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Early-Life Power and Self-Interested Behavior: The Interplay Between Past and Present

Chih-Chieh Chu[1], **Raymond A. Friedman**[2], **& Shu-Cheng Steve Chi**[3]

1 Department of Business Administration, National Changhua University of Education, Taiwan
2 Owen Graduate School of Management, Vanderbilt University, USA
3 Department of Business Administration, National Taiwan University, Taiwan

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Correspondence
Department of Business Administration, National Changhua University of Education,
No. 2, Shida Road, Changhua City, Changhua County 500, Taiwan
e-mail: ccchu@cc.ncue.edu.tw

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Abstract

In this paper, we develop the concept of early-life power (ELP)—the sense of power someone has in their life before becoming an adult. We propose that the known positive relationship between power and self-interested behavior will be enhanced by high ELP and that, for those with high power, self-interested behavior will be higher for those with higher ELP. Study 1 adapts Anderson et al.'s (2012) chronic power scale to develop a retrospective measure of ELP and validates the measure. We test our predictions empirically, using self-reported self-interested behavior (Study 2) and results from the dictator game (Study 3). In these two studies, we operationalize current power in three ways: subjective power, objective power, and position. The results partially support our hypotheses.

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Introduction

The past is not dead. In fact, it's not even past. – William Faulkner

Power refers to "the ability to control resources, own and others', without social interference" (Galinsky et al., 2003: p. 454), which emphasizes that the power holder possesses valued tangible and intangible resources that others do not possess. However, power is not simply the control over resources or composed solely of one's social position. Power is also a psychological state called sense of power. Sense of power refers to "the perception of one's ability to influence another person or other people" (Anderson et al., 2012). Most research on power has adopted the perspective of the approach–inhibition theory of power (Keltner et al., 2003), which says that powerful people act with more freedom and less constraint than those who are lower in power. As a result, powerful people are more likely to display self-interested behavior (e.g., Magee & Langner, 2008). Self-interested behavior means that an individual uses power to benefit themselves (Rus et al., 2010; Williams, 2014; Schmid et al., 2019).

However, it is not inevitable that power, or sense of power, leads to self-interested behavior. There are many factors that can dampen or enhance that relationship. According to Williams (2014), the effect is enhanced by self-focused goals (which can be created by personality traits, self-construals, or motivations) and also by threats to power (such as positional insecurity, low social status, and self-doubt) and a desire to preserve power. This paper explores another moderator—early-life power (ELP). We define ELP as the subjective sense of one's overall power and influence early in life, particularly in late adolescence. Early life experiences play an important role throughout the human lifespan (Inglehart, 1971; Inglehart, 1985). Inglehart and Abramson (1994) argue that pre-adult social learning and educational experiences shape individuals' values. We believe that one's early life experiences of power can have a strong effect on people, and shape how they respond to power later in life.

In this paper, we develop the concept of ELP and examine how it can affect the relationship between power and self-interested behavior. In Study 1, we then develop a retrospective scale for ELP by modifying the established chronic power scale by Anderson et al. (2012) and validating this version of the scale. Next, we test our hypotheses about ELP in two empirical studies. In Study 2, we look at self-reported self-interested behavior. In Study 3, we look at self-interested behavior using the dictator game (DeCelles et al., 2012). In both studies, we operationalize current power in three ways: as subjective experience of power, as objective power (e.g., having authority over budget, hiring), and position power (being a manager versus a non-manager). Lastly, we discuss the implications of our findings for management.

Power

Power can be defined objectively or subjectively. Looking objectively, one can determine access to resources based on formal position and authority. Someone who is a supervisor objectively

has power over someone who is a subordinate. The supervisor can hire and fire employees, assign tasks, allocate pay and rewards, and provide performance reviews and resources. Looking subjectively, power is the psychological experience of control. Subjective power is usually correlated with objective power but may still be different. For example, social psychologists have used manipulations that do not change objective power but do change subjective power. One way they do this is to ask subjects to think of times when they were powerful or less powerful (Galinsky et al., 2003). These manipulations change the subjective experience of power despite there being no objective change of power. Power can also be thought of as acute or chronic. Acute power occurs when there is a momentary opportunity to affect the outcomes for another person, while chronic power is one's ongoing, stable sense of power in life. Much research focuses on how chronic power affects the use (and abuse) of acute power in cases such as revenge, harassment, and abusive behavior (Strelan et al., 2013; Williams et al., 2017; Foulk et al., 2018).

Self-Interested Behavior

Self-interested behavior refers to "actions that benefit the self and come at a cost to the common good" (DeCelles et al., 2012); that is, actions in which individuals pursue their own interests at the expense of others. One of the most stable and well-established effects of power is that it drives self-interested behavior. For instance, Rus et al. (2010) showed that higher power by leaders results in higher self-serving behavior by leaders. And Bendahan et al. (2015) showed that there is an effect of leader's power (moderated by leader's testosterone) on that leader's level of corruption[1]. There are several explanations for this relationship. We discuss two of them here.

The first comes from the approach–inhibition theory of power (Keltner et al., 2003), which investigated how power affects an individual's affect, cognition, and behavior. They made three assumptions: (1) power activates human behavior without consciousness, (2) power enhances trait-consistent behavior, and (3) power affects social attention, i.e., low-power individuals attend to others more carefully, whereas high-power individuals are attended to more carefully by others. They hypothesized that high-power individuals have more resources and freedom, which allows them to act without interference or serious social consequences. Further, such elevating freedom leads to higher levels of these people's approach systems, such as attention to rewards, positive emotions, and disinhibition. On the contrary, low-power individuals have fewer resources and more constraints, which leads to enhanced inhibition systems, including attention to threats, negative emotions, and situationally constrained behavior. In sum, power endows high-power people with the freedom to pursue potential rewards, and they can act with less constraint and ignore social norms. Powerful individuals display unethical behavior because they are able to be more enthusiastic about protecting their own self-interest and have the freedom to be indifferent to others' needs (Lammers et al., 2010; Vriend et al., 2016). They engage in self-interested behaviors because they have leverage to get what they want.

A second explanation for the relationship between high power and self-interested behavior comes from the social distance theory of power (Magee & Smith, 2013). Magee and Smith (2013) argue that when there is asymmetric dependence between two individuals, the result is asymmetric experiences of social distance. The high-power person experiences independence, allowing them to

[1] Other papers with findings related to power enhancing self-interested behavior include Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh (2001), Maner & Mead (2010), Rus et al. (2012), DeCelles et al. (2012), Sassenberg et al. (2012), Wisse & Rus (2012), Pitesa & Thau (2013), Wang & Sun (2016), Giurge et al. (2021).

be distant from others, while the low-power person is highly dependent on others, making them need to seek out affiliation with others. That higher social distance experienced by high-powered individuals leads them to assume less similarity with others, experience lower susceptibility to social influence, and experience fewer social-engaging (versus disengaging) emotions. High-power individuals view low-power individuals as resources to be used to achieve their own goals. They engage in self-interested behavior because they do not have as much understanding of and empathy toward others.

Since there is evidence in support of both arguments, we assume that both mechanisms are valid. Neither explanation precludes the other, and in either case, the overall relationship between power and self-interested behavior is clear. We should note that the effects of power on self-interested behavior occur whether that power is objective or subjective and whether the power is acute (momentary) or chronic (ongoing) (Williams, 2014; DeCelles et al., 2012). To distinguish from ELP, we refer to all of the established approaches to power as measures of "current" power. We provide the following established baseline prediction based on prior results and existing theories of power–behavior relations:

H1.: Current power is positively related to self-interested behavior.

While the link between current power and self-interested behavior has been established, there are also many factors that can dampen or amplify this effect. In a theoretical review, Williams (2014) argues that there are a number of individual difference variables that can impact the relationship. Powerful people who are higher in narcissism, hold self-enhancing values, or are motivated by personal power are more likely to respond to both acute and chronic power with self-interested behavior. These are cases where personality and values are more focused on self-enhancing goals. Those with self-enhancing goals are more likely to act on opportunities for self-interest that come from power. The effect of current power on self-interested behavior is also moderated by threats to power, which can occur due to a sense of insecurity about one's position, self-doubt about one's power, or challenges to the legitimacy of one's power (Fast & Chen, 2009; Maner & Mead, 2010; Fast et al., 2012). Once high-power individuals receive signals that their current power might be threatened, they are likely to display negative behavior to preserve or restore their power. We suggest that an additional moderator is what we call early life power (ELP). That is, the degree to which a person experiences power at a young age. We argue that early life experiences of power shape sensitivity to current power later in life.

Early-life Power

Early-life power (ELP) is the subjective sense of one's overall power and influence (Anderson et al., 2012) in early life, culminating in experiencing power in adolescence (approximately age 15–18). ELP is shaped by early life experiences in the family, school, and social interactions during formative years. One way in which a person can develop a sense of power in their formative years is by being an older sibling, who can dominate over younger siblings (Bigner, 1974), or by being an only child who is listened to attentively by parents. Early life experiences can also affect perceived power through their impact on locus of control. In one study across 46 developing countries where rain has a major impact on livelihoods, rain shortages before age five reduced adult perceptions of locus of control (Shoji, 2020); in another study, childhood poverty was associated with adult health behaviors, in part through a lower locus of control from being poor at a young age (Pedron et al., 2021). In yet another study, "higher SES adolescents feel more internal locus of control in largest part because their parents discuss school more often with them, their homes have more books and other cognitive resources,

they receive higher grades in middle school science and social studies, they are more likely to attend a private rather than public school, their friends are more academically oriented, and they feel safer at school" (Shifrer, 2019, p.74). Having more social capital and wealth as an adolescent was associated with civic engagement, indicated greater confidence to act on the external world (Lenzi et al., 2012). An adolescent who is skilled at athletics or music builds greater self-esteem and sense of mastery, in part because they are met with others respecting them (Lanter & Blackburn, 2015; Darrow et al., 2009), enhancing their personal experience of power and influence. In many ways, large and small, a young person develops a sense of power, feeling either that others should defer to them or that they should defer to others. While one's sense of power may become quite different later in life (either stronger or weaker), we believe that how power is experienced throughout one's life is shaped by power early in life.

Early life experiences of many types are known to provide a lens through which later life experiences are viewed. Early life experiences "stick" with people, even though their circumstances have changed. According to Inglehart's theory of value change (Inglehart,1971), individuals' pre-adult experiences shape their long-term values. For instance, people who face economic hardship as children may work excessively even after they have become financially stable, based on a deeply-embedded fear of poverty. Inglehart (1971) found that the degree of economic security individuals felt in their formative years influences their later political behavior. In France, in 1970, the younger (16–34 years old) generation showed a political preference for post-bourgeois values (i.e., freedom and change), while the older (45–65) generation showed more political preferences for acquisitive values (i.e., economic security and domestic order). Research that is based on the World Values Surveys (Inglehart & Abramson, 1994) found that younger birth cohorts were more post-materialist than older cohorts, reflecting their pre-adult experiences. Just looking at the current state of a person's economic life may not be enough to explain their behavior. Similarly, looking at their current experience of power (whether it be acute or chronic) may not be enough to fully understand how people respond to power.

While early life experiences occur from birth through adolescence, there is evidence that adolescence is when early life experiences culminate in personality formation and, relatedly, we argue, a person's sense of ELP. As Meeus et al. (2011) point out, "There is systematic evidence that personality becomes more mature and stable in adolescence" (p.1192). For example, the relative strength of each of the Big Five personality traits tend to become stable in adolescence (Klimstra et al., 2009); measures of extraversion at age 16 were predictors of indicators of well-being in adulthood, such as life satisfaction, and self-esteem (Blatný et al, 2015); and, identity formation tends to happen during adolescence (approximately age 14), allowing "teenagers to develop their own identity in ways that are distinct from their parents" (Zohar et al., 2019, p.12). Another way to look at the role of adolescence is the impact on autobiographical recall of events, and the formation of a personal biography. Both life narratives and autobiographical reasoning tend to occur during adolescence, because that is the time when one develops the necessary cognitive tools to engage in such reasoning (Habermas & Bluck, 2000). In summary, adolescence is a key stage in pre-adult life, accumulating childhood experiences into a more well-formed, stable, long-lasting psychological base. As people think back to their sense of power in early life, this stage of pre-adult life is likely to be most strongly remembered, and memories of power at this stage are likely to incorporate the impact of events from earlier childhood years. For these reasons, we focus on this stage of life when examining ELP.

ELP, Current Power, and Self-Interested Behavior

Next, we examine how levels of power in adulthood should be more salient for those with higher ELP and that higher salience should, in turn, make the relationship between current power and self-interested behavior stronger for individuals with higher ELP. We will build this argument in three steps: a) ELP shapes whether current power is experienced as a loss or gain, b) losses draw attention more than gains, and c) greater attention to power will create a stronger relationship between current power and self-interested behavior.

First, we consider how ELP shapes whether people experience a gain or loss frame with regard to their current level of power. If someone has low ELP, they can either have gained power across their life (if they have high current power) or have no changes of power across their life (if they have low current power). Combining these two possibilities, on average, those with lower ELP are more likely to experience gains in their power. By contrast, if someone has high ELP, they can either have lost power across their life (if they have low current power) or have no changes of power across their life (if they have high current power). Combining these two possibilities, on average, those with higher ELP are more likely to experience losses to their power. Thus, we expect high ELP to produce a power loss frame, while low ELP to produce a power gain frame. Those with high ELP and low current power will, we argue, have a deep-seated sense of loss of power across their lives, while those with low ELP and high current power will have a deep-seated sense of gain of power across their lives.

Second, we examine the effects of loss/gain frames on attention to one's own power. According to prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Tversky & Kahneman, 1981), losses are weighed more heavily than gains. Thus, the experience of having lost power since adolescence will have a greater impact than the experience of having gained power since adolescence. The greater effect of losses compared to gains has been shown with higher arousal in response to losses than gains (Hochman et al., 2010), greater effects on people whose daily experiences are negative than positive (Ganzach & Karshai, 1995), and a greater effect on people from losing versus gaining money (McGraw et al., 2010).

However, there have also been mixed results that question the validity of prospect theory's idea that people "weigh" losses more than gains (e.g., Glockner & Pachur, 2012). Instead, there is an emerging consensus that more attention is paid to losses than gains. Lejarraga et al. (2019) propose that "organisms may be generally attentive toward losses because the next loss can be deadly in an uncertain environment; there is no equivalent critical threshold in the domain of gains. Thus, organisms must devote resources to detecting losses" (p.646). They are highly attentive to losses, even though they do not value gains and losses differently. Pachur et al. (2018) explain that some of the findings of prospect theory (specifically, how losses versus gains are weighed) can actually be explained by "the allocation of attention during the process of information acquisition" (p.159). They found that loss aversion was associated with paying more attention to losses and gains rather than differences in valuing losses versus gains. And Yechiam and Hochman (2013) argue that "losses have a distinct effect on attention but do not lead to an asymmetry in subjective value" (p.498). This "attention-based" view of losses says that losses affect *attention* more than gains. Thus, we would expect that the loss frame that comes from high ELP will produce greater attention on one's own power than the gain frame that comes from low ELP. Those high in ELP will be very attentive to their power level, while those low in ELP will be less attentive.

Third, we examine how variations in the level of attention to power might affect the power–self-interested-behavior relationship. As discussed when developing H1, power is a driver of self-interested behavior. However, that is based on having power operating—consciously or subconsciously—in the mind of the individual. Power must be active in a person's lived experience. It seems likely that if power is less prominent in a person's experience, its effect on self-interested

behavior would be weaker. If power is more prominent in a person's' experience, the effect of power on self-interested behavior would be stronger. Thus, if high ELP drives a loss frame that draws attention to power, that attention should strengthen the relationship between power and self-interested behavior. However, if low ELP drives a gain frame that reduces attention to power, that lack of attention should weaken the relationship between power and self-interested behavior.

Stepping back now, we look at other research on the effects of life experiences on how losses are experienced. Is there any evidence that early life experiences specifically shape later life approaches to losses versus gains? Kim and Lee (2014) found that children exposed to war developed an aversion to risk that could be observed five decades after the war. Bucciol and Zarri (2013) found that attitudes to financial risk were shaped by two key life experiences—natural disasters and the loss of a child. Huh et al. (2016) found that childhood trauma was associated with loss aversion among depressive patients. Furthermore, Wang and Yan (2020) found that people who experienced prior personal shocks were more risk-averse to medium or large losses. While each of these studies focus on loss aversion, their result might (like other studies of prospect theory) actually be grounded in greater *attention* to losses rather than greater weighting of losses. One study talks specifically about attention: Lakshman et al. found that African-American children who were exposed to early life trauma were more attentive to threats (i.e., angry faces versus happy faces). Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2.: The positive effect of current power on self-interested behavior will be stronger for those higher in Early Life Power than those lower in Early Life Power.

Levels of Self-Interested Behavior among those with High Power

So far, we have looked at the main effects of current power on self-interested behavior (H1) and how that effect might be stronger for those higher in ELP (H2). Next, we focus just on those who have high current power and ask whether the tendency to engage in self-interested behavior is stronger for those who grew up with power (high ELP) or without power (low ELP). Would we expect more self-interested behavior from those who have preserved the power they experienced in adolescence, or from those who gained greater power than they had in their adolescence? This addresses the absolute levels of self-interested behavior, rather differences in the slope of the relationship between current power and self-interested behavior (as in H2). We apply theories of entitlement to explore this question.

The sense of entitlement is a psychological state in which one feels that one is more deserving of positive outcomes than others (Campbell et al., 2004; Tomlinson, 2013; Zitek et al., 2010). This state is one of extreme self-focus and self-interest. Entitlement can occur when someone has had a beneficial outcome in the past and, therefore, expects it to be there in the future. This is the case for people who are in more powerful social groups, such as men and whites. According to Major (1994), there is a "lesser sense of personal entitlement among members of objectively disadvantaged groups (p.294)." While the term ELP is not used in the work on entitlement, implicit in entitlement theory is the idea that people who grow up having something from a young age believe that they deserve to continue having that benefit later in life. Thus, people high in ELP should also come to expect that they deserve to have that power—that they are entitled to power.

The impact of entitlement can be seen in several domains. Major et al. (1984) show that men feel more entitled than women to earn higher pay, and in experiments men do pay themselves more than women for the same work (for other work on entitlement and pay see Barron, 2003; Major, 1989). Pornari et al. (2013) show that sexual violence is associated with "relationship entitlement" (see also

Parkinson, 2017 and Busch et al., 2002 for work on entitlement and sexual violence). Webster et al. (2022) found that high-performing employees feel more psychological entitlement, which leads to less organizational citizenship behavior by those entitled employees. Moreover, Wang et al. (2020) found that those in upper classes have an even stronger desire to gain more wealth and status than do lower-class individuals. In each of these cases, those that grow up with high levels of benefits and control early in life come to expect it later in life, feel entitled to take what they want (sexually and financially) and contribute less—the very definition of self-interested behavior. Thus, if those high in ELP feel entitled to their power, they too will feel free to take what they want, and act self-interestedly.

Thus, we propose the following:

H3.: Among those high in current power, self-interested behavior will be higher for those with higher ELP than those with lower ELP.

An alternative and opposite view is that if you gain power later in life, keeping that added power is more important than for those who grew up with power. Only those who did not have power early in life have a clear sense of how bad it can feel to be powerless and as a result have a greater desire to preserve their escape from powerlessness, including acting in self-interested ways. There are studies showing that those who are less powerful have a desire to acquire more goods as a way to gain status and lesson their powerlessness (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008) and engage in more lying and self-promotion to be sure they make desired gains (Li et al., 2023). Although these studies are not about ELP, the logic might still hold when applied to early life power since feelings of powerlessness early in life may persist despite recently acquired power and since recently acquired power may feel more precarious. This greater desire to protect recently gained power might include lying, self-promotion, and other self-interested behaviors. Thus, we propose the following alternative hypothesis:

Alternative H3.: Among those high in current power, self-interested behavior will be higher for those with lower ELP than those with higher ELP.

Overview of Research

This paper presents three studies. Study 1 develops and validates a retrospective scale for ELP; that is, a scale that asks people to think back to assess their level of power at adolescence. While we would ideally like to have measures of power from when they really were 18 years old, that strategy is not feasible without a conducting a 20- or 30-year research study. Study 2 tests our hypotheses with a sample of line employees and managers, using self-reports of self-interested behaviors. For this study, we measured current power in three ways: subjective experience of power, objective power, and position in one's organization. Study 3 tests our hypotheses with a sample of adults who were asked to make pay allocations in an online version of the dictator game (e.g., Forsythe et al., 1994; DeCelles et al., 2012; Raihani et al., 2013). This approach provided a more objective measure of self-interested behavior than was used in Study 2. Study 3, again, includes three measures of current power.

Study 1: Measurement of ELP

Study 1 was designed to create and validate a retrospective measure of ELP by modifying the chronic power scale (subjective power) from Anderson et al. (2012). We test that our measure of ELP is distinct from chronic power (discriminant validity, Hinkin, 1998), which is especially important given that we are unable to reach back in history to document feelings when participants were actually 18 years old. It is possible that memories of power early in life could be a reflection of current power. Thus, it is critical to show that our measure of ELP is distinct from current power. We also check whether the new ELP scale is predictive of several self-perceptions associated with power (convergent validity, Hinkin, 1998). The self-perceptions we chose were optimism (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006), confidence (See et al., 2011), self-importance (Rucker et al., 2010) and self-esteem (Fast et al., 2009). Lastly, we look at whether ELP adds explanatory power to the prediction of these self-perceptions, after controlling for current power.

Sample

We recruited participants from Mechanical Turk (Mturk). We used a survey pre-filter to include participants from 18–25 years old and from 35–45 years old to ensure we had variation in age, given the possible concern that ELP could only be remembered for younger people, closer to the time when they were adolescents. Thus, we wanted to ensure that there was discriminant validity with current power for older participants, not just younger ones. Also, since we would expect older participants to be more advanced in their careers, they might inherently have more current power than younger participants (the average age for first time manager is around 30 years old [Zenger, 2012]). We wanted to ensure discriminant validity for both those who have more current power than those who have less current power.

We restricted participation to IP addresses located in the United States. There were 69 people in the 18–25 age group and 73 people in the 35–45 age group. Demographics of the two groups were roughly equivalent, except for age.[2] Means, standard deviations, correlations, and scale Cronbach's Alpha are shown in Table 2.

Measures

Early-life Power. We created our measure of early life experience of power by adapting the personal sense of power scale (Anderson et al., 2012). We changed the wording to be past tense and added a specific age period (15 to 18) in front of each item. Respondents were asked to rate their levels of agreement on a seven-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree; 7= strongly agree). A sample item is, "When I was 15 to 18 years old, I could get others to listen to what I say." Our goal was to build off of a well-established and frequently-used scale, but shift the focus from current power to these same experiences at the adolescent stage of life. The reliability coefficient was .93. The exploratory factor analysis results suggested that we should retain eight items (see Table 1).

[2] The average age of the 18~25 age group was 22.86 years old (*SD*=1.45) and of the 35~45 was 38.00 years old (*SD*=3.73). The 18~25 age group was 56.5% male, whereas in the 35~45 age group was 46.6% male. The 18~25 age group was 35% high school degree, 19% 2-year college degree, 45% 4-year college degree, and 1 % master's degree; the 35–45 age group was 25% high school degree, 22% two-year college degree, 41% four-year college degree, 11 % master's degree, and 1% doctoral degree.

Table 1 Exploratory Factor Analysis of ELP Items[a] (N = 142) (Study 1)

Items	*Mean*	*SD*	ELP
1. When I was 15 to 18 years old, I could get others to listen to what I say.	4.01	1.76	.77
2. When I was 15 to 18 years old, my wishes did not carry much weight.	3.59	1.80	.79
3. When I was 15 to 18 years old, I could get others to do what I wanted.	3.64	1.65	.85
4. When I was 15 to 18 years old, even if I voiced them, my views had little sway	3.84	1.70	.78
5. When I was 15 to 18 years old, I think I had a great deal of power.	2.85	1.67	.76
6. When I was 15 to 18 years old, my ideas and opinions were often ignored.	3.96	1.75	.85
7. When I was 15 to 18 years old, even when I tried, I was not able to get my way.	3.86	1.70	.85
8. When I was 15 to 18 years old, if I wanted to, I got to make the decision.	3.45	1.75	.76
Cumulative the explanation of variance (%)			64.35
Cronbach's α			.93

Note. [a] Using a principal axis factor analysis.

Current subjective Power. We used the eight-item personal sense of power scale (Anderson et al., 2012) to measure current subjective power. Respondents were asked to rate their levels of agreement on a seven-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree; 7= strongly agree). A sample item is, "I can get others to listen to what I say."

Optimism. Optimism is a variable that reflects the extent to which people hold generalized favorable expectancies for their future. We used Scheier et al.'s (1994) six-item scale to measure optimism. Respondents were asked to rate their levels of agreement on a five-point Likert scale (1 =strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree). A sample item is, "In uncertain times, I usually expect the best."

Self-Importance. We used Rucker et al.'s (2010) two-items scale to measure self-importance. Respondents were asked to respond to questions on two eight-point scales: "How important are you as an individual? (1=not important at all, 8=very important);" "I am a person of worth (1=totally disagree; 8=totally agree)."

Confidence. We used See et al.'s (2011) three-item scale to measure confidence. Respondents were asked to rate their levels of agreement on a six-point Likert scale (1=no confidence; 6=complete confidence). A sample item is, "Please indicate your level of confidence in your own judgment when making decisions."

Self-esteem. We used the four-item Lifespan self-esteem scale to measure self-esteem (Harris et al., 2018). Respondents were asked to rate their levels of feeling on a five-point Likert scale (1=really sad; 5=really happy). A sample item is, "How do you feel about yourself?"

Demographic Variables. Age, gender, and education level (high school or below, two-year college, four-year college degree, graduate or professional degree or above).

Results

Discriminant Validity of ELP. We tested discriminant validity of ELP with respect to subjective power by conducting a CFA to see if the items loaded as expected onto ELP and current subjective power. The baseline two-factor model (χ^2/df = 2.80; CFI = .90; IFI = .90; NFI = .86; RMSEA = .11;

SRMR= .06) yielded a better fit than an alternative one-factor model (χ^2/df = 7.52; CFI = .64; IFI = .65; NFI = .61; RMSEA = .21; SRMR= .21) (Hu & Bentler, 1999), providing evidence of an adequate discriminant validity and independence of the two measures. This is important, since it provides reassurance that people can differentiate between their early life experiences of power and their current experience of power. In addition, we examined the correlation between ELP and subjective power. The result (r =.33, p < .001; see Table 2) shows a moderate correlation between ELP and subjective power, which provides further support that these two constructs are distinct. The moderate correlation suggests that ELP is somewhat predictive of later life experience of power, but not fully predictive.

Looking more closely at different age groups, we found that the correlation between ELP and current subjective power was significant in both the 35–45 year old sample (r = .28, p=.027, n=73) and the 18–25 year old sample (r = .40, p = .001, n=69). As expected, the correlation was somewhat higher for the younger group since the older age group has had more later life developments than younger respondents. However, this difference (Z_r=.79, p=.430) was not statistically significant. This result shows ELP still has an effect on the older age group, albeit perhaps a bit weaker than occurs for the younger age group. Moreover, age was not correlated with ELP, eliminating any concern that perceptions of ELP might be affected by how many years back one has to remember. Furthermore, current subjective power was not correlated with age, eliminating a concern that current power is necessarily associated with age. Lastly, we looked at the standard deviation (*SD)* of ELP separately for the younger and older samples and found that they are similar: *SD*=1.41 for the younger sample, and *SD*=1.45 for the older sample.

Convergent Validity of ELP. Next, we examined the relationship between ELP and power-related self-perceptions. Looking at Table 2, we can see that ELP was associated with optimism, self-importance, confidence, and self-esteem, all with p-levels p<.001. In addition, we looked at whether ELP explained variance in these self-perceptions after controlling for the effect of current power. For all four self-perception constructs, ELP added significantly to the model R^2 after accounting for subjective power and controls for age, gender, and education (see Table 3). Thus, there is evidence that people can distinguish between ELP and current power, and that the two have different effects on relevant psychological states.

Summary

Study 1 develops a new ELP scale, adapted from Anderson et al. (2012), and this scale was validated including convergent, discriminant, and incremental validity. We found that ELP and subjective power are different constructs, and after controlling for current subjective power ELP still explained variance in individuals' perceptions of optimism, confidence, self-important and self-esteem. Second, we found that the relationship between ELP and current subjective experience of power remains at older ages, even though the effect may diminish somewhat with age. While we were unable to document actually feelings held as 18 years old, we were able to document participants' stable understanding of their ELP looking back from their current adult perspective.

Study 2: ELP and Self-Reported Self-Interested Behavior

Study 2 examines Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 and the Alternative Hypothesis 3. These hypotheses refer to current "power," which can be operationalized in several ways. One is to look at subjective experience of current power, which Williams et al. (2017) call "chronic" power. This measure was used in Study 1 and is a self-reported expression of how one feels about their own ongoing level of power. However, this approach only captures the psychological experience of power. It would be both fruitful

Table 2 Means, SDs, Correlations, and scale Cronbach's Alphas[a] (Study 1)

Variables	*Mean*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	30.64	8.11										
2. Gender[b]	1.49	0.50	.12									
3. Group[c]	0.51	0.50	.94***	.10								
4. Education[d]	2.28	0.99	.17*	.07	.15							
5. ELP	3.65	1.43	-.05	-.08	-.03	.06	(.93)					
6. Current subjective power	4.81	1.27	.14	.04	.15	.02	.33***	(.92)				
7. Optimism	3.43	1.01	.19*	-.00	.21*	.07	.35***	.61***	(.91)			
8. Self-Importance	5.70	1.71	.21*	.09	.26**	.16	.32***	.52***	.63***	(.81)		
9. Confidence	4.30	1.01	.17*	-.15	.22**	.02	.38***	.55***	.58***	.63***	(.84)	
10. Self-Esteem	3.54	1.01	.13	.06	.17*	.12	.37**	.59***	.68***	.71***	.67***	(.94)

[a] n = 142. Cronbach's Alphas appear in parentheses along the diagonal.
[b] Dummy-coded: 2 = female, 1 = male.
[c] Dummy-coded: 0 = 18~25 age group, 1 = 35~45 age group.
[d] Dummy-coded: 1 = high school degree or below, 2= 2-year college degree, 3= 4-year or university degree, 4= master's degree, 5= doctoral degree.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 3: Incremental Validity Tests[a] (Study 1)

Predictors	*Optimism*		*Self-Importance*		*Confidence*		*Self-Esteem*	
	Model1	Model2	Model3	Model4	Model5	Model6	Model7	Model8
Control variables								
Age	.11	.12	.11	.13	.11	.14	.03	.05
Gender[b]	-.05	-.03	.05	.06	-.19**	-.17*	.03	.04
Education[c]	.04	.03	.12	.11	.00	-.02	.10	.09
Main predictors								
Current subjective power	.60***	.54***	.50***	.44***	.54***	.47***	.58***	.51***
ELP		.17*		.18*		.22***		.20**
ΔR^2		.03*		.02*		.04**		.04**
Total R^2	.37	.40	.29	.31	.33	.37	.34	.38
F-value	22.06***	19.47***	15.38***	13.87***	18.12***	17.29***	19.49***	18.03***

[a] n = 142.
[b] Dummy-coded: 2 = female, 1 = male.
[c] Dummy-coded: 1 = high school degree or below, 2= 2-year college degree, 3= 4-year or university degree, 4= master's degree, 5= doctoral degree.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Table 4 Means, SDs, Correlations, and Scale Cronbach's Alphas [a] (Study 2)

Variables	*Mean*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	41.09	5.9										
2. Gender[b]	1.5	0.5	-.09									
3. Education[c]	3.42	0.7	.12	.05								
4. Tenure[d]	7.44	9.71	.16	-.06	.08							
5. Social desirability	0.84	1.2	-.03	.29**	-.15	-.03	(.66)					
6. ELP	3.83	1.21	.09	.09	.04	-.03	-.03	(.93)				
7. Current Subjective power	5.21	0.94	.16	-.02	.12	-.01	.13	.31**	(.92)			
8. Current Objective power	2.87	1.36	.09	-.09	.08	.17†	.10	.22*	.35**	(.95)		
9. Position[e]	1.99	1.08	.03	.06	.16†	.22*	.09	.19	.26**	.79**		
10. Self-interested behavior	1.92	0.68	-.14	-.15	-.03	-.07	-.32**	.22*	.10	.21*	.20*	(.81)

[a] n = 109. Cronbach's Alphas appear in parentheses along the diagonal.
[b] Dummy-coded: 2 = female, 1 = male.
[c] 1 = high school degree or below, 2 = 2-year college degree, 3 = 4-year or university degree, 4 = master's degree, 5 = doctoral degree.
[d] Tenure was reported by years.
[e] 1= employee, 2 = line management, 3 = middle management, 4 = senior/ executive management.
† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

and essential to use alternative, objective conceptualizations of power (DeCelles et al., 2012). Our second approach to measuring current power is to look at specific areas of control and influence, such as the ability to control who is hired and how much people are paid. This is called "objective" power. A third approach is to look at the type of position held, such as employee, manager, executive, and to presume that those at higher organizational levels have more power to control resources than those lower in the hierarchy. This is called "position" power. We test our hypotheses with all three approaches to measuring power. In this study, self-interested behavior is self-reported.

Procedure

We tested our hypotheses by recruiting subjects in the United States through Amazon Mechanical Turk (mTurk). We also excluded participants who participated in Study 1. We conducted a power analysis with the program G*Power to determine the sample size needed to detect a medium effect size with a power of 0.80 (Faul et al., 2007). Based on the calculation and prior related research, our sample size in this study should reach 85 or above in total. We ensured variance in position power by pre-screening to ensure that half the subjects were supervisors (n=55) and half were subordinates (n=54). The average age of the resulting sample was 41.09 (*SD*=5.90), the sample was 60% male, and the mean education level was 3.42 (*SD*=.70), with "3" represented four-year college. Means, standard deviations, correlations, and scale Cronbach's Alpha are shown in Table 4.

Measures

Early-life Power. We used the same scale as in Study 1.

Current Subjective Power. We used the same measure as in Study 1.

Current Objective Power. We used Wisse and Sleebos's (2016) eight-item scale. Respondents are asked to indicate the degree to which they agree (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) with statements that they have authority to take certain actions such as "I have the authority to fire my subordinates."

Current Position Power. We ask participants to indicate their hierarchical position in the current company by identifying their role: (1) nonmanagerial position, (2) line management, (3) middle management, or (4) senior/executive management (see Begley et al., 2006). This scale represents low (1) to high (4) position power.

Self-interested Behavior. We used Rus et al.'s (2010) eight-item self-interested behavior scale into a self-report scale of self-interested behavior. Respondents indicated the number of times they performed each behavior during the past year (1=never; 5=always). A sample item is, "I have negotiated a bonus for myself that was substantially higher than the bonus my coworkers received."

Control variables. We controlled for respondents' age, gender, education, organizational tenure because prior research suggests that these variables affect self-interested behavior (O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005, Rus et al., 2012). We also controlled for social desirability. Since our measure of self-interested behavior is self-reported, it can be expected that those who care about looking good to others may underreport their self-interested behavior. We used the five-item scale developed by Hays et al. (1989). Respondents were asked to rate their levels of agreement on a five-point Likert scale (1=definitely true; 5= definitely false). A sample item is "I am always courteous even to people who are disagreeable."

Results

Preliminary Analyses. We first conducted a CFA to verify the items loaded as expected onto our four study constructs, i.e., current subjective power, ELP, current objective power, and self-interested behavior. These analyses[3] providing evidence of discriminant validity and independence of the four measures. Table 4 provides the means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations for all variables. We note that age is not correlated with ELP (or any study variables), which suggests that how far back one has to remember when reporting ELP does not affect remembered levels of ELP.

Hypotheses Testing

First, we conducted a hierarchical linear regression to test Hypothesis 1 (see Table 5). After controlling for age, gender, education, tenure and social desirability, Models 1, 3, and 5 of Table 5 show that current subjective power, current objective power, and position were positively related to self-interested behavior ($b_{current\ subjective\ power}$ = 0.17, p =.061; $b_{current\ objective\ power}$ = 0.28, p =.002; $b_{position}$ = 0.28, p =.003). Therefore, Hypothesis 1was supported.

Models 2, 4, and 6 of Table 5 show tests of H2. Model 2 shows that the interaction of current subjective power and ELP does not predict self-interested behavior ($b_{current\ subjective\ power \times ELP}$ = 0.10, p = .337). However, Models 4 and 6 do show that the interaction of current objective power and ELP, and of position and ELP, predict self-interested behavior ($b_{current\ objective\ power \times ELP}$ = 0.19, p = .029; $b_{position \times ELP}$ = 0.22, p = .021), so that Hypothesis 2 is partially supported. Conventional procedures were then applied for plotting the moderating pattern from Models 4 and 6 (see Figure 1 and 2) at one SD above and below the mean of ELP (Aiken & West, 1991). Consistent with our prediction, Figure 1 illustrates that, for participants with higher ELP, there was a positive relationship between current objective power and self-interested behavior (simple slope b = 0.60, p = .005). For participants with lower ELP, the relationship was not significant (simple slope b = -0.18, p =.446). Figure 2 illustrates that, for participants with higher ELP, there was a positive relationship between position and self-interested behavior (simple slope b = 0.24, p < .001). For participants with lower ELP, the relationship was not significant (simple slope b = 0.04, p =.696).

For Hypothesis 3, we look at the results for current objective power and position since those measures of power showed an interaction effect with ELP. To test Hypothesis 3, which focuses on the effect of ELP on those with high current power, we examined the relationship between ELP and self-interested behavior for respondents in the top 33% of objective power, and those who had and

[3] Based on the conventional ratio of items (indicator = 5:1), we used randomly parceling items as indicators for constructs that had more than five items (Little et al., 2002). We used conventional fit indices to evaluate model fit: the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), the standardized root mean residual (SRMR), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Cut-off criteria (CFI and TLI > .90, SRMR and RMSEA < .08) were used to indicate acceptable fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2015). The baseline four-factor model (χ^2/df = 1.47; CFI = .97; TLI = .96; SRMR = .07; RMSEA = .07) yielded a better fit than an alternative three-factor model that combing ELP and current subjective power (χ^2/df = 5.19; $\Delta\chi^2$=193.91, p<.001, Δdf= 3; CFI = .76; TLI = .68; SRMR = .16; RMSEA = .19), than an alternative two-factor model that combed ELP, current subjective power and current objective power (χ^2/df = 9.14; $\Delta\chi^2$=219.579, p<.001, Δdf= 2; CFI = .50; TLI = .38; SRMR = .21; RMSEA = .27), and than an alternative one-factor model (χ^2/df = 10.26; $\Delta\chi^2$=69.891, p<.001, Δdf= 1; CFI = .43; TLI = .29; SRMR = .23; RMSEA = .29).

Table 5 Linear Regression Models Predicting Self-interested Behavior[a] (Study 2)

Predictors	*Self-interested behavior*					
	Model1	Model2	Model3	Model4	Model5	Model6
Control variables						
Age	-.16†	-.18†	-.15†	-.18*	-.13	-.14
Gender[b]	-.05	-.10	-.02	-.09	-.03	-.07
Education[c]	-.08	-.07	-.08	-.09	-.11	-.14
Tenure[d]	-.05	-.04	-.10	-.07	-.12	-.11
Social desirability	-.35***	-.33***	-.36***	-.36***	-.37***	-.33**
Main predictors						
Current subjective power (CSP)	.18†	.15				
Current objective power (COP)			.28**	.24**		
Position[e]					.28**	.21*
ELP		.17†		.19**		.13
Interaction effect						
CSP × ELP		.10				
COP × ELP				.19*		
Position× ELP						.21*
ΔR^2		.04†		.06*		.07**
Total R^2	.12	.15	.17	.22	.16	.22
F-value	3.40**	3.29**	4.58***	4.75***	4.48***	4.84***

[a] n = 109.
[b] Dummy-coded: 2 = female, 1 = male.
[c] 1 = high school degree or below, 2= 2-year college degree, 3= 4-year or university degree, 4= master's degree, 5= doctoral degree.
[d] Tenure was reported by years.
[e] 1= employee, 2 = line management, 3 = middle management, 4 = senior/ executive management.
† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

self-interested behavior for those in the middle and bottom 33% of objective power and for those who did not have managerial positions.[4] For the sample in the top 33% of objective power, we found a positive relationship between ELP and self-interested behavior (b= 0.43, p = .015), as predicted in H3. positions as managers or above (see Table 6). FFor completeness, we also report the relationship for those in the middle and lower third of subjective power and objective power in Table 6. However, H3 pertains only to those with high power. For those with managerial positions, we found a positive relationship between ELP and self-interested behavior (b= 0.37, p = .009), supporting H3. These

[4] For the middle 33% of objective power, the relationship between ELP and self-interested behavior was not significant (b= 0.18, p = .292). For the bottom 33% of objective power, the relationship between ELP and self-interested behavior was not significant (b= 0.14, p = .432). For non-managers, the relationship between ELP and self-interested behavior was not significant (b= 0.08, p = .563).

results show that for participants with higher current objective power and position, ELP was positively related to self-interested. Therefore, for these two measures of power, Hypothesis 3 was supported. Since H3 was supported, Alternative Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Figure 1 Interaction effect of ELP and current objective power (Study 2)

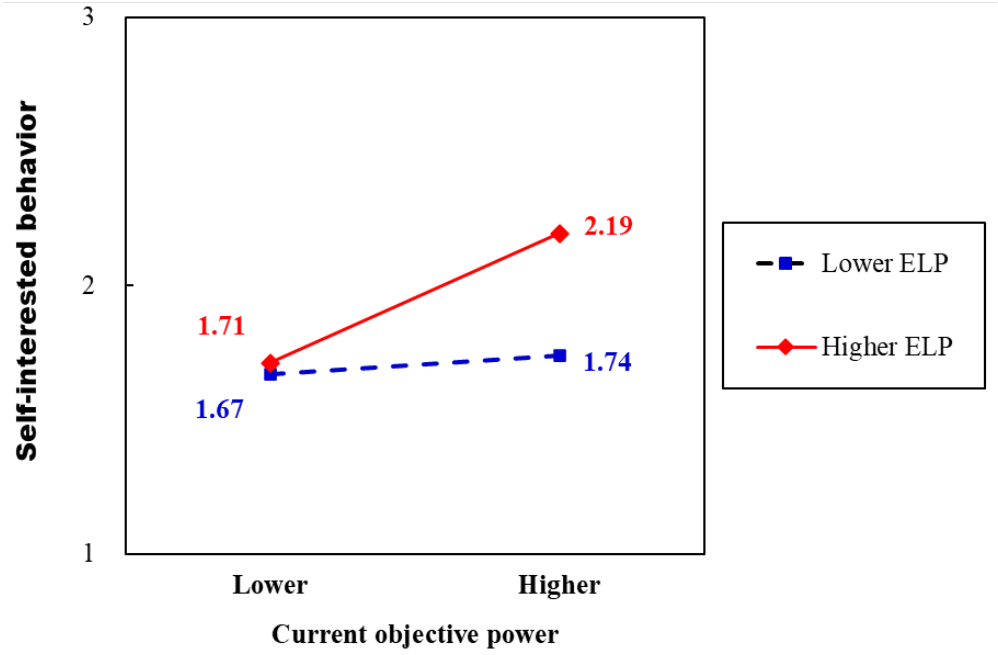

Figure 2 Interaction effect of ELP and position (Study 2)

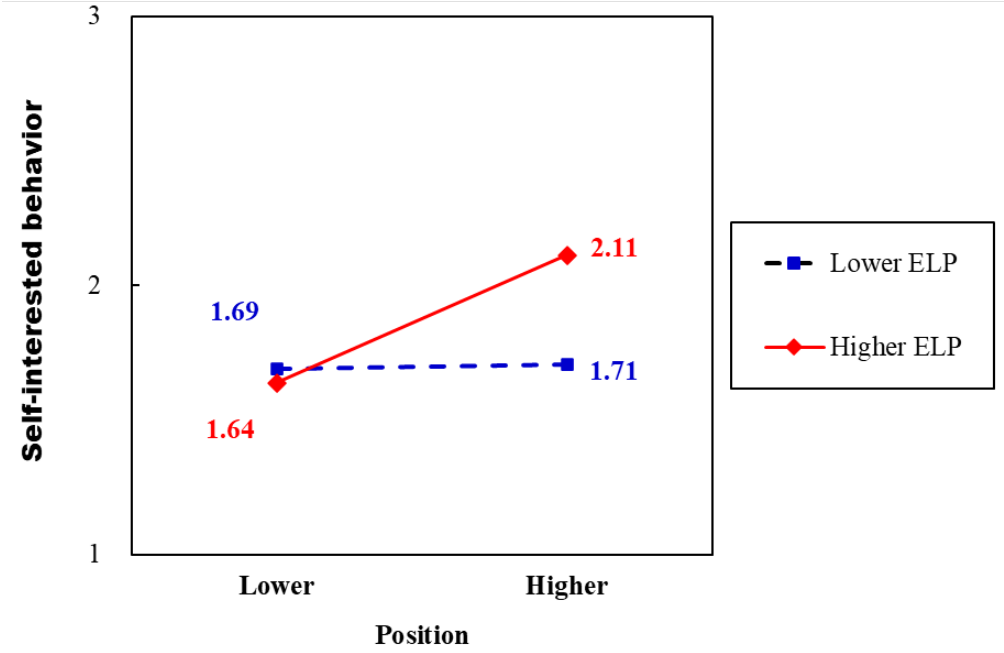

Table 6 Linear Regression Results of ELP Predicting Self-interested Behavior for Subgroups[a] (Study 2)

	ELP → self-interested behavior[b]		
			Tests of H3
Predictors	Bottom 33% score of predictor	Middle 33% score of predictor	Top 33% score of predictor
Current objective power	N=35 *b*= -0.14 *p* = 0.432	N=36 *b*= 0.18 *p* = 0.292	N=38 *b*= 0.43 *p* = 0.015
Position power	Non-managerial position N=54 *b*= 0.08 *p* = 0.563		Managerial position N=55 *b*= 0.37 *p* = 0.009

[a] n = 109.
[b] Control variables: Age, gender, education, tenure, and social desirability.

Summary

There are three findings in Study 2. First, we found that high current power was positively related to self-interested behavior. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported, confirming alignment with the existing literature. Second, people with higher ELP showed more self-interested behavior in response to higher levels of current power for two of our three measures of power (objective and position power). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was partially supported, suggesting that those who experienced more power in their formative adolescent years were more sensitive to the absence or presence of power later in life. Third, among those with higher current objective and position power, higher ELP was associated with more self-interested behavior, providing partial support for H3. This finding supports the argument that those who grew up experiencing more power were more likely to abuse current power than those who grew up without as much power.

It is worth exploring the fact that the subjective power X ELP interaction was not significant, while hte interaction terms of ELP with objective measures of power were significant. There have been other studies where objective measures of power show effects but not subjective measures of power (e.g., Smith & Hofmann, 2016). This may be because objective power is a precursor to felt power (e.g., Heller et al., 2023) potentially providing more powerful effects. Moreover, psychological effects, such as our theorized greater attention on power for those higher in ELP, can still be experienced even in cases where there is low self-awareness of those effects (e.g., implicit attitude tests) (Greenwald et al., 1998) and even if the effect is about attention, such as the tendency to have more attention on angry than happy faces (Pinkham et al., 2010).

There are some limitations in Study 2. First, we used a self-report scale of self-interested behavior. Second, we measured our variables at the same time. As a result, there is a chance that some of our results may be due to common method variance (although this is less likely for the

interaction results). We addressed these concerns by conducting an additional study which uses an experimental design, collected data in two phases separated by several weeks, and increased the sample size.

Study 3: ELP and Objective Self-interested Behavior

Study 3 tests Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3, and Alternate H3, as was done in Study 2, but does so with an objective measure of self-interested behavior—the dictator game.

Procedure

We recruited participants from Mturk. We used a filter that required all participants to be between 35 to 45 years of age and hold a full-time job. We restricted the age range to ensure similarity of years from adolescence. We also restricted participation to IP addresses located in the United States and excluded participants who participated in Studies 1 or 2. Power analysis (Faul et al., 2007) suggested that our sample size should reach 85 or above. However, due to the two-phases design, we recruited more participants than Study 2 to account for expected drop-off between study phases.

The experiment included two phases, the second of which launched two weeks after the first. Following DeCells et al.'s (2012) procedure, we measured relatively stable variables in the first phase, whereas self-interested behavior was in the second phase. In the first phase, participants rated their own ELP, current subjective power, current objective power, and demographic variables (age, gender, and educational level). After two weeks, the participants got instructions about how to play a dictator game with another Mturk worker. They had a brief chat with what they thought was another Mturk worker (but was really a computer acting as another Mturk worker) and decided how to allocate ten points (see more detail below). Then, participants were debriefed.

Sample

At Time 1, 403 participants completed the questionnaire. At Time 2, these 403 participants were sent an invitation message to complete another questionnaire for the second wave of the study. Of the 403 participants, 299 participants completed the second wave, representing a response rate of 74.19 %. The number of participants was also close to other research on power and self-interested behaviors (e.g., DeCells et al., 2012). The final sample used to test our hypotheses was those who completed both phases of the study. The average age of the resulting sample was 38.03 (*SD*=2.85), 41.5% were male, and education level was 23% high school degree, 21% two-year college degree, 34% four-year degree, 18% master's degree, and 4% doctoral degree. The means, standard deviations, correlations, and scale Cronbach's Alpha are shown in Table 7.

Measures

Early-life Power (Phase 1). We used the same scale as in Studies 1 and 2.

Current subjective power (Phase 1). We used the same scale as in Studies 1 and 2.

Current objective power (Phase 1). We used the same scale as in Study 2.

Self-interested behavior (Phase 2). We used the dictator game to measure self-interested behavior (DeCelles et al., 2012; Forsythe et al., 1994; Raihani et al., 2013). Participants were instructed that they would play a decision-making game and would be randomly paired with another Mturk worker (in reality, the computer program). Participants were told (accurately) that we were holding a

lottery for a $100 bonus and the tickets that they would receive for this lottery would depend upon their decisions in this game. The number of lottery chances they would have to win the $100 would be based on the number of points they ended up with (more points would give the participant more chances to win). They were given ten points to split with another Mturk worker, and it was up to that participant alone to decide (to "dictate") how these ten points would be split. The study participants could give the other worker zero points, keeping ten for themselves, give the other worker one, and keep nine for themselves, and so on. How many points they give to themselves is a measure of self-interested behavior (DeCelles et al., 2012), with a higher number representing higher self-interest.

Control variables. As in Study 2, we controlled for respondents' age, gender, education, and organizational tenure. We did not control for social desirability since our measure of self-interested behavior was objective and behavioral.

Results

Preliminary Analyses. We first conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to see if the items loaded as expected onto our three study constructs, i.e., ELP, current subjective power, and current objective power. This analysis[5] provided evidence of adequate discriminant validity and independence of the three measures. Table 7 reports the means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations, and scale Alphas for all the studied variables. We note that age is not correlated with ELP (or any study variables), which suggests that how far back one has to remember when reporting ELP does not affect remembered levels of ELP. Also, age is not correlated with position or current objective power or current subjective power, suggesting that there is similar variation of current power for younger and older respondents.

Hypotheses Testing

We conducted a hierarchical linear regression to test Hypothesis 1 (see Table 8). Looking at Model 1, 3, and 5 of Table 5, after controlling age, gender, education, and tenure, showed that perceptions of current subjective power predicted self-interested behavior ($b_{current\ subjective\ power}$ = 0.13, p =.03), but neither current objective power nor position were positively related to self-interested behavior ($b_{current\ objective\ power}$ = 0.05, p =.42; $b_{position}$ = -0.03, p =.68). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was partially supported.

[5] Based on the conventional ratio of items (indicator = 5:1), we used randomly parceling items as indicators for constructs that had more than five items (Little et al., 2002). We used same conventional fit indices to evaluate model fit as Study 2. The baseline three-factor model (χ^2/df = 2.06; CFI = .99; TLI = .98; SRMR = .02; RMSEA = .06), yielded a better (and acceptable) fit than an alternative two-factor model combing ELP and current subjective power (χ^2/df = 22.01; $\Delta\chi^2$=522.922, p<.001, Δdf= 2; CFI = .73; TLI = .62; SRMR = .19; RMSEA = .27), and an alternative one-factor model combing ELP, current subjective power and current objective power (χ^2/df = 47.53; $\Delta\chi^2$=710.925, p<.001, Δdf= 1; CFI = .37; TLI = .16; SRMR = .25; RMSEA = .40).

Table 7 Means, SDs, Correlations and Scale Cronbach's Alpha [a] (Study 3)

Variables	*Mean*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	38.03	2.84									
2. Gender[b]	1.59	0.49	.09								
3. Education[c]	2.59	1.13	.11	-.08							
4. Tenure[d]	5.69	4.75	.08	-.08	-.04						
5. ELP	3.73	1.23	-.03	-.08	-.10	.08	(.91)				
6. Current subjective power	5.08	1.00	-.04	-.11	.05	.14*	.30**	(.89)			
7. Current objective power	2.44	1.21	-.08	-.21**	.09	.17**	.16**	.30**	(.94)		
8. Position[e]	1.92	1.04	-.11	-.20**	.02	.18**	.12*	.24**	.80**		
9. Self-Interested behavior	5.89	2.13	-.10	.04	.05	.09	.04	.14*	.07	-.00	

[a] n = 299. Cronbach's Alphas appear in parentheses along the diagonal.
[b] Dummy-coded: 2 = female, 1 = male.
[c] Dummy-coded: 1 = high school degree or below, 2 = 2-year college degree, 3 = 4-year or university degree, 4 = master's degree, 5 = doctoral degree.
[d] Tenure was reported by years.
[e] Dummy-coded: 1= employee, 2 = line management, 3 = middle management, 4 = senior/ executive management.
[†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Models 2, 4, and 6 of Table 8 test Hypothesis 2. Models 2 and 4 show that the interaction effect of current subjective power and ELP and of current objective power and ELP predict self-interested behavior ($b_{current\ subjecitve\ power \times ELP} = 0.20$, $p = .001$, $b_{current\ objective\ power \times ELP} = 0.14$, $p = .016$). However, the interaction effects of position and ELP on self-interested behavior was not significant ($b_{position \times ELP} = 0.08$, $p = .180$), providing partial support for Hypothesis 2. Conventional procedures were then applied for plotting the moderating pattern (see Figures 3 and 4) at one standard deviation above and below the mean of ELP (Aiken & West, 1991). Consistent with our prediction, Figure 3 illustrates that, for participants with higher ELP, there was a positive relationship between current subjective power and self-interested behavior (simple slope $b = 0.62$, $p < .001$), while for participants with lower ELP, the relationship was not significant (simple slope $b = -0.09$, $p = .587$). Figure 4 illustrated that, for participants with higher ELP, there was a positive relationship between current objective power and self-interested behavior (simple slope $b = 0.34$, $p = .041$), while for participants with lower ELP, the relationship was not significant (simple slope $b = -0.21$, $p = .239$).

For Hypothesis 3, we examined current subjective power and current objective power since the interaction of those two measures of power with ELP were significant. We examined the relationship between ELP and self-interested behavior for those respondents in the top 33% of subjective power and for the top 33% of objective power (see Table 9). For completeness, we also report the relationship for

Table 8 Linear Regression Models Predicting Self-interested Behavior[a] (Study 3)

Predictors	*Self-interested behavior*					
	Model1	Model2	Model3	Model4	Model5	Model6
Control variables						
Age	-.11†	-.11†	-.11†	-.11†	-.12*	-.11†
Gender[b]	.07	.06	.06	.06	.05	.06
Education[c]	.06	.07	.07	.07	.07	.07
Tenure[d]	.09	.06	.10†	.10	.11†	.10†
Main predictors						
Current Subjective power (CSP)	.13*	.13*				
Current Objective power (COP)			.05	.03		
Position[e]					-.03	-.03
ELP		-.02		.03		.04
Interaction effect						
CSP × ELP		.20***				
COP × ELP				.14*		
Position× ELP						.08
ΔR^2		.04**		.02*		.01
Total R^2	.04	.08	.03	.05	.03	.03
F-value	2.51*	3.59**	1.66	2.11*	1.57	1.47

[a] n = 299.
[b] Dummy-coded: 2 = female, 1 = male.
[c] 1 = high school degree or below, 2= 2-year college degree, 3= 4-year or university degree, 4= master's degree, 5= doctoral degree.
[d] Tenure was reported by years.
[e] 1= employee, 2 = line management, 3 = middle management, 4 = senior/ executive management.
† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

those in the middle and lower third of subjective power and objective power in Table 9.[6] However, H3 pertains only to those with high power. For those in the top 33% of current subjective power, there was a positive relationship between ELP and self-interested behavior (b= 0.24, p = .008), providing support for H3. For the top 33% score of current objective power, the relationship between ELP and

[6] For those in the middle 33% score for current subjective power, the relationship between ELP and self-interested behavior was not significant (b= 0.00, p = .974). For the bottom 33% we found a negative relationship between ELP and self-interested behavior (b= -0.27, p = .009). For those in the middle 33% of current objective power, the relationship between ELP and self-interested behavior was not significant (b= 0.09, p = .423). For the bottom 33% score of current objective power, the relationship between ELP and self-interested behavior was not significant (b= -0.15, p = .11).

self-interested behavior was in the expected direction, but not significant (*b*= 0.13, *p* = .15), suggesting that we have only partial support for H3 (based on the results from subjective power just discussed). Therefore, the Hypothesis 3 was partially supported. Since there was no case of a significant negative coefficient for those with high current power, Alternative Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Figure 1 Ir

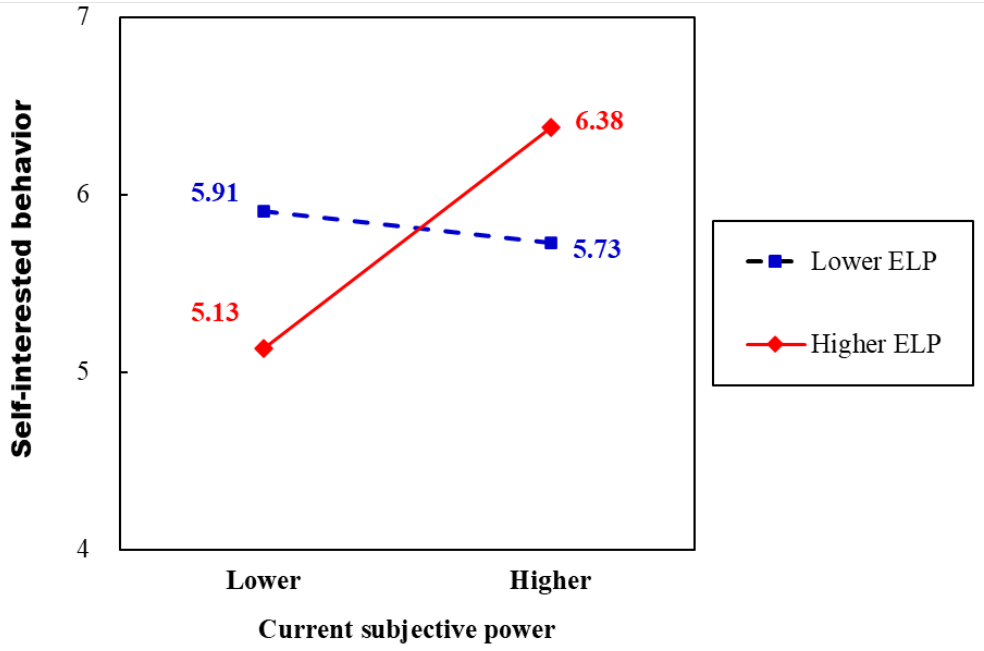

Figure 4 Interaction effect of ELP and current objective power (Study 3)

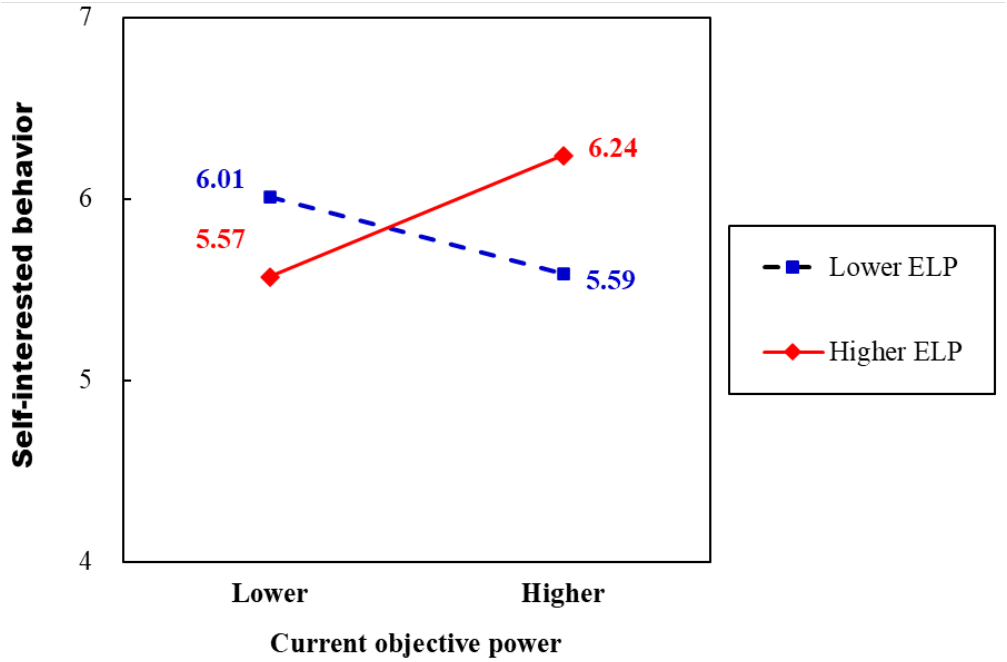

Table 9 Linear Regression Results of ELP Predicting Self-interested Behavior for Subgroups[a] (Study 3)

	ELP → self-interested behavior[b]		
Predictors	Bottom 33% score of predictor	Middle 33% score of predictor	*Tests of H3* Top 33% score of predictor
Current subjective power	N=97 *b*= -0.27 *p* = 0.009	N=79 *b*= 0.00 *p* = 0.974	N=123 *b*= 0.24 *p* = 0.008
Current objective power	N=95 *b*= -0.15 *p* = 0.148	N=96 *b*= 0.08 *p* = 0.431	N=108 *b*= 0.124 *p* = 0.185

[a] n = 299.

[b] Control variables: Age, gender, education, and tenure.

Summary

In Study 3, the results provided partial support for Hypothesis 1, 2, and 3, and no support for Alternative Hypothesis 3. First, current subjective power was associated with higher self-interested behavior, as predicted by Hypothesis 1. However, current objective power and position power were not significantly associated with self-interested behavior. However, there were significant interaction effects of ELP with current power, such that the association between current subjective power and self-interested behavior was stronger for those higher in ELP, and there was an association between current objective power and self-interested behavior for those who were higher in ELP. Thus, when considering two of our three measures of power (current subjective power and current objective power), Hypothesis 2 was supported. Furthermore, in support of Hypothesis 3, among those high in current subjective power, ELP was associated with higher self-interested behavior. However, this same effect was not significant for those highest in current objective power. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was partially supported.

General Discussion

This study introduces the construct of ELP, which is an adaptation of Anderson et al.'s (2012) idea of chronic power. While there is a rich and well-developed body of literature on power (Galinsky et al., 2015), the tendency has been to look only at the impact of current power on power-related behaviors such as self-interested behavior (Williams, 2014). We argue that early-life experiences of power—having more or less of it—shape how power is experienced later in life. We created a version of Anderson et al.'s (2012) chronic power scale that looks at a person's experience of power when they were in their late adolescent years (remembered as an adult) and shows that ELP is a construct that is distinct from current subjective power. Moreover, we show that, looking at emotions that are known to be related to power (optimism, self-importance, confidence, and self-esteem), ELP provides added explanatory power above what is provided by current subjective experience of power. This approach is consistent with research showing that in several areas, such as how people approach wealth and

develop political views, early life experiences are foundational (Inglehart, 1971, 1985; Inglehart & Abramson, 1994; Inglehart & Baker, 2000).

Once one recognizes the existence of ELP, it is possible to think of current power as representing no change from early life power in some cases, an increase in power from early in life in other cases, or a decrease in power from early in life in still other cases. Drawing on prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Tversky & Kahneman, 1981), we expect that the experience that will draw most attention to power is the case of loss of power— moving from high early life power to low current power. That is, those who grew up with power will be most attuned to whether they do or do not have power; certainly, those who did not grow up with power will also notice the difference between having or not having current power, but sensitivity to that difference should be higher for those high in ELP. That is what we proposed in Hypothesis 2, and what we found empirically.

Across two studies, we looked at the known positive effect of power on self-interested behavior and examine whether this effect was stronger for those with high ELP than those with low ELP. That is, whether those who had greater power in adolescence tend to respond more to differences in current power than those who lacked power in their formative years. This tests for a difference in slopes between those high and low in ELP. We examined this Hypothesis first using self-reported self-interested behavior as the dependent variable (Study 2), and second using objective self-interested behavior as the dependent variable (Study 3). We also examined this hypothesis using three different measures of current power – subjective power, objective power, and position power. This provided six tests of our hypothesis. The result did not support our hypothesis in every case but did support our hypothesis in the preponderance of the cases (in four of the six tests).

We also addressed the question of whether a tendency to abuse having high power would be stronger among those who grew up with greater sense of power (or to be more exact given methodological constraints, among those who have a perception that they grew up with more power). We argued, based on theories of entitlement (Campbell et al., 2004; Tomlinson, 2013; Zitek et al., 2010), that people with higher current power who grew up with high power (high ELP) would exhibit greater levels of self-interested behavior than those people with higher current power who did not grow up with power (low ELP). We tested this hypothesis in the four cases where we found support for Hypothesis 2; in three of those cases we found support for Hypothesis 3 (with the fourth showing a similar, albeit non-significant pattern). Thus, it does seem that among those with higher power, higher ELP is associated with greater self-interested behavior (not lower self-interested behavior, as suggested by Alternative H3). Power combined with growing up with power produces the highest level of self-interested behavior.

This work adds to Williams' (2014) analysis of factors that affect opportunistic use of power. Williams (2014) saw that the impact of power on self-interested behavior could be moderated by the presence of self-focused goals or threats to power. ELP, we believe, has elements of both. We based H2 on the idea that those with higher ELP would be more sensitive to current power levels since their experience included losses, rather than gains; this is a form of threat to power discussed by Williams (2014). We based H3 on the idea that those with higher power at a young age would be more likely to expect and use power, thereby expressing a kind of self-focused behavior.

There are implications of these results for managers. There is a great deal of research about the use and abuse of power in the role of leadership. One of the more important tools a manager has is building positive relationships with subordinate (high Leader-Member Exchange; Liden et al., 1997), since this has been shown to improve subordinate motivation (Graves & Luciano, 2013), organizational citizenship behavior (Anand et al., 2018), and commitment (Tremblay et al., 2017). Inversely, there are bad organizational outcomes from abusive supervision (Tepper et al., 2017). While a manager might have the ability, due to their power, to impose their will on others, it would be wise

to refrain from doing so in most cases. As part of that effort, a manager might want to consider their early years, and reflect on whether they might have experienced a great deal of power at that time. If they did, they might want to approach situations with a mental check on whether they might be overstepping the use of their current power; they might try to recognize whether there is a natural tendency to slip into excessive use of power, since it's use may be driven not by the demands of the situation, but the fact that past high levels of power makes use of power seem too natural.

Future Research Directions. Our H3 (and Alternate H3) focused only on those with high power. This approach was driven by the importance of understanding why those with high power to abuse power, and what conditions might amplify or dampen this pattern. We were able to address that question, but there is also more to be explored about those with current lower power. How does ELP affect those with low power? Although we had no hypotheses about this issue, we did report relevant data. Study 2 showed (see Table 6) no significant effects of ELP on self-interested behavior for those low in current objective power or current position power, but Study 3 (which has a more objective measure of self-interested behavior; see Table 9) showed that when current subjective power was low, higher ELP was associated with lower self-interested behavior and there was a similar (albeit not significant) for those low in current objective power. Future research can explore if this pattern holds, and what drives it.

Another opportunity for future research is to look at other effects of power besides self-interested behavior and see if high ELP amplifies those other effects as well. Given that we expect the overall loss frame of high ELP to generate more attention to a person's current power, it might amplify known effect of power on revenge, harassment, and abusive behavior (Strelan et al., 2013; Williams et al., 2017; Foulk et al., 2018) not just self-interested behavior.

Finally, our studies were based on self-reported current power (reported as experience of power, objective power, and position). Future research could use other methods to measure power-related constructs, such as the recall method (Galinsky et al., 2003), role-playing (Galinsky et al., 2003), and word fragments (Galinsky et al., 2008). Most importantly, current power could be manipulated experimentally (e.g., Galinsky et al., 2003).

Limitations. Our study has some limitations. First, while we theorize about actual power in early life, we were only able to measure participants current memory of that early-life power. That is the best we can do without conducting a true, 20-year longitudinal study, but it is not ideal. That said, there is support for the idea that recall is fairly accurate: many power-related experiments use the recall method (e.g., Galinsky et al., 2003), and previous research found that people are moderately accurate when retrospectively assessing their personality change over time (Oltmanns et al., 2020). Moreover, Study 1 showed that even for those over age 35, they were able to clearly distinguish between current power and ELP.

Second, Study 2 uses a single source of self-reported data. This poses the risk of common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, single-source data is unlikely to produce interaction effects of the type posited in our second hypothesis (Siemsen et al., 2010). Also, this problem is not present in Study 3, since it included an objective measure of self-interested behavior – the dictator game (Forsythe et al., 1994; DeCelles et al., 2012; Raihani et al., 2013). The other limitation of this study is that we do not hypothesize about, or measure, intervening psychological processes that create the effects we find. Our theory suggests that there are elements of both threats to power and self-directed behavior inherent in ELP, so the intervening psychological processes are likely to be complex and multi-faceted. Still, it is important to document the core effect of ELP, which can be explored further in the next stages of research.

We believe that understanding of the use – and sometimes abuse – of power can be better understood by adding an awareness of Early Life Power. We introduce this new construct in the hope of advancing our understanding of power, and research on power.

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Author Bios

Chih-Chieh Chu is an Assistant Professor of Department of Business Administration, National Changhua University of Education. Professor Chu earned his Ph. D. from Department of Business Administration, National Taiwan University. Professor Chu's current research interests include power and social hierarchy in organizations, leadership, and cross-cultural organizational behavior. Professor Chu's research papers have been published at international academic journals and conferences.

Raymond A. Friedman is the Brownlee O. Currey Professor of Management at Vanderbilt University. Professor Friedman's research has included negotiation, dispute resolution, the management of diversity, and cross-cultural differences between Chinese and American managers. Professor Friedman has served as president of the International Association for Conflict Management, as President of the International Association for Chinese Management Research, and as chair of the Conflict Management Division of the Academy of Management.

Shu-Cheng Steve Chi is a Distinguished Professor of Department of Business Administration, National Taiwan University. Professor Chi received his Ph.D. from the State University of New York at Buffalo. Professor Chi's research interest includes leadership, conflict management and negotiation, and cross-cultural organizational behavior. Professor Chi has served as coordinator of Management Division One of National Science Council of R.O.C., president of the Taiwan Academy of Management, and as Editor-in-Chief of NTU Management Review.