond differently to power once they obtain it. In a sample of military-officer trainees, social dominance orientation was negatively related to consideration leadership, or leadership behaviors that take into account the needs of subordinates (Nicol, 2009). And in a lab setting, Son Hing and colleagues (2007) found that hypothetical business decisions made by leaders high (versus low) in social dominance orientation were particularly likely to serve self-interests at the expense of others. For example, leaders high in social dominance orientation were more likely to choose to move their company's polluting waste-storage process to a country with

laxer environmental regulations rather than paying to improve the storage process and end the pollution. Last, my colleagues and I found that being placed in a position of power led men high (but not low) in social dominance orientation to evaluate female work partners in light of personal, task-irrelevant goals—in this case whether the work partner was single and available to date them (Williams, Gruenfeld, & Guillory, 2013). In a second study, having power increased the tendency of individuals high in social dominance orientation—women as well as men—to acknowledge that they might try to extract sexual favors from an attractive subordinate.

Personalized (versus socialized) power motivation. If the mere desire to wield power inevitably led to the exercise of self-serving power, however, history would reflect a complete absence of socially responsible or other-serving leaders, and this is certainly not the case. Acknowledging this, several theorists have sought to distinguish among different forms of power motivation (Avolio & Locke, 2002; Foster & Rusbult, 1999; Frieze & Boneva, 2001; Gillet, Cartwright, & van Vugt, 2011; Lammers, Stoker, & Stapel, 2009). One of the first and most prominent of these was McClelland (1975), who differentiated between personalized power motivation, or the desire to influence for self-serving or even antisocial ends, and socialized power motivation, or the desire to influence for other-serving ends. Likewise, management researchers have identified styles of leadership that prioritize the common good over the leader's own interests, such as servant leadership, which is defined as the emergent combination of a need for power with a desire to serve others (van Dierendonck, 2011); relational leadership, or leadership that relies on integrity and mutual trust between supervisors and subordinates (Brower, Schoorman, & Tan, 2000); and socialized (rather than personalized) charismatic leadership, in which the leader leverages his or her interpersonal skill to serve collective interests (House & Howell, 1992).

Empirical evidence supports a distinction between two forms of motivation for power and their behavioral consequences. For instance, in a simulation of the Cuban missile crisis, participants' personalized power motivation (coded from their textual responses) predicted the desire to deliberate about the dilemma less and instead to escalate the conflict—actions that might have had disastrous consequences in the real world (Magee & Langner, 2008). In contrast, socialized power motivation, measured in a separate sample, predicted participants' decisions to move quickly in ushering a socially valuable new drug through the approval process. In other words, it was not the mere desire for power that yielded antisocial outcomes, but rather the particular form of power motivation that focused on the self versus others.

Summary. It does appear, then, that individuals who are strongly motivated to acquire positions of power may not always be the best choice to wield such power, as they may be focused on personal goals to the exclusion of group goals. However, the type of dominance motivation—particularly a social dominance orientation or a personalized (rather than socialized) power motivation—is key. That is, it is not that organizations should be wary of power ambition per se, but instead should be attentive to *why* it is that the leader seeks to gain power—to achieve a greater good or to acquire resources for him- or herself alone.

Threats to Leaders' Power

As described above, I suggest that securing one's hold on power is likely to become a leader's top priority if he or she perceives that power to be under threat. In other words, I suggest that threatened or insecure leaders will show more self-interested behavior—particularly if that behavior is in the service of securing the leader's superior position—relative to secure leaders or nonleaders. For example, a threatened leader may choose to retain hold of all budgetary decisions rather than delegating some to qualified subordinates, or may even sabotage a competent subordinate who is perceived to be a threat. Such behavior may provide benefit to the leader but certainly will have negative effects on subordinate employees and on the organization as a whole. In this section, I explore three sources of power threats—positional insecurity, self-doubt, and low social status—and review evidence of their consequences for leader behavior.

Positional Insecurity or Illegitimacy

Leaders who are conscious that their power could be lost at any time may find it difficult to maintain focus on broad organizational aims, instead of how their own position might be bolstered (Jordan, Sivanathan, & Galinsky, 2011). Indeed, evidence suggests that positional insecurity encourages self-interested and destructive behavior among leaders. For example, in the studies of Maner and Mead (2010), described previously, leaders who particularly valued power (high dominance motivation) were threatened by talented subordinates, and acted against them (e.g., by keeping valuable information to themselves) in order to make themselves appear more skilled by comparison. Importantly, however, these outcomes were found to occur only in conditions of positional insecurity—when the leader knew that he or she could be replaced by a more talented team member—and not when the leader had no reason to doubt his or her position. Similar results were reported by Georgesen and Harris (2006): When leaders' power was insecure (they could be replaced by a subordinate) versus secure, participants evaluated subordinates more negatively, presumably to minimize the threat they posed. They also kept more prize money for themselves.

Illegitimately obtained power may be an additional source of threat for leaders. If a leader's selection can be attributed to relatively dubious factors such as nepotism, seniority, or luck, it is likely that his or her position feels less secure than if the leader was selected based on accepted metrics of performance or skill. In the former case, the leader may be vulnerable to superior performers from below, and again may be motivated to act to ensure the security of his or her position. De Cremer and van Dijk (2008) compared leaders who were told they were chosen by their peers (legitimate) to those told they were appointed by the experimenter (illegitimate), and found that the illegitimate leaders took more resources for themselves in a commons dilemma than did the legitimate leaders.

Likewise, in work by Rodriguez-Bailon, Moya, and Yzerbyt (2000), leaders were told that they had achieved their position via either legitimate (performance) or illegitimate (random draw) means. They then had a chance to learn about the team members whom they would soon be supervising. Illegitimate leaders spent the most time considering the negative, stereotypic traits of their subordinates, whereas legitimate leaders considered all types of information equally. The authors suggested that by giving more attention to their subordinates' weaknesses

(relative to their strengths), illegitimate leaders may have been arming themselves against internal threats from subordinates who might have sought to claim the leadership role.

Self-Doubt

Leaders also may experience a threat to their position that is internal in origin—namely, self-doubts about whether they truly have the ability and capacity to lead others. Leadership self-doubts have been explored in two primary areas—low perceived power and low perceived competence. First, leaders may vary in their subjective sense of power—that is, whether they actually feel as though they can successfully control others' outcomes—*independent* of their actual power. For instance, Fast and Chen (2009) assigned study participants to teacher roles and measured how powerful they perceived themselves to be. The less powerful the teachers thought they were, the more likely they were to act aggressively against their own “students”—in this case, by assigning the students to complete unusually difficult tasks, arguably to boost the appearance of their own relative competence.

Outside of the organizational domain, Bugental and colleagues (Bugental, 2010; Bugental & Happaney, 2004; Bugental & Lin, 2001) have studied mothers who doubt their own ability to control and influence their children. That is, mothers may possess actual power as a function of their role and relative age, but perceive themselves to be powerless, particularly relative to a demanding child. Sadly, Bugental has found this combination to be a major risk factor for child abuse; mothers who feel controlled by their young children may aggress against them. Fortunately, however, interventions to increase mothers' sense of parental power and efficacy can greatly curtail the likelihood of abuse.

Leaders may also have doubts about their own competence or ability as leaders. As with doubts about one's own power, competence uncertainty may lead powerholders to act against others in order to appear more competent by comparison. In a series of experiments, Fast and colleagues (Cho & Fast, 2012; Fast & Chen, 2009) gave leaders bogus feedback suggesting that they were either of “excellent” or “average” ability. Leaders told they were merely “average” were more likely to evaluate their own subordinates poorly or to give them unfairly difficult tasks. Again, such behaviors may have been motivated by a desire to bolster their own position by increasing the (apparent) difference in competence between themselves and their subordinates. Similarly, Rus, van Knippenberg, and Wisse (2010a) found that when participants were told that their performance fell below that of other team members, being placed in a position of power over those team members caused participants to allocate more of the group's performance points to themselves. In contrast, when participants were told that their performance was superior to that of team members, having power *decreased* leaders' self-allocations. And in a sample of high-level managers discussed in the same article, workplace power was positively correlated with reports of recent self-interested behavior among managers who had experienced recent low performance levels. Yet among those who had experienced high performance, workplace power was *negatively* correlated with recent self-interested behavior.

Status

Leadership researchers have recently begun to emphasize the importance of distinguishing power, or control over valued resources and outcomes, from status, or respect and esteem of others. Although power and status regularly co-occur, a key distinction is that power is

situated within the individual, whereas status is socially situated—it arises from others' opinions (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Leveraging this distinction, several investigators have recently explored how status might interact with power to influence leaders' behavior. Here, I note that being low in status as a powerholder is likely to be not only hedonically aversive (Fast, Halevy, & Galinsky, 2012) but also positionally threatening. That is, a leader who does not enjoy the respect of his or her subordinates may not expect to remain a leader for long. Moreover, individuals in positions of power and authority may be especially likely to believe that they are entitled to the respect of others and undeserving of low social status—circumstances that are particularly likely to lead to damaging behaviors (Richman & Leary, 2009). The threat therefore implied by low status (in spite of high power) may cause a leader to prioritize securing his or her own position in the hierarchy over pursuing larger group goals.

Recent studies provide support for this hypothesis. Leaders who lack status appear particularly prone to responding to this threat with antagonism. Their aim may be to make others look bad by comparison to the self, thus potentially shoring up their own superior role, or to protect a positive self-view (Anicich, Fast, Halevy, & Galinsky, 2013; Fein & Spencer, 1997). Regardless, leaders' humiliating or aggressive behaviors toward their colleagues at best serve their own ego-protective self-interests and at worst have detrimental effects on group cohesion and organizational productivity.

For instance, pitting high status against high power, Blader and Chen (2012) found that participants with power were less generous to their partner in a dictator game, treated their negotiation partner less equitably, and were less sensitive in their delivery of layoff news, relative to participants who had status. Fast and colleagues (2012) manipulated power and status orthogonally to test how a lack of status might affect powerful individuals. Results showed that participants who had power but lacked status were more likely than individuals with any of the other three power-status combinations to aggress against their own subordinates, such as by asking them to perform demeaning behaviors (e.g., barking like a dog). Another set of studies demonstrated that managers who were high in power but low in status were more likely than any of the other three groups to view their subordinates as valuable only to the degree that they were personally useful to the manager—a perspective that creates fertile ground for exploitation (Anicich et al., 2013).

Summary

The evidence reviewed here suggests that threats to power, such as from positional insecurity, self-doubt, or low social status, cause leaders to act in more self-interested ways. If leaders have significant concerns about losing their power, securing their own position may quickly move to the top of their to-do list, ahead of group-wide goals. On the other hand, to conclude from this evidence that organizations will be best served by constantly reassuring leaders that they are competent and will never lose their power may be going too far. After all, leaders who think *too* highly of their own abilities might end up feeling more entitled, like the narcissistic leaders discussed previously, than leaders who sometimes experience doubts.

Ideally, leaders should feel sufficiently secure and efficacious in their roles that they do not feel the need to continually prove themselves to be superior to their subordinates and colleagues—but not so invulnerable that they no longer feel the need to account for their actions to others. One way to help achieve this is for organizations to select on

person-organization and person-job fit in both hiring and promotion (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006). Leaders who fit well within their organizations and have the skill to perform their jobs will feel more self-efficacy (Gregory, Albritton, & Osmonbekov, 2010) and therefore fewer doubts about their own competence or their hold on power.

Next Steps

Prescriptions for Organizations

There are a number of evidence-based steps organizations might take to minimize behavior that prioritizes the leaders' interests above others. This section explores these possibilities.

Neutralizing the effects of self-focused goals. In light of the evidence that leaders with self-focused goals are more likely to use their position of power to further their own interests, the most direct solution might be for organizations to exclude from promotion individuals whose goals are highly self-focused (i.e., those who are low in agreeableness, are narcissistic, or who hold strong self-enhancement values). However, such screening criteria may be difficult to implement given the motivation of candidates to present themselves positively to their supervisors. Candidates being considered for a managerial role are unlikely, for example, to acknowledge being cold or argumentative (aspects of low agreeableness) on a questionnaire. The use of less face-valid metrics, however, or peer and supervisor evaluations, may help with this problem.

Beyond selection, organizations also can work to create a climate or culture that emphasizes a focus on others rather than the self, to help ensure that leaders retain their focus on shared rather than personal goals. For instance, as previously noted, Maner and Mead (2010) found that leaders high in dominance motivation tended to sabotage talented subordinates. Yet this tendency was eliminated in follow-up experiments when participants were simply told that the group they led was in competition with other groups. This tactic appeared to focus leaders' attention on intergroup threats (consistent with organizational goals) rather than intragroup ones (Mead & Maner, 2012). Organizations can also foster intraorganizational cooperation (versus competition) via thoughtful compensation and evaluation systems, such as those that emphasize shared rewards (e.g., profit-sharing) over those that are more zero-sum in nature (e.g., forced rankings; Grant, 2013). Upper management also might emphasize that other leaders in the past have acted in the interests of subordinates (not just their own interests), or that doing so is associated with effective performance. Both strategies have been found in experimental research to reduce self-interested behavior among leaders (Rus et al., 2010a; Rus, van Knippenberg, & Wisse, 2010b).

Organizations also can induce an interdependent (rather than independent) focus among employees simply with thoughtful communication. In two studies, for example, when study participants were instructed to think about themselves as independent, being then placed in a position of power caused them to take more resources for themselves (relative to a control condition), but power did not have this effect among employees who first thought about themselves as interdependent or as members of a group (Chen & Welland, 2002; Wisse & Rus, 2012). Thus, the language that upper management uses in speaking with company supervisors—whether focusing on the interdependence or the separateness among employees—may

influence how supervisors behave toward their own subordinates. For instance, the grocery chain Whole Foods emphasizes the importance of shared goals and employee interconnections with a mission statement titled “Declaration of Interdependence” that stresses the shared fate of employees across levels of the hierarchy (Blackman, 2004). Implementation of this mission has included an executive-pay cap that limits what top managers may earn relative to the company’s lowest paid employees.

Last, organizations can help ensure that leaders are empathetic and able to take others’ perspectives (rather than solely self-interested) by demonstrating that such behaviors are valued at the company. Indeed, research suggests that midlevel managers look to top managers for guidance as to what is and is not acceptable treatment of others (Ayree, Chen, Sun, & Debrah, 2007; Mawritz, Mayer, Hoobler, Wayne, & Marinova, 2012; Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, & Salvador, 2009; Schaubroeck et al., 2012). In an experimental test, leaders who were given simple instructions to “view the situation not just as a manager, but also as an employee” were less likely to undermine a subordinate by withholding valuable information from him or her, compared to leaders not given these instructions (Henderson & Frantz, 2013). And although, as previously mentioned, appointed leaders tended to act with more self-interest than those who were elected, this difference was eliminated when the appointed leaders were first asked to consider “the extent to which you experience a prosocial attitude toward others” (De Cremer & van Dijk, 2008). Other ways of encouraging perspective-taking habits include encouraging physical intermixing across departmental units (Audia, 2012), engaging in regular perspective-taking exercises such as practicing getting in the mindset of customers or job candidates (Grant, 2013), and explicitly seeking feedback about when one’s behavior reflects a lack of empathy (Goleman, 1998, November).

Reducing leaders’ threat concerns. As described in the preceding section, experiencing threat to one’s hold on power can negatively affect the behavior even of otherwise other-oriented powerholders. Again, completely eliminating a leader’s sense of risk may not be advisable, as it may lead to excessive leader entitlement or a sense of invulnerability. However, evidence suggests that there are more moderate steps that organizations might take to reduce leader insecurities. First and most critical, making promotion decisions based on established, merit-based criteria, rather than arbitrary or inconsistent criteria, will yield managers whose power is viewed as legitimate and who therefore feel less vulnerable to external threats. Increasing the degree of fit between a leader’s abilities and the demands of the job (Guay, 2013) also will reduce competence doubts among leaders.

More subtly, organizations can consider managers’ general well-being—managers who feel self-affirmed (Fast & Chen, 2009), who are fairly treated (Ayree et al., 2007; Hoobler & Brass, 2006; Tepper, Duffy, Henle, & Lambert, 2006), or who are the recipients of simple expressions of gratitude (Cho & Fast, 2012) are less likely to act aggressively against others from a position of power.

Ensuring accountability for leaders. Along with minimizing self-focused goals and threat concerns, ensuring that leaders are held accountable for their actions also will reduce the likelihood that their power will be used for self-serving ends. In several studies, involving both student samples and working professionals, power tended to increase the tendency to make self-serving decisions only in circumstances of low accountability—that is, when the

outcomes of leaders' decisions would not be visible to others (De Cremer, 2003; Pitesa & Thau, 2013b; Rus, van Knippenberg, & Wisse, 2012). Thus, by establishing transparency and visibility of managerial decisions, organizations can greatly decrease the likelihood that leaders will act primarily on their own behalf.

Future Directions for Research

In keeping with Van Knippenberg and Sitkin's (2013) call for theory and research exploring "more clearly defined and empirically distinct aspects of leadership" (p. 2), the present article articulates how one such aspect (power) might interact with characteristics of the leadership setting (self-focused goals and threats to power) to predict a specific organizational outcome (self-interested leader behavior). However, there is much more to be done to further elucidate this phenomenon.

Moderators. The proposed model suggests that power will strengthen the relationship between self-focused goals and self-interested behavior, but additional variables are likely to further moderate these relationships. One possibility is that a strong organizational culture might serve as a powerful environmental influence that reduces the effect of individual differences on behavior. In other words, the proposed interaction between power and self-focused goals may be stronger in an organization with a weak culture versus a strong one. In a strong organizational culture in which behavior is more tightly monitored, power may have less of a disinhibiting effect on behavior than in weaker cultures in which behavioral expectations are looser.

In addition to the strength of an organizational culture, *what* is valued by a given culture also may matter. In an organization that maintains strong cooperative norms, everyone—even self-focused individuals with power—might be motivated to behave in ways that benefit the team. In contrast, in an organization that strongly values competitiveness, everyone—even other-focused individuals in subordinate roles—might learn to attend to their own needs and interests.

National-level culture may operate similarly. Although there is some exploration in the present article of cultural differences in responses to power, the overwhelming majority of this research was carried out in North American or Western European cultural contexts. Future research should explore the possibility that different mechanisms will affect leader behavior in non-Western environments than in Western ones. As one example, criteria for what constitutes legitimate versus illegitimate leadership may well be culture-specific. Performance-based criteria for promotion are considered standard practice in the United States, whereas other factors such as age or seniority may be considered equally legitimate elsewhere. Moreover, stronger cultural norms of prioritizing the group over the individual in non-Western (versus Western) cultural contexts may reduce the influence of self-focused goals on self-focused behavior in those settings.

Gender, too, can be viewed as a source of potential cultural variation in individuals' responses to power. Although the role of gender in predicting leadership effectiveness has been extensively explored (e.g., Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003), less is known about whether women and men might be differentially vulnerable—or not—to the potentially corrupting effects of power. This is an area ripe for empirical investigation.

Finally, the nature of the interactive effect between power and self-focused goals in predicting leader self-interested behavior may turn out to vary at different levels of leader power. Laboratory operationalizations of power tend to involve relatively minor degrees of power with minimal long-term consequences, such as the power to evaluate another person's achievement on a lab task. Real-world leadership is of course more consequential; yet even so, truly absolute power is quite rare. Supervisors must answer to their own supervisors, CEOs are held in check by boards of directors, and politicians can be voted out or overthrown. I have suggested here that the tendency of power to lead to corruption (at least in the form of self-interested behavior) is dependent on the leader's goals, but it might nonetheless be the case, as Lord Acton famously suggested (Dalberg-Acton, 1907), that absolute power corrupts absolutely. Perhaps even those leaders with other-focused tendencies may be persuaded by seemingly unlimited power to act toward their own ends. In other words, it would be interesting to explore whether the hypothesized interactive relationship between power and self-focused goals on self-interested behavior changes as a leader's power increases in scope.

Additional dependent variables. Power and self-focused goals or threats may also interact to affect additional outcomes beyond those explored here. The dependent variable of self-interested leader behavior overlaps with that of ethical behavior, an outcome of long-standing interest to management researchers. Future research might explore whether power leads individuals with self-focused goals to behave less ethically, but individuals without self-focused goals to perhaps increase their attention to ethical guidelines.

Similarly, this review has focused on self-interested behavior as the key outcome variable, but has not directly explored behavior that directly serves the interests of others. Although prosocial or other-interested behavior is frequently conceptualized as the opposite of self-interested behavior, these two outcomes are at least theoretically orthogonal, as discussed earlier. Researchers might profitably explore the specific circumstances under which an increase in power might induce leaders to behave in others' interests. In doing so, one important consideration would be to carefully identify the specific "other" whose interests are being served by the leader. One can certainly imagine situations in which the interests of one's work team may conflict with that of the organization, or when the organization's interests may conflict with those of the community or society as a whole. How do leaders manage the sometimes-conflicting interests of these varying constituencies, and how might their decisions be predictable based on characteristics of the leader and his or her environment?

Finally, although I have suggested that self-interested leader behavior will have a net negative effect for organizations (and particularly for subordinates), it is unlikely that this is always true in all circumstances. Chatterjee and Hambrick (2007), for instance, demonstrated that narcissism among CEOs predicted volatility in company performance—but not absolute levels of performance. In other words, self-interested leaders may in some circumstances serve companies well. More research is needed to more precisely characterize the effects of self-interested behavior on individual and organizational performance.

Tests of interventions. As a final note, more empirical tests of organizational interventions also are sorely needed. For instance, what strategies can organizations use to effectively establish norms that maintain leaders' focus on group goals, regardless of the leaders' initial

tendencies? Having effective, evidence-based tools to reduce self-interested leader behavior would be an enormous boon for organizations and their members.

Concluding Thoughts on Power and Corruption

"It is not power that corrupts, but fear. Fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it and fear of the scourge of power corrupts those who are subject to it."

—Aung San Suu Kiy (2010), Nobel Peace Prize Winner

The evidence reviewed in this article is consistent with the suggestion of Suu Kiy, the Burmese political leader, that power corrupts not inevitably but only under specific circumstances, and that a desire for power can have either prosocial aims or selfish ones. The new and stimulating empirical findings reviewed here provide insight into what tips that balance. First, individual characteristics that encourage a prioritizing of the self over others—including self-focused personality traits (e.g., narcissism), a self-orientation (e.g., individualism), self-enhancement values, or a personalized dominance motivation—may lead to self-interested behavior, exacerbated by a position of power. Second, threats to leaders' power—such as from instability, illegitimacy, competence doubts, or low status—may also tend to push leaders toward maintaining their own power at all costs, even if it means abusing it. Moreover, these factors may be at their most toxic in combination, such as a leader who lacks a moral identity and is low in status, or one who has a strong motivation for power but a tenuous hold on it (see Maner & Mead, 2010).

Yet despite the dark picture that these findings suggest, there is encouraging news as well. First, as described previously, there are a number of antidotes that organizations can put in place to foster group-serving behavior among leaders. Second, an interesting, even inspiring, finding emerged in a not-insignificant number of the studies reviewed here (Chen et al., 2001; DeCelles et al., 2012; Fast & Chen, 2009; Kopelman, 2009; Lönnqvist et al., 2011; Rus et al., 2010a; Wisse & Rus, 2012; Zhong et al., 2006). In these studies, not only did individuals who fell on the self-focused end of a particular continuum become more self-interested in their behavior when they had power (versus no power), but for individuals who fell on the other-focused end of a continuum, having power decreased their tendency to be self-interested. That is, for generally other-oriented individuals, having power actually made them better people than they were before. This suggests that not only may power not always have negative effects, but it may have positive, rather than neutral, effects as well. This is good news for organizations and good news for humanity. The reputation of power as a purely malevolent social force appears then to be at least partially undeserved.

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