

# I Do Not Need Feedback! Or Do I? Self-Efficacy, Perspective Taking, and Feedback Seeking

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A central idea in the feedback seeking literature is that there should be a positive relationship between self-efficacy and the likelihood of seeking feedback. Yet empirical findings have not always matched this theoretical claim. Departing from current theorizing, we argue that high self-efficacy may sometimes *decrease* feedback seeking by making people undervalue feedback and that perspective taking is an important factor in determining whether or not this occurs. Results from 5 studies, utilizing diverse methodologies and samples, support our hypothesis that the relationship between self-efficacy and feedback seeking depends on the extent to which one engages in perspective taking. In the absence of perspective taking, self-efficacy tends to be more negatively related to feedback seeking. However, when perspective taking occurs, this relationship tends to be more positive. We also provide evidence that this interaction effect is mediated by perceptions of the value of feedback. We discuss the implications of our theory and findings for the feedback seeking literature and more broadly.

**Keywords:** feedback-seeking, perspective taking, self-efficacy

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In organizations, much of the information required to adequately assess one's effectiveness is not voluntarily provided by others (Ashford & Tsui, 1991). In light of this, both practitioners (e.g., O'Hara, 2015; Zenger & Folkman, 2013) and scholars (e.g., Anseel, Beatty, Shen, Lievens, & Sackett, 2015; Ashford, De Stobbeleir, & Nujella, 2016) advise people to actively seek feedback from others. This is because soliciting feedback can provide diagnostic information that allows seekers to improve (Anseel et al., 2015; Ashford, Blatt, & Vandewalle, 2003; Ashford et al., 2016). Indeed, employees who actively solicit feedback tend to perform better (Gong, Wang, Huang, & Cheung, 2017), are seen as more effective by supervisors, peers, and subordinates (Ashford & Tsui, 1991), and are more creative (De Stobbeleir, Ashford, & Buyens,

2011). Yet, people do not often follow the advice to seek feedback (Tourish & Robson, 2003, 2006). Parker and Collins (2010) compared a host of proactive work behaviors and found feedback seeking to be the least frequently reported of those behaviors. Similarly, in an assessment of supervisors completed by thousands of subordinates, the statement: ". . . asks for feedback on how his/her actions affect other people's performance" received the lowest frequency rating compared to 30 other managerial behaviors (Kouzes & Posner, 2014).

Given the relatively low frequency of this important behavior, scholars have tried to identify factors that increase feedback seeking. One factor that they often point to is self-efficacy (Ashford et al., 2003; Niemann, Wisse, Rus, Van Yperen, & Sassenberg, 2015), or people's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish specific tasks (Bandura, 1986). The key reason for expecting that high self-efficacy will lead to more feedback seeking is that self-efficacy reduces the threat inherent in receiving feedback, as people with high self-efficacy have less fragile egos compared with those with low self-efficacy. When people experience low self-efficacy, on the other hand, this may lead to heightened fears about hearing negative information regarding the self or appearing incompetent or uncertain in the eyes of others (Anseel et al., 2015; Ashford, 1986; Ashford et al., 2003; Brown, Ganesan, & Challagalla, 2001). For example, Anseel, Beatty, Shen, Lievens, and Sackett (2015, p. 323) argued that "the cost of [feedback seeking behavior] will be higher for someone with low . . . self-efficacy because of the potential detrimental impact negative feedback might have on the feedback seeker's self-worth."

Despite this reason for expecting a positive relationship between self-efficacy and feedback seeking, empirical research on this

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relationship is somewhat inconclusive. Whereas some studies report a positive association between self-efficacy and active feedback seeking (e.g., Renn & Fedor, 2001) others have found no relationship (e.g., Ashford, 1986). We propose that a reason for these mixed results is that, although self-efficacy does reduce ego threat, it also acts as a powerful internal source of information about one's performance, which may cause high self-efficacy individuals to discount the potential value of feedback from outside sources. In other words, we argue that high self-efficacy may act as an internal signal that one is performing well, thus reducing the perceived value of obtaining external feedback (Schmidt & DeShon, 2010). Thus, unless high self-efficacy is tempered by something that motivates the individual to go beyond internal or self-referential sources of information about his or her performance, it may not have a positive effect on feedback seeking, and may actually have a negative effect.

We propose that *perspective taking*, or the active cognitive process of imagining the world from others' viewpoints (Ku, Wang, & Galinsky, 2015), will play such a tempering role. A well-established effect of perspective taking is a reduction in self-reliant thinking and the tendency to recognize and value others' viewpoints (Epley, Keysar, Van Boven, & Gilovich, 2004; Galinsky, Magee, Rus, Rothman, & Todd, 2014; Yip & Schweitzer, 2019). We therefore propose that when they engage in perspective taking, individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to recognize the value of feedback from others, and thus seek such feedback more.

By providing this expanded theoretical account, we clarify disparate past findings on the relationship between self-efficacy and feedback seeking (e.g., Ashford, 1986; Brown et al., 2001; Renn & Fedor, 2001). We argue that, depending on perspective taking, the relationship between self-efficacy and feedback seeking can be either positive or negative, which would explain why some past research has found no overall effect. We also extend existing feedback seeking theory by highlighting how self-efficacy may reduce the perceived value of feedback, and by integrating work on feedback seeking with the perspective taking literature. In addition, our work answers calls by scholars to explore the role that perspective taking plays with respect to organizationally relevant behaviors and outcomes (Ku et al., 2015; Parker, Atkins, & Axtell, 2008).

## Theory and Hypothesis Development

Feedback seeking, or the deliberate devotion of effort toward determining the adequacy of one's actions, is central to people's efforts to be self-aware and to regulate their performance and effectiveness (Ashford, 1989; Ashford & Tsui, 1991; Tsui & Ashford, 1994). Feedback seeking provides diagnostic and error-corrective information on where one's behavior or performance is falling short of expectations and how it may be improved (Ashford, 1989; Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Van Velsor, Taylor, & Leslie, 1993). It allows people access to information which can be used to adapt their behavior and thereby improve performance (Ashford & Tsui, 1991). Feedback seeking can range from passive monitoring of one's environment to active requests for others to provide an assessment of one's performance (Ashford et al., 2003). In this article, we focus on the latter.

## Self-Efficacy and Feedback Seeking

According to models of feedback seeking (Ashford et al., 2003; Ashford & Cummings, 1983) when deciding whether to seek feedback, individuals engage in a mental calculus of costs and benefits. The higher the perceived benefits, and the lower the perceived costs, the more likely one is to engage in feedback seeking. The most obvious benefit of seeking feedback is the possibility of obtaining diagnostic information that can aid in improving one's performance and thus increase the chance of attaining valued goals (Ashford, 1986). Indeed, the anticipated value of the information one expects to obtain is seen as a key driver for seeking feedback (Morrison, 2002; Morrison & Cummings, 1992). Yet, feedback seeking also has costs, which may inhibit the behavior (Ashford, 1989). These costs include damage to one's ego (from receiving negative feedback) or to one's image (e.g., appearing unsure or incompetent).

One factor that is likely to affect the perceived costs of feedback seeking is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). It is key in how people self-regulate and make decisions about how to spend their time and effort (Bandura, 1997). Previous theorizing suggests that low self-efficacy leads to heightened fears about hearing negative information regarding the self or appearing weak in the eyes of others (Anseel et al., 2015; Ashford, 1986; Ashford et al., 2003; Brown et al., 2001). Hence feedback seeking should be more likely when self-efficacy is high rather than low (Ashford et al., 2003). The empirical evidence, however, does not lend clear support for this prediction. Although a positive relationship has been reported (Renn & Fedor, 2001), other published studies find no direct relationship between self-efficacy and feedback seeking (Ashford, 1986; Brown et al., 2001).<sup>1</sup>

One possible reason for the failure to find consistent support for a positive relationship is that existing theory has focused on how, for people with high self-efficacy, the perceived *costs* of asking for feedback may be reduced. Yet, this work has neglected to take into account how, for people with high self-efficacy, the perceived *benefits* of asking for feedback may *also* be reduced, which might lead to *less* feedback seeking. Consistent with this idea, Weiss and Knight (1980) showed that people with higher beliefs about their own self-worth and competence were less likely to search for information on problem solving tasks, and as a result, performed more poorly. Similarly, research on advice seeking shows that people with high levels of confidence in their own abilities fail to seek and take others' advice even when it could improve their performance (Gino, Brooks, & Schweitzer, 2012; See, Morrison, Rothman, & Soll, 2011).

Building on these ideas and findings, we argue that when people have high self-efficacy, they are apt to assume that their performance is on-track, and as a result, to view the diagnostic error-corrective benefits of feedback as low. In other words, self-efficacy may act as a powerful internal source of information for

<sup>1</sup> In their meta-analysis, Anseel et al. (2015) reported an overall positive relationship of self-efficacy with feedback seeking. However, two out of the five studies included in their meta-analysis were unpublished and thus, we could not directly examine their findings.

judging ones' performance as high, and by extension, the value of feedback as low. When this occurs, feedback seeking is likely to be curtailed, regardless of whether the costs are high or low. These arguments are consistent with broader feedback seeking theorizing which suggests that people first consider the possible benefits of feedback, and only if they judge feedback to be valuable, do they consider that value relative to the costs of seeking it (Levy, Albright, Cawley, & Williams, 1995; Morrison, 2002).

The reliance on one's self-efficacy as a basis for judging how well one is performing, and thus as a basis for deciding whether to devote effort to obtain feedback, is reasonable if self-efficacy is an accurate indicator of performance. Yet in many settings, performance is subjective, multifaceted, and ambiguous, making the relationship between past and future performance imperfect. It is also well-established that people tend to think they are performing better than they actually are (Greenwald, 1980; Hall & Raimi, 2018; Kruger & Dunning, 1999). As a result, when people heuristically rely on their high level of self-efficacy as a basis for deciding whether to invest effort in obtaining feedback, they may forgo seeking feedback even when this information could help them improve. In sum, we propose that high self-efficacy can lead people to underappreciate the value of feedback, and as a result, engage in less feedback seeking. However, as we explain next, perspective taking may reduce or even reverse this effect.

### The Moderating Role of Perspective Taking

Perspective taking refers to the "active cognitive process of imagining the world from another's vantage point or imagining oneself in another's shoes to understand their visual viewpoint, thoughts, motivations, intentions, and/or emotions" (Ku et al., 2015, p. 79). In organizations, perspective taking involves attempts to mentally represent what others (supervisors, coworkers, subordinates, customers) are feeling and thinking, and how they see the perspective taker and his or her behavior (Axtell, Parker, Holman, & Totterdell, 2007; Grant & Berry, 2011). Perspective taking causes people to step outside the constraints of their own internal, and often biased, frames of reference (Galinsky, Maddux, Gilin, & White, 2008; Moore, 2005). Perspective taking also reduces reliance on heuristic and egocentric thinking, and increases systematic processing and information search (Epley et al., 2004; Trötschel, Hüffmeier, Loschelder, Schwartz, & Gollwitzer, 2011). That is, when people perspective take, they step outside of their usual mental routines and default tendencies to consider alternative viewpoints and possibilities and process information more deeply (Erle & Topolinski, 2017; Ku, Wang, & Galinsky, 2010; Todd, Galinsky, & Bodenhausen, 2012; Vescio, Sechrist, & Paolucci, 2003).

Building from these ideas, we suggest that individuals with high self-efficacy who engage in perspective taking will be more likely to recognize that they might lack awareness of some aspects of their performance and/or that others may see their performance differently. In other words, perspective taking induces more of a focus on others that can serve to temper self-efficacy's effects as an internal self-focused beacon for judging one's performance. Hence, perspective taking may make it more likely that individuals with high self-efficacy will recognize that there could be value in feedback from others

(Axtell et al., 2007; Parker et al., 2008). This, in turn, will increase the likelihood of them seeking feedback.

Some empirical research provides indirect support for our arguments. Galinsky, Magee, Rus, Rothman, and Todd (2014) found that high power individuals who engaged in perspective taking sought more information from others as compared with high power people who did not engage in perspective taking. In addition, Beck and Schmidt (2012) showed that for people with a high levels of self-efficacy, momentary experiences of doubt (such as what should be brought about by perspective taking) relate to increased information search. In a similar vein, research suggests that people can overcome bounded awareness and other positive self-biases by deliberately considering issues, questions, or ideas from alternative points of view, similar to the cognitive processes involved in perspective taking (Zhang, Fletcher, Gino, & Bazerman, 2015). Such acts disrupt default thinking and enable more complex cognitive processes. This allows individuals to recognize possible biases in their own thinking, increasing the perceived value of obtaining additional information (Bazerman, 2014; Lovallo & Kahneman, 2003).

Integrating the above, we expect that in the absence of perspective taking, self-efficacy will relate negatively to feedback seeking, because as people's self-efficacy increases they are more likely to assume they are performing well and thus undervalue input from others. On the other hand, in the presence of perspective taking, we expect the relationship between self-efficacy and feedback seeking to become more positive, because high self-efficacy individuals who engage in perspective taking will be less likely to assume that feedback lacks value. Thus:

*Hypothesis 1:* The effect of self-efficacy on feedback seeking is moderated by perspective taking. When perspective taking is low (high), self-efficacy relates negatively (positively) to feedback seeking.

### The Mediating Role of Perceived Value

Our theorizing suggests that the effect of self-efficacy on feedback seeking will vary because perspective taking alters the relationship between self-efficacy and the perceived value of feedback, or the subjective judgment about the extent to which feedback from others could be instrumental for achieving one's goals (Ashford, 1986). Thus, we propose that the interactive effect of self-efficacy and perspective taking on feedback seeking operates via perceived value. In the absence of perspective taking, individuals are likely to rely on their own internal sense of how they are performing, and thus those with high self-efficacy are likely to underappreciate the potential value of getting information from others, and not recognize that it might enable them to improve their effectiveness. With perspective taking, however, individuals will be more likely to recognize that they may have an incomplete or inaccurate sense of how they are doing, such that even with high self-efficacy, they will see value in feedback from others.

*Hypothesis 2:* The interactive effect of self-efficacy and perspective taking on feedback seeking is mediated by the perceived value of feedback seeking.



## Overview of Studies<sup>2</sup>

We conducted five studies to test our hypotheses. Studies 1–3 tested Hypothesis 1. In Study 1, we surveyed managers employed in a variety of organizations across three time points. In Study 2, we again surveyed managers from a variety of organizations, but obtained reports of the managers' feedback seeking from their subordinates, to reduce common source bias. In Studies 1 and 2, we also explored whether our hypothesized effects were unique to feedback seeking by also testing them with a measure of voice solicitation (another form of information seeking from subordinates). Results of these analyses can be found in the [online supplemental materials](#). Studies 1 and 2 were correlational, and feedback seeking was reported, not observed. Hence, in Study 3 (an online experiment) we measured self-efficacy on a specific task, manipulated perspective taking, and observed the effects on people's actual feedback seeking behavior. In Studies 4 and 5, we manipulated both self-efficacy and perspective taking and directly tested the mediating role of perceived feedback value (Hypothesis 2). Study 4 used a scenario design and Study 5 used an online experiment with participants focused on their real jobs.

## Study 1

### Method

**Procedure.** For Study 1, we recruited a diverse sample of U.S. working managers to complete surveys on Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). MTurk has been shown to be a reliable source of data, comparable with traditional survey or lab research (Paolacci & Chandler, 2014), and has been used to study managers' behavior with comparable results to those obtained from other sources (e.g., Johnson et al., 2017). We obtained institutional review board (IRB) approval from New York University (IRB-FY2017-1116), protocol title: "Managerial Workplace Experiences."

To reduce common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), the data collection process involved surveys at four points in time. At Time 0, we posted a 2-min screening survey. We used the Turkprime platform (Litman, Robinson, & Abberbock, 2017) to target MTurkers who had previously reported to have supervisory roles. We focused on managers in supervisory roles because they are more likely to engage in complex tasks that may require feedback from others and because it allowed us to measure feedback seeking from not just bosses and peers, but also from subordinates/employees. We told participants that completing this survey would allow us to determine their eligibility for our main study, but did not tell them anything about our screening criteria (Chandler & Paolacci, 2017). We then used three criteria to identify eligible respondents from the 568 who completed the screening survey: (a) full time employment status, (b) three or more subordinates with whom they directly and regularly interacted face-to-face, and (c) an open-ended description of the position indicating managerial/supervisory responsibilities. This yielded 306 eligible respondents. About a week later (Time 1), we sent a link to a 5-min survey to these 306 people. This survey included the perspective taking and control variable measures. A month later (Time 2), we sent a short survey with a measure of self-efficacy to the 265 people who completed the Time 1 survey. We received responses from 234. Finally, 1 month later (Time 3),

we sent another survey, with our measure of feedback seeking, to the 265 participants who completed the Time 1 survey. We received back 224 surveys. We paid people \$.31 for completing the screening survey and \$1 for each of the other surveys.

**Sample.** Our final sample included 207 managers who completed all four surveys. These managers worked in a variety of industries (e.g., health care, media, transportation, finance, retail, and education), and held varied titles (e.g., pharmacy technician, shift supervisor, sales manager, registered nurse, store director). On average, they were 35.96 years of age, had held their current positions for 5.41 years, and had 10.11 employees directly reporting to them. They were 82% Caucasian, 41% female, and 67% had more than 4 years of college education. Most occupied low level supervisory (37%) or middle management (39%) positions and 79% worked in organizations with 50 or more employees.

### Measures.

**Self-efficacy.** Participants reported their self-efficacy at Time 2 using the three-item competence dimension from Spreitzer's (1995) empowerment scale (e.g., "I am confident about my ability to do my job"; 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*;  $\alpha = .85$ ), which has been previously used to capture individuals' work self-efficacy (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012).

**Perspective taking.** Participants reported their tendency to engage in perspective taking on the Time 1 survey, using a four-item measure adapted from Grant and Berry (2011) which is based on the extensively validated Davis (1980) measure (e.g., "On the job, I make an effort to see the world through others' eyes," and "At work, I regularly seek to understand others' viewpoints"; 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *to a very large extent*;  $\alpha = .92$ ). Although most research on perspective taking has used experimental manipulations, studies have also measured perspective taking as a personal disposition (Davis, 1980; Grant & Berry, 2011; Parker & Axtell, 2001). Research finds consistent effects whether one uses an experimental manipulation or a dispositional measure (e.g., Galinsky et al., 2008; Ku et al., 2010).

**Feedback seeking.** Participants reported their feedback seeking behaviors at Time 3, using nine items ( $\alpha = .97$ ) adapted from Ashford and Tsui (1991), with three items referring to each of three feedback-seeking targets: supervisor/boss, peers, employees/subordinates. The items were: "Requested your [target] to provide you with an informal appraisal or feedback of your performance," "Directly asked your [target] for information concerning your personal performance as a manager," and "Attempted to talk to your [target] about whether they have any concerns regarding how you personally interact with them" (1 = *never*, 4 = *3–4 times a month*, to 7 = *daily*). An exploratory factor analysis showed that all items loaded onto a single factor with an Eigenvalue larger than 1, so we created one feedback seeking scale.

**Control variables.** We controlled for managers' span of control (number of direct reports) as having more direct reports might make it harder to seek feedback, or alternatively, might require one to seek more feedback. We also controlled for managers' job tenure, as tenure may be associated with higher self-efficacy and lower perceived need to seek feedback. Both were measured at Time 0. Given that feedback seeking is a proactive behavior

<sup>2</sup> Data and syntax used to conduct our analysis are available on Open Science Framework: <https://goo.gl/riYE7G>.

(Parker & Collins, 2010), we also controlled for proactive personality using Parker's (1998) six-item measure ( $\alpha = .85$ ). In addition, because low psychological safety may increase the perceived interpersonal costs of seeking feedback, we controlled for psychological safety using Liang, Farh, and Farh's (2012) five-item measure ( $\alpha = .87$ ). These two scales were on the Time 1 survey. Excluding any controls does not change the statistical significance of our results (Becker, 2005).

**Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).** We conducted a CFA on our five multiitem measures (self-efficacy, feedback seeking, perspective taking, proactive personality, and psychological safety). In line with recommendations (Little, Rhemtulla, Gibson, & Schoemann, 2013; e.g., Matsunaga, 2008), we used item parcels to reduce the feedback seeking measure to three indicators. The five-factor model exhibited good fit to the data ( $N = 207$ ;  $\chi^2 = 371.25$ ,  $df = 179$ ,  $p < .001$ , CFI = .93, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .06). All items loaded on their respective factor ( $p < .001$ ). Chi-square difference tests showed that alternative nested models achieved significantly poorer fit. For example, constraining self-efficacy and perspective taking to load on one factor produced a significantly worse fit,  $\Delta\chi^2(N = 207; \Delta df = 1) = 264.81$ ,  $p < .001$ , CFI = .84, RMSEA = .11, SRMR = .10. These analyses indicated discriminant validity of our measures.

## Results and Discussion

Means, *SDs*, and bivariate correlations of our measures are in Table 1. Consistent with prior research (Ashford, 1986; Brown et al., 2001), the zero-order correlation between self-efficacy and feedback seeking was not significant ( $r = -.06$ ,  $p = .402$ ). In support of Hypothesis 1, OLS regression results (see Table 2) showed that self-efficacy and perspective taking interacted to predict feedback seeking ( $B = .25$ ,  $p = .011$ ).<sup>3</sup> We plotted this interaction (see Figure 1) and conducted simple slopes analysis (Aiken & West, 1991). This analysis indicated that self-efficacy related negatively to feedback seeking when perspective taking was low ( $-1$  *SD*,  $B = -.46$ ,  $p = .003$ ) but not when perspective taking was high ( $+1$  *SD*,  $B = .08$ ,  $p = .640$ ).

Per our theorizing, perspective taking should only matter when self-efficacy is high. To confirm whether this was the case, we conducted an additional analysis where we examined the effects of perspective taking at high and low levels of self-efficacy. Supporting our theoretical arguments, perspective taking had a positive effect on feedback seeking when self-efficacy was high ( $+1$  *SD*,  $B = .39$ ,  $p = .001$ ), but not when it was low ( $-1$  *SD*,  $B = -.06$ ,  $p = .659$ ).

Consistent with Hypothesis 1, Study 1 found that perspective taking moderates the effects of self-efficacy on feedback seeking. This relationship was negative for low perspective taking people, but became more positive, although it did not become significant, for people who reported high perspective taking. We controlled for other possible predictors of feedback seeking (proactive personality and psychological safety) and our results were robust to these controls. A strength of Study 1 is that we collected measures at different points in time. However, measures were self-reported, which may create common source or social desirability bias. We conducted Study 2 to address these limitations. Although any type of feedback seeking can be valuable for managers, downward seeking may be particularly so (Ashford, Wellman, Sully de

Luque, De Stobbeleir, & Wollan, 2018), as employees tend not to provide feedback to their supervisors unless explicitly asked to do so (Anderson & Brown, 2010). We thus used subordinates' ratings of their managers' feedback seeking behavior.

## Study 2

### Method

**Procedure.** We obtained IRB approval from the University of Maryland (845179), protocol title: "Managers and Employees Work Behaviors." We utilized the snowball technique frequently used to capture diverse samples (Mitchell, Vogel, & Folger, 2015). As part of an undergraduate organizational behavior class assignment, we asked students to each recruit one employee-manager dyad. A recent meta-analysis has suggested that student-recruited samples are comparable to non-student-recruited samples (Wheeler, Shanine, Leon, & Whitman, 2014). Students had to recruit dyads from their own personal network and ensure that (a) they worked full time (more than 30 hr a week); (b) the employee directly reported to the manager; and (c) the manager had at least three direct reports. Based on the information that the students provided, we contacted 497 manager-employee dyads via e-mail with a link to an online survey. After 2 weeks, 457 employees and 462 managers had completed the survey and we were able to match the responses of 415 dyads that did not have missing data on focal variables. Because employees provided ratings of our dependent variable, we wanted to ensure we only included dyads where employees were likely to be reliable reporters of their managers' feedback seeking. We thus excluded 30 dyads where the employees indicated they were either unfamiliar with their managers' performance (five) or rarely interacted with their manager (25).

**Sample.** The final sample consisted of 385 manager-employee dyads working in a variety of industries including insurance, education, construction, accounting, finance, government, hospitality, IT, and defense. Managers (61% male; 62% Caucasian, 21% Asian, and 12% African American;  $M_{\text{age}} = 44.49$ ;  $M_{\text{org tenure}} = 10.63$ ;  $M_{\text{current position tenure}} = 6.31$ ) occupied a range of organizational levels (15% first level supervisors, 24% middle management, 23% upper middle management, 18% executive, and 21% top management), and had an average of 11.39 employees reporting directly to them. Employees ( $M_{\text{age}} = 38.98$ ;

<sup>3</sup> We explored the robustness of this interaction in several ways. First, the interaction was also significant when we used 1,000 bootstraps with bias corrected confidence intervals ( $B = .25$ ,  $p = .001$ , 95% CI [.075, .461]). Second, we repeated our analysis using a separate measure for each target, and found similar interactions (i.e., employees:  $B = .28$ ,  $p = .007$ ; manager/boss:  $B = .20$ ;  $p = .054$ ; and peers:  $B = .28$ ,  $p = .009$ ). Third, at Time 1, we also measured participants' general self-efficacy (GSE; Chen et al., 2001), which was correlated with our more specific self-efficacy measure at Time 2 ( $r = .47$ ,  $p < .001$ ). When we used the GSE measure instead of our self-efficacy measure in our analysis, we found similar results. GSE was unrelated to feedback seeking ( $r = .09$ ,  $p = .183$ ) but interacted with perspective taking ( $B = .44$ ,  $SE = .11$ ,  $p < .001$ ). When perspective taking was high, the relationship between GSE and feedback seeking was positive and significant ( $B = .85$ ,  $p < .001$ ), but when perspective taking was low, this relationship was negative, but not significant ( $B = -.09$ ,  $p = .569$ ).

Table 1  
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Variables (Study 1)

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Span of control (Time 0)	10.11	11.25	—						
2. Position tenure (Time 0)	5.41	4.76	.10	—					
3. Psychological safety (Time 1)	5.14	1.23	.07	.11	—				
4. Proactive personality (Time 1)	5.40	.88	.22**	.04	.26**	—			
5. Perspective taking (Time 1)	5.48	1.07	.18*	.08	.31**	.36**	—		
6. Self-efficacy (Time 2)	5.95	.91	.19**	.22**	.32**	.45**	.32**	—	
7. Feedback seeking (Time 3)	2.67	1.42	.21**	.01	-.03	.07	.13	-.06	—

Note. *N* = 207.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

$M_{\text{position tenure}} = 4.83$ ;  $M_{\text{tenure with manager}} = 3.90$ ), were 55% female, 58% Caucasian, 22% Asian, and 12% African American.

#### Measures.

**Self-efficacy.** Managers reported their self-efficacy using the same measure used in Study 1 (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*;  $\alpha = .85$ ).

**Perspective taking.** In line with the recommendation to adapt measures of perspective taking to the particular context (Ku et al., 2015), we reworded the four items used in Study 1 to focus on the frequency with which managers had taken the perspective of their direct reports (e.g., “On the job, I frequently try to take my direct reports’ perspectives” and “At work, I often imagine how my direct reports are feeling”; 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *to a large extent*;  $\alpha = .86$ ).

**Feedback seeking.** Employees reported on their managers’ feedback seeking using a measure similar to the one used in Study 1 with one added item focused on feedback seeking about one’s performance as a manager. Specifically, we asked employees how frequently their manager does each of the following: “Directly ask you or other subordinates for information concerning his/her performance as a manager,” “Request subordinates to provide him/her with an informal appraisal,” “Attempt to talk to subordinates about whether they have any concerns about how s/he treats them,” “Openly ask how am I doing?” (1 = *never* to 5 = *all the time*;  $\alpha = .86$ ). We worded the stem and the items to ask about the manager’s behaviors in general, not just toward the reporting employee, to capture downward feedback seeking more broadly.

**Control variables.** As in Study 1, we controlled for managers’ span of control and tenure in their position. We also controlled for the quality of the leader–member exchange (LMX) between the manager and employee, using the LMX-7 ( $\alpha = .86$ ; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) as reported by the employee. Excluding these variables from our analysis does not change the statistical significance of our findings (Becker, 2005).

**CFA.** To assess the factor structure of the four measured variables (self-efficacy, perspective taking, feedback seeking, LMX), we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis. Results indicated that the hypothesized four-factor measurement model fit the data well,  $\chi^2(N = 385; df = 129) = 219.26, p < .001$ , CFI = .97, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .04. All items loaded on their respective factors ( $p < .001$ ). Chi-square difference tests showed that alternative nested models achieved significantly poorer fit. For example, constraining self-efficacy and perspective taking on one factor produced a significantly worse fit,  $\Delta\chi^2(N = 385; \Delta df = 1) = 519.67, p < .001$ , CFI = .80, RMSEA = .11, SRMR = .10.

## Results and Discussion

Table 3 provides the means, *SDs*, and bivariate correlations of our measures. As in Study 1, the zero-order correlation between self-efficacy and feedback seeking was not significant ( $r = -.01, p = .774$ ). However, in support of Hypothesis 1, OLS regression results (see Table 4) showed that self-efficacy and perspective

Table 2  
Moderated Regression Analysis of Feedback Seeking at Time 3 (Study 1)

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Intercept	2.67 (.10)**	2.67 (.10)**	2.59 (.10)**	2.59 (.10)**
Span of control (Time 0)	.03 (.01)**	.03 (.01)**	.03 (.01)**	
Position tenure (Time 0)	.00 (.02)	.00 (.02)	.00 (.02)	
Psychological safety (Time 1)	-.06 (.08)	-.06 (.09)	-.07 (.08)	
Proactive personality (Time 1)	.06 (.12)	.09 (.13)	.10 (.13)	
Perspective taking (PT) (Time 1)		.19 (.10)	.17 (.10)	.21 (.10)*
Self-efficacy (SE) (Time 2)		-.25 (.13)	-.19 (.13)	-.13 (.11)
SE * PT			.25 (.10)*	.24 (.10)*
$R^2$	.05*	.08**	.11**	.06**
$\Delta R^2$		.03*	.03*	

Note. *N* = 207. Table entries represent unstandardized parameter estimates with standard errors in parentheses.

All independent variables were mean centered.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

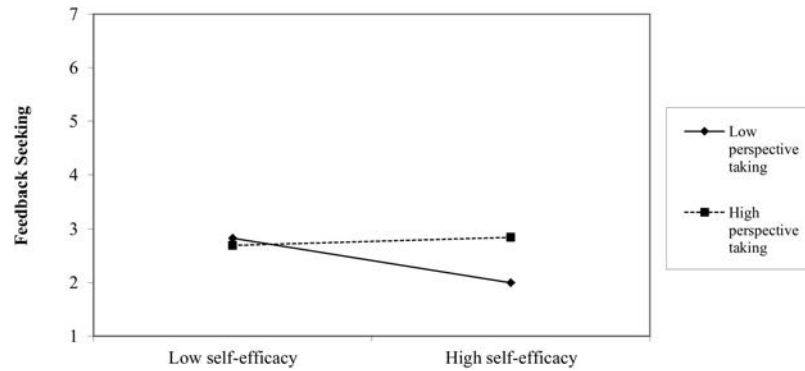


Figure 1. Interaction between managerial self-efficacy (Time 2) and managerial perspective taking (Time 1) on feedback seeking (Time 3; Study 1). When perspective taking was low self-efficacy was negatively related to feedback seeking ( $-1\ SD, B = -.46, p = .003$ ). When perspective taking was high, the regression coefficient was positive but not significant ( $+1\ SD, B = .08, p = .64$ ).

taking interacted to predict feedback seeking ( $B = .33, p = .009$ ).<sup>4</sup> Simple slopes analyses (see Figure 2) indicated that self-efficacy was negatively related to managerial feedback seeking when perspective taking was low ( $-1\ SD, B = -.27, p = .038$ ). When perspective taking was high, the regression coefficient was positive but not significant ( $+1\ SD, B = .19, p = .117$ ). An analysis of the areas of significance (Preacher, Curran, & Bauer, 2006) revealed that the positive slope became significant ( $p = .05$ ) at around  $+1.4\ SD$ . As in Study 1, we also tested the effect of perspective taking on feedback seeking depending on managers' self-efficacy. When self-efficacy was high ( $+1\ SD$ ) perspective taking had a positive relationship with feedback seeking ( $B = .22, p = .026$ ). This effect was not significant in the case of low self-efficacy ( $-1\ SD, B = -.16, p = .14$ ).

Study 2 provided further support for Hypothesis 1, as self-efficacy and perspective taking interacted to predict feedback seeking. When perspective taking was low, self-efficacy was negatively related to feedback seeking. When perspective taking was high, this relationship trended positive, although it did not reach conventional levels of statistical significance. A strength of Study 2 over Study 1 was that we obtained data from two sources. We also found our hypothesized effects to be robust to the inclusion of LMX. However, in both Studies 1 and 2, we measured, rather than observed, feedback seeking behavior. In Study 3, we devised an online experiment in which we observed real feedback seeking behavior.

### Study 3

#### Method

**Procedure.** We obtained IRB approval from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (18–1920), protocol title: “Self-Efficacy and Perspective Taking, Online Experiment.” We conducted Study 3 over 2 weeks. We recruited U.S. participants on MTurk, excluding anyone who participated in Study 1. We described it as a study of creativity and incentives. At Time 1, we told participants that their task was to write a creative story in three minutes based on three “elements,” and that this story would be evaluated by other MTurk workers. We also told them that they

would write a new story at Time 2 based on three new elements, and that the evaluation of that story would determine their eligibility for a \$20 bonus. To make the set-up more believable, participants evaluated two stories (using the elements: “A stolen ring, fear of spiders, and a sinister stranger”) which we told them were written by other MTurk workers and randomly selected for them. In reality, all participants read the same two stories. Participants evaluated the creativity of each story (1 = *not creative at all* to 10 = *very creative*) and were asked to suggest “two things the writer could have done to improve the creativity of the story.” They then had 3 min to write their own story (using the elements: “An annoying boss, a bikini, and a fake illness”). After they wrote the story, we measured their self-efficacy (see below). We paid them \$1 at Time 1.

At Time 2, we contacted the same participants, reminded them of the purpose of the study, and then told them the following:

Based on performance, people who complete this study can gain tickets. The more creative the story you will write today is evaluated by other MTurk workers, the more tickets you will gain. Tickets will be used in a drawing based on chance in which each ticket has equal odds of receiving a \$20 bonus. As each ticket has equal odds, the more tickets you have for the draw, the more likely you are to have a ticket that will be drawn and thus receive the \$20 bonus. Specifically, based on how creative the story you write today is evaluated to be, you will receive the following number of tickets: average rating of 1–2.9 = two tickets; average rating of 3–5.9 = seven tickets; average rating of 6–8.9 = 12 tickets; average rating 9–10 = 17 tickets.

After answering questions to ensure that they understood the instructions, participants were shown the creative story they wrote a week before. We then told them that before writing the story that would determine their eligibility for a bonus, they would have an opportunity to see feedback and suggestions written by other MTurk workers about their story from a week before. However, they were told that obtaining this feedback would cost them two tickets:

<sup>4</sup> As in Study 1, the interaction was also significant when we used 1,000 bootstraps with bias corrected confidence intervals ( $B = .33, p = .008, 95\% \text{ CI } [.094, .593]$ ).



Table 3  
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Variables (Study 2)

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Span of control	11.39	16.36	—					
2. Position tenure	6.31	6.44	-.06	—				
3. LMX (employee rated)	4.17	.56	-.08	.03	—			
4. Perspective taking (manager rated)	4.02	.69	.02	-.08	.09	—		
5. Self-efficacy (manager rated)	4.50	.56	.07	.13*	.00	.05	—	
6. Feedback seeking (employee rated)	2.77	1.03	-.14**	.02	.30**	.06	-.01	—

Note. *N* = 385, LMX = leader-member exchange.

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01.

. . . if you chose to see the feedback that others have provided, two tickets will be deducted from the number of tickets you will gain, based on the quality of the story you will write today. As each ticket has an equal chance to draw the \$20 bonus, this means you might be less likely to draw a ticket that will make you eligible for the bonus.

Next, we introduced our perspective taking manipulation (see below). Finally, we asked participants whether they wanted to see the feedback and suggestions provided by other workers who evaluated their story from the prior week. We debriefed participants and paid them all \$2.

**Sample.** Five-hundred and two participants completed the first part of our study. A research assistant (RA) reviewed participants' stories and searched for relevant passages online to ensure that participants did not copy the stories from an online source. The RA did not detect any suspicious stories. We excluded one person, as he or she provided nonsensical responses (e.g., "Yyyyyyyyyyuuuuu"). Of the remaining 501 participants, 445 responded at Time 2. However, we excluded three people who incorrectly answered one of three true/false questions about the study procedures (e.g., "It will cost me five tickets to see the feedback from other MTurk workers"). We also examined the number of words in participants' responses to our perspective taking and control questions and excluded 6 people who used fewer words than 1 *SD* below the mean, as this indicated lack of sufficient effort and cast doubt on the effectiveness of the manipulation for these participants (Sigall & Mills, 1998).<sup>5</sup> Our final sample thus included 437 participants (61% female, 86% Caucasian, *M*<sub>age</sub> = 37.15).

#### Measures.

**Self-efficacy.** After they wrote their first story, participants were asked to evaluate their confidence in obtaining different ratings for the creative writing task (at least a 7, at least a 9, a 10; Seo & Ilies, 2009). Responses were on a 5-point scale (1 = *no chance at all* (0%), 2 = *a slight chance* (25%), 3 = *some chance* (50%), 4 = *a good chance* (75%), 5 = *certain* (100%;  $\alpha$  = .85). This measurement approach, highlighted for its rigor (Bandura, 2012, p. 26), is recommended for measuring task specific self-efficacy when performance criteria are quantifiable (Klein, 1991). As we did not manipulate self-efficacy, we measured it at Time 1 to ensure time separation between our independent and dependent variables, which reduces common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In a pilot study, we included this measure at both Time 1 and Time 2 and found a strong correlation between the two ( $r$  = .64,  $p$  < .001).

**Perspective taking manipulation.** We randomly assigned participants to either a control condition or a perspective taking

condition. We modeled our manipulation after commonly used manipulations of perspective taking in the literature (see Ku et al., 2015). In the control condition ( $n$  = 218), participants answered the following two questions before making their decision about obtaining feedback: "How do you feel about the story you wrote last time? How did you evaluate it?" and "Do you think there is something you can do to make the new story more creative?" In the perspective taking condition ( $n$  = 219), participants answered the following two questions: "What might MTurk workers who evaluated the story you wrote last time likely felt about your story? How did they evaluate it?" and "Put yourself in the shoes of the MTurk workers who evaluated your story. Taking their perspective, do you think there is something you can do to make the new story more creative?"

There were no differences in the total number of words written by participants across the two conditions (control:  $M$  = 43.25,  $SE$  = 1.35; perspective taking:  $M$  = 42.36,  $SE$  = 1.35,  $F(1, 435)$  = .22,  $p$  = .641). To check the effectiveness of our manipulation, two independent coders rated the extent to which each response focused on others' perspectives (thoughts, feelings, etc.; 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *to a great extent*). There was good interrater reliability ( $ICC_{(2)} = .81$ ,  $p$  < .001), so we averaged ratings. A one-way ANOVA indicated that comments focused more on others in the perspective taking condition ( $M$  = 2.87;  $SD$  = .84) than in the control condition ( $M$  = 1.11;  $SD$  = .26;  $F(1, 435)$  = 864.12,  $p$  < .001,  $\eta_p^2$  = .67). As a whole, these results suggest that our manipulation changed the perspective of participants' thoughts and attention as intended.

**Feedback seeking.** We operationalized feedback seeking as participants' choice to obtain feedback before writing their second story. We attached a cost to this decision (two tickets) to simulate the fact that obtaining feedback typically has time and effort costs associated with it. We provided participants with a binary choice of "No, I would not like to see the feedback, and would like the keep the two tickets" coded as 0 and "Yes, I would like to see the feedback for the cost of two tickets" coded as 1.

## Results and Discussion

Table 5 provides the means, *SD*s, and bivariate correlations of our measures. Again, the zero-order correlation between self-efficacy and feedback seeking was not significant ( $r$  = .07,  $p$  =

<sup>5</sup> We conducted the analysis reported below including these excluded respondents. Our results, although weaker, were similar in direction, magnitude, and significance levels.



Table 4  
*Moderated Regression Analysis of Feedback Seeking (Employee Rated; Study 2)*

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Intercept	2.77 (.05)**	2.77 (.05)**	2.76 (.05)**	2.76 (.05)**
Span of control	-.01 (.00)*	-.01 (.00)*	-.01 (.00)*	
Manager position tenure	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.01)	
LMX	.52 (.09)**	.52 (.09)**	.51 (.09)**	
Perspective taking (PT)		.05 (.07)	.03 (.08)	.06 (.08)
Self-efficacy (SE)		-.02 (.09)	-.04 (.09)	-.05 (.09)
SE * PT			.33 (.13)**	.36 (.13)**
$R^2$	.09**	.09**	.11**	.02*
$\Delta R^2$		.00	.02*	

Note.  $N = 385$ , LMX = leader-member exchange. Table entries represent unstandardized parameter estimates with standard errors in parentheses. All independent variables were mean centered.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

.169). Logistic regression results (see Table 6) showed that the interaction between self-efficacy and perspective taking to predict feedback seeking was not significant, but trended in the hypothesized direction ( $B = .50$ ,  $p = .055$ ).<sup>6</sup> We plotted this interaction (see Figure 3) and compared the correlation between self-efficacy and feedback seeking in the two conditions. In the control condition the correlation was negative but not significant ( $r = -.03$ ,  $p = .647$ ), and in the perspective taking condition, the correlation was positive and significant ( $r = .160$ ,  $p = .019$ ).

Although the interaction term in Study 3 was not significant, we observed patterns of results consistent with Hypothesis 1. Engaging in perspective taking increased the likelihood that self-efficacy would result in the expenditure of resources to seek feedback. One possible reason why the interaction term was not significant could be the perspective taking manipulation we used. Although modeled after manipulations used in other studies, it asked participants to provide feedback for themselves, which may have made them feel less need to seek feedback from others. In any case, taken together, Studies 1–3 provide evidence that the relationship between self-efficacy and feedback seeking varies as a function of dispositional (Studies 1 and 2) or induced (Study 3) perspective taking. However, Studies 1–3 did not examine the proposed mechanism of perceived value of feedback seeking (Hypothesis 2), and measured (rather than manipulated) self-efficacy, thus reducing our ability to draw causal inference. We designed Studies 4 and 5 to address these limitations.

## Study 4

### Method

**Sample.** We obtained institutional review board (IRB) approval from New York University (IRB-FY2017-398), protocol title: “Managerial Downward Feedback Seeking (SE & PT).” We recruited 250 working U.S. adults from MTurk to complete a 10-min study for \$2. After removing 18 participants who failed an attention check,<sup>7</sup> our final sample was 232 (53% male, 91% currently employed, 84% Caucasian,  $M_{\text{work experience}} = 16.74$  years).

**Procedure, manipulations, and measures.** We used a 2 (low vs. high self-efficacy)  $\times$  2 (control vs. perspective taking) factorial design, with random assignment. We asked participants to read a

scenario (in which self-efficacy was manipulated), engage in perspective taking (or a control condition), and report the perceived value of feedback. Scenario studies are useful in exploring cognitive processes and providing evidence of causality in tightly controlled situations (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). People can relatively easily imagine hypothetical situations involving feedback, and their responses to such situations tend to be similar to real-life responses (e.g., Gurmankin, Baron, & Armstrong, 2004; Sedikides & Green, 2004).

**Self-efficacy.** Fast, Burris, and Bartel (2014) used a scenario to manipulate self-efficacy and test its effects on voice solicitation. We followed their design. All participants read that they have been working for TechCo, “a medium sized technology firm that serves clients in the banking and financial industries.” Following Fast et al. (2014), the self-efficacy manipulation focused on an internal sense of confidence coupled with positive past performance, as past performance is one of the main drivers of self-efficacy (Sitzmann & Yeo, 2013). The high self-efficacy text ( $N = 118$ ) is below, with the low self-efficacy wording ( $N = 114$ ) in parentheses.

When you joined TechCo you already had [did not have] a lot of prior successful leadership experience. Not surprisingly, you were [not among the people] singled out by your superiors as someone with strong management potential. During the last 2 years, you received short opportunities to display your skills and as expected, the results were extremely positive [were average to good]. In fact, [although] your supervisors were very satisfied [not too worried] with your leadership performance [they were not too impressed]. These experiences confirmed what you already knew: Being a team leader is something you are great at and really like to do [is probably something you can be good at, if you put a lot of effort into it]. You [do not] feel very confident and secure in your leadership capacity and your ability to manage employees effectively. You have just graduated from a special 2-week leadership development program in your company. Given your prior performance, and given that you excelled [your average performance] in the program, many [a few] department

<sup>6</sup> As in Studies 1 and 2, we used 1,000 bootstraps with bias corrected confidence intervals to test this interaction, and found it to be significant ( $B = .50$ ,  $p = .042$ , 95% CI [.023, 1.02]).

<sup>7</sup> We reran the analysis including these 18 participants and our results remained similar in magnitude, direction, and significance level.

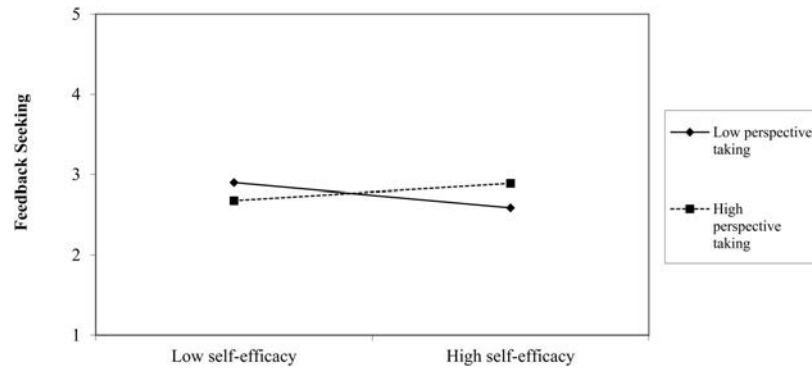


Figure 2. Interaction between managerial self-efficacy and managerial perspective taking on feedback seeking (employee rated; Study 2). When perspective taking was low, self-efficacy was negatively related to feedback seeking ( $-1\text{ SD}$ ,  $B = -.27$ ,  $p = .038$ ). When perspective taking was high, the regression coefficient was positive but not significant ( $+1\text{ SD}$ ,  $B = .19$ ,  $p = .117$ ).

heads have been courting you. You have narrowed down your options to two teams.

To check the effectiveness of the manipulation, we asked participants how they would feel as a leader of one of these teams, using the three-item self-efficacy scale used in Studies 1 and 2, with an additional item based on the scenario (i.e., “I will have a lot of positive experience to draw on”;  $\alpha = .90$ ). One-way ANOVA indicated that participants in the low self-efficacy condition reported lower efficacy ( $M = 3.28$ ;  $SE = .06$ ) than those in the high self-efficacy condition ( $M = 4.64$ ;  $SE = .06$ );  $F(1, 230) = 232.66$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .50$ . We found no differences in participants’ general self-efficacy across the conditions ( $M_{\text{low}} = 3.58$ ;  $SE = .07$ ;  $M_{\text{high}} = 3.72$ ;  $SE = .07$ );  $F(1, 230) = 2.05$ ,  $p = .153$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ , which we measured prior to the manipulation using five items from Chen, Gully, and Eden’s (2001) scale ( $\alpha = .90$ ).

**Perspective taking.** We modeled the perspective taking manipulation after similar manipulations used in the literature (see Ku et al., 2015). Participants in the perspective taking condition ( $N = 119$ ) were told the following:

Think about everything you read thus far and try to imagine the employees in the two teams you are considering and take their perspective.

- How will they react to you as a leader?
- Will they be able to provide you with a different perspective or see something differently than you?
- What might be their assumptions and will they differ from yours?
- If you were in their shoes, what would you see and feel that you might not from your own perspective?

Table 5  
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Variables (Study 3)

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1. Self-efficacy (Time 1)	1.97	.80	—		
2. Perspective taking <sup>a</sup> (Time 2)	.50	.50	.02	—	
3. Feedback seeking (Time 2)	.31	.46	.07	.00	—

Note.  $N = 437$ .

<sup>a</sup> Control condition = 0, Perspective taking condition = 1.

In two to three sentences, please write your answers to some of these questions.

In contrast, in the control condition ( $N = 119$ ) participants were told the following:

Think about everything you read thus far and try to imagine how it would be feel to be the manager of the two teams you are considering.

- What will be your situation and how might you experience it?
- How will you be as a leader?
- What will you see or feel?
- How are you likely to approach the role?

In two to three sentences, please write your answers to some of these questions.

As a manipulation check, two independent coders rated the extent to which each comment focused on other people’s thoughts, feelings, and so forth (1 = *not at all* to 5 = *to a great extent*). There was good interrater reliability ( $ICC_{(2)} = .75$ ,  $p < .001$ ) so we averaged their ratings. A one-way ANOVAs indicated that in the control condition, comments focused less on others ( $M = 1.34$ ;  $SE = .10$ ) as compared with the perspective taking condition ( $M = 3.71$ ;  $SE = .09$ );  $F(1, 228) = 319.45$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .58$ . These ratings were not affected by the self-efficacy manipulation.

**Perceived feedback value.** We measured perceptions about the value of feedback with three items adapted from Keeping and

Table 6  
Moderated Logistic Regression Analysis of Feedback Seeking (Study 3)

Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept	−1.14 (.29)**	−.62 (.39)
Perspective taking <sup>a</sup> (Time 2) (PT)	−.01 (.21)	−1.01 (.56)
Self-efficacy (Time 1) (SE)	.17 (.13)	−.09 (.19)
SE * PT		.50 (.26) <sup>†</sup>
Nagelkerke $R^2$	.006	.018

Note.  $N = 437$ . Table entries represent unstandardized parameter estimates with standard errors in parentheses.

<sup>a</sup> Control condition = 0, Perspective taking condition = 1.

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

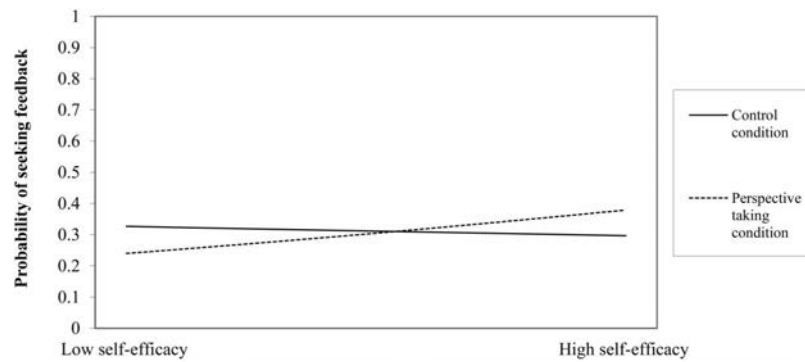


Figure 3. Interaction between self-efficacy and perspective taking on feedback seeking (Study 3). In the control condition, self-efficacy was not related to feedback seeking ( $r = -.03$ ,  $p = .647$ ). In the perspective taking condition self-efficacy was related positively to feedback seeking ( $r = .16$ ,  $p = .019$ ).

Levy's (2000) perceived utility scale: "Feedback from members of the team will help me do my job better," "I will have a clearer idea of what to do as a team leader if I ask members of the team for feedback," and "Seeking feedback from members of the team about my performance will be a good use of my time and effort" ( $\alpha = .81$ ). To isolate the effects of perceived value, we also asked about ego concerns with three items from Tuckey, Brewer, and Williamson's (2002) ego-defense motive measure (e.g., "I will likely feel negative about myself as a manager";  $\alpha = .87$ ).

**Feedback seeking.** We asked participants to make a binary choice of which team to join, following previous studies that have used situational choice as a way to measure feedback seeking or avoidance (Ruttan & Nordgren, 2016). We told participants that the teams were equivalent in terms of salary, general responsibilities, members' abilities, and so forth, but that there were some differences in the teams' internal processes. We presented them with emails from the current managers of these teams (i.e., the people they would supposedly replace). In the e-mails, each manager described the team and provided a rating of the team across five dimensions (e.g., motivation, workload). Rating on all dimensions were equivalent, except for the one relating to employees' feedback giving propensity. In one team (Tigers, choice coded as 1), the current manager provided a rating of 5 out of 5 on the dimension "Employees provide manager with formal and informal feedback about his/her performance both publicly and privately." In the other team (Dragons, choice coded as 0), the same dimen-

sion received a rating of 1 out of 5. We presented the e-mails in random order.

We ascertained whether participants differentiated between the teams by asking them to rate on a 1–5 scale the extent to which the following statement about each team was true or false: "If I choose to join Team Tigers/Dragons, I will get constant feedback on my performance as a leader." A paired sample  $t$  test indicated that, as expected, participants rated the statement about team Tigers as mostly true ( $M = 4.47$ ,  $SD = .79$ ), and the statement about team Dragons as mostly false ( $M = 1.63$ ,  $SD = .92$ );  $t = 29.67$ ,  $p < .001$ . Thus, a choice between the teams could be seen as representing a decision to seek more feedback from employees.

## Results and Discussion

Table 7 provides the means,  $SD$ s, and bivariate correlations of our measures. The zero-order correlation between self-efficacy condition and feedback seeking was negative but not significant ( $r = -.12$ ,  $p = .070$ ). The correlation between self-efficacy condition and perceived value was not significant ( $r = .05$ ,  $p = .413$ ). Consistent with Hypothesis 1, cross-tabulation revealed that in the control condition, 80.6% of the people in the high self-efficacy condition chose Team Tiger (i.e., more feedback) as compared with 94.1% in the low self-efficacy condition,  $\chi^2(df = 1) = 4.41$ ,  $p = .036$ . This difference was not significant in the perspective taking condition, where 91.1% of the people chose

Table 7  
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations (Study 4)

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Self-efficacy condition <sup>a</sup>	.51	.50	—				
2. Perspective taking condition <sup>b</sup>	.51	.50	-.08	—			
3. Perceived value of feedback	5.76	.90	.05	.03	.19**		
4. Ego concerns	3.53	1.55	-.54**	.12	-.36**	—	
5. Feedback seeking binary choice <sup>c</sup>	.89	.31	-.12	.08	.24**	.02	—

Note.  $N = 232$ .

<sup>a</sup> Low = 0, High = 1; <sup>b</sup> Control condition = 0, Perspective taking condition = 1; <sup>c</sup> Team Dragons (less feedback) coded as 0, Team Tigers (more feedback), coded as 1.

\*\*  $p < .01$ .



Team Tigers in the high self-efficacy condition as compared to 92.1% in the low self-efficacy condition  $\chi^2(df = 1) = .04, p = .846$ .

In line with Hypothesis 2, OLS regression results (see Table 8) showed that self-efficacy and perspective taking interacted to predict perceived feedback value ( $B = .53, p = .027$ ).<sup>8</sup> Simple slopes analysis (see Figure 4) showed that in the control condition, the relationship between self-efficacy and perceived value of feedback was negative, but not significant ( $B = -.17, p = .321$ ), whereas in the perspective taking condition, this relationship was positive ( $B = .36, p = .031$ ). Although the self-efficacy manipulation also affected ego concerns ( $B = -1.41, SE = .23, p < .001$ ), there was no interaction with perspective taking ( $B = -.28, SE = .34, p = .425$ ).

Next, we examined whether perceived value mediated the interactive effects of self-efficacy and perspective taking on feedback seeking using the PROCESS syntax for SPSS (Hayes, 2013). As shown in Table 8, perceived value of feedback was positively related to feedback seeking ( $B = .87, p < .001$ ). Results also showed a positive indirect effect of self-efficacy on feedback seeking via perceived value in the perspective taking condition (.27; 95% CI [.04, .87]), and a negative but nonsignificant effect in the control condition (-.10; 95% CI [-.45, .26]). These effects were significantly different from one another (.46; 95% CI [.07, 1.03]).

Study 4 provided additional evidence for the interaction between self-efficacy and perspective taking on feedback seeking. Further, it provided evidence that perceived value of feedback mediates this interaction effect. In the perspective taking condition, but not the control condition, perceptions of feedback value were higher in the high (vs. low) self-efficacy condition. In Study 4, we manipulated both of our independent variables, providing enhanced internal validity. However, the hypothetical nature of the scenario might raise concerns about generalizability to actual behaviors in the workplace. To address this, we conducted Study 5.

## Study 5

### Method

**Procedure.** We obtained IRB approval from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (18–1851), protocol title: “Self-Efficacy and Perspective Taking.” We recruited U.S. participants using Prolific Academic, an online platform for recruiting participants for scientific purposes (Palan & Schitter, 2018). Prolific has been shown to provide data with at least equal quality to other online platforms or traditional lab research (Peer, Brandimarte, Samat, & Acquisti, 2017). The study involved three stages: (a) a prescreen; (b) 1 week later, a manipulation of self-efficacy and perspective taking, and a measurement of perceived value of feedback; and (c) 2 weeks later, a measurement of feedback seeking behavior.

We first posted a prescreening survey. We told respondents ( $n = 1,002$ ) that this survey would allow us to determine their eligibility for our main study, focused on workplace experiences. We paid them \$.50 for completing the survey. We used four criteria, not revealed to the respondents, to identify eligibility for the study: (a) paid employment, (b) working for a company with at least 10 employees, (c) working >30 hr a week, and (d) not working as a

manager or supervisor. These criteria helped ensure that respondents could draw on real work experiences for the study. In addition, because Studies 1 and 2 (and to a certain extent Study 4) focused on managers, we wanted to explore whether our findings generalize to employees with no supervisory responsibilities. This resulted in 446 eligible respondents, whom we invited to complete our main survey.

In the main survey, posted a week later and completed by 323 people in exchange for \$1.50, we randomly assigned participants to a *self-efficacy condition* by asking them to think about an aspect of their job about which they feel either very confident (high self-efficacy condition) or not very confident (low self-efficacy condition):

Please think about one part or aspect of your job that you [*do not*] feel very confident about. That is, think about one part or aspect of your job that you know [*are not sure*] you have the capabilities to perform well, that you know [*have doubts that*] you can do effectively, and in which you have [*lower*] confidence in your abilities.

We then asked them to define the job aspect in a few words (e.g., “presentation skills,” “working in a team,” “coaching others”) and explain in two to three sentences what they are required to do. After the manipulation check (reported below), participants were randomly assigned to a *perspective taking* condition. In the control condition, we asked “How do you currently think and feel about your performance with respect to [job aspect]?” and “Do you think there is something you can or need to do to further improve your performance with respect to [job aspect]? If so, what?” In the perspective taking condition, we asked “If you were in other people’s shoes, what would you see, think, and feel about your performance with respect to [job aspect] that you might not see, think, or feel given your own perspective?” and “Taking the perspective or point of view of relevant others, do you think there is something these others would like or need you to do to further improve your performance with respect to [job aspect]? If so, what?”

Next, we asked respondents to evaluate the *perceived value of feedback* with respect to the job aspect (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*), using four items adapted from Linderbaum and Levy (2010): “I find that feedback from others is critical for reaching goals with respect to [job aspect]”; “I do not need feedback from others to know how well I am doing with respect to [job aspect]” (reverse scored); “Feedback from others is critical for improving my performance with respect to [job aspect]”; and “Feedback from others is required for me to be successful with respect to [job aspect].”

Two weeks later, after removing four people who failed an attention check or did not provide an aspect of their job that made sense (e.g., “I got to go”), we invited the remaining 319 to complete a follow-up survey. Two-hundred and 74 did so in exchange for \$.50. We reminded participants of the job aspect that they had described 2 weeks prior, and then asked them to report their feedback seeking regarding this job aspect. Respondents indicated whether or not (yes/no) they had engaged in the follow-

<sup>8</sup> As in Studies 1–3, the interaction was also significant when we used 1,000 bootstraps with bias corrected confidence intervals ( $B = .53, p = .028, 95\% \text{ CI } [.075, 1.006]$ ).

Table 8  
Regression Analysis (Study 4)

Variables	Perceived value of feedback		Feedback seeking binary choice <sup>c</sup>	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Intercept	5.68 (.11)**	5.83 (.13)**	2.77 (.60)*	-1.14 (1.54)*
Self-efficacy condition <sup>a</sup> (SE)	.10 (.12)	-.17 (.17)	-1.35 (.68)	1.60 (.75)
Perspective taking condition <sup>b</sup> (PT)	.06 (.12)	-.21 (.17)	.32 (.76)	.05 (.79)
SE * PT		.53 (.24)*	1.22 (.95)	.62 (.99)
Perceived value of feedback				.87 (.25)**
Ego concerns				-.21 (.19)
$R^2$	.00	.03	.05 <sup>d</sup>	.17 <sup>d</sup>
$\Delta R^2$		.02*		

Note.  $N = 232$ . Table entries represent unstandardized parameter estimates with standard errors in parentheses.

<sup>a</sup> Low = 0, High = 1; <sup>b</sup> Control condition = 0, Perspective taking condition = 1; <sup>c</sup> Binary logistic regression: Team Dragons (less feedback), coded as 0, Team Tigers (more feedback), coded as 1; <sup>d</sup> Nagelkerke  $R^2$ .

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

ing four behaviors during the past 2 weeks and if so, how many times they “Requested others to provide you with an informal appraisal or feedback of your performance with respect to [job aspect],” “Attempted to talk to others about whether they have any concerns regarding your performance with respect to [job aspect],” “Asked others informally ‘How am I doing?’” with respect to [job aspect],” “Asked others to evaluate or assess your performance with respect to [job aspect].” We created two measures of feedback seeking from these answers. The first was a binary measure, where we assigned 1 to those indicating “yes” to any of the four items and 0 to those who indicated “no” to all items. The second was a measure of the number of times people reported engaging in feedback seeking, created by summing their answers to the four items.

As in Study 3, we examined the number of words in participants’ responses to the perspective taking and control manipulation and excluded 39 people who used fewer words than 1  $SD$  below the mean, as this made the efficacy of the manipulation questionable for these participants (Sigall & Mills, 1998).<sup>9</sup> Our final sample thus included 235 respondents (52% female, 78% Caucasian,  $M_{\text{age}} = 32.80$ ,  $M_{\text{organizational tenure}} = 5.80$ ,  $M_{\text{position tenure}} = 3.76$ ), who came from a wide variety of industries (e.g., health care, energy, information technology, legal, trucking, manufacturing, and retail) and held a variety of positions (e.g., software engineer, actuarial analyst, registered nurse, security officer, chemist, retention agent, and sales associate).

**Manipulation checks.** We tested the self-efficacy manipulation in several ways. First, we used the same three-item self-efficacy scale used in our other studies, but worded with respect to the focal job aspect (e.g., “I am confident in my abilities with respect to [job aspect]”; 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*;  $\alpha = .97$ ). An ANOVA with this scale as the dependent variable showed that respondents in the low self-efficacy condition ( $n = 118$ ) reported lower self-efficacy for their focal job aspect ( $M = 3.84$ ,  $SE = .10$ ) than respondents in the high self-efficacy condition ( $n = 117$ ,  $M = 6.46$ ,  $SE = .10$ );  $F(1, 233) = 347.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .60$ . To ensure that our random assignment worked, we repeated the analysis with a number of demographic characteristics and found no significant differences. We also wanted to ensure that there were no differences in respondents’ general self-efficacy, which we measured before the self-efficacy manipulation with

four items from Chen et al.’s (2001) scale (e.g., “I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks”; 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). The results showed no significant differences ( $M_{\text{low}} = 5.80$ ,  $SD = .97$ ;  $M_{\text{high}} = 6.00$ ,  $SD = .96$ );  $F(1, 233) = 2.51$ ,  $p = .115$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ .

Because we had participants think about a job aspect that they selected, some might have focused on job aspects very central to their roles, while others might have focused on more peripheral job aspects. Thus, we also asked respondents how central the job aspect was to their jobs (i.e., “[job aspect] plays a very small part of my job” [reverse coded]; 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). We found that people who were asked to think about a job aspect that they felt confident about (high self-efficacy) also reported this aspect to be more central to their job ( $M_{\text{low}} = 4.24$ ,  $SE = .15$ ;  $M_{\text{high}} = 5.61$ ,  $SE = .15$ );  $F(1, 233) = 39.91$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .15$ . As this variable was correlated with our mediator (perceived value) and dependent variable (feedback seeking), we controlled for it in all our analyses.

As for the perspective taking manipulation, we found that people in the control condition ( $n = 125$ ) wrote slightly more words ( $M = 79.08$ ,  $SE = 2.91$ ) than people in the perspective taking condition ( $n = 110$ ;  $M = 70.55$ ,  $SE = 3.11$ );  $F(1, 233) = 4.02$ ,  $p = .046$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . To check the effectiveness of our manipulation, two independent coders rated the extent to which responses to the two perspective taking questions focused on others’ perspective (thoughts, feelings, etc.; 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *to a great extent*). There was good interrater reliability ( $ICC_{(2)} = .76$ ,  $p < .001$ ), so we averaged the ratings. A one-way ANOVA indicated that in the control condition, responses focused less on others ( $M = 1.60$ ;  $SD = .67$ ) than in the perspective taking condition ( $M = 3.60$ ;  $SD = 1.02$ );  $F(1, 233) = 324.79$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .58$ . There were no differences in ratings of focus on others between the two self-efficacy conditions ( $M_{\text{low}} = 2.59$ ,  $SD = 1.39$ ;  $M_{\text{high}} = 2.47$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ );  $F(1, 233) = .45$ ,  $p = .504$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ . These results suggest that our manipulation induced perspective taking.

<sup>9</sup> We conducted the analysis reported below including these excluded respondents. Our results were similar in direction and magnitude, although some effects were no longer significant (i.e.,  $p > .05$ ).

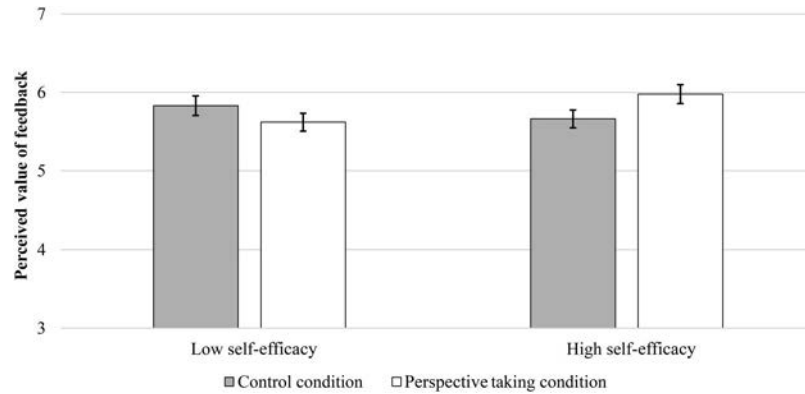


Figure 4. Interaction between self-efficacy and perspective taking on perceived value of feedback (Study 4) with standard errors as bars. In the control condition differences between low and high self-efficacy conditions were not significant ( $p = .321$ ). In the perspective taking condition differences between low and high self-efficacy conditions were significant ( $p = .031$ ).

## Results and Discussion

Table 9 provides the means, *SDs*, bivariate correlations, and reliability estimates of our measures. Unlike in Studies 1–4, there were significant zero-order correlations between self-efficacy condition and feedback seeking (binary:  $r = .14$ ,  $p = .031$ ; sum of counts:  $r = .12$ ,  $p = .058$ ). Self-efficacy condition was not significantly correlated with perceived feedback value ( $r = -.05$ ,  $p = .450$ ). However, when we controlled for the effect of job aspect centrality, the correlations between self-efficacy and feedback seeking were no longer significant (binary:  $r = .05$ ,  $p = .448$ ; sum of counts:  $r = .033$ ,  $p = .618$ ), similar to what we found in the other studies. The negative association between self-efficacy and perceived feedback value increased when we controlled for centrality, but it was still not significant ( $r = -.11$ ,  $p = .102$ ).

To test Hypothesis 2, we first examined whether the interaction between perspective taking and self-efficacy related to the perceived value of feedback. We did this by regressing the proposed mediator on the two variables and their interaction, controlling for job aspect centrality. As seen in Table 10, we found a significant interaction ( $B = .79$ ,  $p = .046$ ).<sup>10</sup> We plotted this interaction (see Figure 5) which indicated that in the control condition, perceived feedback value was higher in the low self-efficacy condition ( $M = 5.26$ ,  $SE = .19$ ) than in the high self-efficacy condition ( $M = 4.54$ ,  $SE = .20$ );  $F(1, 230) = 6.57$ ,  $p = .011$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ . In contrast, in the perspective taking condition, perceived feedback value was not significantly different in the low self-efficacy condition ( $M = 5.07$ ,  $SE = .21$ ) as compared with the high self-efficacy condition ( $M = 5.13$ ,  $SE = .21$ );  $F(1, 230) = .05$ ,  $p = .827$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ . We also compared the control and perspective taking conditions in the high self-efficacy condition, and found significant differences,  $F(1, 230) = 4.56$ ,  $p = .034$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ , with more perceived value when self-efficacy was high versus low. As seen in Table 10, perceived feedback value was positively related to both operationalizations of feedback seeking. These results provide support for Hypothesis 2, showing that perspective taking and self-efficacy interacted to predict perceived feedback value, and that perceived feedback value affected feedback seeking.

Next, we conducted an indirect effect analysis, using PROCESS SPSS macro Version 3.1 (Hayes, 2013), which allows one to

conduct such analyses with categorical dependent variables. Results indicated a negative indirect effect of self-efficacy on feedback seeking (binary) in the control condition (effect =  $-.22$ ,  $SE = .09$ ; 95% CI  $[-.393, -.049]$ ), and a positive yet not significant indirect effect in the perspective taking condition (effect =  $.02$ ,  $SE = .09$ ; 95% CI  $[-.158, .202]$ ), with these two effects significantly differing from one another (contrast =  $.24$ ,  $SE = .12$ ; 95% CI  $[.003, .486]$ ). We conducted the same analysis using the sum of counts measure<sup>11</sup> and the results were similar. There was a negative indirect effect of self-efficacy on feedback seeking in the control condition (effect =  $-.52$ ,  $SE = .21$ ; 95% CI  $[-.949, -.118]$ ), and a positive yet not significant indirect effect in the perspective taking condition (effect =  $.05$ ,  $SE = .22$ ; 95% CI  $[-.359, .488]$ ), with these two effects significantly differing from one another (contrast =  $.56$ ,  $SE = .29$ ; 95% CI  $[.021, 1.180]$ ). These results further support Hypothesis 2.

## General Discussion

Reviews of the feedback seeking literature suggest a simple positive relationship between self-efficacy and feedback seeking (Anseel et al., 2015; Ashford et al., 2003), although some studies have found no relationship between the two (e.g., Ashford, 1986). We suggest a more complex relationship. Specifically, self-efficacy may, under some conditions, have a negative effect on feedback seeking by leading people to discount the value of feedback, but perspective taking can mitigate or reverse this effect. Across five studies, with different samples, study designs, and operationalizations of feedback seeking, we find supportive evidence that perspective taking and self-efficacy interact to affect feedback seeking. Examining the patterns of interactions, we find,

<sup>10</sup> As in Studies 1–4, the interaction was significant when we used 1,000 bootstraps with bias corrected confidence intervals ( $B = .79$ ,  $p = .044$ , 95% CI  $[.048, 1.592]$ ). In addition, we also tested this interaction with all the responses obtained at Time 2 (using the same exclusion criteria) as this provided a bigger sample ( $n = 296$ ). The interaction remained similar ( $B = .71$ ,  $SE = .35$ ,  $p = .046$ ) as did the simple slopes tests.

<sup>11</sup> The PROCESS macro conducts this analysis using OLS regression. Given the count nature of the data, these results should be interpreted with caution.



Table 9

*Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Reliability Estimates of Variables (Study 5)*

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Job aspect centrality (Time 1)	4.92	1.79	—					
2. Perspective taking condition <sup>a</sup> (Time 1)	.47	.50	.06	—				
3. Self-efficacy condition <sup>b</sup> (Time 1)	.50	.50	.38**	.02	—			
4. Perceived value of feedback (Time 1)	5.00	1.53	.13	.07	-.05	(.92)		
5. Feedback seeking (binary) (Time 2)	.52	.50	.25**	-.05	.14*	.38**	—	
6. Feedback seeking (sum of counts) (Time 2)	2.17	3.90	.25**	.00	.12	.30**	.54**	(.81)

Note. *N* = 235.

<sup>a</sup> Control condition = 0, Perspective taking condition = 1; <sup>b</sup> Low = 0, High = 1.

\* *p* < .05. \*\* *p* < .01.

across all five studies, that the relationship between self-efficacy and feedback seeking depends on whether perspective taking is high versus low (or absent). Although the interaction effects across our five studies were small, they are consistent with average effect sizes for interactions reported in the literature (Aguinis, Beaty, Boik, & Pierce, 2005; Champoux & Peters, 1987; McClelland & Judd, 1993). In general, we find more support for the negative effects of self-efficacy on feedback seeking in the absence of perspective taking (Studies 1, 2, and 5). However, we did find support for an indirect positive effect of self-efficacy on feedback seeking in the presence of perspective taking in Study 4 (and indications of such an effect in Study 3, although the interaction was not significant). We also found evidence that the interactive effect is mediated by perceived value of feedback (Studies 4 and 5).

### Theoretical Contributions

Our main contribution lies in enhancing current understanding of the relationship between self-efficacy and feedback seeking, which has played an important role in the feedback seeking literature (Anseel et al., 2015; Ashford et al., 2003). Most prior work has argued that heightened self-efficacy should increase feedback seeking because it reduces the perceived ego and image costs associated with this behavior (Anseel et al., 2015; Ashford et al., 2003). Yet published research has not consistently supported this proposition (Ashford, 1986; Brown et al., 2001). We suggest that

this may be because prior research has not considered how self-efficacy affects the perceived value of feedback. This is an important oversight, as Levy et al. (1995) argued that regardless of perceived costs, people are unlikely to seek feedback if they fail to see it as useful (Ashford et al., 2003; Morrison, 2002). Arguing that self-efficacy can make people underestimate their need for feedback, we proposed that under certain conditions self-efficacy is negatively related to feedback seeking. In this way, our theory and findings support the idea that when it comes to reducing the tension between the instrumental benefits and psychological costs of behaviors such as feedback seeking, a sole focus on the latter is not sufficient.

We also enhance current understanding of the relationship between self-efficacy and feedback seeking by integrating insights from the perspective taking literature. In our studies, had we not taken into account perspective taking, we would have found a null association between the two variables, similar to prior studies. However, our studies consistently demonstrated that the relationship of self-efficacy with feedback seeking varies depending on perspective taking, and as a result, can be either negative, null, or more rarely in our studies, positive. Our results thus provide evidence that an important moderating condition for the effect of self-efficacy on feedback seeking is the extent to which people engage in perspective taking.

Although our studies examined feedback seeking from a range of different sources, Studies 2 and 4 focused specifically on

Table 10

*Moderated Regression Analysis (Study 5)*

Variables	Perceived value of feedback (Time 1)		Feedback seeking (binary) <sup>a</sup> (Time 2)		Feedback seeking (sum of counts) <sup>b</sup> (Time 2)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Intercept	4.38 (.30)**	4.55 (.31)**	-1.16 (.43)**	-3.95 (.73)**	-.74 (.28)**	-2.94 (.45)**
Job aspect centrality (Time 1)	.14 (.06)*	.15 (.06)*	.28 (.08)**	.24 (.09)**	.28 (.05)**	.19 (.05)**
Self-efficacy (SE) <sup>d</sup> (Time 1)	-.35 (.21)	-.72 (.28)*	-.03 (.39)	.39 (.43)	.16 (.23)	.42 (.25)
Perspective taking (PT) <sup>e</sup> (Time 1)	.20 (.31)	-.19 (.28)	-.56 (.39)	-.52 (.41)	-.10 (.24)	.05 (.25)
SE * PT		.79 (.39)*	.52 (.55)	.11 (.59)	-.02 (.33)	-.40 (.34)
Perceived value of feedback (Time 1)				.57 (.11)**		.47 (.07)**
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.03	.05*	.10 <sup>c</sup>	.26 <sup>c</sup>		
$\Delta R^2$		.02*		.16		

Note. *N* = 235. Table entries represent unstandardized parameter estimates with standard errors in parentheses.

<sup>a</sup> Binary logistic regression; <sup>b</sup> Negative binomial regression; <sup>c</sup> Nagelkerke *R*<sup>2</sup>; <sup>d</sup> Low = 0, High = 1; <sup>e</sup> Control condition = 0, Perspective taking condition = 1.

\* *p* < .05. \*\* *p* < .01.

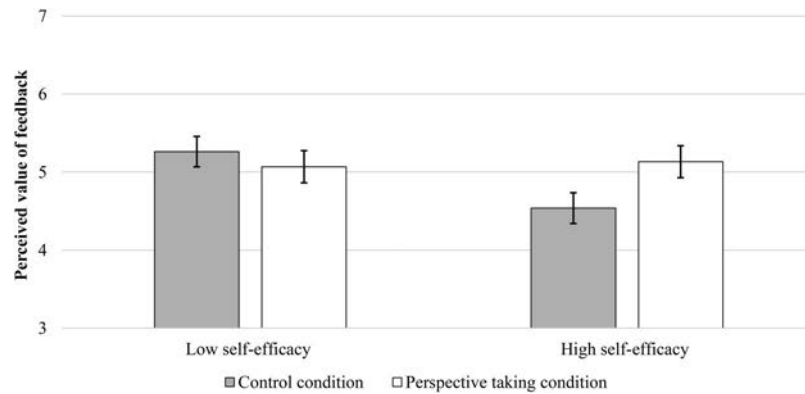


Figure 5. Interaction between self-efficacy and perspective taking on perceived value of feedback (Study 5) with standard errors as bars. In the control condition differences between low and high self-efficacy conditions were significant ( $p = .011$ ). In the perspective taking condition differences between low and high self-efficacy conditions were not significant ( $p = .827$ ).

managers seeking feedback from subordinates, a form of feedback seeking that has not received much research attention (Ashford et al., 2016). Although researchers have highlighted the benefits of “downward feedback seeking” (Ashford & Tsui, 1991; Ashford et al., 2018), evidence suggest that managers are especially unlikely to engage in this behavior (Ashford et al., 2003; Tourish & Robson, 2003, 2006). Given that supervisors often hold position of power, which makes them particularly likely to have high self-efficacy and less likely to engage in perspective taking (Blader, Shirako, & Chen, 2016), our findings provide one possible explanation for this failure to engage in downward feedback seeking. At the same time, our findings suggest that regardless of the direction of feedback seeking (i.e., downward, upward, lateral), self-efficacy can hinder it, and perspective taking can often reduce this effect.

It is also worth noting that we demonstrated downward feedback seeking to be distinct from voice solicitation, and that the hypothesized interaction between self-efficacy and perspective taking occurred just for the former (see online supplemental materials). These findings contribute to emerging efforts to understand the psychological mechanisms explaining when and why managers seek different types of input from employees (Ashford, Sutcliffe, & Christianson, 2009; Sherf, Tangirala, & Venkataramani, 2019). We encourage future research to continue exploring multiple information seeking behaviors together, to enrich our knowledge of their common versus unique antecedents.

Our findings contribute not only to the feedback seeking literature, but also to research on perspective taking. Ku et al. (2015) argued that a number of questions remain unanswered for how perspective taking affects managerial and organizational outcomes, particularly given the scarcity of research on perspective taking in the context of actual workplace interactions. We conducted three of our studies with real employees/managers either in the context of their actual workplace interactions or with them thinking about their jobs. In doing so, we help to highlight the key role of perspective taking in real context such as supervisor–subordinate interactions, while also providing needed evidence for the effects of perspective taking outside of the lab context. As Ku et al., (2015, p. 97) noted, there have been very few studies showing the external validity of perspective-taking effects, and

“the translation of experimental findings to organizations is of critical theoretical and practical significance.” Another noteworthy contribution of our work is that it shows consistent effects of perspective taking using both survey and experimental designs (e.g., Galinsky et al., 2008; Ku et al., 2010), providing further evidence of the external validity of the construct.

### Limitations and Directions for Future Research

It is important to recognize the limitations of our studies. In Study 1, although we surveyed managers at three points in time, the data were all self-reported. In Study 2, we had data from two sources, but all measures were taken at the same time. Study 3 provided experimental control, but may lack generalizability due to the specific nature of the creative task. Generalizability is also a potential issue with scenario studies (Study 4). Moreover, Studies 1–3 did not test the mediating role of feedback value. However, as a package, our studies provide consistent evidence for our hypotheses, with each study’s strengths compensating for the weaknesses of the others.

We mostly focused on self-efficacy for people who had been in their role for a certain amount of time. However, the relationship between self-efficacy and feedback seeking may be different for new employees, who are still learning and developing their self-efficacy beliefs (Ashford & Black, 1996; Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989; Locke & Latham, 2006). Thus, it would be useful for future research to examine the effects of self-efficacy and perspective taking on newcomers’ feedback seeking, and whether these effects change over time. Longitudinal data would also allow for a more dynamic investigation. It is likely, for example, that over time, seeking feedback will affect self-efficacy levels as well as perceptions about the value of future feedback, suggesting potential feedback loops. Examining the role that perspective taking plays in such loops may provide additional theoretical insights.

We would also encourage further research on the interactive effect of self-efficacy and perspective taking on other important behaviors and outcomes. Li and Liao (2017), for example, found that organizationally based self-esteem (which is conceptually related to self-efficacy) moderated the effect of perspective taking

on creativity. The effects of perspective taking may also vary across different contexts. For example, widely shared norms or expectations about the importance of seeking feedback may create a “strong situation” where individual differences such as dispositional perspective taking play a lesser role. Developing a better understanding of contextual factors such as these could be a fruitful avenue for future research. Finally, we did not distinguish between positive versus negative feedback seeking (cf., Gong et al., 2017). Future research could explore whether self-efficacy and perspective taking have similar effects on feedback seeking when one is purposefully seeking positive versus negative feedback.

## Practical Implications

With the above limitations in mind, our theory and findings offer a number of implications for employees, managers, and organizations. Ashford (1989) suggested several hurdles that make it difficult for employees to accurately ascertain their performance. Our work highlights a hurdle that has not previously been appreciated. One’s self-efficacy can stand in the way as it might make one less likely to invest effort in trying to gather information that can help to accurately assess one’s performance. Our findings show that this applies to both managerial and nonmanagerial employees.

Feedback seeking theory has highlighted how, by reducing perceived costs, one can increase the likelihood of feedback seeking. Our research suggests that to facilitate such behavior, it might not be enough to lower the perceived costs, as judgments about the value of feedback play an independent role in people’s decision to seek feedback. For organizations, this points to the value of training employees to better appreciate the value and usefulness of feedback. However, as the biasing effects of high self-efficacy may affect behaviors in subtle yet meaningful ways, it might also be helpful to train employees in perspective taking. Indeed, Studies 3, 4, and 5 showed that simple prompts to consider the perspective of others change the behaviors of high self-efficacy individuals. In this respect, our work suggests that a relatively small and costless perspective taking intervention can change people’s feedback seeking behavior. As such, organizations and individuals may consider explicitly incorporating perspective taking into their routines, or at key moments, as a way to increase feedback-seeking.

## Conclusion

Abundant evidence points to the role that feedback seeking can play in facilitating effective functioning in organizations. In this article, we argued that people with high self-efficacy might tend to undervalue the benefits associated with feedback seeking, thus missing opportunities to gain valuable information about their performance. However, we also proposed that taking the perspective of others might help to mitigate, and even reverse this tendency. Results of five studies highlighted the important role that perspective taking plays in the self-efficacy-feedback seeking relationship. We believe that the insights from these findings can inform both future research and practical interventions aimed at enhancing feedback seeking behaviors in organizations.

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