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Speaking Truth to Power: The Effect of Candid Feedback on How Individuals With Power Allocate Resources

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Subordinates are often seen as impotent, able to react to but not affect how powerholders treat them. Instead, we conceptualize subordinate feedback as an important trigger of powerholders' behavioral self-regulation and explore subordinates' reciprocal influence on how powerholders allocate resources to them over time. In 2 experiments using a multiparty, multiround dictator game paradigm, we found that when subordinates provided candid feedback about whether they found prior allocations to be fair or unfair, powerholders regulated how self-interested their allocations were over time. However, when subordinates provided compliant feedback about powerholders' prior allocation decisions (offered consistently positive feedback, regardless of the powerholders' prior allocation), those powerholders made increasingly self-interested allocations over time. In addition, we showed that guilt partially mediates this relationship: powerholders feel more guilty after receiving negative feedback about an allocation, subsequently leading to a less self-interested allocation, whereas they feel less guilty after receiving positive feedback about an allocation, subsequently taking more for themselves. Our findings integrate the literature on upward feedback with theory about moral self-regulation to support the idea that subordinates are an important source of influence over those who hold power over them.

Keywords: power, upward feedback, self-regulation, allocation behavior

Organizations and groups regularly face the challenge of how to distribute finite resources (March & Simon, 1958), including compensation, plum assignments, budgets, expense accounts, and even office space (Barnard, 1938). In these contexts, some individuals have control over how these resources are allocated, while others have to accept the allocations made to them. As a result, those who control resource allocations have a great deal of power. In fact, most definitions of power focus on the extent to which an individual controls important outcomes or resources (Dépret & Fiske, 1993; Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003) or the extent to which others depend on them for valued resources (Emerson, 1962; French & Raven, 1959).

However, allocating finite resources involves difficult tradeoffs for the individuals with the power to do so, not only about how to divide resources but also about how to balance their own self-interest with the interests of those over whom they have power (Diekmann, Samuels, Ross, & Bazerman, 1997; Komorita &

Parks, 1994). Every allocation requires individuals with power to make a choice about whether to serve the interests of the group or to maximize their own self-interest, typically at the expense of others (Rus, van Knippenberg, & Wisse, 2010). How those in power resolve tradeoffs between their own and others' interests when allocating resources is thus a topic of significant importance in the power (e.g., DeCelles, DeRue, Margolis, & Ceranic, 2012; Overbeck & Park, 2001, 2006) and organizational justice (e.g., Adams, 1965; Leventhal, 1980; Tyler, 1989) literatures as well as in research on moral and prosocial behavior (Bersoff, 1999; Epley, Caruso, & Bazerman, 2006).

A considerable amount of the research on power would lead to pessimistic conclusions about how individuals resolve these tradeoffs. Power appears to increase individuals' tendencies to take more for themselves and feel legitimate in doing so (e.g., de Cremer & van Dijk, 2005; de Cremer, van Dijk, & Folmer, 2009; Keltner et al., 2003; Kipnis, 1972; Piff, Kraus, Côté, Cheng, & Keltner, 2010; van Dijk & de Cremer, 2006; Winter, 1973). Fortunately, there is also evidence to suggest that some contextual factors, such as the extent to which the situation facilitates powerholders' thinking about their social responsibility to others, can moderate these tendencies (e.g., Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh, 2001; Gardner & Seeley, 2001; Handgraaf, van Dijk, Vermunt, Wilke, & de Dreu, 2008; Overbeck & Park, 2001).

Interestingly, one contextual factor that may rein in powerholders' tendency to take more for themselves when making allocations has been neglected: *the behavior of those affected* by the allocation decisions (Handgraaf, van Dijk, & de Cremer, 2003).

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Work on how power affects allocation behavior has focused overwhelmingly on the unidirectional effect of powerholders on those receiving the allocations. This treats the exercise of power as a one-way street and assumes that powerholders are unaffected by the outcomes of their decisions. It also treats everyone on the receiving end of an allocation as impotent and incapable of shaping his or her outcomes. As Handgraaf et al. (2003) noted, a “strong bias exists toward research and theorizing about allocators, [and] recipients are usually mentioned only as some kind of afterthought and are often not elaborated upon extensively” (p. 279). In their words, this gap represents a “missed opportunity” (p. 279).

In this article, we address this missed opportunity and examine the influence that recipients of a powerholder’s allocations can have over the allocations they receive over time. (We refer to these recipients as *subordinates*, as they are subordinate to the powerholder making the allocation). We argue that when subordinates’ feedback is candid (i.e., when it accurately reflects the extent to which the powerholders’ last allocation was self-interested), it can trigger powerholders’ self-regulatory processes and function as an important check on their self-interested behavior over time. We compare this type of feedback to compliant feedback (i.e., consistently positive feedback about the powerholder’s last allocation, regardless of how self-interested it was), which provides no countervailing check against increasing self-interest over time. Specifically, we link research on moral self-regulation to existing theories of power to explain changes in the pattern and trend of powerholders’ behavior as a function of subordinates’ feedback to them.

We integrate knowledge about upward feedback processes and outcomes in organizations (Antonioni, 1994; Seifert & Yukl, 2010; Seifert, Yukl, & McDonald, 2003; Smither, London, & Reilly, 2005) with psychological theory on moral self-regulation (Monin & Jordan, 2009; Monin & Miller, 2001) to conceptualize subordinates as an important source of social information for those in positions of power. In doing so, we explore the ways in which those subject to powerful others can have a more profound influence over their ultimate outcomes than current understandings in the power literature include (Handgraaf et al., 2003). In addition, we explore the role of emotion as a mechanism driving our effects. We show that the level of guilt triggered by subordinates’ feedback as a function of the powerholder’s last allocation operates as a mechanism that either dampens (if guilt is high) or amplifies (if guilt is low) powerholders’ self-interested tendencies over time.

We examine allocation decisions as part of an ongoing dynamic that unfolds between those making the allocations and those receiving them (Bluedorn & Jaussi, 2008; Shamir, 2011). This approach adds an important dimension to our research, since the majority of studies about how power affects allocation decisions focus on one-shot contexts and ignore the temporal nature of most organizational decision making (Zaheer, Albert, & Zaheer, 1999). Attending to the temporal dimension in this process allows us to understand the behavior of those with power as part of a continuing reciprocal relationship: powerholders act, those subordinate to them and affected by their decisions react, leading to subsequent reactions by the powerholder that may (or may not) reflect an adjustment in their behavior as a result of the subordinates’ reaction (and so on). Even work examining allocation decisions across multiple rounds has focused on overall (cross-time) averages or

final round allocations as the ultimate outcomes of interest (e.g., Lurie & Swaminathan, 2009). In contrast, we offer a richer understanding of this reciprocal dynamic and examine changes in the patterns and trends of behavior in addition to averages and overall outcomes (Menard, 2002).

Power, Self-Interest, and Self-Regulatory Restraint

Historically, power has been considered a corrupting force (Kipnis, 1972) that encourages individuals to pursue their own self-interest (de Cremer et al., 2009; de Cremer & van Dijk, 2005; van Dijk & de Cremer, 2006). Individuals with more power feel less inhibited about doing what they want (Keltner et al., 2003), are inclined to behave less generously toward others (Piff et al., 2010), feel more entitled to take resources for themselves (de Cremer et al., 2009; de Cremer & van Dijk, 2005), and experience less interference from others when they do so (Winter, 1973).

There are three main reasons why having power motivates higher levels of self-interested decision making. First, given their control over critical resources, individuals with power tend to perceive themselves as highly independent (Lee & Tiedens, 2001) and socially distant from others (Lammers, Galinsky, Gordijn, & Otten, 2012; Magee & Smith, 2013). Social distance consequently increases self-interested tendencies in resource allocations (Bohnet & Frey, 1999; Hoffman, McCabe, & Smith, 1996) and can exacerbate self-interested behavior more generally (Messick & Sentis, 1983).

Second, powerholders pay more attention to information relevant to their self-interest (Copeland, 1994; Ebenbach & Keltner, 1998). Individuals in positions of power over others perceive that they have more input in a group and thus deserve more of the common resource in return (Diekmann et al., 1997). They thus underestimate their own levels of self-interested behavior (Messick & Sentis, 1979; Thompson & Loewenstein, 1992) and may not see violations of equality or equity norms as necessarily self-interested (Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988; Wicklund, 1975).

Third, research on cognitive role schemas has shown that powerholders may be particularly likely to deceive themselves into thinking that self-interested allocation decisions are appropriate, particularly in the presence of incentives to behave in a self-interested manner (e.g., de Cremer & van Dijk, 2005; Messick & Sentis, 1983). For instance, powerholders will deviate from an equality (or equity) norm and take more than their fair share from a common resource, even when they have done no more work than any of the other group members, simply by virtue of being named the “leader” or “supervisor” of a group (de Cremer et al., 2009; de Cremer & van Dijk, 2005). Even if their power was randomly assigned to them, the simple act of being assigned that power leads people to feel entitled to behave in a self-interested manner (de Cremer et al., 2009; de Cremer & van Dijk, 2005; van Dijk & de Cremer, 2006).

Moreover, there is good reason to believe that this general tendency for powerholders to take more escalates over time, as individuals with power become accustomed to getting their own way and few people challenge their actions (Kipnis, 1972; Winter, 1973). Together, these psychological tendencies converge to a general conclusion that individuals with power tend to take more for themselves, a tendency that worsens over time.

However, powerholders do not always make self-interested choices (Chen et al., 2001; Gardner & Seeley, 2001; Handgraaf et al., 2001). Like all individuals, those with power desire to see themselves as moral (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Blasi, 1984) and are motivated to be seen as fair, generous, and less self-interested by others (Franzen & Pointner, 2012). Even when they have the power to behave in a self-interested manner and get away with it, powerholders can be subject to self-regulatory restraints that curb this tendency (Dana, Cain, & Dawes, 2006; Pillutla & Murnighan, 1995).

For instance, Dana et al. (2006) demonstrated how a deep-seated desire to appear moral helped mitigate powerholders' self-interested tendencies in a dictator game. In their experiment, a substantial number of participants in the dictator role chose to exit the game for a lower amount than they could have received otherwise in order to prevent others from realizing how self-interested they were. This natural restraint against being seen as self-interested exists in tension with the powerholder's desire to maximize his or her own short-term self-interest. As powerholders seek to strike a balance between these opposing motivations, their subordinates have the opportunity to be a unique source of social influence to help tip the scales in either direction.

The Role of Subordinate Feedback in Powerholders' Allocation Decisions

Certain contextual factors can influence powerful people to be more (rather than less) attentive to others' interests as well as more willing to trade off their own self-interest and act in the interests of others (e.g., Chen et al., 2001; Gardner & Seeley, 2001; Handgraaf et al., 2008; Overbeck & Park, 2001). Here, we explore the role of subordinate feedback as a contextual factor influencing how self-interested powerholders become over time.

Though powerholders may be less susceptible to the influence of others than some (Keltner et al., 2003), they are not immune to it (e.g., Atwater, Roush, & Fischthal, 1995; Heslin & Latham, 2004; Reilly, Smither, & Vasiljopoulos, 1996; Walker & Smither, 1999). Research on upward feedback—that is, feedback from individuals lower in the hierarchy to those higher up—suggests that it raises individuals' self-awareness of what they do well or badly (Ashford & Tsui, 1991; Atwater et al., 1995). Since subordinates are the immediate recipients of powerholders' decisions, feedback from them has the potential to affect powerholders' positive or negative views about themselves.

Candid Versus Compliant Feedback

However, feedback from subordinates is unlikely to be consistent across sources (Cardy & Dobbins, 1986; Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). Indeed, research on upward influence (e.g., Wayne & Liden, 1995; Yukl & Tracey, 1992) and implicit voice theory (Detert & Edmondson, 2011) suggest that subordinates differ in their willingness to provide candid feedback to powerholders about how they are being treated. In particular, some subordinates provide candid feedback about the decisions that affect them, while others refrain from it, endorsing decisions that affect them regardless of whether those decisions have benefited or harmed them (Antonioni, 1994). We focused on this dimension here and made a prediction about how subordinates who provided candid

feedback to powerholders about their allocation decisions (i.e., opposed or endorsed them depending on the level of their self-interested behavior) rather than provide compliant feedback (i.e., endorsed them unquestioningly) elicited different behavior from their powerholders over time.

Subordinates who are candid with powerholders about their perceptions provide negative feedback when allocations are perceived to be unfair but provide positive feedback when allocations are perceived positively. When subordinates are candid, those who have power over them are more likely to make an effort to strike a balance between their own self-interest and the interests of their followers.

In contrast, subordinates who provide compliant feedback to powerholders regardless of their behavior (i.e., provide consistently positive feedback, regardless of the prior allocation) provide no countervailing source of information to motivate a change in self-perceptions, allowing powerholders to behave more selfishly. Specifically, we expected powerholders who received compliant feedback to be less likely to make an effort to strike a balance between their own self-interest and the interests of their subordinates. Therefore, we hypothesized the following as a general effect of subordinate feedback on how powerholders allocate resources to their subordinates:

Hypothesis 1: Powerholders who receive candid feedback about their allocation decisions make less self-interested allocations, on average, compared with powerholders who receive compliant feedback about their allocation decisions.

However, our primary interest is in the effect of feedback on how powerholders manage the competing motivations to be more or less self-interested in an ongoing way. Thus, in order to unpack this general effect of subordinate feedback on allocations, we require more specific hypothesizing about how different types of subordinate feedback (candid vs. compliant) affect the trends and patterns of powerholders' allocation decisions over time.

Effects of Subordinate Feedback on Powerholders' Self-Regulatory Tendencies

Research on multisource feedback claims that it helps individuals perceive their behavior more accurately, especially when the feedback comes from someone with a different perspective (Seifert et al., 2003; Yammarino & Atwater, 1993). Although a number of studies have shown that individuals in positions of power are more likely to change their behavior in the presence of negative feedback and less likely to change their behavior in the presence of positive feedback (e.g., Atwater, Roush, & Fischthal (1995); Hegarty, 1974; Walker & Smither, 1999), many others have shown either inconsistent or weak results for the overall impact of subordinate feedback (e.g., Atwater et al., 2000; Reilly et al., 1996; Seifert & Yukl, 2010). We argue that when powerholders are navigating competing motivations to be more or less self-interested, their subordinates' feedback may swing their behavior in either direction, depending on whether it triggers their self-regulatory tendencies (Monin & Jordan, 2009; Monin & Miller, 2001).

Individuals regulate their behavior in many domains, from what they eat to whether they sin (Vohs, 2006). Theories of moral credentialing and compensation (Merritt, Effron, & Monin, 2010;

Monin & Jordan, 2009) posit that the moral self-concept is dynamic and that individuals constantly navigate around an internal equilibrium that permits them to behave in a self-interested way, but only to the point at which their moral self-image would become unnecessarily tarnished by the behavior (Mazar, Amir, & Ariely, 2008). Individuals give themselves moral “credits” for ethical behavior, which provide them with a license to behave unethically subsequently (Merritt et al., 2010; Monin & Miller, 2001). After building up their moral “bank account” with ethical behaviors, individuals then draw on this account and feel licensed to commit self-interested or unethical acts (Batson & Shaw, 1991). However, individuals also accrue moral “debits” for behaving unethically, for which they compensate by behaving more ethically subsequently (Sachdeva, Iliev, & Medin, 2009). This moral compensation process is typically activated by the threat to the self-concept triggered by their prior unethical acts (Monin & Jordan, 2009).

We expected to find that powerholders who receive candid feedback would engage in more active moral self-regulation than powerholders who receive compliant feedback. In other words, powerholders’ allocation decisions would fluctuate more over time for those with subordinates who provided candid feedback than for those with subordinates who provided compliant feedback. If powerholders receive negative feedback after a self-interested decision, it threatens their ability to maintain a positive self-view (Epley & Dunning, 2000; Thompson & Loewenstein, 1992), leading to subsequent compensation behavior (in this case, a less self-interested allocation). However, the less self-interested allocation would elicit a positive response from subordinates, which would then bolster their moral self-image and license the powerholders to make a more self-interested allocation. The ongoing self-regulation that candid feedback triggers in powerholders means that, longitudinally, their decisions (or behavior) would follow neither a negative or positive trend. Instead, it would vary around some equilibrium point as powerholders adjust their next allocation based on the most recent feedback.

Hypothesis 2: Candid feedback in response to a powerholder’s prior decision will predict how a powerholder’s allocation subsequently changes, such that after receiving positive (negative) feedback, his or her next allocation will be more (less) self-interested.

In contrast, because powerholders with subordinates who provide compliant feedback are not confronted with negative feedback after self-interested decisions, their self-concept would be less threatened when they make those self-interested allocations, making compensation for this behavior less necessary. Instead, when powerholders receive compliant feedback from subordinates, they maintain consistently positive self-views (Atwater et al., 1995). We expected to find that, without the negative feedback that triggers moral self-regulation and keeps their motivation to behave in self-interested ways in check, powerholders with compliant feedback would slide more smoothly down a slippery slope toward increasingly self-interested behavior (Gino & Bazerman, 2009; Schrand & Zechman, 2011). In other words, we expected these powerholders to show a steadily escalating trend (significantly increasing slope) toward more self-interested allocations over time.

Hypothesis 3: Powerholders who receive compliant feedback about their allocation decisions will make increasingly self-interested decisions over time.

The Mediating Role of Guilt

Thus far, our hypotheses have focused on how subordinate feedback shapes powerholders’ allocation behavior over time. We have not yet addressed what may be the underlying process behind our hypothesized effects. Therefore, the final goal in this article was to unpack the mechanism that mediates the effect of subordinate feedback on powerholders’ allocation decisions. To do this, we return to theory on the moral self-concept (Monin & Jordan, 2009), as well as work on moral emotions (Eisenberg, 2000; Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007). As we have discussed already, morality is central to most people’s identities, and it is important for individuals are able to think of themselves as moral and fair (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Blasi, 1984; Franzen & Pointner, 2012). The ability to view oneself as moral and fair is obviously compromised when one makes decisions that contravene moral norms. In allocation tasks, the most common norm used to determine fairness is equitable distribution (Leventhal, 1976). Thus, when individuals make self-interested allocations that are less than equitable, they are violating a moral norm.

Transgressions of normative behavior are often accompanied by emotions (Blasi, 1999). While many emotions can follow from behavior that violates moral norms, one of the most common is guilt (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1995; McGraw, 1987). Guilt originates from interpersonal interactions (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994; Lewis, 2008; Tangney et al., 2007), and involves a negative evaluation of specific behaviors (Tangney et al., 2007). Thus, feedback from those with whom one interacts is likely to exacerbate guilt if that feedback is negative or dampen guilt if that feedback is positive. In the context of allocating scarce resources, we expected that when powerholders received more negative feedback from others they would feel more guilt, and when they received more positive feedback from others, they would feel less guilt.

The question then becomes whether this emotional response to subordinate feedback changes powerholders’ allocation behavior, with higher levels of guilt predicting less self-interested subsequent allocations and lower levels of guilt predicting more self-interested subsequent allocations. Existing research suggested that this would be the case. A key attribute of guilt is that it can motivate individuals to repair the damage caused by the action that triggered it. As Nelissen and Zeelenberg (2009) put it, “guilt motivates compensatory prosocial behavior to repair social bonds” (p. 118). Both manipulated guilt and self-reported guilt have been found to predict increases in cooperative behavior in social dilemmas (Ketelaar & Tung Au, 2003; Nelissen, Dijk, & deVries, 2007). In addition, moral compensation theory (Monin & Jordan, 2009) proposes that guilt constitutes a threat to a powerholder’s moral self-regard. Hence, if the self-interested nature of powerholders’ actions is highlighted for them by others, they will feel more guilt and subsequently make a less self-interested decision in an attempt to repair their positive self-concept.

Hypothesis 4: The guilt a powerholder feels after receiving feedback from subordinates about his or her most recent

allocation will mediate the relationship between subordinates' feedback and the change in the powerholder's next allocation (i.e., whether it becomes more or less self-interested).

Overview of Studies

We are interested in the effect of candid (vs. compliant) subordinate feedback on the allocation behavior of powerholders over time and whether guilt mediates the relationship between the type of subordinate feedback and subsequent changes in powerholders' allocation behavior. To have precise empirical control over the independent variables we were interested in and to ensure these predictors drive the effects we hypothesized, in the two studies that follow we employed a multiparty, multiround dictator game (Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler, 1986) to examine how dictators (powerholders) react to feedback from groups of recipients (subordinates). In Study 1, we investigated how different types of subordinate feedback about allocation decisions influence powerholders' allocation decisions on average (Hypothesis 1) and over time (i.e., their patterns and trends; Hypotheses 2 and 3). In Study 2, we replicated results for our first three hypotheses and explored the role of guilt as a mediator of the impact of subordinate feedback on powerholders' allocation behavior (Hypothesis 4).

The use of a multiround dictator game provided a number of advantages in studying our research question. This paradigm allowed us to activate the tension between a powerholder's motivations to make more or less self-interested decisions (e.g., Dana et al., 2006; for a review see Camerer, 2003) and to tap actual behavioral consequences of the subordinates' feedback. The multiround format further allowed us to examine trends over time in a nuanced way (e.g., Andrade & Ariely, 2009). Manipulating subordinates' responses in real time as allocation decisions were being made allowed us to create groups of individuals that mapped our predictions precisely and to test the immediate effect of feedback on a powerholder's actual allocations (becoming more or less self-interested during each round). Finally, participants' decisions had meaningful outcomes for them: powerholders who kept more of the common resource during the studies received more money or credit at the end of each study.

Study 1

Method

Sample. Eighty-six participants (50% female; $M_{\text{age}} = 28.32$ years, $SD = 9.33$; 48% currently employed) from a paid, community-based subject pool earned £10 for participating in the study and could earn up to £10 more, depending on how much they kept of the common resource during the course of the experiment.

Experimental setting and procedure. Upon their arrival at the lab, participants were guided to cubicles containing a computer and a set of instructions. All instructions were read aloud. Consistent with work on instant entitlement bias (e.g., de Cremer et al., 2009; de Cremer & van Dijk, 2005; van Dijk & de Cremer, 2006), participants were informed they would be assigned to either a "powerholder" (dictator) or a "subordinate" (recipient) role. However, each participant was actually assigned the role of dictator, while a computer program modeled the reactions of the subordi-

nates (we elaborate on this aspect of the procedure under "Measures and operationalization"). Each group (consisting of one powerholder and three subordinates) was endowed with 100 points for each of 10 rounds. Participants were told that the powerholder's task was to take as much of the resource as they desired, and the remaining resources would be divided equally among the three subordinates. They were also told that the identity of participants was anonymous and that subordinates had no option but to accept the powerholder's allocation. However, subordinates would provide feedback to the powerholder about their views of the fairness of the allocation decisions.

Participants were told they would receive points amounting to a proportion of the total allocation over the 10 rounds that they kept for themselves and that these points would translate into higher earnings (up to an additional £10). During the debriefing, we checked whether participants understood the dynamics of the experiment and also probed them for suspicion about the experiment. Six participants either failed to correctly reply to the questions designed to check whether they understood the game or reported suspicion that the subordinate feedback was fake. In addition, six participants failed to correctly answer three attention filters embedded in the questionnaire (i.e., "This is just to make sure you are reading this question carefully. Please select 'very likely' below"). We excluded these participants from the analyses.

Powerholders then allocated their initial endowment. After this and each subsequent round's allocation, they received (programmed) subordinate feedback based on the extent to which the allocation decision of the powerholder in the previous round was assessed as more or less self-interested. At the end of all the rounds, the total points the powerholders retained for themselves, as well as the total points they had allocated to each of the "recipients" were calculated and recorded. We then debriefed the participants, and paid them their £10 base pay as well as an additional cash payout amounting to £0.01 for each point they had retained for themselves. These additional payouts ranged from £0 to £10 ($M = £4.80$, $SD = £3.23$).

Conditions. The experiment had two conditions. In the candid feedback condition, all subordinates reacted candidly to the powerholder's allocations, more or less positively based on whether the powerholder had been more or less equitable in the previous round. In the compliant feedback condition, all subordinates reacted in a consistently positive way to the powerholder's allocation decisions regardless of how self-interested they were. Subordinate feedback was modeled such that the individual feedback of the three computer-generated subordinates was reported to the powerholder as an average rating across all subordinates. This feedback was randomly generated around a fixed value that was dependent on the powerholder's prior allocation.

Measures and operationalization.

Classification of powerholders' allocation behavior. To program subordinate feedback, we had to categorize the powerholder's allocations such that the computer-generated subordinates responded appropriately after each round (the calculations used to ensure the feedback was realistic are available from the first author). Given that how powerholders resolve tradeoffs between their own and their subordinates' interests when allocating resources is a key indicator of how fairly they treat their subordinates more generally (e.g., Bazerman, Loewenstein, & White, 1992; Folger & Konovsky, 1989; Lind, 2001) subordinate feedback to

powerholders was framed in terms of “fairness.” We used equal division as the benchmark to determine whether powerholders’ allocation behavior was evaluated as fair or not by subordinates, based on prior work using dictator game paradigms (e.g., de Kwaadsteniet, Rijkhoff, & van Dijk, 2013).

In the first round, an allocation of an equal or more than equal share (giving at least three fourths of the 100-point endowment to the three subordinates) was seen as a positive (fair) allocation and an allocation of less than an equal share was seen as a negative (unfair) allocation. Our simulated subordinates responded to powerholders’ allocations on a round-by-round basis. After the first round, the allocation behavior of powerholders was classified by a combination of the amount they kept in that round and by the change in their behavior from the previous round. Allocations of (a) an equal or more than equal share, with a positive change compared with the previous round, was classified as *very positive*; (b) a less than an equal share, with a negative change compared with the previous round, was classified as *very negative*; (c) a more than an equal share, but a negative change compared with the previous round, was classified as *positive*; and (d) a less than an equal share, but with a positive change compared with the previous round, was classified as *negative*.

Subordinate feedback. Based on their allocation in the prior round, powerholders (our participants) received a rating of the fairness of their allocations as perceived by the (computer-generated) recipients on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *very unfair*, 5 = *very fair*). In this experiment, powerholders saw the average rating across all group members (reported as a mean between 1 and 5). To create realism, we used an algorithm that randomly varied the subordinate ratings in both subordinate feedback conditions around a fixed value based on how self-interestedly the powerholder had behaved in the previous round. As an example, a powerholder in the candid feedback condition behaving *negatively* (i.e., allocating a less than equal share to participants but nevertheless allocating more than he or she had in the previous round) would (as a function of the algorithm used by the program to create realism in the modeled subordinate feedback) receive ratings varied around a fixed value (between 2 and 3, labeled as *negative*) from his or her subordinates. In general, powerholders in the candid feedback condition received ratings above 3 following their “positive” and “very positive” allocations and ratings below 3 following their “negative” and “very negative” allocations. In contrast, powerholders in the compliant feedback condition received ratings around a fixed value (between 3 and 5) regardless of how self-interested their previous round’s allocations had been.

Analytic strategy. We wanted to make use of the statistical power afforded by the multiple observations we had for each individual, while accounting for the fact that the observations (allocation decisions) were nested within individuals and thus were nonindependent. A random effects panel data approach allowed us to control for nonindependence among the observations while utilizing all our data points and also permitted an examination of trends and change over time (e.g., Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012). We used a maximum-likelihood algorithm to derive parameter estimates with robust standard errors.

Results

Manipulation check. To assess the effectiveness of the feedback manipulation, we asked a subsample of participants ($N = 54$) to indicate the extent to which they perceived the ratings of their subordinates to be negative (on a 7-point scale). A two-tailed t test revealed that powerholders in the candid feedback condition perceived the feedback they received as more negative than powerholders in the compliant feedback condition ($M_{\text{compliant feedback}} = 1.70$, $SD = 1.13$, vs. $M_{\text{candid feedback}} = 5.37$, $SD = 1.64$), $t(53) = 9.53$, $p = .00$.

Hypothesis tests. Hypothesis 1 predicted that, on average, powerholders in the candid feedback condition would take less of the common resource than powerholders in the compliant feedback condition. We ran a panel data regression, controlling for the first-round allocation and including a dummy variable for the subordinate feedback condition (compliant feedback = 0, candid feedback = 1). Consistent with our hypothesis and in line with findings in the upward feedback literature (Atwater et al., 1995; Hegarty, 1974; Walker & Smither, 1999), it revealed a negative and significant coefficient for condition ($\beta = -.16$, $p = .036$), indicating that powerholders in the candid feedback condition ($M_{\text{candid feedback}} = 43.05$, $SD = 31.76$) took significantly less on average than participants in the compliant feedback condition ($M_{\text{compliant feedback}} = 53.50$, $SD = 33.47$).

Hypothesis 2 predicted that candid subordinate feedback in response to a powerholder’s prior allocation decision would predict the change in a powerholder’s subsequent allocation decision. This is a hypothesis about the pattern of how self-interested a powerholder’s allocations become over time. Specifically, our prediction was that powerholders would self-regulate their allocation decisions in the candid feedback condition (their allocations would fluctuate) but not in the compliant feedback condition, in which powerholders were not confronted with any negative feedback. This requires a test of the effect of subordinate feedback at time $t - 1$ on the size of the change in the allocation of powerholders at time t , while controlling for nonindependence among observations. A random effects panel data regression with feedback ($t - 1$) as the independent variable provides an estimation of the effect of a given round’s feedback on the size of the change in the next round’s allocation, after parsing out the variance that could be attributed to time-invariant characteristics of the individual. Table 1 presents these results.

The coefficient for feedback ($t - 1$) was positive and significant for powerholders in the candid feedback condition ($\beta = .34$, $p = .00$, see Table 1), showing that these powerholders significantly *changed* their allocations as a result of the candid feedback in the prior round. Moreover, this change was sensitive to the valence of the feedback they had received. Powerholders made less self-interested allocations (took less of the common resource) after being rated as unfair (less than 3, or negative feedback about their prior allocation) in the previous round and made more self-interested allocations (took more of the common resource) after being rated as fair (more than 3, or positive feedback about their prior allocation) in the previous round. Specifically, after receiving negative feedback about their prior allocation, participants allocated themselves an amount close to an equal share, while after receiving positive feedback about their prior allocation, participants allocated themselves more than half the total resources

Table 1
Panel Data Regressions on the Effect of Subordinate Feedback on Round-by-Round Changes in Powerholders' Self-Allocations

Variable	Effect of prior round's feedback on the change in powerholder's allocation in the following round			
	Study 1		Study 2	
	Candid feedback (<i>N</i> = 35 powerholders; 315 observ.)	Compliant feedback (<i>N</i> = 39 powerholders; 351 observ.)	Candid feedback (<i>N</i> = 52 powerholders; 468 observ.)	Compliant feedback (<i>N</i> = 54 powerholders; 486 observ.)
Feedback (<i>t</i> - 1)	7.87*	-0.79	10.75*	5.30
<i>SE</i>	1.21	3.36	1.60	2.79
β	.34*	-.01	.41*	.06
<i>R</i> ² overall	0.12	0.00	0.17	0.00
Wald chi square	42.27	0.05	45.10	3.61

Note. Feedback (*t* - 1) refers to the feedback given by subordinates in the previous round. *SE* refers to standard errors, and β refers to the standardized coefficients. Observ. = observations.

* *p* < .05.

($M_{\text{negative feedback}} = 31.72$, $SD = 15.10$, vs. $M_{\text{positive feedback}} = 51.50$, $SD = 24.75$), $t(313) = 8.28$, $p = .00$.

In contrast, powerholders' allocation decisions in the compliant feedback condition did not significantly change as a result of the subordinates' feedback ($\beta = -.01$, *ns*). These results suggest that powerholders use candid feedback from subordinates to regulate their behavior, with positive feedback functioning as a license to increase their share of the common resource and negative feedback triggering compensation for prior, more self-interested allocation behavior.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that powerholders in the candid feedback condition would become more self-interested over time. This is a hypothesis about the trend of how self-interested a powerholder's allocations become over time. Specifically, our prediction was that the overall slope of powerholders' allocations would be significant and positive in the compliant feedback condition (their allocations would become more self-interested over time) but not in the candid feedback condition, in which subordinate feedback would influence powerholders to keep their self-interested inclinations in check. A panel data regression with time as the independent variable was used to estimate the behavioral trends of powerholders' allocations over time within the two different feedback conditions (candid vs. compliant). Table 2 presents these regression results. The coefficient for time was positive and significant for powerhold-

ers in the compliant feedback condition ($\beta = .16$, $p = .00$) but nonsignificant for powerholders in the candid feedback condition. In other words, there was significant trend toward more self-interested allocations for powerholders in the compliant feedback condition. Powerholders whose subordinates provided compliant feedback about how their allocation choices were perceived took an ever-larger proportion of the common resource over time. In contrast, powerholders whose subordinates provided candid feedback did not start along a slippery slope toward increasingly self-interested behavior ($\beta = .06$, *ns*; see Figure 1).

Study 2

In Study 1, we examined how subordinate feedback shapes powerholders' allocation behavior on average and over time, depending on the type of feedback (Hypotheses 1–3). In Study 2, we positioned guilt as the mediating mechanism explaining the relationship between subordinate feedback and a powerholder's allocation behavior (Hypothesis 4).

Method

Sample. One hundred and eleven undergraduate students in an introductory organizational behavior class (72% female; $M_{\text{age}} =$

Table 2
Panel Data Regressions on the Effect of Subordinate Feedback on Powerholders' Self-Allocations Over Time

Variable	Trend of the average amount of resources powerholders allocated to themselves, across the rounds of the experiment			
	Study 1		Study 2	
	Candid feedback (<i>N</i> = 35 powerholders; 350 observ.)	Compliant feedback (<i>N</i> = 39 powerholders; 390 observ.)	Candid feedback (<i>N</i> = 52 powerholders; 520 observ.)	Compliant feedback (<i>N</i> = 54 powerholders; 540 observ.)
Time	0.69	1.84*	0.54	2.23*
<i>SE</i>	0.36	0.31	0.30	0.28
β	.06	.16*	.06	.24*
<i>R</i> ² overall	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.06
Wald chi square	3.63	34.72	3.21	62.01

Note. Time refers to rounds in the experimental game. *SE* refers to standard errors, and β refers to the standardized coefficients. Observ. = observations.

* *p* < .05.

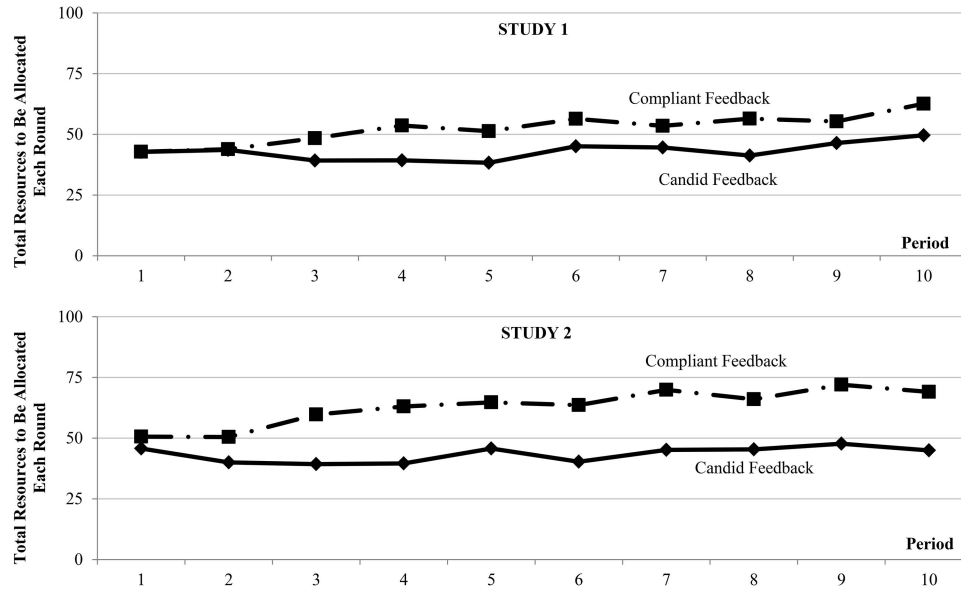


Figure 1. Individual powerholder self-allocations in the candid feedback and compliant feedback conditions, Studies 1 and 2. Total resources are measured in British pounds in Study 1 and in course participation credits in Study 2.

20.40 years, $SD = 1.48$) participated in the study in order to earn bonus marks (up to 4% added to their final grade). In this study, the bonus marks added to their final grade ranged from 0% to 4% ($M = 2.13\%$, $SD = 1.16\%$).

Experimental setting. The procedure and the introduction of the experiment were the same as in Study 1, with one exception. As in Study 1, after powerholders made the initial endowment, subordinate feedback was received at the end of every round. However, in Study 2, immediately after receiving the subordinates' feedback but before making their next allocation, powerholders responded to additional questions about their feelings. During the debriefing, we checked whether participants understood the dynamics of the game with the same two questions as in Study 1 and also probed them for suspicion concerning the experiment. One participant failed to correctly answer questions designed to check whether they understood the game, and five participants reported suspicion that the subordinate feedback was fake. We excluded these participants from the analysis.

Conditions. The experimental conditions were the same as in Study 1. We again included two conditions: candid feedback and compliant feedback.

Measures and operationalization.

Classification of powerholders' allocation behavior. In order to simulate subordinate feedback, we categorized powerholders' allocation behaviors in the same way as in Study 1.

Subordinate feedback. As in Study 1, subordinates' reactions to powerholders' allocation decisions were computationally modeled and reported back to the powerholder as an average rating across all group members.

Guilt. After making an allocation decision and receiving the feedback from subordinates but before proceeding to the next round, participants (i.e., powerholders) completed scales assessing their emotional state. Consistent with the measurement of guilt in

previous research (e.g., Heaven, Ciarrochi, & Leeson, 2009; Ilies, Peng, Savani, & Dimotakis, 2013; Judge, Ilies, & Scott, 2006), we assessed guilt using a subscale of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule–Expanded Form (PANAS–X; Watson & Clark, 1994). Although we only theorized about guilt as a mediating mechanism, in order to reduce demand characteristics, we also included one positive emotion (happiness), one basic emotion (self-assurance), and one affective state scale (surprise) in the set of items. We randomized the order of the items across rounds. Given that participants were going to be asked these items at the end of each round, to reduce participant fatigue we limited the items used to the three with the highest loadings for each subscale (Watson & Clark, 1994). Participants thus responded to 12 adjective-based items (e.g., “I feel guilty after the previous round”) on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Reliability for the guilt items was $\alpha = .76$ at Round 1 and $\alpha = .78$ at Round 10.

Results

First, consistent with Study 1, we conducted a panel data regression, controlling for the first-round allocation and including a dummy variable for the feedback condition (compliant feedback = 0, candid feedback = 1). Replicating our results for Hypothesis 1 in our first study, there was a negative and significant coefficient for condition ($\beta = -.32$, $p = .00$), indicating that powerholders in the candid feedback condition took significantly less on average ($M_{\text{candid feedback}} = 43.12$, $SD = 27.99$) than participants in the compliant feedback condition ($M_{\text{compliant feedback}} = 64.28$, $SD = 27.32$).

We replicated our results for Hypothesis 2 as well, such that in the candid feedback condition, subordinate feedback in one round predicted the size of the change in how self-interested powerholders' allocations were in the following round ($\beta = .41$, $p = .00$, see

Table 1). Similar to Study 1, after receiving negative feedback (rated as unfair), participants in this condition allocated themselves an amount close to an equal share, while after receiving positive feedback (rated as fair), participants allocated themselves almost half the total resources ($M_{\text{negative feedback}} = 32.46, SD = 18.98$ vs. $M_{\text{positive feedback}} = 47.44, SD = 29.87$), $t(466) = 5.40, p = .00$. We also replicated our results for Hypothesis 3, such that powerholders in the compliant feedback condition showed a positive and significant trend in their allocations, taking increasing amounts of the common resource over the course of the experiment ($\beta = .24, p = .00$; see Table 2 and Figure 1).

Hypothesis 4 predicted that guilt mediates the relationship between subordinate feedback and the change in the powerholder's next allocation (i.e., whether it becomes more or less self-interested). We conducted a mediation analysis suitable to our multilevel panel data, following the procedure described by Krull and MacKinnon (1999, 2001). With this multilevel mediation analysis, we computed both direct and indirect effects of subordinate feedback on the changes in powerholders' subsequent allocation behavior. However, since this method only produces the effect sizes of the estimates ($\beta_a^*\beta_b$), not standard errors or confidence intervals, we used an additional bootstrap procedure (with 1,200 repetitions) to report standard errors ($\sigma_{\beta_a\beta_b}$) and the significance test results (z statistic). For the indirect effect of subordinate feedback on changes in allocation behavior through guilt, the analysis revealed an estimate of $\beta_a^*\beta_b = .0424$ and a standard error ($\sigma_{\beta_a\beta_b}$) of .0108. The z statistic was significant ($z = 3.93, p = .00$). This result suggests that guilt was a significant mediator of the relationship between subordinate feedback and changes in powerholders' allocation behavior. In other words, powerholders felt more (less) guilty when subordinate feedback was more (less) negative in response to their prior allocation decisions and subsequently took less (more) of the common resource. However, even in the presence of this significant indirect effect, the direct effect of subordinate feedback on changes in powerholders' allocation behavior remained significant. The analysis revealed an estimate of $\beta_a^*\beta_b = .2167$ and a standard error ($\sigma_{\beta_a\beta_b}$) of .0413 and a significant z statistic ($z = 5.23, p = .00$), suggesting that guilt only partially mediates this relationship.

General Discussion

Predicting when those with power will choose to serve their own or others' interests is a topic of significant importance in the social sciences (DeCelles et al., 2012; Lee & Tiedens, 2001; Overbeck & Park, 2006). The outcomes of these tradeoff decisions also have important implications for employees (e.g., Maner & Mead, 2010), organizations (e.g., Zahra, Priem, & Rasheed, 2005) and wider stakeholders (e.g., Agle, Mitchell, & Sonnenfeld, 1999; Tosi, Katz, & Gomez-Meija, 1997). Although researchers have identified a number of individual and contextual factors that help explain when powerholders make more or less self-interested decisions, the possibility that those affected by those decisions may, in turn, shape powerholders' subsequent decisions has been largely neglected (Handgraaf et al., 2003). This is a crucial possibility, as it provides subordinates with some personal agency and control over how they are treated.

In this article, we examined how subordinates' feedback to those with power over them reciprocally shapes the way powerholders

later allocate resources to them. We examined these effects in the presence of subordinate feedback that was either candid or compliant. More important, our design allowed us to explore behavioral trends rather than only looking at average levels of powerholders' allocation decisions. In two experiments, conducted in different countries and played for different stakes with different samples (one community-based sample and one student sample), we showed that powerholders with subordinates who provide candid feedback about their prior allocation decisions behave very differently than those with subordinates who provide compliant feedback.

Our results in both Studies 1 and 2 suggest that powerholders who made allocations to subordinates who provided candid feedback about whether the powerholders' prior allocation was self-interested behaved differently as a result of this feedback. When powerholders received candid feedback, their inclinations toward self-interest were held in check, and the trend in their self-allocations remained flat over time. More specifically, candid feedback appeared to trigger powerholders' moral self-regulation, preventing them from going down a slippery slope (cf. Gino & Bazerman, 2009) toward increasing self-interest. These findings suggest that providing candid feedback about a powerholder's behavior is a good strategy if subordinates want to encourage the powerholder to pay more attention to others' needs. In contrast, powerholders in groups of subordinates who provided compliant feedback failed to regulate their behavior and simply became more self-interested in their allocation decisions over time.

In addition, we examined whether guilt mediates the relationship between subordinates' feedback and changes in powerholders' allocation decisions. Our results provide evidence that when they receive more negative feedback, powerholders feel more guilt, and as a result, they decrease the proportion of the common resource they take. In contrast, when they receive more positive feedback, they feel less guilt and take more of the common resource than they took previously. The fact that this relationship is mediated by guilt fits with findings in the moral emotion (Tangney et al., 2007) and moral self-regulation (Monin & Jordan, 2009) literatures. Subordinate feedback triggers powerholders' moral self-regulatory processes and determines their later behavior through the effect the feedback has on their affective state.

Theoretical Contributions

Our research has important theoretical implications for a number of research areas. First, this article represents one of the few attempts to demonstrate how subordinates can affect powerholders' allocation decisions, showing that subordinates can have an active influence on how they are ultimately treated. In this respect, these two experiments speak to prior research on power, particularly around whether power mitigates (Chen et al., 2001; Galinsky et al., 2003; Overbeck & Park, 2001) or intensifies (Keltner et al., 2003) powerholders' self-interested tendencies. Our work advances this research by highlighting the role of an ever-present contextual factor for powerholders: the behavior of those over whom they hold power. More important, we were able to show how subordinates can exercise agency in their ongoing relationship with people who hold power over them, rather than simply receive their outcomes in a passive way.

Our work also represents one of the few efforts to examine powerholders' behavior over time (e.g., Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir 2002). We related literature on feedback and self-regulation to the power literature to explore the behavioral trends of those with the power to allocate resources. In doing so, we show that powerholders use the feedback they receive from their subordinates in different ways depending on the type (or favorability) of the feedback (e.g., Smither & Walker, 2004). The results also suggest that subordinates are an important but neglected factor in powerholders' moral self-regulation, providing them with moral credentials (in the case of both candid and compliant feedback) or triggering moral compensation (only in the case of candid feedback; Merritt et al., 2010; Monin & Jordan, 2009).

Existing work in the feedback literature has reported inconsistent results regarding the effect of upward feedback on authorities (e.g., managers, supervisors, and leaders; Seifert et al., 2003; Seifert & Yukl, 2010). One of the main explanations for these inconsistent results is that recipients of feedback may find it less useful when it is from their subordinates, compared with their managers or peers (Bernardin, Dahmus, & Redmon, 1993). However, our theoretical focus on moral self-regulation (Monin & Jordan, 2009) and our experimental design helps to enrich current understanding regarding the behavioral reactions of recipients to feedback. In our study, negative feedback triggered guilt, which caused the powerholders who received that feedback to adjust their subsequent allocation behavior in line with this affective reaction.

Practical Implications

Practically speaking, our research shows that providing unquestioning, compliant feedback to powerholders will increase their self-interested behavioral tendencies over time. Subordinates aiming for more equitable collective outcomes are better served by speaking up rather than placidly accepting their powerholders' decisions. Still, the question remains why a subordinate would speak up and challenge the powerholder, especially if the possibility of retribution exists. When powerholders react harshly or are unwelcoming toward subordinate feedback, subordinates tend to develop implicit assumptions (e.g., voice is harmful) that prevent them from expressing their concerns or challenging powerholders (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). Given our findings for the strong effects of feedback on powerholders' later behavior, it seems important to build channels through which this information can flow more easily. This suggests that feedback from subordinates should perhaps be filtered through some sort of mediator (or facilitator; e.g., Seifert et al., 2003) or be anonymous (e.g., Antonioni, 1994).

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions

The present study has several strengths. Longitudinal research on the reciprocal dynamic that powerholders and subordinates co-create is still emerging and lacks well-developed theories as well as strong empirical evidence. By conducting a controlled experimental study, we were better able to unpack complicated processes about how powerholders can be influenced to become less self-interested over time. Our paradigm allowed us to build and test specific theoretical predictions about the effect of different types of feedback on trends in powerholder behaviors over time, while controlling for unmeasured variables.

One of the important strengths of our experimental design was the fact that in our studies, a simple expression of subordinate perceptions shifted powerholders' allocation decisions. This is particularly interesting in light of the fact that the subordinates in our studies had no prior relationship with the powerholders, the powerholders were not dependent on them, and they would never know who the subordinates were. Hence, one might have expected our experimental manipulation to have no effect on how powerholders allocated resources at all. Nevertheless, participants were still influenced by those to whom they were making allocations, relinquishing allocations that affected their own ultimate payouts from the study in response to feedback.

Despite its strengths, a number of limitations remain. One limitation is that we focused, in line with our theoretical framework, on only two specific types of subordinates, those who provided candid feedback and those who provided compliant feedback. We focused on these two types because they represent the most obvious ways to respond to the decisions of those who have control over the resources one receives and because they are the most dominant subordinate types in the followership literature (e.g., Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010; Kelley, 1988). However, in the real world, individuals are more heterogeneous, and the processes we examined here likely play out in a noisier way.

In addition, in our experimental design, we did not manipulate any type of interdependence between powerholders and subordinates. Interdependence was minimal or nonexistent. However, had we done so, one would expect an even stronger effect than our studies show. In fact, powerholders are dependent on their subordinates in many ways (Oc & Bashshur, 2013; Tjosvold, 1986) and have ongoing relationships (of different qualities) with them (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Thus, in the real world, powerholders are more obligated to take their subordinates' interests into consideration given that the consequences for subordinate dissatisfaction may be severe. When subordinates perceive that their voice (or feedback) is not acknowledged or does not lead to change (i.e., the frustration effect; Folger, 1977), they can develop negative attitudes, become less satisfied with outcomes, and show more dislike of authorities. Given our results, this suggests that real-world subordinates have even more influence over powerholders than we demonstrated here.

A potential weakness is that we used an equal division rule as the objective fairness criterion when manipulating subordinates' reactions toward powerholders' decisions. However, unequal allocations may not have seemed self-interested to our participants (powerholders) due to biased perceptions of their own behavior (e.g., underestimating of the level of their self-interested behavior, feeling entitled). Indeed, the participants in our study generally took at least 40% of the common resource. This mirrors results in other literatures that use the same paradigm. For example, de Cremer and his colleagues (2009) showed that simply being in a position of power inspired individuals to take more than an equal share of a common resource. Hence, it may be fruitful for future researchers to examine how different allocation rules (e.g., equity- or need-based) affect powerholders' allocation decisions over time.

In addition, our subordinates differed from one another only in terms of their fairness perceptions. Their influence on powerholders' allocation behavior was a function of the guilt they triggered

in the powerholder. However, various other characteristics distinguish subordinates and can make one more influential than another (Oc & Bashshur, 2013). For instance, some subordinates can exert greater power due to their status in the group (e.g., Eagly, 1983) or their relationship with the powerholder (e.g., Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Subordinate influence also increases as a function of powerholders' dependence on them (Oc & Bashshur, 2013). Therefore, future researchers may benefit from considering other subordinate characteristics that moderate the effect of feedback on powerholders' behavior.

All in all, we believe subordinate feedback is an important tool that can be used to align powerholders' self-interest with the collective interests of others. Of course, the story is likely to be more complex than it appears. Powerholders may adjust their behavior and become less self-interested when they receive candid feedback due not to some internalized belief that their actions were wrong but more because they desire to be seen as fair (Dana et al., 2006) and earn credits in the eyes of subordinates (perhaps so they can spend them afterward; Hollander, 1992). However, knowing the role that subordinate feedback can play in this process—the power that subordinates have to affect the moral self-regulation of those who have power over them—presents a first step in providing those who are not in the fortunate position of controlling the resources have more say in their ultimate outcomes.

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