

MERLIJN VENUS

# Demystifying Visionary Leadership

In Search of the Essence  
of Effective Vision Communication



**Demystifying Visionary Leadership**  
**In search of the essence of effective vision communication**



# **Demystifying Visionary Leadership**

## **In search of the essence of effective vision communication**

**Het ontraadselen van visionair leiderschap:**

**Op zoek naar de essentie van effectieve visiecommunicatie**

Thesis

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## **Doctoral Committee**

**Promotor:** Prof.dr. D.L. van Knippenberg

**Other members:** Dr. D. van Dierendonck

Dr. S.R. Giessner

Dr. R.E. Johnson

**Copromotor:** Dr. D.A. Stam

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

The core question in leadership research has always been (and probably will always be) how it is that certain leaders successfully mobilize others towards higher levels of motivation, commitment, and performance (Yukl, 2010). Illumination of the process that underlies this phenomenon is perhaps best provided by the view that sees leadership as the management of meaning (Podolny, Khurana, & Hill-Popper, 2005; Shamir, 2007; Smircich & Morgan, 1982). According to this view, leaders provide their followers with a viable basis for action by influencing the meaning that they attach to events, actions, and work experience (Shamir, 2007; Smircich & Morgan, 1982). At its core, meaning can be seen as the constructed connection or coherence between stimuli (Baumeister, 1991). We cannot make sense of something or know what something signifies unless we have a mental representation of how environmental stimuli relate or connect to each other. Applied to the leader-follower influence context, when leaders connect work events with goals, purported causes, or other events, they provide followers with a schema that allows them to interpret the external world (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1999), especially with regard to ambiguous stimuli, such as in times of crisis and change (Maitlis & Sonenschein, 2010). In that particular case when leaders connect aspects of work with something that their followers perceive

as personally significant or vitally important, leaders infuse their work with meaningfulness and purpose (Rosso, Dekas, & Wresniewski, 2010; Shamir, 1991; Thompson & Bunderson, 2003). What this view implies, then, is that effective leadership is reflected in the ability of leaders to frame and define our reality in a way that provides us with an interpretive scheme as well as with a sense of purpose. Put yet differently, demonstrating effective leadership “is to create connections and patterns to account for events, objects, and situations so that they become meaningful for members of the organization and by doing so, to construct the basis on which other people interpret their own specific experiences, decide what is happening, and judge whether they are engaged in worthwhile activities” (Shamir, 2007, p. 111).

### **Leadership and Meaning Making**

It is difficult to escape the centrality of the meaning- or connection-making aspect of leadership in the transformational, charismatic, and visionary leadership theories – theories that have proven to be highly influential in the last decades (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Burns, 1978; Conger & Kanungo, 1987, 1998; House, 1996; Shamir, Arthur, & House, 1994; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). Of all the leader behaviors specified by these theories, it is without a doubt the communication of a vision by a leader that has received the highest significance (House & Shamir, 1993). Indeed, after a review of these theories, Parry and Bryman (2006)

concluded that “These various writings on the New Leadership can, then, be viewed as signaling a change of orientation toward the leader as a manager of meaning and the pivotal role of *vision* in that process” (p.451, italics added), and that these theories reveal “a conception of the leader as someone who defines organizational reality through the articulation of a *vision*” (p. 450, italics added). More specifically, it has been argued that visionary leaders mobilize follower action, above all, by linking organizational goals and activities with followers’ self-concept and value hierarchies (Bono & Judge, 2003; House & Shamir, 1993; Lord & Brown, 2004, Shamir et al., 2004), as well as by connecting followers to the collective such that their interests become fused with those of the organization (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Shamir et al., 1993). Clearly, it is leader vision by shaping the way followers see and define themselves in relation to their work and organization that should provide followers with a basis for action.

### **What is Effective Vision Communication?**

Most unfortunately, the New Leadership theories tend to view and measure outstanding leadership as a set of leader behaviors, of which leader vision communication is only one aspect. As such, we are often not able to isolate the specific effects of vision communication on followers from the effects of the other leader behaviors on followers. Furthermore, it is not an exaggeration to state that the existing leadership studies that focus on vision communication in specific are

not in abundance and do not yield a comprehensive understanding of the nuts and bolts of effective vision communication (see Stam, van Knippenberg, & Wisse, 2010a for an overview). As a consequence, the current state of science leaves us in the dark as to how leader vision translates into follower action, a problem that has been referred to as one of the master problems in leadership research (Haslam & Platow, 2001). In the current dissertation, I try to disambiguate this elusive phenomenon – an aim that is reflected in the following research question:

*How can vision communication provide followers with a viable basis for action and motivation?*

As may have become apparent already, the ability to communicate an inspiring vision is considered to be the *sine qua non* of outstanding leadership (House & Shamir, 1993; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996). Not coincidentally, this ability is seen as characteristic of effective leaders not only by leadership scholars but also by laypersons across different cultures (Den Hartog, House, Hanges, Ruiz-Quintanilla, 1999). But what exactly is a leader vision? There are many different definitions of leader vision, of which some are even conflicting (cf. Zaccaro & Banks, 2001). Nevertheless, some commonalities can be distilled from the literature, which leads us to the following definition: A vision is a leader's mental

image of a future state for the collective (e.g., the organization). By implication, vision communication can be defined as the communication of a future state by a leader, often in an attempt to mobilize followers towards collective action.

As noted before, it is far from clear what makes for an inspiring and motivating vision. Leadership theorists tend to differ in their assertions about what makes visions effective in mobilizing action. Some scholars say that inspiring visions are optimistic, focus on ideals and positive future events, defining effective visions as those that portray an attractive future (a promotion vision; e.g., Berson, Shamir, Avolio, & Popper, 2001; Shamir et al., 1993). Others contend that visions can be just as motivating when they focus on the avoidance of threats and possible future losses (a prevention vision; e.g., Bruch, Shamir, & Eilam-Shamir, 2007). Stam and colleagues recently showed that both types of visions can be motivating for followers, depending on whether they align with the situational context or follower characteristics (Stam et al., 2010a). Seemingly similar conceptions of motivating visions emerge when scholars discuss how vision facilitates leaders to motivate others to accept intended changes. Simply put, it is generally assumed that visions motivate change by emphasizing both the negative features of the status quo and the positive features of the future as presented in the vision (Conger & Kanungo, 1987, 1998). Because the conceptions of effective visions as discussed above are representative of the current state of science, they will play a

central role in this dissertation as well. Interestingly, as the reader shall see, prevalent conceptions of how vision inspires change may not be as valid as they seem to be.

As implied by the existing literature and as noted earlier, effective visions provide followers with a basis for action by impacting the way followers see themselves. Indeed, there is convergence among leadership scholars that leaders exert their profound influence on followers through their impact on the follower self-concept (Lord & Brown, 2004; Lord, Brown, & Freiberg, 1999; Shamir et al., 1993; van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, de Cremer, & Hogg, 2004). The self-concept can be defined as the organized network of knowledge, beliefs, and feelings about the self and its relation to others and the outside world (Banaji and Prentice, 1994). Because the self-concept has a significant impact on our thoughts, behaviors, and feelings, it is by arousing or engaging particular aspects of follower self-concepts that leader vision may exert great influence on followers (e.g., House & Shamir, 1993; Shamir et al., 1993). Importantly, the self-concept is based not only on unique self-descriptions that distinguish ourselves from others, but also on the collectives to which we feel connected. It is by incorporating into our self-concept the key features of the groups to which we belong, that we form collective-based identities – identities that provide a sense of meaning and purpose, and that serve as useful schemas to regulate our perception of reality (Shamir, 1999).

Needless to say, the purported potential of visions to inspire people through their impact on follower self-processes will be subjected to empirical test in the current dissertation.

So far, I have only discussed the content part of visions and how this may influence the thoughts of followers about themselves. However, just like the leader-follower influence process in general, the vision communication process is replete with emotional significance (Gooty, Connelly, Griffith, & Gupta, 2010). While there is empirical research which examines the effects of leader emotions on follower outcomes, and the effects of leader behavior on follower emotions, to my knowledge there is no study that has studied the role of emotions in the vision communication process. This is unfortunate, because it is likely that the experienced and displayed emotions of both leader and follower significantly affect the outcomes of the vision communication process. It is reasonable to assume that when communicating their vision, leaders use their emotions as a means to express how they personally relate to the envisioned future. The expression of emotion, in turn, will undoubtedly have an impact on how people react to the communicated vision. Conversely, it is likely that the personal feelings that followers experience contribute to whether they perceive the vision as providing a basis for action. For example, in times of crisis it is likely that a leader's portrayal of a better future will have a larger impact on those people who



experience the crisis themselves in terms of personal uncertainty. In the current dissertation, I focus on both the role of leader emotion (Chapter 2) and follower emotion (Chapter 3).

### **The Current Dissertation**

The outcomes of my research will be covered by Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. These chapters represent stand alone research articles and can therefore be read in isolation as well. In the remainder of this dissertation, the pronoun ‘we’ will always refer to my co-authors and I as a collective.

*Chapter 2: Leader emotion as a catalyst of effective leader communication of visions.* In this chapter we tested whether and how leader emotional displays can help leaders to communicate their vision in a more successful way. Specifically, we expected that leaders would enhance the perceived attractiveness of their vision if they expressed emotions that were in sync with the regulatory focus as implied by the vision content (promotion vs. prevention). We sought to confirm this predicted ‘match’ between vision content and emotional delivery by means of laboratory experiments. We reasoned that displays of enthusiasm and frustration would facilitate leaders with communicating a promotion vision, whereas displays of agitation (viz. concern) would be more effective for the communication of a prevention vision (Study 2.1). We further tested the proposed underlying process of this phenomenon by exploring whether leader enthusiasm (agitation) engages

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followers' promotion (prevention) focus, and whether this in turn would result into higher effectiveness when the vision of the leader was in sync with this aroused regulatory focus (Study 2.2) Finally, we tested the proposed power of leader emotion in making followers receptive to the leader's communicated end state in relation to the communication of value-laden messages (Study 2.3) and short-term goals (Study 2.4), desired end states that are related to vision.

*Chapter 3: Visions of continuity as visions of change.* In this chapter we investigated how a leader's vision can be most successful in inspiring followers to accept change. Changes typically lead to feelings of uncertainty and propensities towards resistance among employees. One explanation for this is that change threatens the existence or continuity of the part of employees' sense of self that they derive from answering the question 'who are we as an organization?' This organization-based sense of self allows employees to reduce subjective uncertainty about what they should think, feel, and do. Because people generally prefer to feel that their fundamental self remains the same over time and situations, we reasoned that visions should successfully inspire change when they assure employees that of all those aspects that will change, the organizational identity will definitively not. These visions of continuity, we predicted, should generate support for change especially for employees who experience the highest uncertainty. We tested these ideas in an organizational field setting when employees were asked about the

leadership of their supervisors (Study 3.1) and when employees were asked to judge an organizational leader's speech in which future changes were envisioned (Study 3.2). We also tested these ideas with students who were asked to imagine themselves as employees and react to the communicated vision of change by the company CEO (Study 3.3). Finally we tested these ideas with students who were led to believe that their education program would undergo fundamental changes, and who were accordingly asked to react to the vision of change by the Dean of the business school (Study 3.4). It should be noted that in Studies 2-4 we also tested our proposed moderated-mediation model, which outlined that visions of continuity would result in employees' belief that the organizational identity would be maintained, which accordingly would lead to support for change to the extent that employees experienced uncertainty.

## CHAPTER 2

### LEADER EMOTION AS A CATALYST OF EFFECTIVE LEADER COMMUNICATION OF VISIONS<sup>1</sup>

*Despite the importance that effective leader communication of visions, value-laden messages, and goals seems to have in leadership, we know very little about which leader behavior is conducive to effective persuasive communication of desired end states. The current research highlights leader emotion as useful for leaders to make followers receptive to leaders' communicated end state. Across four experiments we found that follower performance was highest when there was a match between leader emotion and end state in terms of implied regulatory focus (promotion vs. prevention). Three of these experiments tested the proposed underlying mechanism of this pattern and found that leader enthusiasm (agitation) primed followers with promotion (prevention) focus, which in turn generated high follower performance when leaders communicated end states that sustained this focus, that is, when visions appealed to promotion (prevention); persuasive messages contained openness (conservatism) values; and when goals were defined as maximal (minimal) goals.*

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<sup>1</sup> A modified version of this chapter has been accepted for publication in *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*.

## **Introduction**

The core function of organizations is to attain desired end states (Locke, 2005). Accordingly, a key responsibility for organizational leaders is to motivate and inspire employees to accept these end states (Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2001), whether they are specific goals, goal-related values, or future end states and superordinate goals such as visions (Cropanzano, James, & Citera, 1993; Lord & Brown, 2004). To this end, leaders must engage in persuasive communication (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1998), the importance of which is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the consensus among scholars that the ability to persuasively communicate a vision is the *sine qua non* of outstanding leadership (House & Shamir, 1993; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996).

However, previous research on leader persuasive communication of desired end states is scarce and has yielded inconsistent results regarding the effectiveness of persuasive messages (cf. Grant & Hofmann, 2011) as well as regarding the effectiveness of a charismatic presentation style in message communication (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996). Leadership scholars have therefore started to identify the conditions under which leader persuasive communication is effective. Thus, Grant and Hofmann (2011) found that ideological messages were only effective when communicated by a beneficiary and

not the leader. As another example, Stam and colleagues (2010a) found that a visionary message influenced follower performance only when it matched followers' motivational state, be it trait-based or contextually induced.

Yet, a match between leaders' persuasive appeals and follower psychological states may as often as not occur spontaneously, and adjustment of persuasive appeals to follower characteristics may not always be possible or desirable for leaders. Leaders are often necessitated to align employees' behavior with goals that require frequent adaptation to volatile, changing environments. Further, leaders often have various, multiple goals that emanate from their own idiosyncratic beliefs and values that they wish their employees to act upon. How can leaders accomplish this? Clearly, the contingency perspective that characterizes the current state of science fails to identify what it is that leaders do in their persuasive attempts to motivate followers to accept desired end states.

One neglected yet potentially effective means leaders could employ in their persuasive attempts to make followers more receptive to accept desired end states is the use of emotional displays. We argue that leaders can use specific emotions to prime followers with a regulatory focus, which is a self-regulatory system that determines whether followers view end states in terms of hopes, wishes, and aspirations (a promotion focus) or in terms of duties, obligations, and responsibilities (a prevention focus). According to regulatory focus theory

(Higgins, 1998), followers pay attention to information that sustains their primed regulatory focus, and regulatory fit emerges when environmental stimuli (e.g., activities, goal-pursuit means) sustain one's focus, thus increasing the value and motivation in what one is doing (Higgins, 2000). Relying on the primacy of affect hypothesis (Zajonc, 1984), which suggests that leader emotions can influence followers' mindsets more readily than leader verbal communication, we argue that leaders can manage follower regulatory fit and effectively communicate end states by displaying emotions that induce a regulatory focus aligned with the communicated goal, value, or vision. The communicated end state, in turn, should sustain followers' primed regulatory focus, increasing motivation to accept the desired end state.

The contributions of our study are threefold. First, by identifying leader emotion as an effective means to make followers receptive to desired end states, we integrate the literature on leader persuasive communication concerning desired end states with the emerging literature that explores the role that leader emotion plays in the leadership influence process (e.g., van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, van Kleef, & Damen, 2008). Second, unlike much prior work (e.g., Grant & Hofmann, 2011; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Stam et al., 2010a) our study focuses not narrowly on either vision communication, value messages, or the communication of short-term goals, but offers a theory that applies to all these

areas. Third, unlike others (e.g., Stam et al., 2010), we examine what leaders (can) do to increase support for their communicated goal irrespective of idiosyncratic follower characteristics.

### **Leader Persuasive Communication and Leader Emotion**

Arguably one of the most important tasks leaders have is to communicate desired end states. Indeed, according to the leadership literature outstanding leadership is reflected in effective communication of visions (cf. House and Shamir, 1993), effective communication of goals (e.g., Berson & Avolio, 2004; Colbert, Kristof-Brown, Bradley, & Barrick, 2008), and in motivating followers through messages infused with values (House, 1996; Shamir et al., 1993). Remarkably however, it is far from clear which leader behaviors are conducive to effective communication of desired end states. What is more, research exploring how inspirational communication adds to charisma mainly focuses on the role of leader rhetoric (e.g., Emrich, Brower, Feldman, & Garland, 2001). There is increasing evidence, however, that leaders can use their emotions to influence how followers think, feel, and behave (e.g., van Knippenberg et al., 2008). Accordingly, in the present study we explore how leaders' use of emotions may help leaders in successfully communicating visions, goals, and value-laden messages.

Although the leadership literature has always acknowledged that “emotions are deeply intertwined with the process of leading” (Gooty et al., 2010, p. 979),



leadership researchers have only recently started to examine how leader emotional expressions impact follower behavior (for overviews see Gooty et al., 2010; van Knippenberg et al., 2008). Unfortunately, studies have generated mixed results regarding the relative effectiveness of positive versus negative leader emotions. To shed more light on this issue, two processes have been identified through which leader emotions may influence followers (e.g., van Kleef, 2009). On the one hand, leader emotions may influence followers through the affective reactions they evoke in followers. For example, leader positive emotions may through evoking positivity produce higher ratings of charisma than negative emotions (e.g., Bono & Ilies, 2006). On the other hand, leader emotions may influence followers through the information they provide regarding follower performance quality. Leader negative emotions may, for example, indicate substandard performance, which may result into increased effort among followers (Sy, Côté, & Saavedra, 2005).

Van Kleef and colleagues identified information-processing motivation as a factor that determines whether followers pay attention to emotion-related information or not. Specifically, they found that leader happiness versus leader anger through affective reactions generated higher team performance when teams scored low on information-processing motivation, whereas the reverse pattern appeared when teams scored high on information-processing information, an effect that was mediated by performance inferences (Van Kleef, Homan, Beersma, van

Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, & Damen, 2009). Similar results have been found with regard to other follower characteristics (Van Kleef, Homan, Beersma, & van Knippenberg, 2010). Taken together, leader emotions may influence followers through two ways, the relative prevalence of which may be influenced by follower personality.

Even so, it is not clear how leader emotion may through either performance inferences or affective reactions enhance positive follower behavior (e.g., goal acceptance) in a leadership situation that involves persuasive communication of desired end states. Even if there were a leader emotion (e.g., enthusiasm) that could elicit goal acceptance, it would not be clear whether this generalizes to different types of goals or followers. In short, it is hard to see how the current state of science can inform us regarding effective leader persuasive communication of desired end states. In response to calls for more attention to other mediating processes (van Knippenberg et al., 2008), in the current paper we raise the possibility that leader emotions can activate in followers a certain action state or motivational direction, which causes followers to react more positively to one type of goal or value than another. We submit that leader emotion can do so by priming followers' self-regulatory focus, as it is this construct that is concerned with people's self-regulation towards desirable end states.

## **Regulatory Focus Theory and Regulatory Fit**

According to Regulatory Focus Theory (Higgins, 1998, 2000) individuals may differ in their regulatory focus, or motivational orientation, with respect to the *same* desired end state. This focus may be manifested not only as an individual trait originating from socialization processes (Keller & Bless, 2006), but also as a temporal state elicited by situational cues (e.g., Friedman & Förster, 2001). A promotion focus involves a focus on ideals (e.g., aspirations), a focus on gains, and the use of approach strategies or eagerness means to attain a positive end state. A prevention orientation, in contrast, involves a focus on oughts (e.g., obligations), a focus on losses, and the use of avoidance strategies or vigilance means to attain the same positive end state (Higgins, 1998, 2000).

Importantly, the influence of regulatory focus on motivation and performance is determined by regulatory fit. Regulatory fit is defined as a positive experience that results when individuals are exposed to environmental stimuli (e.g., specific goal-pursuit activities or strategic means) that match or sustain their regulatory focus (Higgins, 1998, 2000). Research has shown that regulatory fit is associated with enhanced performance (Shah, Higgins, & Friedman, 1998), increased motivational strength (Avnet & Higgins, 2006), and enjoyment of goal-directed action (Freitas & Higgins, 2002). Interestingly, the robust effects of regulatory fit have been documented also in leadership contexts (e.g., Benjamin &

Flynn, 2006; Li, Evans, Christian, Gilliland, Kausel, & Stein, 2011), including one that involved leader vision communication (Stam et al., 2010a). Consistent with the principle of regulatory fit, Stam et al. (2010a) found that vision communication was effective to the extent that the type of vision sustained followers' current regulatory focus. Specifically, communication of visions that focused on ideals led to higher performance for followers who had a promotion focus, whereas visions that focused on oughts led to higher performance for followers who had a prevention focus.

These findings suggest that regulatory fit is worthy of being taken into account in studying leader persuasive communication of end states, especially because, like visions, goals and values may also vary in the extent to which they relate to different regulatory foci. In the current paper, therefore, we propose that one way through which leader emotion may make followers more receptive to accept the leader's desired end state is by influencing followers' regulatory focus and as such creating regulatory fit. More specifically, if leaders could "prime" followers with a mindset that is compatible with the regulatory focus implied by the communicated end state, they would create regulatory fit and thus increase motivation towards the desired end state. Accordingly, we discuss how leader's display of emotions is an especially effective means for leaders to prime followers with a regulatory focus.

### **Leader Emotion and Regulatory Fit in Leader Communication of End States**

We argue for several reasons that leaders can prime followers' regulatory focus not only, as has often been argued, through verbal communication and rhetoric (e.g., Brockner & Higgins, 2001; Kark & van Dijk, 2007), but also, and even more effectively, through emotional displays. First, according to the primacy of affect hypothesis (Murphy & Zajonc, 1993; Zajonc, 1984) the reactions to leader emotion should precede the cognitive processing of leader verbal communication. Leader emotion should therefore prime followers more readily than leader verbal communication. Second, leader verbal communication is more likely to prime follower motivational states, among other things, when rhetoric is accompanied with consistent leader behaviors, leaders are close to their followers and spend much time with them, and when followers turn to their leaders for direction (Lord & Brown, 2004). In situations that require short-term persuasive influence, therefore, we do not expect leader verbal communication to have a significant influence on follower regulatory focus. Third, awareness of the priming potential of stimuli tends to inhibit priming effects (Bargh & Chartrand, 2000). Because followers presumably are more aware of a leader's attempt to influence them through verbal communication than through emotional displays, leader emotion should have a stronger influence than leader rhetoric. Fourth, and lastly, priming attempts tend to be more successful when they elicit arousing states in

followers (Lord & Brown, 2004). It can be argued that leader emotion is more likely than leader verbal communication to evoke congruent arousing, emotional states in followers.

How, then, could leader emotion be conducive to priming a promotion or prevention focus? According to semantic network models of emotion concepts (Niedenthal, 2008), antecedents, behaviors, and experiential characteristics that are associated with an emotional experience tend to be organized and linked together in memory. As an implication, exposure to emotional cues makes it likely that emotion-related material represented in memory becomes activated and salient in a person's mind. Indeed, it has been shown that exposure to emotional cues primes emotion-related thoughts and behavior (Zemack-Rugar, Bettman, & Fitzsimons, 2007). It is plausible to argue then that leader emotion can prime followers with a particular regulatory focus if the respective emotion is indeed associated with this regulatory focus (see also Higgins, 2001; personal communication)

Not surprisingly, emotions tend to be closely linked to regulatory focus. In general, the performance feedback (i.e., success or failure) related to promotion goals tends to be associated with emotions along an enthusiasm-dejection dimension, whereas the performance feedback related to prevention goals tends to be associated with emotions along an agitation-quiescence dimension (Brockner & Higgins, 2001; Higgins, 1987; Higgins, Shah, & Friedman, 1997; Idson, Liberman,

& Higgins, 2004). It can be expected therefore that exposure to leader enthusiasm primes followers with a promotion focus. This is because enthusiasm conveys promotion success, the primal motivator to act for those employed with a promotion orientation. In contrast, exposure to leader agitation (i.e., anxiety, worry) should prime followers with a prevention focus. This is because agitation conveys prevention failure, the primal motivator to act for those employed with a prevention orientation (Brockner & Higgins, 2001; Higgins et al., 1997). What follows is that leaders can effectively communicate desired end states by combining persuasive communication with emotional displays that are congruent with the regulatory focus that the communicated end state implies. If leader emotion primes followers with a goal-congruent regulatory focus, the leader-communication goal will provide for followers an environmental cue that sustains their primed focus. In this way leaders create regulatory fit, which should enhance follower motivation to accept and pursue the end state. Thus, we predict that visions, goals, and value-laden messages that appeal to a promotion focus are most effectively communicated when accompanied with leader displays of enthusiasm, whereas end states that appeal to a prevention focus are most effectively communicated when accompanied with leader displays of agitation.

### **Overview of the Present Research**

We tested our predictions across four laboratory experiments. Experiments

allow for establishing causality and identifying processes that drive an effect (Brown & Lord, 1999; Goodwin, Wofford, & Boyd, 2000), thus providing a suitable method to test our model. In the current research we employed leader speeches or leader messages, which can be regarded as an effective means for leaders to communicate desired end states (e.g., Grant & Hofmann, 2011; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Stam et al., 2010a). It should be noted that we do not intend to claim that these speeches and messages contain all required attributes necessary to be qualified as leader visions or inspirational messages, or that the experiments capture the leadership process. Rather, we maintain that they contain elements that can be regarded as highly relevant to leader persuasive communication of desired end states such as visions, short-term goals, and values to guide behavior.

Our research population of interest included Dutch adult students who studied either business or social sciences and who had not participated in similar studies before (for instance, participants who had participated in Study 1 should not be included in later studies as they would be knowledgeable of the design of these studies). Accordingly, in each study students were screened for age, prior participation, and study major. In Study 1-2 we tested our model in application to leader communication of visions differing in their appeal to regulatory focus. In addition to the effects of leader enthusiasm and leader agitation, Study 1 examined



the effect of leader frustration. Frustration, like enthusiasm relates to a promotion focus (Higgins, 1987; Strauman & Higgins, 1988), but, unlike enthusiasm, reflects negative affect. Incorporating leader display of frustration into the design thus provides a test to rule out that the predicted pattern of findings is consistent not only with a regulatory-fit explanation but also with a match in valence explanation (Labroo & Lee, 2006). Because people differing in working experience may differ in their ability to put a visionary statement in the right context, Study 2 included only participants with working experience. Replicating the core findings of Study 1 in Study 2 would provide us with substantial reason to rule out concerns with the potential role of working experience. Study 2 not only replicated the test of the focal prediction, but also investigated the proposed underlying mechanism by examining whether leader emotion primes a congruent follower regulatory focus. In Study 3-4 we tested the predicted pattern and the proposed underlying mechanism in application to leader communication of messages infused with values differing in their appeal to regulatory focus (Study 3) as well as to leader communication of goals differing in their relation to regulatory focus (Study 4).

### **Study 1**

Testifying to the importance of leader vision communication, an examination of transformational, charismatic, and visionary leadership theories by House and Shamir (1993) revealed that the communication of an appealing vision

is the only leadership behavior that is specified in all of these theories. A vision can be defined as a leader's description or mental image of a desired *future* goal or end state (Conger & Kanungo, 1998). Interestingly, while multiple conceptualizations of vision content are possible, one specification appears to closely parallel the distinction between promotion and prevention focus (Stam et al., 2010a). On the one hand, many scholars have contended that visions typically are promotion focused, that is, focused on ideals and positive future events (Berson et al., 2001; Shamir et al., 1993, 1994). However, it has also been argued that visions appealing to a prevention focus, that is, a focus on negative future events and the avoidance of threats and losses, may motivate followers as well (Bruch et al., 2007; Conger & Kanungo, 1987). Based on our model of effective leader persuasive communication of end states, it can be predicted that leaders can enhance the effectiveness of vision communication by displaying congruent emotional displays. This can be translated into the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1: Leader communication of promotion visions is more effective when communicated with a promotion-related emotional display, whereas leader communication of prevention visions is more effective when communicated with a prevention-related emotional display*

Study 1 was set up to test this hypothesis. As a stringent test of this hypothesis, we needed to ensure that the predicted pattern is indeed consistent only with regulatory focus theory and not also with a valence-match effect (Labroo & Lee, 2006). To do so, we also considered the effect of leader frustration. Frustration, like enthusiasm, relates to a promotion focus (Higgins, 1987; Strauman & Higgins, 1988), but unlike enthusiasm reflects negative affect. These properties allow one to disentangle a valence-match effect (i.e., a match in implied emotional valence) from a regulatory fit effect (i.e., a match in implied regulatory orientation). If leader frustration and leader agitation generate higher performance in combination with a prevention vision than with a promotion vision, while leader enthusiasm shows the reverse pattern, results will be supportive of a valence-match effect. However, if, as we predict, leader frustration and leader enthusiasm both elicit higher performance in combination with a promotion vision rather than a prevention vision, while leader agitation shows the reverse pattern, results will be in line with an explanation in terms of regulatory fit.

## **Method**

**Participants and Design.** The study was a laboratory experiment in which Vision Focus (promotion vs. prevention), and Leader Emotion (enthusiasm vs.

agitation vs. frustration) were manipulated in a 2 X 3 factorial design<sup>2</sup>. A total of 186 students completed the experiment. One participant was excluded from analysis because we had substantial reason to believe that this participant did not engage in the experiment in a serious way. This resulted in 185 participants aged between 18 and 32 years ( $M = 20.52$ ,  $SD = 2.01$ ), who were randomly assigned to conditions.

**Procedure.** The paradigm was modeled after Stam et al. (2010a). Participants were placed inside cubicles behind a computer and were informed that a videotaped speech would be presented on the screen that was prepared for them by a male leader (a trained actor; see below). The leader would present his vision about innovative management, a topic that can be considered relevant for any business student regardless of (future) specialization. The leader was introduced as a young successful entrepreneur who regularly provided seminars about innovative management for practitioners. To further increase participants' engagement, participants learned that the leader obtained a master's degree in management at the business school where the study took place. Also, participants read that careful attention to the speech was necessary because questions would later be asked about

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<sup>2</sup> Initially our design also included a neutral, no emotion condition. However, results from one of our pilot study indicated that this condition could not be perceived as a true control condition, because positive emotions were attributed to the leader. We therefore excluded this condition.

the leader's message. After they had watched the video, participants engaged in a performance task (see below).

In reality, the leader was a confederate who was trained to present the speech with respective vision focus and leader emotion. These speeches were standardized by having them videotaped. In doing so, we follow leadership research that successfully manipulated leader speeches (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999) and leader emotion (e.g., van Kleef et al., 2009) in an experimental setting by using trained actors and videotaped leader communication

**Independent variables.** *Vision type manipulation.* To manipulate vision type, we used the speeches developed by Stam et al. (2010a). Both speeches contained the same desired future state: innovative management as key competence of future managers (e.g., *“innovation and creativity are important in business”* and *“the innovative manager holds the future”*). In the promotion-vision condition the leader represented the consequences of becoming an innovative manager as an ideal future and emphasized eagerness approach means and gains to approach the desired future state (e.g., *“If you want to be able to be flexible under fast changing conditions; if you want enthusiastic, creative subordinates that are able to cope with the complex problems of today; ..., than you understand how important innovation and creativity are for businesses”*). In the prevention-vision condition the leader represented the consequences of becoming an innovative

manager as an ought future and emphasized vigilance avoidance means and losses to approach the desired end state (e.g., *“If you don’t want to be inflexible and slow under fast changing conditions; if you don’t want conservative and bored subordinates that are not able to cope with the complex problems of today; ..., than you understand how important innovation and creativity are for businesses”*). Thus, both speeches were, apart from regulatory focus, identical in content. Stam et al. (2010a) already showed in a pilot study that in this manipulation the promotion vision was perceived as more promotion focused than the prevention vision. In the Stam et al. (2010a) study these speeches were presented in audio format, however, and we decided therefore to test the vision type manipulation in video format as well. A pilot study was conducted with 28 business students aged between 18 and 25 ( $M = 20.11$ ,  $SD = 1.77$ ). Participants were randomly assigned to either of two conditions characterized by leaders presenting either a promotion speech or a prevention speech. Both conditions were devoid of emotion manipulations to make sure that any effect would be due to vision content and not emotional displays. A total of six items, some of which were borrowed from Stam et al. (2010a), were used to assess the extent to which participants perceived the speech as promotion versus prevention oriented ( $\alpha = .73$ ), including “The speech presented passive, non-innovative managers as undesirable examples of future managers” (reverse-coded), “During the speech I imagined myself as an active,

innovative manager”, and “During the speech I imagined myself as a passive, non-innovative manager” (reverse-coded). All items were measured using a 7-point scale ( $1 = \text{completely disagree}$ ,  $7 = \text{completely agree}$ ). An analysis of variance showed that participants in the promotion condition perceived the speech as more promotion focused ( $M = 5.70$ ,  $SD = .77$ ) than those in the prevention condition ( $M = 4.49$ ,  $SD = .59$ ),  $F(1, 26) = 21.44$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .45$ . Given this result, the vision type manipulation can be considered successful.

*Leader emotion manipulation.* While presenting his speech (the leader was male) the leader displayed enthusiasm, agitation, or frustration. In the enthusiasm condition, the leader looked cheerful and happy, smiled regularly, spoke with an enthusiastic, upbeat tone, and had an open and erect posture. The leader in the agitation condition looked anxious, nervous, and tense, frowned regularly, had an agitated tone of voice, and showed a closed posture with bent upper body and flexed arm muscles. The leader in the frustration condition looked irritated, spoke with an angry tone of voice, and clenched his wrists regularly. Note that enthusiasm, agitation, and frustration are all high in arousal, a property that controls for possible arousal effects (cf. van Knippenberg et al., 2008).

A second pilot study was conducted in order to assess whether leader emotion was displayed as intended. Participants were 53 business students aged between 18 and 26 ( $M = 20.21$ ,  $SD = 1.85$ ), and were randomly assigned to either

of three emotion conditions. We showed video's without audio to ensure that any effects would only be due to emotional displays and not to vision content. A total of 18 items were used to design three scales, each consisting of six items, measuring leader enthusiasm, leader agitation, and leader frustration respectively. Each item was preceded by the phrase "I think the person in the movie clip is". The items of the enthusiasm scale ( $\alpha = .92$ ) included: "enthusiastic", "happy", "passionate", "gay", "pleased", and "elated". The items of the agitation scale ( $\alpha = .93$ ) included: "anxious", "uneasy", "tense", "nervous", "concerned", and "worried". The items of the frustration scale ( $\alpha = .97$ ) included: "mad", "irritated", "annoyed", "piqued", and "frustrated". Items were coded using a 7-point scale ( $1 = \text{completely disagree}$ ,  $7 = \text{completely agree}$ ). Analysis of variance revealed a significant effect for the enthusiasm scale,  $F(2, 50) = 71.07$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .74$ . Post-hoc Bonferoni tests showed that an enthusiastic leader was perceived as more enthusiastic ( $M = 5.53$ ,  $SD = .19$ ) than an agitated leader ( $M = 2.95$ ,  $SD = .19$ ) and a frustrated leader ( $M = 2.41$ ,  $SD = .20$ ). The latter two conditions did not differ from each other. A significant effect of leader emotion was also found on the agitation scale,  $F(2, 50) = 92.18$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .79$ . Post-hoc Bonferoni tests showed that an agitated leader was perceived as more agitated ( $M = 6.07$ ,  $SD = .72$ ) than an enthusiastic leader ( $M = 2.31$ ,  $SD = .90$ ) and a frustrated leader ( $M = 3.70$ ,  $SD = .90$ ). Lastly, a significant effect was found on the frustration scale,  $F(2,$



50) = 71.19,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .74$ . Post-hoc Bonferoni tests showed that a frustrated leader was perceived as more frustrated ( $M = 6.21$ ,  $SD = .25$ ) than an enthusiastic leader ( $M = 2.35$ ,  $SD = .25$ ) and an agitated leader ( $M = 4.75$ ,  $SD = .25$ ). Results also showed that an enthusiastic leader was perceived as less agitated than a frustrated leader and less frustrated than an agitated leader, which may not be very surprising given that frustration and agitation represent negative valence emotions. Furthermore, given that these emotions produce in fact differential effects (see results section), they provide us with a conservative test of our hypotheses. Taken together, it can be concluded that the emotion manipulation was successful.

**Dependent variable.** If fit results in increased motivation and attraction to the leader's communicated vision, motivation should best be expressed by support and pursuit regarding the desired future state. Specifically, motivation should be reflected by the degree to which participants perceive innovative management as important and worthy to pursue. A task presented as predictive of the ability to manage innovation (or to become an innovative manager) should therefore elicit effort and motivation to do well on this task among participants who support the vision. In this case we used a memory task and, by means of a cover story, participants read that this task was of critical importance for innovative managers. This memory task has shown to distinguish between motivation levels on the basis of performance (Stam et al., 2010a). Higher motivation and effort typically result

in increased performance on these tasks when the task is presented as relevant for participants' desirable professional abilities (see Brunstein & Gollwitzer, 1996). The cover story was a modified version from that of Brunstein and Gollwitzer (1996):

*Research on innovative management showed that memory capacity is an important predictor of innovative management behavior. Memory capacity is very important for innovative managers. Making innovative decisions and solving problems innovatively requires tremendous memory capacity. Indeed, memory capacity is regarded as one of the most important qualities necessary to solve complex decisions in innovative ways. Studies show that especially innovative managers distinguish themselves from other managers by having the ability to use mental capacity well. Managers that are pointed out as innovative managers without exception score high on mental capacity tasks.*

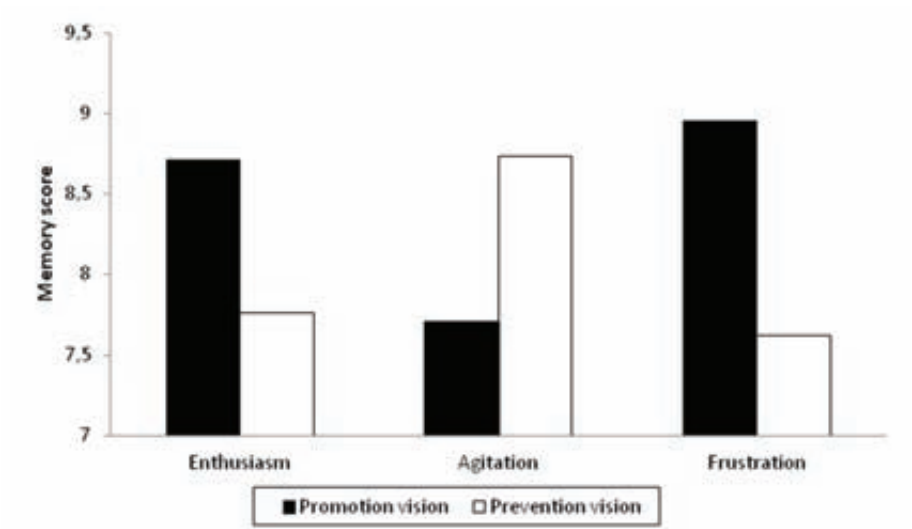
After participants had read the cover story, task instructions were provided to them. A series of 16 words would be presented on the screen, each word appearing for a few seconds. After the final word had disappeared participants read that they would be given one minute to type in as many words as they could remember. All correctly remembered words (excluding repeated correct words) were counted, resulting in a memory score that was the dependent measure of

performance.

## Results

An analysis of variance on the number of correct words yielded neither a main effect of vision focus,  $F(1, 179) = 1.53$ ,  $ns$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ , nor a main effect of leader emotion,  $F(2, 179) = .02$ ,  $ns$ ,  $\eta^2 = .00$ . However, the predicted interaction effect did emerge (see Figure 2.1),  $F(2, 179) = 4.63$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ . One-sided planned contrasts (Levine, Page, Braver, & MacKinnon, 2003) indicated that participants who saw an enthusiastic leader remembered more words correctly when the speech was promotion focused ( $M = 8.71$ ,  $SD = 2.30$ ) than when the speech was prevention focused ( $M = 7.76$ ,  $SD = 2.21$ ),  $t(179) = 1.70$ ,  $p = .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . As expected, the reverse pattern emerged for agitated leaders. Participants who saw an agitated leader remembered more words correctly when the speech was prevention focused ( $M = 8.73$ ,  $SD = 2.17$ ) than when the speech was promotion focused ( $M = 7.71$ ,  $SD = 2.53$ ),  $t(179) = 1.80$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . As regards the frustrated-leader condition, participants reported more correctly remembered words when the speech was promotion focused ( $M = 8.96$ ,  $SD = 2.23$ ) than when the speech was prevention focused ( $M = 7.62$ ,  $SD = 2.45$ ),  $t(179) = 2.02$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ .

Figure 2.1. Performance as a function of communication orientation and leader emotion (Study 1)



**Discussion Study 1**

Study 1 showed that effective vision communication varied as a function of the interaction between vision and leader emotion. It also showed that, as predicted, the pattern of findings was consistent with a regulatory fit interpretation and not with a valence-match explanation. As expected, leader enthusiasm as well as leader frustration led to higher performance for promotion visions than for

prevention visions, whereas delivering a message with agitation led to higher performance for prevention visions than for promotion visions. In sum, Study 1 through experimental design showed causal effects that are consistent with a regulatory fit effect.

## **Study 2**

Even so, Study 1 did not include one step that would make the evidence for regulatory fit even more convincing. For regulatory fit to be controlled by leaders in a leader communication context, it is required that leaders induce a corresponding focus in followers before followers start processing the leader's message (cf. Cesario, Higgins, & Scholer, 2008). Such an emotion-primed follower focus should mediate vision communication effectiveness in interaction with vision type. That is, follower regulatory focus induced by leader emotion will only lead to higher follower performance when congruent with vision focus, an issue Study 1 cannot speak to because it did not include a measure of follower current regulatory focus. Study 2 was designed to test this moderated mediation hypothesis, thus complementing the evidence for the regulatory-fit effect found in Study 1 through the inclusion of the frustration condition.

*Hypothesis 2: Leader enthusiasm primes followers with a promotion focus, which leads to higher follower performance for promotion visions than for*

*prevention visions, whereas leader agitation primes followers with a prevention orientation, which leads to higher follower performance for prevention visions than for promotion visions.*

## **Method**

**Participants and Design.** The study was a laboratory experiment in which Vision Focus (promotion vs. prevention), and Leader Emotion (enthusiasm vs. agitation) were manipulated in a 2 X 2 factorial design. A total of 145 Dutch students completed the experiment. One participant was identified as an outlier because this person had a standardized residual exceeding 3. We had substantial reason to believe that two participants did not engage in the experiment seriously. We excluded these participants from analysis, resulting in 142 usable participants. Age ranged between 18 and 28 years ( $M = 19.97$ ,  $SD = 1.93$ ).

**Procedure.** The procedure was similar to that described in Study 1 with the exception that participants were provided a word-fragment completion task as an implicit measure to assess state regulatory focus. The task was provided after participants had watched the video and before the memory task started. This conforms to the temporal order as posited in our model.

**Independent variables.** Vision focus and leader emotion were manipulated as in Study 1, with the exception that the leader frustration condition was not included.

**Dependent measures.** *State regulatory focus.*<sup>3</sup> Given that self-regulation typically occurs outside people's awareness (Johnson & Saboe, 2011), an implicit measure was used to assess participants' regulatory focus, hereby also addressing calls for more research on implicit processes within the organizational behavior literature (Locke & Latham, 2004). We developed a word fragment completion task, which is a common technique for assessing implicit content (Vargas, Sekaquaptewa, & von Hippel, 2007). In developing the measure, word fragment items were created that could be completed as either a regulatory focus word (promotion vs. prevention) or a neutral word by inserting letters in the blank spaces (i.e., either promotion/neutral or prevention/neutral). A total of ten Dutch word fragments, five for promotion and five for prevention, were created of which each appeared on the computer screen for 7 seconds (see Johnson & Steinman, 2009, for an example of promotion items in English). Participants were instructed to type in the first word that came to their mind and to wait for the next fragment if no word came to mind. In line with previous research (Johnson & Lord, 2010; Johnson & Saboe, 2011; Johnson & Steinman, 2009) all focus-related words were summed up

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<sup>3</sup> Two participants failed to complete this measure so they were excluded from analyses that involve this measure.

for each focus separately and divided by the total number of completed words (also including completed neutral words), producing promotion scores and prevention scores. A relative (or dominant) measure of regulatory orientation was then constructed by subtracting the prevention score from the promotion score, resulting in a measure that reflects relative promotion strength where high values indicate high promotion focus and low values indicate high prevention focus. Although measures of *chronic* regulatory focus often assess promotion and prevention independent of each other (as two separate dimensions), a single dimensional dominance conceptualization of *state* regulatory orientation is consistent with previous research (e.g., Lockwood, Jordan, & Kunda, 2002) and with research showing that higher activation of one focus is associated with lower activation of the other focus when regulatory focus is regarded as a motivational state rather than a chronic trait (Amodio, Shah, Sigelman, Brazy, & Harmon-Jones, 2004).

Relative scores were represented by algebraic difference scores. The use of algebraic difference scores, however, is susceptible to methodological problems such as untested implied constraints (cf. Edwards, 1994, 1995). We therefore followed Edwards' (1994, 1995) recommendations for the analysis of an algebraic difference score (i.e., promotion score – prevention score) both as a dependent ( $X \rightarrow M$ ) and as an independent variable ( $M \rightarrow Y$ ). Validating our  $X \rightarrow M$  model, coefficients of the effect of leader emotion on the component scores were different



in sign ( $b_{\text{pro}} = .022$ ,  $b_{\text{pre}} = -.028$ ) but equal in magnitude ( $b_{\text{pro}} = b_{\text{pre}}$ ), Wald  $F(1, 138) = .09$ , *ns*. Validating our M→Y model, (a) adding the two component scores and their interactions with vision focus to a model that included leader emotion and vision focus resulted in increased model fit,  $\Delta R^2 = .06$ ,  $F_{\text{change}}(4, 133) = 2.28$ ,  $p = .06$ , (b) performance was significantly predicted by the Promotion Score X Vision Focus interaction,  $b = 6.87$ ,  $t(133) = 2.03$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ , and by the Prevention Score X Vision Focus interaction,  $b = -5.78$ ,  $t(133) = -1.87$ ,  $p = .06$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ , (c) coefficients of the interaction terms were different in sign but equal in magnitude, Wald  $F(1, 133) = .05$ , *ns*, and lastly (d), No higher order terms emerged as significant predictors. Thus, the use of a difference score can be considered to be justified.

*Vision communication effectiveness.* We used the same memory performance task as was used in Study 1 to measure the effectiveness of leader persuasive communication concerning desired future states. This time we had participants perform two sets of 16 words and we took the average of both sets.

## Results

**Moderated mediation analysis.** An analysis of variance on the memory score yielded neither a main effect of leader vision focus,  $F(1, 138) = .62$ , *ns*, nor a main effect of leader emotion,  $F(1, 138) = .37$ , *ns*. Again, however, a significant interaction effect showed up,  $F(1, 138) = 4.39$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ . Hypothesis 2

predicted that leader emotion affects relative promotion strength equally for both vision foci, but relative promotion strength would only heighten performance when congruent with vision focus. We therefore conducted moderated mediation analyses following the procedures recommended by Edwards and Lambert (2007). Our model corresponds with Edwards and Lambert's (2007) second-stage moderation model in which the  $M \rightarrow Y$  path of the indirect effect is moderated. Coefficients were tested with OLS regression after the equation for the mediator variable was substituted into the equation for the dependent variable, thereby allowing for the computation of direct and indirect effects at different levels of the moderator. Indirect effects, which involve products of coefficients, were tested with bias-corrected confidence intervals (Stine, 1989) based on the product of 1000 bootstrap coefficient estimates (Shrout & Bolger, 2002) of the constitutional coefficients. All continuous variables were mean-centered, whereas vision focus was coded 0 and 1 for prevention and promotion respectively, and leader emotion was coded 0 and 1 for agitation and enthusiasm respectively.

As predicted (see Figure 2.2), leader emotion had a significant impact on relative promotion strength,  $b = .05$ ,  $t(138) = 2.27$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ , whereas vision focus did not,  $b = .00$ ,  $t(138) = .01$ , *ns*,  $\eta^2 = .00$ . Relative promotion strength, in turn, interacted with vision focus in impacting performance,  $b = 6.41$ ,  $t(136) = 2.98$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ . The indirect effects equal the product of the first stage and

simple effects for the second stage. For promotion vision the indirect effect was  $.05 * 10.18 = .19$ , of which the 95 % confidence interval did not include zero, .01, .51. Conversely, the indirect effect for prevention vision was  $.05 * -2.59 = -.14$ , of which the 95 % confidence interval did not include zero, -.44, -.01. Confirming Hypothesis 2, leader enthusiasm led to higher relative promotion strength, which led to follower performance only for promotion visions, whereas leader agitation led to lower relative promotion strength (i.e., prevention orientation), which led to follower performance for prevention visions.

## **Discussion Study 2**

Study 2 corroborated our hypothesized process model and thus more firmly established that the interaction between vision focus and leader emotion may be attributed to a regulatory fit effect. As expected, Study 2 showed that leader emotion primed an emotion-congruent follower regulatory focus. In line with the principle of regulatory fit, high follower performance resulted when there was a fit between the primed regulatory focus and leaders' vision focus. Importantly, Study 2 not only extends but also replicates the core findings of Study 1, and thus attests to the robustness of the regulatory-fit effect in vision communication. The question that remains is whether these results can be generalized to persuasive communication regarding end states other than visions, such as values and short-term goals. Accordingly, the next two studies build on the former to address this

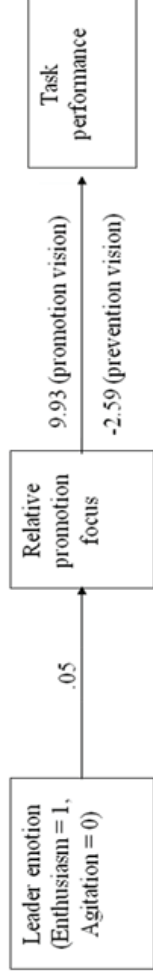


Figure 2.2. Moderated Mediation Path Model  
(Study 2.2)

question. Study 3 and Study 4 were also designed to see whether the results regarding the critical role of leader emotion can be generalized to other tasks and dependent measures.

### **Study 3**

Effective leaders are not only visionary leaders but also “values-based leadership specialists” (Brown & Trevino, 2009, p. 480). Indeed, values play an important role in the leader-follower influence process (Lord & Brown, 2004), and many leadership scholars concur that leaders motivate their followers by infusing their messages with values (e.g., House, 1996; Shamir et al., 1993). Values can be defined as abstract goal states or more formally as desirable trans-situational goals (Schwartz, 1992). Research by Schwartz (1992) has shown that values can be structured as four higher-order factors that form two value dimensions: the self-enhancement versus self-transcendence values dimension and the openness versus conservatism values dimension. Interestingly, the latter dimension appears to parallel the promotion-prevention distinction (Kark & van Dijk, 2007; Kluger, Stephan, Ganzach, & HersHKovitz, 2004). Specifically, self-direction and stimulation values, the values that underlie the openness factor, appear to be connected to ideals and advancement needs, whereas security, conformity, and tradition, the values that underlie the conservatism factor, appear to be connected to oughts and security needs. It is because of this apparent resemblance that values

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have been used as measures of chronic regulatory focus by some scholars (Kluger et al., 2004; van Dijk & Kluger, 2004). We will henceforth refer to these respective values as promotion-prevention values. Based on these notions, we may develop predictions regarding how leader emotion is conducive to effective communication of value-laden leader appeals. It can be argued that messages infused with promotion are more effective when communicated with enthusiasm, because promotion values sustain an enthusiasm-induced follower promotion focus. Messages infused with prevention values, in contrast, should be more effective when communicated by leaders with displays of agitation, because prevention values sustain an agitation-induced follower prevention focus. Study 3 was designed to test these predictions, which can be translated into the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 3: Leader enthusiasm primes followers with a promotion focus, which leads to higher follower performance for leader messages that include promotion values as opposed to prevention values, whereas leader agitation primes followers with a prevention focus, which leads to higher follower performance for leader messages that include prevention values as opposed to promotion values.*

## Method

**Participants and Design.** The study was a laboratory experiment in which Value Type (promotion vs. prevention), and Leader Emotion (enthusiasm vs. agitation) were manipulated in a 2 X 2 factorial design. A total of 91 students completed the experiment. We had substantial reason to believe that four participants did not engage in the experiment in a serious way. After excluding these participants we obtained a final sample of 87 students, aged between 18 and 29 years ( $M = 21.17$ ,  $SD = 2.03$ ).

**Procedure.** The paradigm was inspired by that of Grant and colleagues (Grant, Campbell, Chen, Cottone, Lapedis, & Lee, 2007). Participants were shown a video in which an independent researcher discussed a recently started program designed to help students with the job application process. The researcher started acknowledging how hard it is for students to sell and promote themselves to potential employers. He further said that for students in order to make the right impression, it is important to know what it is that employers seek in applicants. The researcher then told about the research he conducted in more than 200 companies, which revealed that employers find it particularly important that applicants express values and norms. The value type manipulation was introduced in the remainder of the message.

As in the previous studies, the authority figure in the video was in reality a (male) actor who we trained to communicate the messages. After they had watched the video and completed the implicit regulatory focus measure, participants performed a writing task (see below). The writing task was followed by a questionnaire containing the manipulation checks.

**Independent variables.** New videos were developed to manipulate leader emotion and value content. Leader emotion was manipulated using the same procedures that we employed for the videos in Study 1-2. The value content manipulation involved the researcher emphasizing either promotion or prevention values in the second part of the message. These descriptions were preceded by such phrases as “*employers especially seek employees who ...*.” The particular value descriptions that we used were based on items (i.e., values and their definitions) from both the Schwartz Value Survey (Schwartz, 1992) and the Portrait Values Questionnaire (Schwartz, Melech, Lehmann, Burgess, Harris, & Owens, 2001), the latter of which differs from the former in having items that are phrased more in terms of the goals that underlie their corresponding values.

In the promotion value condition, we included in the message five self-direction values (e.g., independence, curiosity, having unique ideas) and three stimulation values (i.e., preference for variety, openness to change, and risk and challenge seeking), which together represent all the values that comprise the



promotion value domain. In the prevention value condition, we included in the message five conformity values (e.g., meeting obligations, self-discipline, fitting in), two tradition values (i.e., showing modesty, avoiding extremes), and one security value (i.e., being clean and organized). Relatively more conformity values were included because we believed some tradition and security values were not applicable to the current context (e.g., being devout, social order, national security). Furthermore, we did not want the number of values in the prevention condition to exceed those in the promotion condition, nor did we want both conditions to be equal in number but the promotion condition to have value duplicates. Thus, the value type conditions differed only in terms of the value domain (promotion or prevention) to which the included values refer.

**Dependent measures.** *Leader communication effectiveness.* To assess the effectiveness of leader communication of value-laden messages, we provided participants with a task to write two paragraphs of a job application letter, which already contained an introduction and conclusion. The letter template was ostensibly derived from a job application letter written by a fellow student. Importantly, we told participants that both the independent researcher (whom they saw in the video) and the experimenters wanted to test the skills of business students in presenting themselves via a cover letter to a potential employer. As a result, participants who agree with the importance of making a right impression,

and thus with the communicated message, should be motivated to invest efforts in promoting themselves. As an indicator of effective persuasion we relied on the number of positive qualities and personality aspects that participants mentioned in the letter. One of the authors, therefore, blindly counted the number of distinct reported qualities (e.g., leadership experience, professional attitude, team worker). We also used time spent writing as a measure of persistence, which was measured by recording time spent in minutes.

*State regulatory focus.* As in Study 2, we measured participants' state regulatory focus using a word-fragment completion task which was administered before the performance task. This time we used the items as used by Sligte, de Dreu, and Nijstadt (2011). Because we wished to obtain relative promotion scores, which are represented by the difference between promotion and prevention scores, we followed Edwards' (1994, 1995) procedures for the use of difference scores. Validating the  $X \rightarrow M$  model, coefficients of the effect of leader emotion on the component scores were different in sign ( $b_{\text{pro}} = .026$ ,  $b_{\text{pre}} = -.022$ ) but equal in magnitude ( $b_{\text{pro}} = b_{\text{pre}}$ ), Wald  $F(1, 85) = .04$ , *ns*. Validating our  $M \rightarrow Y$  model, (a) adding the two component scores and their interactions with value type to a model that included only leader emotion and value type resulted in increased model fit both when performance was the dependent variable,  $\Delta R^2 = .23$ ,  $F_{\text{change}}(4, 80) = 5.87$ ,  $p = .00$ , and when persistence was the dependent variable,  $\Delta R^2 = .12$ ,

$F_{\text{change}}(4, 80) = 2.68, p = .04$ , (b) task performance and persistence were significantly predicted both by the Promotion Score X Value Type interaction (performance:  $b = 32.63, t(80) = 4.05, p = .00, \eta^2 = .16$ ; persistence:  $b = 53.22, t(80) = 2.27, p = .03, \eta^2 = .06$ ) and by the Prevention Score X Value Type interaction (performance:  $b = -22.87, t(80) = -1.98, p = .05, \eta^2 = .04$ ; persistence:  $b = -76.86, t(80) = -2.29, p = .03, \eta^2 = .06$ ), (c) coefficients of these interaction terms were different in sign but equal in magnitude (performance: Wald  $F(1, 80) = .48, ns$ ; persistence: Wald  $F(1, 80) = .33, ns$ ), and lastly (d), no higher order terms emerged as significant predictors of both dependent variables. We conclude that the use of a difference score is justified.

*Manipulation checks.* After the writing task, participants completed a questionnaire designed to ensure that the leader emotion manipulation and the value type manipulation were effective. Items were coded using a 7-point scale ( $1 = \text{completely disagree}, 7 = \text{completely agree}$ ). First, participants responded to eight items that were preceded by the phrase “I think the person in the movie clips was....” The items of the enthusiasm scale ( $\alpha = .93$ ) included: “happy”, “gay”, “pleased”, and “elated”. The items of the agitation scale ( $\alpha = .87$ ) included: “worried”, “concerned”, “tense”, and “serious”.

Next, participants had to indicate which of two competing values representing both ends of a 7-point scale best described the values that the

researcher emphasized. Six items were developed, each of which had a prevention value at the lower end of the scale and a promotion value at the higher end of the scale. The juxtaposed values of the six items include: “meeting obligations” vs. “being independent”, “being organized” vs. “being unique and original”, “self-discipline” vs. “curiosity”, “fitting in a work culture” vs. “exploring and learning”, “being modest” vs. “openness to variety”, and “complying to rules and norms” vs. “preference for risk and challenge seeking”. The scale was highly reliable ( $\alpha = .95$ ).

## Results

**Manipulation checks.** Analyses of variance revealed that the manipulation of leader emotion was effective. Participants in the leader enthusiasm condition perceived the leader as more enthusiastic ( $M = 5.40$ ,  $SD = .64$ ) than those in the leader agitation condition ( $M = 3.62$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ),  $F(1, 85) = 82.50$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $\eta^2 = .49$ , whereas the latter perceived the leader as more agitated ( $M = 4.61$ ,  $SD = .91$ ) than those in the leader enthusiasm condition ( $M = 2.60$ ,  $SD = .91$ ),  $F(1, 85) = 106.26$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $\eta^2 = .56$ . We also subjected the emotion measures to a 2 (leader emotion) X 2 (emotion type) mixed analysis of variance, where emotion type was the within-subject factor. Results revealed a significant interaction, Wilks' Lambda = .42,  $F(1, 85) = 119.67$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $\eta^2 = .58$ . Simple effect analyses indicated that participants in the leader enthusiasm condition perceived their leader as more

enthusiastic ( $M = 5.40$ ,  $SD = .64$ ) than agitated ( $M = 2.60$ ,  $SD = .91$ ),  $F(1, 85) = 138.28$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $\eta^2 = .62$ , whereas those in the leader agitation condition perceived their leader as more agitated ( $M = 4.61$ ,  $SD = .91$ ) than enthusiastic ( $M = 3.62$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ),  $F(1, 85) = 15.54$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $\eta^2 = .16$ .

An analysis of variance implied that also the value type manipulation was successful,  $F(1, 85) = 182.34$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $\eta^2 = .68$ . Participants in the promotion values condition indicated to a larger degree that the researcher emphasized promotion values ( $M = 5.53$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ) than those in the prevention values condition ( $M = 2.38$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ). Overall, it can be concluded that both manipulations were successful.

**Moderated mediation analysis.** A multivariate analysis of variance on persistence and performance yielded neither a main effect of value type, Wilks' Lambda = .99,  $F(2, 82) = .56$ , *ns.*,  $\eta^2 = .01$ , nor a main effect of leader emotion, Wilks' Lambda = 1.00,  $F(2, 82) = .18$ , *ns.*,  $\eta^2 = .00$ . Importantly, however, a significant interaction effect emerged, Wilks' Lambda = .89,  $F(2, 82) = 5.09$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .11$ . Subsequent univariate tests revealed a significant interaction on persistence,  $F(1, 83) = 3.92$ ,  $p = .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ , and performance,  $F(1, 83) = 7.42$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ . Moreover, relative promotion strength was significantly predicted by leader emotion (see Figure 2.3),  $b = .05$ ,  $t(85) = 2.49$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $\eta^2 = .07$ , but not value type,  $b = -.01$ ,  $t(85) = -.30$ , *ns.*,  $\eta^2 = .00$ . Promotion strength, in turn, interacted with value type in

impacting both persistence,  $b = 60.80$ ,  $t(82) = 3.19$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $\eta^2 = .11$ , and performance,  $b = 29.60$ ,  $t(82) = 4.44$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $\eta^2 = .19$ . We thus turned to moderated mediation analyses following the procedures as suggested by Edwards and Lambert (2007). All continuous variables were mean-centered, whereas value type was coded 0 and 1 for prevention and promotion values respectively, and leader emotion was coded 0 and 1 for agitation and enthusiasm respectively.

Indirect effects were tested through constructing bias-corrected confidence intervals (Stine, 1989) based on the product of 1000 bootstrap samples (Shrout & Bolger, 2002) of the corresponding coefficients. The confidence intervals of the indirect effect for promotion values excluded zero both when persistence was the outcome,  $.05 * 21.84 = 1.13$  (90% CI = .07, 3.25), and when performance was the outcome,  $.05 * 9.93 = .52$  (95% CI = .03, 1.34). The confidence intervals of the indirect effect for prevention values similarly excluded zero both when persistence was the outcome,  $.05 * -38.95 = -1.94$  (95% CI = -5.04, -.29), and when performance was the outcome,  $.05 * -19.67 = -.91$  (95% CI = -2.37, -.28).

### **Discussion Study 3**

Study 3 corroborated our hypothesis and thus attests to the powerful role of leader emotion in effectively communicating value-laden messages. Specifically, Study 3 showed that leader emotional displays through priming follower regulatory focus relate to higher performance and persistence when leaders infuse their

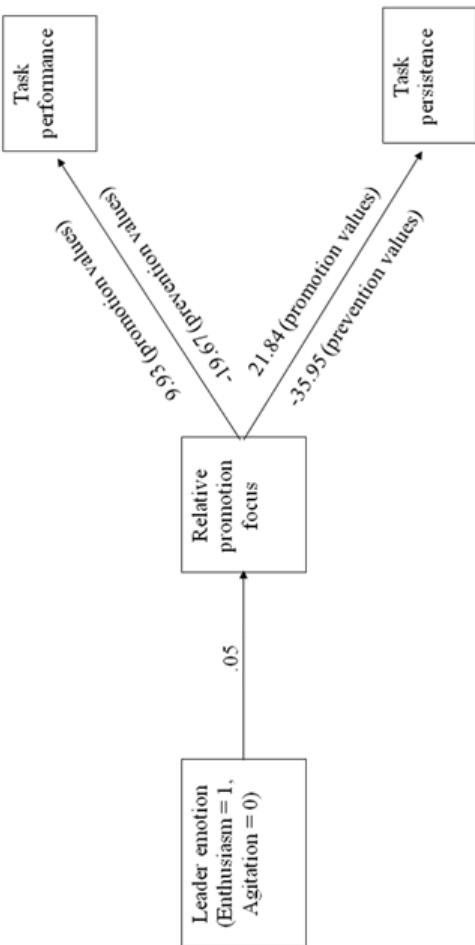


Figure 2.3. Moderated Mediation Path Model  
(Study 2.3)

persuasive messages with congruent values. Importantly, by using a task, end state manipulation, and dependent measure other than those used in Study 1-2, Study 3 not only extends but also conceptually replicates our previous findings (Lykken, 1968). One final step remains, one that is needed to substantiate our claim that leader emotion helps leaders in their attempts to align follower behavior to desired end states. That is, we need to show that leader emotional displays are conducive also to effective persuasive communication targeted at short-term goal pursuit. Study 4 was designed to complete this final step.

Additionally, Study 4 was designed to bolster our findings regarding our proposed moderated mediation model. Note that in Studies 2-3, the state regulatory focus measure was preceded by leader emotion and followed by the performance measure. Moreover, by necessity vision type (Study 1-2) and value type (Study 4), which were proposed and found to moderate the  $M \rightarrow Y$  path, co-occurred with the leader emotion manipulation. However, although results were in line with our regulatory fit interpretation, the priming effects could also be explained in terms of a match between emotion and verbal content. This alternative explanation could be ruled out if our research design more closely aligned with the causal sequence that our model implies (Mathieu & Taylor, 2006). Accordingly, Study 4 involved a design in which leader communication contained only the leader emotion manipulation, and in which the goal manipulation followed just after the state



regulatory focus measure.

#### **Study 4**

Although effective leadership is reflected in effective communication of visions and value-laden messages, effective leadership also requires motivating followers to align their behavior with more concrete goals (e.g., Cropanzano et al., 1993). In line with our model, effective communication of such concrete goals should be a function of whether leaders display emotions that are congruent with the regulatory focus implied by the respective goal. Not surprisingly perhaps, people differing in regulatory focus also differ in the way they define the same specific goal (Brendl & Higgins, 1996). The ideals, aspirations, and eagerness means associated with a promotion focus typically result in a representation of goals as maximal goals, which are goals one hopes to attain, whereas the oughts, obligations, and avoidance means associated with a prevention focus typically result in the representation of goals as minimal goals, which are goals one must obtain (Brendl & Higgins, 1996; Higgins, 1998; Giessner & van Knippenberg, 2008). What follows is that the communication of maximal goals should be more successful when combined with displays of enthusiasm, whereas minimal goals are more likely to be accepted when communicated displays of agitation.

*Hypothesis 4: Leader enthusiasm primes followers with a promotion focus, which leads to higher follower performance for leader communicated maximal goals as opposed to minimal goals, whereas leader agitation primes followers with a prevention focus, which leads to higher follower performance for leader communicated minimal goals as opposed maximal goals.*

## **Method**

**Participants and Design.** The study was a laboratory experiment in which Goal Type (maximal vs. minimal) and Leader Emotion (enthusiasm vs. agitation) were manipulated in a 2 X 2 factorial design. A total of 87 students completed the experiment. Three participants were excluded because they had standardized residuals that exceeded 3 and three were excluded because we had substantial reason to believe that they did not engage in the experiment in a serious way. This resulted in a sample of 81 participants, aged between 18 and 25 years ( $M = 19.80$ ,  $SD = 1.68$ ).

**Procedure.** The paradigm was a modified version from that of Grant and Hofmann (Grant & Hofmann, 2011). Participants watched a video in which a male teacher (again a trained actor) informed them about a recently started program designed to improve and optimize students' writing skills. The teacher started with reflecting on the minor yet unnecessary grammatical errors students commonly

make when writing Dutch texts. To explain its importance with regard to work, the teacher stated: *“Whether your aim is to become a manager, consultant, or a policy officer, your ideas will be taken more seriously when you are able to put these on paper flawlessly.* The teacher then informed participants about the goal of the program and concluded with: *“We would like to ask you to proofread a paper written by a young, promising, international PhD student who wants to get her paper published in a renowned Dutch journal. She could really need some help”.* The implicit regulatory focus measure followed after this.

Importantly, the leader message only contained the leader emotion manipulation. The goal type manipulation was introduced after the implicit measure and before the actual proofreading task (see below).

**Independent variables.** New videos were developed in which leader emotion was manipulated as in the previous studies. Goal type was manipulated by providing participants with a concrete goal regarding the proofreading task. In the maximal goal condition participants were instructed to *“try to correct as many errors as you would hope to correct. It would be ideal if the corrected paper were graded with 4 out of 5. Therefore, try to go for the ideal score of 4 out of 5.”* In the minimal goal condition participants were instructed to *“try to correct as many errors as would make you feel satisfied. You could be satisfied if the corrected paper were graded with 4 out of 5. Therefore, try to go for at least the score of 4*

out of 5". These instructions follow the definition of maximal and minimal goals (see Brendl & Higgins, 1996). Thus, participants in both conditions had the same goal (i.e., reaching a score of 4 out of 5), but the way this goal was defined differed per condition.

**Dependent measures.** *Leader communication effectiveness.* Participants were given the task to proofread a paper. In addition to the teacher's request for helping the PhD student, we told participants that the experimenters were mainly interested in their level of writing skills. Goal communication effectiveness arguably should be reflected in participants' alignment of their behavior with the teacher's message and instructed goal. Phrased more concretely, effectiveness should be manifested by the motivation among participants to search for and identify errors in the paper, and to correct these accordingly.

We therefore assessed effectiveness in terms of accuracy performance and persistence. Accuracy was assessed by counting the number of spelling and grammatical errors that participants corrected successfully (Bono & Judge, 2003; Grant & Hofmann, 2011). As in Study 3, persistence was assessed by recording the time in minutes participants spent proofreading. The paper that participants proofread and edited was a modified and shortened version of an actual Dutch article published in a Dutch OB journal. The paper was shortened to 5 pages and a total of 83 spelling and grammatical errors were included in the paper. Following

Grant and Hofmann (2011), we first calculated performance scores by counting the number of correctly identified errors per page. Accordingly, we checked for the internal consistency across the five pages of the paper ( $\alpha = .91$ ). An accuracy performance score was then calculated by summing the total number of identified errors.

*State regulatory focus.* State regulatory focus was measured through the same word-fragment completion task as used in Study 3, and Edwards' (1994, 1995) procedures were followed for the use of difference scores. Validating the  $X \rightarrow M$  model, coefficients of the effect of leader emotion on the component scores were different in sign ( $b_{\text{pro}} = .03$ ,  $b_{\text{pre}} = -.01$ ) but equal in magnitude ( $b_{\text{pro}} = b_{\text{pre}}$ ), Wald  $F(1, 79) = .86$ , *ns*. Validating the  $M \rightarrow Y$  model, (a) adding the two component scores and their interactions with goal type to a model that included only leader emotion and value type resulted in increased model fit both when performance was the dependent variable,  $\Delta R^2 = .17$ ,  $F_{\text{change}}(4, 74) = 3.80$ ,  $p = .007$ , and when persistence was the dependent variable,  $\Delta R^2 = .13$ ,  $F_{\text{change}}(4, 74) = 2.68$ ,  $p = .04$ , (b) task performance and persistence were significantly predicted both by the Promotion Score X Goal Type interaction (performance:  $b = 158.60$ ,  $t(74) = 2.73$ ,  $p = .008$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ ; persistence:  $b = 135.16$ ,  $t(74) = 2.43$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $\eta^2 = .07$ ) and by the Prevention Score X Goal Type interaction (performance:  $b = -120.44$ ,  $t(74) = -2.11$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ ; persistence:  $b = -128.15$ ,  $t(74) = -2.34$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ ),

(c) coefficients of these interaction terms were different in sign but equal in magnitude (performance: Wald  $F(1, 82) = .28, ns$ ; persistence: Wald  $F(1, 74) = .01, ns$ ), and lastly (d), no higher order terms emerged as significant predictors of both dependent variables. These results again show that the use of a difference score is valid.

*Manipulation checks.* After proofreading the paper, participants completed a questionnaire designed to ensure that the leader emotion manipulation and the value type manipulation were effective. Items were coded using a 7-point scale ( $1 = \text{completely disagree}$ ,  $7 = \text{completely agree}$ ). Participants responded to the same eight items that were used in Study 3. Each item was preceded by the phrase “The teacher was very....” The items of the enthusiasm scale ( $\alpha = .94$ ) included: “happy”, “gay”, “pleased” and “elated”. The items of the agitation scale ( $\alpha = .81$ ) included: “worried”, “concerned”, “tense”, and “serious”.

To assess whether goal type was successfully manipulated, we adapted and modified four items from the minimal/maximal scale developed by Giessner and van Knippenberg (2008). For each item, participants indicated to which extent two competing statements, which represented both ends of the same 7-point answer scale, best described their assigned goal. Examples of contrasting statements pairs are “My goal was to get at least a score of 4 out of 5” vs. “My goal was to go for the ideal score of 4 out of 5” and “My goal had to be at least reached by me: a

*score lower than 4 out of 5 was not satisfactory*” vs. *“My goal was like an ideal: not reaching a score of 4 out of 5 wasn’t necessarily bad”*. The scale was reliable ( $\alpha = .75$ ).

## Results

**Manipulation checks.** Results from analyses of variance indicated that our manipulation of leader emotion was effective. Participants in the leader enthusiasm condition perceived the leader as more enthusiastic ( $M = 5.17$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ) than those in the leader agitation condition ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ),  $F(1, 79) = 41.66$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .35$ , and those in the latter condition perceived their leader as more agitated ( $M = 4.75$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ) than those in the leader enthusiasm condition ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ),  $F(1, 79) = 29.07$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .27$ . Moreover, A 2 (leader emotion) X 2 (emotion type) mixed analysis of variance, with emotion type as the within-subject factor, revealed a significant interaction, Wilks’ Lambda = .61,  $F(1, 79) = 49.80$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .39$ . Subsequent simple effect analyses indicated that participants in the leader enthusiasm condition perceived their leader as more enthusiastic ( $M = 5.17$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ) than agitated ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ),  $F(1, 79) = 33.97$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .30$ , whereas those in the leader agitation condition perceived their leader as more agitated ( $M = 4.75$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ) than enthusiastic ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ),  $F(1, 79) = 17.50$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .18$ .

Due to technical problems, the goal type manipulation measure was only completed by 45 participants. For this sample, an analysis of variance indicated that participants in the maximal goal condition perceived their goal significantly more as a maximal goal ( $M = 4.16$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ) compared to those in the minimal goal condition ( $M = 2.46$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ),  $F(1, 43) = 27.43$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .39$ . Thus, we concluded that both manipulations were successful.

**Moderated mediation analysis.** A multivariate analysis of variance on time and the qualification score yielded neither a main effect of goal type, Wilks' Lambda = 1.00,  $F(2, 76) = .12$ , *ns.*,  $\eta^2 = .00$ , nor a main effect of leader emotion, Wilks' Lambda = .99,  $F(2, 76) = .51$ , *ns.*,  $\eta^2 = .01$ . More importantly, however, a significant interaction effect was found, Wilks' Lambda = .90,  $F(2, 76) = 4.21$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $\eta^2 = .10$ . Subsequent univariate tests revealed a significant interaction on time,  $F(1, 77) = 4.74$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ , and the qualification score,  $F(1, 77) = 6.36$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ .

Moreover, relative promotion strength was significantly predicted by leader emotion (see Figure 2.4),  $b = .04$ ,  $t(79) = 3.17$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $\eta^2 = .11$ , but not goal type,  $b = -.00$ ,  $t(79) = -.14$ , *ns.*,  $\eta^2 = .00$ . Promotion strength, in turn, interacted with goal type in impacting both time,  $b = 128.80$ ,  $t(76) = 2.99$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $\eta^2 = .10$ , and qualification scores,  $b = 143.62$ ,  $t(76) = 3.15$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .11$ . Thus, we turned to moderated mediation analyses following the procedures suggested by Edwards and



Lambert (2007). All continuous variables were mean-centered, whereas goal type was coded 0 and 1 for minimal and maximal goals respectively, and leader emotion was coded 0 and 1 for agitation and enthusiasm respectively.

Indirect effects were tested through constructing bias-corrected confidence intervals (Stine, 1989) based on the product of 1000 bootstrap samples (Shrout & Bolger, 2002) of the involving coefficients. The confidence intervals of the indirect effect for maximal goals excluded zero both when time was the outcome,  $.04 * 44.20 = 2.15$  (90% CI = .03, 5.69), and when performance was the outcome,  $.04 * 39.10 = 1.77$  (90% CI = .11, 4.50). The confidence intervals of the indirect effect for minimal goals excluded zero both when time was the outcome,  $.04 * -84.60 = -3.64$  (95% CI = -9.65, -.43), and when performance was the outcome,  $.04 * -104.52 = -4.71$  (95% CI = -9.70, -1.08).

#### **Discussion Study 4**

Study 4 supported our hypothesis and thus shows that leader emotion facilitates leaders in communicating not only abstract goals such as visions and message-incorporated values but also concrete goals. Specifically, Study 4 showed that leaders can effectively communicate concrete goals by displaying emotions that induce a regulatory focus implied by the communicated goal. By replicating the core findings of Study 1-3 with goals as desired end state and yet another task, Study 4 reconfirms the role of leader emotion as a useful tool for leaders

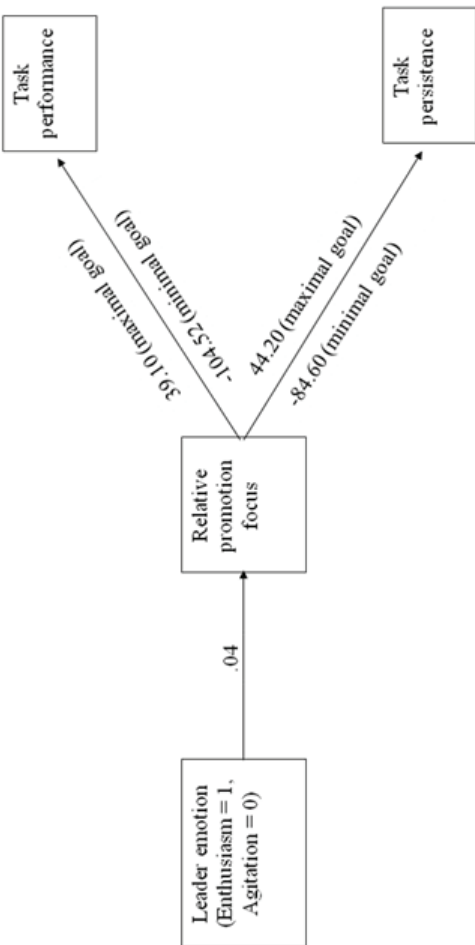


Figure 4. Moderated Mediation Path Model  
(Study 2.4)

in effectively communicating desired end states. Moreover, by separating in time the manipulation of leader emotion and leader goal, Study 4 provides us with further evidence that it is leader emotion per se that primes follower regulatory focus, which then is sustained by the leader goal. Together, Study 4 provides us with increased confidence in the validity of our theoretical model regarding effective leader persuasive communication of end states.

### **General Discussion**

Although the communication and emphasis of desired end states takes a central role in the leadership literature, it remains largely unknown what leaders do in their communicative acts to increase follower acceptance of desired end states. Addressing this issue, the aim of the current study was to examine how leader emotion may contribute to effective leader persuasive communication. Relying on regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1998, 2000), we posited that the facilitative role of leader emotion lies in priming followers with the same regulatory focus as that implied by the communicated end state, which will enhance motivation and performance by creating regulatory fit, that is, by sustaining followers' primed mindset. We found support for the predicted match between leader emotion and desired end state both when leaders communicated visions (Study 1-2), value-laden messages (Study 3), and concrete goals (Study 4). Most importantly, by showing both that this observed pattern could not be attributed to an explanation in terms of

valence (Study 1) and that leader emotion (and not leader verbal communication) influenced followers' regulatory focus (Study 2-3), even when fully isolated (Study 4), we can have strong confidence that our findings are representative of a regulatory-fit mechanism.

### **Theoretical Implications**

By providing consistent evidence that leader emotion through its influence on follower regulatory focus facilitates the communication of leader goals and values, these results highlight the importance of exploring how leader emotion interacts with leader message in influencing leader persuasive communication of desired end states. In particular, given our findings one may raise the question of how leader emotion contributes to effective communication of goals and values other than discussed in the present study. How may leaders effectively communicate, for example, ideological messages that emphasize collective goals and pro-social values, end states that take a central role in the charismatic leadership literature (Grant & Hofmann, 2011; Shamir et al., 1993; Thompson & Bunderson, 2003). Interesting in this regard is work by Michie and Gooty (2005), who suggest a link between self-transcendent emotions (viz. gratitude, empathy) and leaders' inclination to act in pro-social ways. Building on this work as well as our own, we propose that pro-social messages are more likely to elicit follower support and pro-social behavior when displayed with pro-social emotions. We

hope that empirical research will follow in testing these propositions regarding the interplay of vision-related values and emotional delivery.

Our results also have several implications for the literature on vision communication in particular. While scholars have pointed to the importance of vision content and vision delivery in determining effective vision communication (Jermier, 1993), little research has examined these aspects. As such the current study not only answers calls for more attention to the content aspect of leader vision (Beyer, 1999; Shamir, 1999), but also adds to the limited empirical findings about the role of vision delivery in vision communication. Previous studies have conceptualized vision delivery as the presence versus absence of a charismatic communication style composed of such nonverbally-expressive behaviors as dynamic gestures, eye contact, vocal fluency, and animated facial expressions (e.g., Awamleh & Gardner, 1999). Such a charismatic style might be generally effective in the sense that it serves as an impression management technique (Gardner & Avolio, 1998), however, it is not clear how it affects follower vision acceptance. By showing that effective vision communication is, in part, determined by whether leaders match vision content with how they deliver their vision, the current study points to the merits of a focus on the interplay of these components in vision communication rather than a focus on leader rhetorical techniques (e.g., Emrich et al., 2001), which has generated interesting results but no guiding

framework, or a focus on the relative importance of both components, which has produced mixed findings (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996).

Our findings add to the literature on emotions and leadership in four major ways (Gooty et al., 2010; van Knippenberg et al., 2008). First, one persistent question is how leader emotional displays affect followers (Fisher & Ashkanasy, 2000; van Kleef et al., 2009; van Knippenberg et al., 2008), a problem scholars have addressed by identifying two mediating processes (van Kleef et al., 2009; van Knippenberg et al., 2008). By showing that leader emotions can impact follower behavior also by engaging followers' regulatory focus, our research illuminates a third mechanism. Second, whereas earlier research focusing on the moderating factors of the impact of emotional displays typically looked at contextual variables (e.g., follower personality; van Kleef et al., 2009), we looked at factors that are within control of the leader, namely the use of emotional displays. Third, the finding that two distinct emotions with the same valence (i.e., agitation vs. frustration) have different effects on followers points to the merits of an emotion-specific approach versus a valence-based approach in studying the effects of leader emotions on followers (cf. Lerner & Keltner, 2000; van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2010). Fourth, and lastly, our study advances the literature by addressing calls to pay more attention to the understudied role of leader negative

emotions and to examine the indirect influence of leader emotions (Gooty et al., 2010).

Our findings have interesting implications for conceptual work that posits that effective leadership may flow from leaders' influence on followers' regulatory focus (Brockner & Higgins, 2001; Kark & van Dijk, 2007). Especially interesting in this regard is that this work has mainly emphasized leaders' use of language in eliciting followers' regulatory focus. Relying on the literature regarding the boundary conditions of priming effects (Lord & Brown, 2004), we argued that the ability of leader rhetoric to prime followers' regulatory focus is not as self-evident as has been suggested (Kark & van Dijk, 2007). Our results confirmed this expectation and showed that leader emotion is a much stronger source of priming influence. This does not imply, of course, that leader rhetoric has no priming potential at all. Rather, we maintain that, in agreement with Lord and Brown (2004), leader rhetoric will prime followers when followers turn to their leaders for direction, as will be the case in times of crisis and adversity, though this moderating role of context should also apply to leader emotion.

With respect to the role of context, it is not uncommon for leaders in their persuasive appeals to make references to outgroups in an attempt to convey an image of being ingroup oriented (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Intuitively, the display of negative emotions by leaders may be instrumental for such attempts, but

negative emotions may differ in terms of their corresponding regulatory focus, and thus in terms of meaning. Interestingly, it has been found that a prevention focus is related to outgroup derogation, whereas a promotion focus is more related to ingroup favoring (Shah, Brazy, & Higgins, 2004). Displays of agitation, therefore, when combined with outgroup-oriented rhetoric may signal danger and threat. On the other hand, frustration, a promotion-oriented emotion, typically follows from a blocking of progress (Higgins, 1987), and as such, displays of frustration may signal that the outgroup is blocking progress of the in-group. Based on this, we speculate that for persuasive appeals that incorporate outgroup-oriented rhetoric the relative effectiveness of these emotional displays depends on the subtle framing of outgroup *threat*. Specifically, displays of frustration may be more effective when leaders stress that opportunities are blocked because of out-groups, whereas displays of agitation may be more appropriate when leaders stress that ingroup security is threatened by the outgroup.

Evidently, our findings also add to the charismatic leadership literature. This literature argues that effective leaders increase, among other things, followers' commitment to goals as well as followers' intrinsic value, sense of meaningfulness, and satisfaction from participation in the vision articulated by the leader (House & Shamir, 1993; Shamir et al., 1993; House, 1996). But how can leaders achieve these desired outcomes? Interestingly, House and Shamir (1993)



suggested that leaders can do so by selectively arousing follower motivations relevant to the goals envisioned by the leader. Our results seem to not only support this proposition but also identify leader emotion as a catalyst of this effect. Specifically, because people tend to be highly motivated to engage in activities or goal-pursuit strategies that sustain their dominant regulatory focus (Higgins, 1998, 2000), arousing a goal-consistent focus causes followers to find in goal commitment that which sustains their focus. As a result of experiencing fit, followers become committed to the vision, and perceive this commitment as important and satisfying. In a sense, commitment to and identification with the goal provide the means by which followers can sustain their dominant orientation. Recognition of the role of leader emotion in arousing follower motivations thus enriches our understanding of the processes by which charismatic leaders influence goal commitment.

### **Implications for Practice**

Vision communication also assumes center-stage in practitioners' literature about leadership (e.g., Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Nanus, 1992; Kotter, 1995). This literature, however, is mute regarding the role of vision delivery. Based on our findings, it can be argued that it has value-added to pay attention to leader emotional displays. Leaders need to be made aware of the potential of emotional displays to influence followers' motivational orientation. This is especially

important considering that there is a tendency in the business world to avoid emotional expressiveness (Conger, 1991). Our findings suggest that leaders who are capable of delivering emotional displays will be successful in getting followers to share and pursue the vision. Regarding the selection and development of leaders, attention should therefore be paid to abilities that are predictive of such qualities, one of which could be emotional intelligence (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008).

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to perceive and express, use, understand, and regulate emotions (Mayer et al., 2008). It can thus be suggested that leaders who are capable of expressing emotional displays will be more successful in their attempts to prime followers. Interestingly, recently it has been suggested that individuals may also differ in their ability to influence others via emotional displays (Côté & Hideg, 2011). This ability is proposed to consist of deciding which emotion will have the desired impact on others, and then effectively eliciting this emotion during interpersonal interaction. Provided that this proposed ability exists, priming followers should be managed best by those leaders who are able to select a goal-congruent emotion and then select the most effective strategy to regulate emotional displays. Thus, training efforts should focus on the expression and regulation of emotional displays as well as on developing awareness and knowledge of emotions and their influential consequences.

## **Limitations and Future Directions**

The present study employed an experimental design, which may raise questions of generalizability (Wofford, 1999). Research that corroborates our findings in the field, therefore, would be highly welcome. In this regard, it should be noted, however, that while field studies are well-suited to study general leadership styles, it may be more difficult to study the interaction of emotional delivery and leader communicated end states in the field. Specifically, attempts to study the interplay of leader communicated end state and emotional delivery in the field are likely to be accompanied with a confounding of effects. In addition, emotional displays in combination with leader persuasive communication may be especially limited to single events, or at least to rare events, making it challenging to explore this phenomenon in the field. A laboratory experiment, in contrast, perfectly lends itself as a method to study this interplay in that it allows one to decompose the effects of the two components. Even so, it is important to know whether our results can be observed in the field. Fortunately, it appears that leadership research in the lab and field often yields similar results (e.g., De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002; Giessner & van Knippenberg, 2008; van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005; Ullrich, Christ, & van Dick, 2009).

Another limitation concerns the unit of analysis. In the present study we focused on leader persuasive communication and the leader-follower process

without taking into account follower-follower interactions. The chief advantage of leader communication through a speech is of course the potential to reach a large group of followers. Although we expect that regulatory-fit effects occur also at a group level, additional processes likely will play a role. Specifically, when leaders' emotions transfer to followers, this may trigger priming effects to spread from follower to follower (cf. Meindl, 1995). As such, priming- and regulatory-fit effects should be reinforced by these processes. Research has indeed shown that, within groups, members tend to polarize to either a promotion or prevention orientation (Levine, Higgins, & Choi, 2000). It seems therefore certainly worthwhile and exciting to explore these processes in future research.

Another extension of our study that would bolster our core findings would be to study whether there are regulatory fit-specific performance effects. To clarify, because regulatory fit means that one's current regulatory focus is sustained by environmental stimuli, it stands to reason that regulatory fit may generate performance that is related to the sustained regulatory focus. Following this line of argument, regulatory fit that ensues from a sustained promotion focus may produce behavior that is related to creativity and risk-taking. Prevention-related regulatory fit, in contrast, is more likely to produce behavior that is related to compliance. Thus, we would speculate that the two types of regulatory fit relate to unique types of performance. Perhaps promotion-related regulatory fit should

relate more to such behaviors as making constructive suggestions (George & Jones, 1997) and change-oriented behavior (Choi, 2007), whereas prevention-related regulatory fit should relate more to compliance behaviors such as meeting deadlines, following rules, and not wasting time (Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983; Graham, 1991).

A final note concerns the focal emotional displays in our study. Although promotion and prevention relate to high-arousal emotions (viz. enthusiasm and agitation respectively) as well as low-arousal emotions (viz. dejection and quiescence respectively), we focused only on the high-arousal emotions. We did so because leaders are more likely to use high-arousal emotions in their attempts to influence their followers through emotional displays (van Knippenberg et al., 2008), a reasoning that is consistent with Lord and Brown (2004) who argue that priming attempts are more likely to be successful when they elicit arousing effects. Nevertheless, it could be that low-arousal emotions still have their effects. We speculate that such effects may emerge after frequent daily leader-follower interactions where leaders consistently display these emotions. This may be an interesting avenue for future research.

## **Conclusion**

As clear as the importance of leader communication of goals and values may be, as unclear is it which leader behaviors are responsible for effective persuasive

communication. In an effort to demystify part of it, we illustrated that leaders can enhance their success by using their emotions to arouse the right motivational mindset in followers. Yet, while we believe that a focus on the interplay of leader emotion and communicated end state has great potential to advance our understanding of effective leadership, there is still a long way to go. We hope our approach sparks future research in leader communication of desired end states.



## CHAPTER 3

### VISIONS OF CONTINUITY AS VISIONS OF CHANGE

*Despite wide consensus that leader vision is a key vehicle for leaders to motivate followers to support change, it remains far from clear what characterizes an effective vision of change (Yukl, 2010). We build on the social identity approach of organizational change (e.g., van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003), which asserts that followers resist change because change poses a threat to the organizational identity, an important basis of follower self-definition and uncertainty reduction. Accordingly, we hypothesize that a vision of change which assures that the essence of the organizational identity remains unchanged will mobilize follower support for change, and that this relation is mediated by the interaction between follower perception of collective self-continuity and follower uncertainty.*



## **Introduction**

Scholars consensually agree that outstanding leadership is characterized by vision communication (House & Shamir, 1993; Locke & Kirkpatrick, 1996) and reflected in effective change (e.g., Bass & Riggio, 2006; Conger & Kanungo, 1987, 1998). Indeed, vision and change seem to be inextricably linked even by definition. Leader vision can be defined as a leader description of a future state of the collective (Zaccaro & Banks, 2001), whereas change can be defined as realization of that future state (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). It may therefore not come as a surprise that leader vision has been qualified as a key vehicle for leaders in motivating followers towards change (Yukl, 2010). What should be surprising, however, is that it remains far from clear what characterizes an effective vision of change (Fiol, Harris, & House, 1999; Yukl, 2010).

According to many leadership scholars, effective visions of change emphasize the deficiency of the status quo and provide a discrepant and idealized alternative, thereby creating a need for change (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1987, 1998; Kotter, 1995; Pawar & Eastman, 1997), providing a sense of challenge (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1998), highlighting the existence of opportunities (Conger & Kanungo, 1987, 1998; Shamir & Howell, 1999), or simply inspiring followers towards change (e.g., Bommer et al., 2005). At the core, these conceptions of

effective visions of change imply that effective visions of change motivate change by discouraging current identities and promoting new identities (Fiol, 2002).

Yet, in spite of what we think we know, the unfortunate reality is that many organizational change efforts are prone to failure because employees resist to accept change (e.g., Bovey & Hede, 2001), even under circumstances when they recognize the need for change (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1997), when the change is consonant with their interests (Oreg, 2003), and when they want what is best for their organizations (Reger, Gustafson, Demarie, & Mullane, 1994). Indeed, people in general value a sense of coherence, consistency, or continuity over time and change (Sani, 2008; Shamir, 1991). Existing conceptions of effective visions of change clearly fail to address this issue. The immediate question is how leaders can mobilize change when employees value continuity?

We build on emerging social identity approaches of organizational change, according to which employees resist change because change poses a threat to employees' basis of self-definition that they derive from being an organizational member (Hogg & Terry, 2000; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Drawing on the notion that individuals self-categorize in terms of group features in order to reduce self-uncertainty (i.e., uncertainty reduction hypothesis; Hogg, 2007), we posit that an effective vision of change is one which is able to assure followers that whatever is going to change, those aspects that constitute the organizational identity remain

unchanged, and that such visions will mobilize follower support to the extent that followers experience uncertainty. As such, the paradox between change and continuity is resolved in that change concerns practices not central to identity and continuity concerns self-defining aspects. We propose that such a vision of continuity is effective because it increases followers' perceived sense of collective continuity (Sani, 2008) – the sense that over time the key features of the organizational identity will be preserved. This, in turn, should motivate followers to contribute to successful change, in particular when they experience substantial uncertainty.

The contributions of our study are threefold. First, by identifying continuity of identity as a critical aspect of an effective vision of change, we answer the call for more research on what type of vision actually fosters change (Yukl, 2010). Second, our study highlights follower self-continuity as a mechanism of the leader-follower influence process (van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Third, our study integrates the macro perspective of organizational change that focuses on the role of leadership with the micro perspective of organizational change that stresses the criticality of employee reactions to change (Oreg & Berson, 2011).

### **Visions, Change, and Resistance to Change**

A fundamental task of organizations is to change internal systems and accommodate organizational functioning in response to environmental changes

(Chemers, 2001; Schein, 1985). This remains perhaps especially true in light of the ever increasing rate and frequency of these changes. Indeed, results from a recent survey of HR professionals revealed that organizations implement on average two major organizational changes each year (Benedict, 2007). Although failure of these change initiatives appears to be the norm rather than the exception (e.g., Beer & Nohria, 2000), there is a growing consensus that success of organizational change is determined by whether employees accept organizational change (cf. Oreg & Berson, 2011; Oreg, Vakola, & Armenakis, 2011). Fostering such acceptance is undeniably a key responsibility for organizational leaders (Shamir, 1999), and the question that naturally arises is: What, then, can leaders do to motivate followers to accept change?

Even a cursory inspection of the literature (e.g., Bass & Riggio, 2006; Conger & Canungo, 1987, 1998; Shamir et al., 1993) seems to suggest that there is little confusion about what leaders should do motivate change acceptance. Indeed, it can almost be considered a truism that change acceptance is facilitated by the communication of a vision. Remarkably enough, however, it appears to be less clear how exactly a leader vision translates into follower change acceptance (Yukl, 2010). For example, although the power of leader vision to generate follower change acceptance has often been attributed to its ability to ‘pull’ or attract followers towards the envisioned future, the scarce studies that actually tested this

link have produced mixed findings (Griffith, Parker, & Mason, 2010; Oreg & Berson, 2011). What is more, while scholars have just recently started to explore the link between transformational/charismatic leadership – a major component of which is the articulation of a vision (cf. House & Shamir, 1993) – and positive change-oriented follower attitudes (Bommer et al., 2005; Groves, 2005; Herold, Fedor, & Caldwell, 2008; Oreg & Berson, 2011), these leadership styles constitute a constellation of behaviors, which makes it difficult to establish whether and how leader vision is responsible for influencing change acceptance (Yukl, 1999). Thus, the current state of science seems to offer little to advance our understanding on the vision-change link. This leads us to agree with Yukl who, after a review of the literature, concluded that “more research is needed to determine what type of vision is sufficient to guide and inspire major change “ (Yukl, 2010, p.310). Given that resistance to change has been pointed out as the major barrier to organizational change (Conner, 1995), a promising starting point, we believe, may be an examination of what actually causes this resistance.

While there exist many reasons for individuals to resist change (cf. Oreg, 2003), there is growing recognition that a particularly significant source of resistance is rooted in followers’ concerns with the potential implications that change poses to their self-concept (e.g., Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2001; Eilam & Shamir, 2005; Rousseau, 1998). Interestingly, this idea has been extended to

include the part of followers' self-concept that is based on organizational membership (Fiol, 2002; Hogg, 2007; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Rousseau, 1998; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). To clarify, it is argued by social identity theories (e.g., Hogg & Terry, 2000), uncertainty identity theory in particular (Hogg, 2007), that the core underlying motive for employees to self-categorize in terms of organizational identity resides in the ability of organizational identity to reduce subjective uncertainty. That is, employees identify with their organization, primarily, because the organizational identity provides them with a consensually valid social template for what to think, feel, do, and expect (Hogg, 2007; Hohman & Hogg, 2011). According to these views then, because changing organizations significantly update what they do and who they are (Fiol, 2002), change is resisted because it threatens employees' basis of self-definition and uncertainty reduction. Clearly, then, leaders ought to take into account these concerns in their visionary efforts to motivate followers toward change.

Remarkably, however, several scholars, while acknowledging the problem of identity concerns, have focused on leadership strategies for change that foster a discontinuity of organizational identity. Fiol (2002), for example, stressed the importance for leaders to engage in de-identification strategies by using rhetoric that negates the organizational identity (see also Chreim, 2002). It is reasoned that the uncertainty and loss of meaning that ensue from de-identification will make

followers more receptive to identify with the change-implied organizational identity, a reasoning that was also used to explain the observation by Fiol and colleagues (Fiol et al., 1999) that charismatic U.S. Presidents more frequently than their non-charismatic counterparts used the word “not” in their speeches during early phases of a change process. In a similar way, other research suggests the importance of creating identity ambiguity or confusion (Corley & Gioia, 2004). Yet others combine this approach with an emphasis on the portrayal of an attractive future organizational identity (e.g., Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Reger et al., 1994), a combination that corresponds with the dominant conceptions of effective visions of change in the leadership literature (e.g., Bass & Riggio, 2006; Conger & Kanungo, 1987, 1998).

In spite of the seemingly valid reasoning underlying these approaches, they encourage essentially a discontinuity of employees’ basis of self-conception and uncertainty reduction, which, from a social identity point of view, is precisely the reason why resistance emerges and changes fail (e.g., Giessner, Ullrich, & van Dick, 2011; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Rousseau, 2003; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Indeed, in line with this view, there is substantial evidence from merger research that employees support change to the extent that they perceive a sense of collective continuity (Giessner, Viki, Otten, Terry, & Täuber, 2006; Ullrich, Wieseke, & van Dick, 2005; van Leeuwen, van Knippenberg, & Ellemers, 2003) –

the sense that over time defining features of the organizational identity are preserved (Sani, 2008). Accordingly, reasoned from a social identity perspective, if leaders wanted to motivate change, they would need to articulate a vision of change that induces followers with a perception of collective continuity. Although this premise may seem paradoxical at first, a sense of identity continuity need not be antithetical to change as long as the change is perceived by followers as involving practices and organizational features that are not a central part of the organizational identity. In what follows we discuss how leaders may articulate visions which establish follower perceptions of collective continuity.

### **Visions of Continuity**

Providing evidence for the idea that leaders can be a source of such perceptions, Bobbio and colleagues found that leaders generated support for change to the extent that they were perceived as highly representative of the group identity, an effect that was mediated by follower perception of leaders as assuring continuity of identity (Bobbio, van Knippenberg, & van Knippenberg, 2005). But can such perceptions actually be aroused or controlled by leaders, for example, through the way they frame the change, regardless of whether they happen to be perceived as representative of the group identity? Analyses of the rhetorical techniques used by effective leaders suggest that leaders can indeed do so. In their self-concept based analysis of outstanding leadership, Shamir et al. (1993)



described how effective leaders create a sense of meaningfulness in followers by articulating how actions and goals are connected to the past and the future (see also Shamir et al., 1994). Likewise, in their rhetorical analysis of effective political leaders, Haslam and colleagues described how leaders gain the support from their followers by referring to identity as evolving from the past, thus constructing a version of identity that “is no longer one version amongst many but rather the *only* valid version“ (Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011, p. 178; see also Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). The utilization of this technique is nicely illustrated by U.S. President Obama’s 2009 inaugural speech. In this speech, references to history and past generations were made by Obama when he said that “*America has carried on (...) because We the People have remained faithful to the ideals of our forbearers, and true to our founding documents*”. Later on, a link was made between the need for action and the past as well as between the past and the future by such statements as “*The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit*”, and later “*This is the journey we continue today*”. Thus, it appears that for leaders to establish a sense of continuity, they need to be skilled “entrepreneurs of identity” (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001).

As we have suggested, visions of continuity may be effective especially in mobilizing support for change. Following a social identity perspective of change, we argued that organizational change leads to resistance because it threatens the

part of employees' self-concept that they rely on in order to reduce uncertainty about what to think, do, and feel (Hogg, 2007). This resistance could be taken away if leaders can envision change in such a way that followers will come to believe that, despite changes in several aspects, the essence of what defines the organization remains unchanged. Effective visions of change, therefore, should incorporate an assurance of continuity of organizational identity. As an example, consider the case of Charlotte Beers who, as a new CEO of Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide in 1993, developed a vision statement which outlined not only major changes but also stated that "*The values we share, however, the way we do things day-to-day, will remain constant*" (Sackley & Ibarra, 1995, p. 18). It should be noted, however, that followers will vary in the extent that they experience change as threatening to the organizational identity. We argue, therefore, that, in accordance with the uncertainty-reduction hypothesis (Hogg, 2007), visions of continuity should be effective in overcoming resistance and generating support for change, in particular for followers who experience high levels of uncertainty. That is, if follower resistance and uncertainty center on the perceived threat to one's basis of self-definition and uncertainty reduction, a vision which assures the preservation of this basis will motivate contribution to change to the extent that follower uncertainty is high. This prediction can be translated into the following hypotheses.

*Hypothesis 1: The effect of leader communication of visions which assure collective self-continuity on follower support for change is moderated by follower uncertainty such that visions of continuity positively impact follower support for change, especially when follower uncertainty is high.*

### **Overview of the Present Research**

We tested our hypotheses across four studies: two field studies (Studies 1-2) and two experimental studies (Studies 3-4). Whereas field studies allow us to test the validity of our model in an actual change context, the strength of experimental studies lies in their ability to allow for establishing causality (Brown & Lord, 1999). As such, the weakness of one method will be compensated by the strength of the other (Dipboye, 1990), an approach that has been proven fruitful in previous leadership studies (e.g., Giessner & van Knippenberg, 2008; Ullrich, et al., 2009; van Dijke, de Cremer, & Mayer, 2010; van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). Study 1 tested our focal prediction in an organizational change context by measuring follower perceived leader communication of identity continuity and leader-rated follower support for change. Study 2 was designed to replicate the finding of Study 1 in an actual vision-communication context and to test its proposed underlying mechanism by examining whether perceived vision of continuity increases follower perception of collective continuity. Study 3 tested our

hypotheses in a scenario experiment, which concerned the impact of a vision of continuity on self-rated support in an imaginary merger situation. In Study 4 we examined whether a purported vision of change by the dean of a business school impacted student participants' behavioral support of the purported changes in the education program.

Further, across all studies we employed different conceptualizations of follower uncertainty because uncertainty identity theory (Hogg, 2007, 2009) as well as research inspired by it (cf. Hogg, 2007) suggests that self-categorization tendencies, and thus identity-rooted resistance, can originate from any kind of uncertainty that is relevant to the self. If follower uncertainty indeed interacts with a vision of continuity in impacting support for change, we should find convergent findings across studies that employ somewhat different types of uncertainty. Put differently, finding the predicted interaction effects across studies using different operational representations of (self-) uncertainty should provide us with greater confidence in the proposed role of uncertainty and identity-rooted resistance (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). Study 1 focused on job-specific uncertainty experienced as a result of organizational change; Study 2 focused on general uncertainty in relation to organizational change; Study 3 focused on self-conceptual unclarity (Campbell, Trapnell, Heine, Katz, Lavalley, & Lehman,

1996); Study 4 focused on self-conceptual uncertainty (Hogg, 2007; Rast, Hogg, & Giessner, 2012).

## **Study 1**

In Study 1 we tested the core hypothesis that a vision of continuity generates employee support for change to the extent that perceived uncertainty is high. To do so, we conducted a cross-sectional survey in a youth health care organization based in the Netherlands two months before the organization would implement large-scale changes. Employees rated their perceived change-related uncertainty as well as the degree to which their supervisor assured a sense of continuity. Supervisors, in turn, rated the degree to which their employees expressed support for the change.

### **Method**

**Sample and Procedures.** We sent invitations to participate to the 750 employees of the organization where the study took place. Each time that we received a completed questionnaire, we sent an invitation to the respective supervisor. We received 276 completed questionnaires, representing a response rate of 37%. Forty-nine supervisors rated an average of 4.7 and in total 230 employees, resulting in a response rate of 29%. One participant was identified as an outlier because this person has a standardized residual exceeding 3. Analyses were thus based on 229 employee-supervisor matched dyads.

**Measures.** All constructs were measured using a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

*Vision of continuity.* To assess vision of continuity at the supervisor level we developed the agent of continuity scale (AOC). The scale consisted of three items including “My supervisor ensures that the organization in the future will be a continuation of the organization now”, “My supervisor ensures that the organization will maintain its identity”, and “My supervisor ensures that the organization in the future will still feel like the organization now” ( $\alpha = .91$ ).

*Uncertainty.* Four items were used to measure uncertainty ( $\alpha = .68$ ). One item was developed to measure general concern about the change: “I am worried about the changes”. The remaining items were developed to measure more job-related concerns: “As a result of the changes I am worried about whether I have influence on changes within my work”, “As a result of the changes I am worried about whether I have the freedom to determine how I do my work”, and “As a result of the changes I am worried about whether I will be able to adjust to the changes”.

*Supervisor-rated support for change.* Supervisors rated their subordinates’ willingness to contribute to and support the change on four items ( $\alpha = .86$ ). We used the three items from Herold et al. (2007) that focused explicitly on making a contribution to the change. These items are: “This person does whatever (s)he can

to help this change to be successful and “This person tries to convince others to support the change”, and “This person fully endorses the plan to change”. As a fourth item we took a negatively stated item from Furst and Cable (2008; see also Tyler, 1999), namely “This person will refuse to support the change” (reverse coded).

## **Results**

Summary statistics for all the variables can be found in Table 1. Because employees were nested within supervisors, we conducted multilevel analysis using the mixed model command within SPSS and treated the intercept as a random component to account for potential nonindependence of our observations. Multilevel regression results are shown in Table 2.

**Supervisor-rated support for change.** To test our hypothesis, we regressed supervisor-rated employee support for change on AOC and uncertainty in step 1 and added the interaction term in step 2. A main effect was found of AOC on support for change in step 1,  $\gamma = .12$ ,  $t = 3.49$ ,  $p = .00$ . Of primary interest, the predicted interaction effect emerged to be significant,  $\gamma = .06$ ,  $t = 2.14$ ,  $p = .03$ . We conducted simple slope analysis (Aiken & West, 1991) to reveal the nature of this interaction effect (see Figure 2.1). When employee uncertainty was high (one SD below the mean), the impact of AOC on support for change was stronger ( $\gamma = .17$ ,  $t$

= 3.50,  $p = .00$ ) than when employee uncertainty was low (one SD above the mean;  $\gamma = .03$ ,  $t = .75$ ,  $p = ns$ ).

Table 1

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Between Study 1 Variables*

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Uncertainty	3.39	1.05	—	-.18**	-.26**
2. AOC	4.20	1.55		—	.20**
3. Support for change	5.72	0.92			—

\*\* Coefficient is significant at  $p < .01$

Table 2

*Multilevel Regression Results (Study 1)*

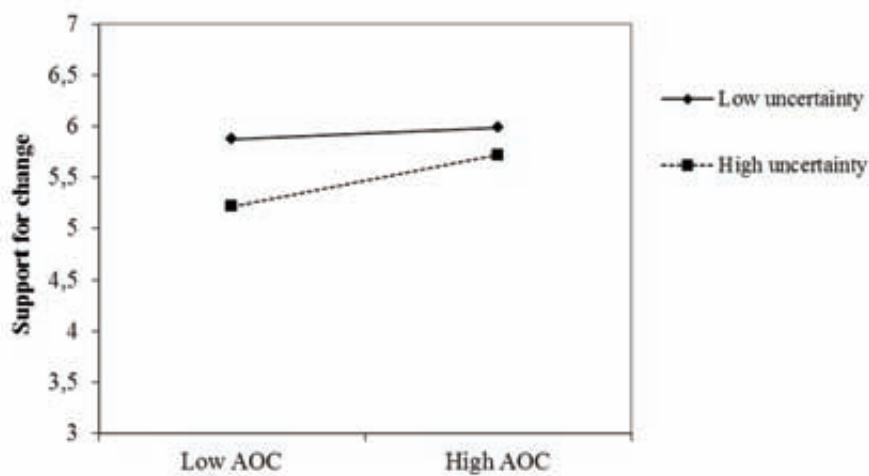
Variable	$\gamma$	SE $\gamma$
AOC	.10**	.03
Uncertainty	-.22**	.05
AOC * Uncertainty	.06*	.03

\*\* Coefficient is significant at  $p < .01$

\* Coefficient is significant at  $p < .05$



Figure 2.1: Interaction between vision of continuity and follower uncertainty on supervisor-rated support for change (Study 1)



**Discussion Study 1**

Consistent with our prediction, Study 1 showed that follower acceptance of change varies as a function of the interaction between leader assurance of collective continuity of identity and follower perceived uncertainty. That is, leaders who were perceived by followers as assuring that the collective identity would be preserved increased follower expressed support for change, particularly when follower uncertainty was high. As such, this finding provides a first step in

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demonstrating that visions of continuity are effective visions of change. The question that remains, however, is whether follower perceived collective continuity drives this result. Study 2 was designed to address this question. As suggested earlier, a vision of continuity should be effective because it assures followers that the organizational identity, their basis of self-definition, remains preserved. If this is indeed the case, then we should find that a vision of continuity has a positive impact on follower perceived collective continuity (Sani, 2008). This perception, in turn, should lead to support for and acceptance of change to the extent that followers experience uncertainty. This can be translated in the following moderated-mediation hypothesis.

*Hypothesis 2: Leader communication of vision of continuity leads to follower perception of collective continuity, which in turn increases follower support for change to the extent that followers experience uncertainty.*

## **Study 2**

### **Method**

**Overview.** In Study 2 we also conducted an organizational survey. Importantly, however, Study 2 was concerned with an actual communicated vision of change. Specifically, an organizational leader's speech to employees concerning large scale future plans was treated as a vision of change and employee perception

of communicated identity continuity was used as measure of vision of continuity. Speeches can be considered the most effective way for leaders to communicate their vision to organizational members. Although researchers often study vision communication by analyzing speeches from presidential or organizational leaders (Berson et al., 2001; Den Hartog & Verburg, 1997; Emrich et al., 2001; Fiol et al., 1999; Mio et al., 2005; Shamir et al., 1994), they never do so by assessing follower reactions to leader speeches. As such, our study fills this void in the study of vision communication. To allow for testing our moderated-mediation hypothesis, Study 2 included a measure of follower perceived collective continuity (Sani, 2008). We also employed a slightly different measure of follower uncertainty.

**Sample and Procedures.** The study was conducted in a youth health care organization based in the Netherlands. Approximately two months prior to the study, the organization had had an organized meeting for all employees at which the CEO (male) gave a speech to employees in which he reflected on the previous years and outlined the future directions of the organization, which included plans to form alliances with other organizations. Employees were invited to participate in the research survey through an email containing a link to the intranet website where the questionnaire would be administered. Employees were informed that participation would be possible only if they actually attended the organized meeting. In total, we received 121 completed surveys. Though we do not know

how many employees actually attended the meeting, we know the actual number accounts for a response rate of at least 20%. Because of incomplete data and missing values, we used 102 questionnaires.

**Measures.** All constructs were measured using a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Importantly, in all analyses we controlled for whether employees had been informed earlier about the vision of change, which occurred to 30 employees in the manifestation of a written vision statement (no = '0', yes = '1').

*Vision of continuity.* In order to increase rating validity of vision of continuity, we employed a visualization technique, thereby following recommendations for assessing leader behaviors which are related to specific events in specific contexts (Naidoo, Kohari, Lord, & Dubois, 2010; Shondrick, Dinh, & Lord, 2010). Specifically, employees were prompted to recall the vision of change by instructions to think back about what exactly was communicated in the CEO speech, which was explicitly referred to as the vision containing the plans for the future, as well as by the request to provide a number of key words that they thought reflected the key message. We then administered the seven-item vision of continuity questionnaire, which we developed based on the conceptualization of vision of continuity as followers' perception of vision-communicated assurance of identity continuity. Examples of items are: "The future image of X [name of the

organization] feels to me like a continuation of what X looks like now”, “The identity of X in the future, as articulated in the vision, feels like the current identity of X”, and “The future values and beliefs as described in the vision are very characteristic of X” ( $\alpha = .85$ ).

*Follower Uncertainty.* To assess the general feeling of uncertainty that employees experienced as a result of the plans for change, we developed three items, namely “The future plans make me uncertain about what is going to happen with my organization”, “I am concerned about the future plans”, and “I think the consequences of the future plans are very uncertain” ( $\alpha = .90$ ).

*Perceived Collective Continuity.* To assess employees’ perception of continuity of the organizational identity we modified the 12-item perceived collective continuity (PCC) scale as developed and validated by Sani and colleagues (Sani, Bowe, Herrera, Manna, Cossa, Miao, and Zhou, 2007). Examples of items are: “X will always be characteristic of particular traditions and beliefs”, “There is no continuity among different time periods within X” (reverse-coded), and “Values and beliefs within X will be maintained over time”. The scale was reliable ( $\alpha = .83$ ).

*Support for change.* Six items were developed that were intended to tap employees’ support for and willingness to contribute to change. Sample items are: “I am willing to do much more than what is required from me to help

implementing the vision”, “I am willing to put extra efforts in realizing the plans”, and “I am willing to fully collaborate with the implementation of the plans” ( $\alpha = .93$ ).

## **Results**

Summary statistics for all the variables can be found in Table 3. To test hypothesis 1 we performed a hierarchical regression analysis with vision as predictor of support for change in step 1, and vision, uncertainty, as well as the interaction term of these variables in step 2. The interaction term was based on the product of the mean-centered variables vision and uncertainty (Aiken & West, 1991). Regression results are shown in Table 4.

As in Study 1, in step 1 vision of continuity positively impacted support for change,  $b = .97$ ,  $t = 8.55$ ,  $p = .00$ . Of primal interest, as in Study 1, the predicted interaction effect emerged to be significant ( $b = .24$ ,  $t = 2.41$ ,  $p = .02$ ). We conducted simple slope analysis (Aiken & West, 1991) to reveal the nature of this interaction effect (see Figure 2.2). When employee uncertainty was high (one SD below the mean), the impact of vision of continuity on follower support for change was stronger ( $b = .94$ ,  $t = 6.19$ ,  $p = .000$ ) than when employee uncertainty was low (one SD above the mean;  $b = .42$ ,  $t = 2.42$ ,  $p = .02$ ).

Table 3

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Between Study 2 Variables*

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Received information	—	—	—	-.06	-.11	.00	.12
2. Uncertainty	2.44	1.10		—	-.53**	-.51**	-.57**
3. Vision of Continuity	3.34	0.65			—	.62**	.66**
4. PCC	3.57	0.56				—	.59**
5. Support for change	3.53	0.96					—

\*\* Coefficient is significant at  $p < .01$

**Moderated mediation analysis.** Our moderated-mediation hypothesis (hypothesis 2) predicted that, irrespective of the degree of experienced uncertainty, vision of continuity has a positive impact on PCC, which in turn is associated with reported contribution to change to the degree that follower uncertainty is high. This second-stage moderation model in which the  $M \rightarrow Y$  path of the indirect effect is

moderated (Edwards & Lambert, 2007) was tested by using the MODMED macro developed by Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007). This macro allows for testing the indirect effect by calculating bias-corrected confidence intervals (Stine, 1989) based on 1000 bootstrap samples of the product of coefficients that represent the indirect effect. All variables were mean-centered prior to analysis.

Table 4

*Regression Results (Study 2)*

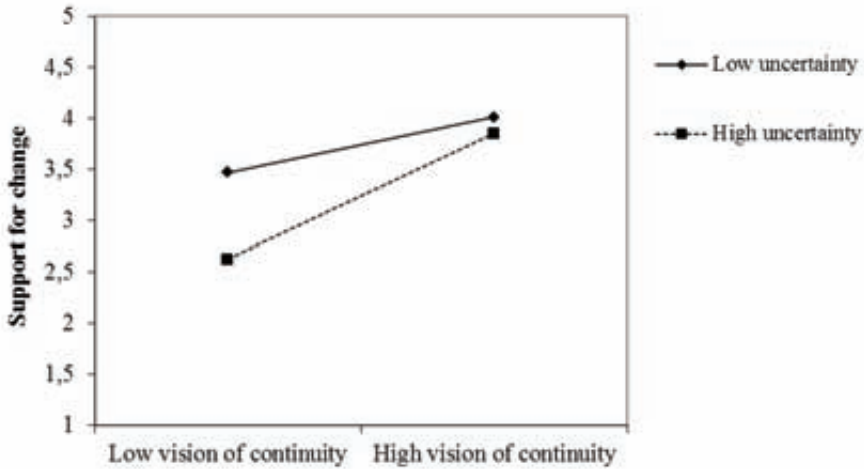
Variable	b	SE b
Received information	.19	.15
Vision of continuity	.68**	.12
Uncertainty	-.23**	.07
Vision * Uncertainty	.24*	.10

\*\* Coefficient is significant at  $p < .01$

\* Coefficient is significant at  $p < .05$

*Figure 2.2: Interaction Between Vision of Continuity and Follower Uncertainty on Support for Change (Study 2)*





As predicted, vision of continuity was positively associated with PCC,  $b = .53$ ,  $t = 7.85$ ,  $p = .00$ . No interaction effect was found, however, between vision and uncertainty on PCC,  $b = .05$ ,  $t = .75$ ,  $p = ns$ . PCC, in turn, interacted significantly with uncertainty in impacting support for change,  $b = .25$ ,  $t = 2.43$ ,  $p = .01$ . The indirect effect involves the product of the first-stage effect (.53) and the simple effects in the second stage. At high levels of uncertainty, the indirect effect was  $.53 * .70 = .37$ , of which the calculated confidence interval did not include zero (99% CI = .11 to .81). At low levels of uncertainty, however, the confidence interval of the indirect effect ( $.53 * .15 = .09$ ) did include zero (95% CI = -.16 to .26).

## Discussion Study 2

Results of Study 2 fully corroborated our hypothesized process model. Specifically, Study 2 showed that a vision of continuity through providing followers with a sense of collective continuity motivated followers to accept change to the extent that followers experience uncertainty. Importantly, Study 2 not only extends but also replicates the findings of Study 1 both in an actual vision communication context and with a different operationalization of follower uncertainty. Even so, while these findings bolster our confidence in the validity of our model, the evidence so far is based on cross-sectional data, which do not allow us to confidently claim that the findings from Studies 1-2 reflect causal relations (Shadish et al., 2002). Clearly, additional evidence is needed that allows us to draw causal conclusions regarding the vision-support link. Accordingly, Studies 3-4 build on the previous studies and make use of designs that allow for establishing causality.

### **Study 3**

#### **Method**

**Overview.** Study 3 utilized a scenario experiment, which enabled us to have participants imagine themselves as employee of an organization undergoing a merger. Mergers can be perceived as an extreme form of organizational change that generates high levels of uncertainty (Schweiger & DeNisi, 1991). While inducing hypothetical situations and responses, scenario experiments tend to yield

results that are replicated in actual organizational contexts (e.g., Giessner & van Knippenberg, 2008; Ullrich et al., 2009). Vision of continuity was operationalized as a communicated speech by the company CEO. Given the difficulties of manipulating feelings of uncertainty in this context, uncertainty was measured using a trait-based measure of uncertainty, self-conceptual unclarity, which refers to the degree to which self-beliefs are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and stable (Campbell et al., 1996). It can be reasonably argued that a potential discontinuity of a potent basis of self-definition and uncertainty reduction should be threatening especially for individuals with high self-concept unclarity.

**Participants and design.** A total of 99 Dutch undergraduate business students participated in exchange for course credits. Age ranged between 18 and 25 ( $M = 20.24$ ;  $SD = 1.60$ ). Uncertainty was a continuous variable and vision of continuity was manipulated. Participants were randomly assigned to either a control condition or a vision of continuity condition.

**Experimental procedure.** After arriving in the laboratory, participants were placed inside cubicles behind a computer and informed that the study consisted of two parts. The ostensible purpose of the first part was to validate the “life orientation and attitude questionnaire”, which actually contained the 12-item self-concept (un)clarity scale (Campbell et al., 1996). Sample items include “My beliefs about myself often conflict with one another”, “In general, I have a clear

sense of who I am and what I am” (reverse-coded), and “I spend a lot of time wondering about what kind of person I really am”. The scale was highly internally consistent ( $\alpha = .86$ ). After participants had completed the questionnaire, they learned that the first part ended and that the second part, “study 2”, would start.

The second part was introduced to participants as a study in which they had to imagine themselves as being in a particular situation or scenario and to answer any subsequent questions from this adopted perspective, as if they really situated themselves in the imaginary situation. Specifically, participants were asked to imagine themselves as being an employee of an airline company named Fairlines. To increase organizational identification, participants were told that there was a good match between them and Fairlines, colleagues were similar in terms of attitudes and beliefs, and that they were proud to be a member of Fairlines. To give participants a notion of what constituted the organizational identity, we conceptualized and labeled “*the essential features of Fairlines that have always been characteristic of the organization, (...) which in combination form the core of the company, and make Fairlines unique, distinguishing, and different from others*” as sustainability, innovation, and customer focus. Examples were provided of how Fairlines expressed these core values, and thus identity, in daily operations.

The introduction of the planned merger followed after this. Concretely, participants were told that Fairlines had been growing and profitable until the start

of the economic crisis. Various attempts to attract customers notwithstanding, revenues and profits continued to decline. For this reason, Fairlines had decided to merge with Air Fly, an airline company that was, in terms of employees and revenue, comparable in size with Fairlines. However, Air Fly was described as less distinguishing than Fairlines, and hence, more like an “ordinary” company just like many others. The CEO of Fairlines would be the person mainly responsible for the change process. Finally, participants read that Fairlines would survive the change, but that changes were inevitable, and that the CEO would ask them to support the decision to merge by means of a speech in which the CEO would announce the change and articulate the future of Fairlines.

What followed was the manipulation of vision of continuity. Importantly, both visions were made equal in terms of “charismatic” content. That is, in both conditions the CEO stressed the untenable condition of the status quo (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1998), the need for change, and the future perspective of Fairlines. Moreover, the CEO appealed to collective ideals by referring to Fairlines as the potential number one in Europe (references to ideals; e.g., Shamir et al., 1993). The CEO also emphasized the collective identity by referring to the key values (references to values and the collective; e.g., Shamir et al., 1993). Finally, the CEO stressed confidence and expressed the belief that by working as a collective

Fairlines would be able to manage this change (i.e., references to collective self-efficacy; e.g., Shamir et al., 1993)

The continuity condition equaled the control condition except for the following. In the continuity condition, the CEO assured continuity of identity at three moments in the speech. After the part where the CEO in both conditions had announced that changes were inevitable because of cost reduction and adaptation to Air Fly, the CEO in the continuity condition added: *“Fairlines will however continue to stand for what has always characterized us: sustainability, innovation, and customer focus. It is merely the expression that changes”*. The next moment was after the CEO had announced that usual methods needed to be replaced and the marketing department needed to be reorganized. In the continuity condition, the CEO added: *“But don’t forget: Despite these changes, sustainability, innovation, and customer focus will remain central to the identity of Fairlines”*. We also manipulated continuity of identity at the end of the speech. After the CEO announced to be responsible for the change process, we added *“and also for the preservation of our identity”*. To ensure that any effect of vision would be due to our manipulation, we made both visions equal in word length by modifying the wording in the control condition.

**Dependent measures.** Participants answered all scale items on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

*Manipulation check.* We adapted two items from the AOC scale (see Study 1) to assess whether the manipulation of vision of continuity was perceived as intended ( $\alpha = .85$ ), namely “The CEO assured that Fairlines will remain its identity” and “The CEO assured that after the merger Fairlines will still feel like Fairlines”.

*Perceived collective continuity.* As in Study 2, to measure this construct we used the 12-item PCC scale as developed by Sani et al. (2007). The scale was reliable ( $\alpha = .87$ ).

*Support for change.* To measure support for change we used the same items that we used to measure support for change in Study 2 ( $\alpha = .82$ ).

## **Results**

**Manipulation check.** A one-way analysis of variance revealed that participants in the continuity condition perceived the speech as more continuity assuring ( $M = 4.19$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ) than those in the control condition ( $M = 2.60$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ),  $F(1, 97) = 38.87$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .29$ . We can conclude that our vision manipulation was successful.

**Support for change.** To test the predicted interaction effect between vision and uncertainty, we conducted a hierarchical regression analysis in which the main effects of vision and uncertainty were included as predictors in step 1, and the interaction term of these variables in step 2. Prior to analysis, uncertainty was

mean-centered and vision was dummy-coded (0 = *control*, 1 = *continuity*). Regression results are shown in Table 5.

Vision of continuity did not impact support for change,  $b = .10$ ,  $t = .54$ ,  $p = ns$ . However, confirming hypothesis 2, a significant interaction showed up between vision and uncertainty,  $b = .44$ ,  $t = 2.34$ ,  $p = .02$ . Simple slope analysis (Aiken & West, 1991) was used to clarify the nature of the interaction (see Figure 2.3) and indicated that, conform expectation, vision of continuity was associated with support for change when self-concept unclarity was high (one SD below the mean;  $b = .50$ ,  $t = 2.05$   $p = .04$ ) but not when self-concept unclarity was low (one SD above the mean;  $b = -.31$ ,  $t = -1.27$ ,  $ns$ ).

Table 5  
*Regression Results (Study 3)*

Variable	b	SE b
Self-concept unclarity	-.25	.13
Vision of continuity	.10	.17
Vision * Self-concept unclarity	.44*	.19

\* Coefficient is significant at  $p < .05$

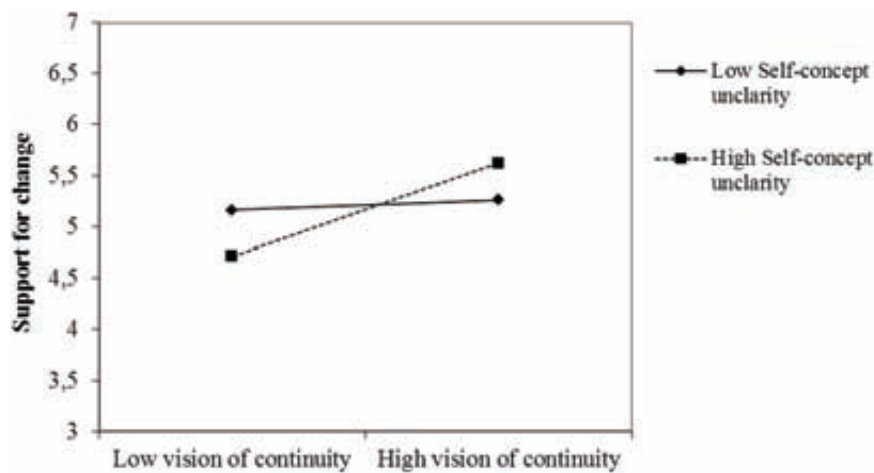


**Moderated mediation.** Moderated mediation was tested using the same procedures as in Study 2. That is, we estimated bias-corrected confidence intervals for the indirect effect with a sample of 1000 bootstrap estimates. Testing the first stage first, we found a significant effect of vision of continuity on PCC,  $b = .60$ ,  $t = 4.04$ ,  $p = .00$ , but not of the interaction between vision and uncertainty,  $b = -.23$ ,  $t = -1.40$ ,  $p = ns$ . In the second stage of the model, PCC interacted significantly with self-concept unclarity in impacting support for change,  $b = .21$ ,  $t = 1.84$ ,  $p = .07$ . At high levels of uncertainty, the indirect effect equals  $.60 * .65 = .39$ , of which the estimated confidence interval did not include zero (99% CI = .11 to .77). At low levels of self-concept unclarity, the indirect effect equals  $.60 * .27 = .16$ , of which the confidence interval did not include zero (95% CI = -.01 to .42).

### **Discussion Study 3**

Results of Study 3 confirmed our main predictions. As expected, a vision of continuity led to higher support for change to the extent that participant self-uncertainty in terms of self-concept unclarity was high. This effect was mediated by follower perceived self-continuity such that vision of continuity increased participants' sense of collective continuity, which increased support for change to the extent that self-uncertainty was high.

Figure 2.3. Interaction Between Vision of Continuity and Follower Self-concept uncertainty on Support for Change (Study 3)



This effect was mediated by follower perceived self-continuity such that vision of continuity increased participants’ sense of collective continuity, which increased support for change to the extent that self-uncertainty was high. Furthermore, by using operationalizations of vision of continuity and follower uncertainty other than those in Studies 1-2, Study 3 conceptually replicates our previous findings (Lykken, 1986). As such, given the high internal validity that results from experimental studies tend to provide, we can have greater confidence in drawing causal conclusions from the converging findings across our studies.

Even so, while Study 3 was high in mundane realism and allowed for establishing causality, it could only assess participants' self-reported support with regard to an imaginary change. Even stronger evidence for causality would be obtained if we could replicate our findings with a more objective measure of support. Accordingly, Study 4 used an experimental paradigm that has more experimental realism and that allows for using a behavioral measure of follower support for change. In addition, whereas the PCC scale used in Studies 2-3 could be easily modified for its use in an (imaginary) organizational change context, it may not be well suited in a context where student participants are led to believe that their educational program will undergo changes (see below). Accordingly, in Study 4 we developed a new measure of perceived collective continuity that was more suitable to the context. Importantly, this also allows us to triangulate our findings across different measures of collective continuity. Lastly, Study 4 again employed a different measure of follower uncertainty.

## **Study 4**

### **Method**

**Overview.** Study 4 was a controlled laboratory experiment in which student participants were informed about planned changes in the bachelor education program. Vision of continuity was operationalized as a vision statement ostensibly written by the Dean of the Business School. A behavioral measure was used as

proxy for support for change. Participant uncertainty was measured using a trait-based measure of fundamental uncertainty about the self (Rast et al., 2012).

**Participants and design.** Our research population of interest included Dutch business students who followed the bachelor program, as the change that participants were exposed to was intended to affect bachelor students only. The recruitment system did not allow us to screen participants for their year of study, however, so we could exclude students who were *not* enrolled in the business bachelor program (e.g., master students) only after participation. A total of 77 participants completed the experiment. We had substantial reason to believe that three students did not participate in a serious way. Also, one participant was identified as an outlier. Thus, analyses were based on a sample of 73 students, ranging in age between 18 and 26 ( $M = 19.84$ ;  $SD = 1.68$ ). Uncertainty was a continuous variable and vision of continuity (control vs. continuity) was manipulated. Participants were randomly assigned to either the control condition or the vision of continuity condition.

**Experimental procedure.** After arriving in the laboratory, participants were placed inside cubicles behind a computer and informed that the study consisted of two parts. In the first part participants completed the “life orientation and attitude questionnaire”, supposedly to validate the questionnaire. In reality, this questionnaire contained the three items from the self-uncertainty scale (Rast et al.,

2012) that tapped into fundamental uncertainty about one's current self-concept.<sup>4</sup> Examples of items are "I am uncertain about my place in society" and "I am uncertain about who I am". The scale turned out to have high internal consistency ( $\alpha = .80$ ). After participants had completed the questionnaire, they were told that the first part ended and that they would begin with the second part.

Participants learned that the study concerned recent developments within the business school and that the experimenters were interested in these developments, particularly in the reactions of students to these developments. Moreover, they were told that even though preparations were still being made to announce these developments to students, management had granted permission to the experimenters to investigate the "phenomenon", and hence also to announce the developments earlier to some students than was actually intended. Participants were kindly requested not to speak in detail with other students who did not participate yet.

In the part that followed we introduced the planned changes. Specifically, participants read that also their business school would be hit by governmental cutbacks in education, an actual phenomenon that was rather salient at the time of

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<sup>4</sup> Three items from this scale refer to future uncertainty, whereas four relate to general self-uncertainty. However, apart from being too much linked with continuity assurance, future uncertainty is not the type of uncertainty that we are interested in. For these reasons, we focused only on the general self-uncertainty items. Moreover, although the scale contains four items that relate to general self-uncertainty, we took only three of them, for these items were in so much overlap and could not clearly be distinguished from each other after being translated into Dutch.

the study. As a result of this, as of the upcoming year the school would be necessitated to providing education to students with fewer teachers (something which might actually happen in reality). Participants then read that, in order to adapt to this situation, the school had decided not only to eliminate certain courses, but also, and probably more important, to change the education program and to shift to another teaching method. When probed for their initial reaction towards these changes, many students expressed serious concern, indicating that our paradigm was high in experimental realism.

Importantly, in the part that followed we tried to induce a potential discontinuity of the collective identity. Participants learned that the decision to implement a completely different teaching method could influence the “character” of the education program at the school. Specifically, participants read that the change could in fact “*change that where X [the school] as management education stands for and that which makes it distinguishable from others*”. We then defined the school’s character or identity by citing an actual article that appeared in a Dutch magazine in 2010. The article judged the character of the business program in an exceptionally positive way. Moreover, participants read that the program’s character is defined by a focus on breadth and depth as well as by such values as professionalism, fair play, and teamwork – values that we adopted from an existing webpage oriented at prospective business students.

We then informed participants about an upcoming text written by the then dean (male) of the school in which he articulated his vision of change. Participants read that the text was, in essence, comparable with what would ultimately be “formally” communicated to all students. Given that in reality the dean does not speak the participants’ native language, we told participants that the experimenters translated the text into Dutch. The vision statement of the dean then appeared on the computer screen.

In both the vision of continuity condition and the control condition the dean started the vision statement by elaborating on the positive reputation and status of the business school. In the second and third paragraph, the dean referred to cutbacks in education and the (minor) changes that the school had to implement as a result of these governmental decisions. In the fourth paragraph the dean elaborated on the planned radical changes in teaching program and philosophy, and stressed that change success would be critically contingent on students’ efforts, in particular on their creativity (see below why). In the fifth paragraph the dean communicated some implementation details. In the sixth and final paragraph the dean expressed his faith and confidence in a successful transition, and re-emphasized the critical role of students’ creativity for successful change. The dean ended by asking participants for support and collaboration.

**Independent variables.** In the *vision of continuity* condition we manipulated assurance of identity continuity by embedding continuity references in the final three paragraphs. Thus, in the fourth paragraph the dean assured collective self-continuity by saying that: “*Despite these changes, that which has always characterized our program – breadth and depth – will remain central to the program’s character*”. In the fifth paragraph, participants read that the dean would be responsible not only for the change process, as students read in the control condition, but also for “*preservation of our program’s character: breadth and academic depth*”. In the final paragraph, after the dean expressed his confidence in the plans, he added: “*Professionalism, fair play, and teamwork – core values within our program – will remain characteristic to our program*”. To clarify, the control condition did not contain these continuity references. We ensured that both visions were equal in length by modifying the wording of the text in the control condition without any loss of meaning.

**Dependent measures.** Participants answered all items on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

*Manipulation check.* To check whether our vision manipulation was successful, we used the same items as we used in Study 3: “The dean assures that the program’s character will be represented in the program next year” and “The dean assures that the program will remain its character” ( $\alpha = .61$ ).



*Perception of collective self-continuity.* As noted before, because we did not think the PCC scale as used in Studies 2-3 was appropriate here, we developed four items to assess the degree that participants experienced a continuity of their school's identity ( $\alpha = .75$ ).<sup>5</sup> Sample items are "The character of the education program will be clearly visible in the program next year" and "The program of next year is in actuality a continuation of the program".

*Behavioral support for change.* To assess participants' motivation to support the change we reminded students of the articulated link by the Dean between change success and student creativity. More specifically, recall that at several points in the vision statement the dean stressed that change success was critically contingent on students' efforts, support, and in particular their creative efforts. We stressed that students' creativity is indeed needed to successfully bring about changes like the current one, and that by demonstrating their creativity, students could indicate whether they supported the change or not. Subsequently, participants learned that a task would follow that was supposedly indicative of their creativity. We told participants that the experimenters were interested in finding out whether the respective changes actually have a chance for success. We

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<sup>5</sup> In order to see whether our self-developed measure indeed taps into the intended construct, we also administered the six most context-suitable items from the PCC scale (Sani et al., 2007), that is, those items that explicitly referred to continuity in terms of values and identity. Both measures were moderately highly related to each other ( $r = .64$ ). Importantly, substituting our new measure for the 6-item PCC measure in our analyses did not lead to a change in the direction and interpretation of our results.

reasoned that if the expression of this support was linked with creativity, participants would see the task as an opportunity to express their support. We intentionally used a task on which performance is typically a function of effort and motivation (see Brunstein & Gollwitzer, 1996), not of actual creativity potential. As such, to the extent that participants support the change, they should be motivated to invest extra effort in a task that measures their creativity. Assuming that support leads to attempts to demonstrate one's creativity, we should see task performance as reflective of participants' support for change. We used the pasta name task in which participants were given one minute time to come with as many new, original pasta names as possible (Dijksterhuis & Meurs, 2006). Five examples of new pasta names were given (e.g., ripatini). We counted the number of generated, non-redundant nonwords, and treated this count as the performance variable ( $M = 6.82$ ,  $SD = 2.96$ ).

## Results

**Manipulation check.** A one-way analysis of variance revealed that participants in the continuity condition thought the CEO assured continuity of identity more ( $M = 4.64$ ,  $SD = .88$ ) than those in the control condition ( $M = 3.32$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ),  $F(1, 71) = 33.96$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .32$ . We therefore concluded that our vision manipulation was successful.

**Follower task performance.** Hierarchical regression analysis was performed to test the predicted effects. As in Studies 1-3, we regressed performance on vision and uncertainty in step 1, added the interaction term in the analysis in step 2. Prior to analysis, self-uncertainty was mean-centered and vision was dummy-coded (0 = *control*, 1 = *continuity*). Table 6 displays the regression results.

Table 6  
*Regression Results (Study 4)*

Variable	b	SE b
Self-uncertainty	-.71	.44
Vision of continuity	.22	.32
Vision * Self-uncertainty	1.37*	.66

\* Coefficient is significant at  $p < .05$

No main effects was found for vision,  $b = .22$ ,  $t = .31$ ,  $p = ns$ . Again we found a significant interaction between vision and uncertainty,  $b = 1.37$ ,  $t = 2.08$ ,  $p = .04$ . Simple slope analysis (Aiken & West, 1991) was employed to explore the nature of this interaction (see Figure 2.4), indicating that vision of continuity was associated with performance when self-uncertainty was high (one SD below the

mean;  $b = 1.65$ , one-sided  $t = 1.86$ ,  $p = .05$ ) but not when self-uncertainty was low (one SD above the mean;  $b = -1.23$ ,  $t = -1.26$ ,  $p = ns$ ).

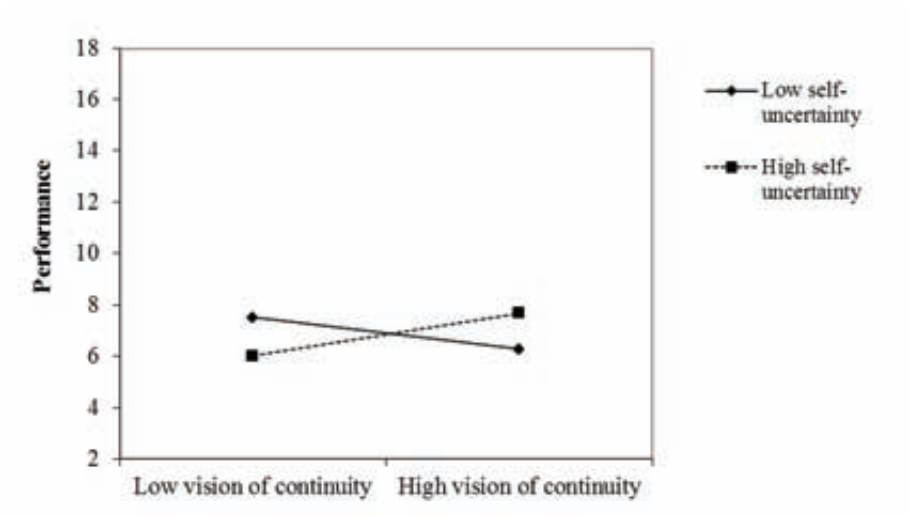
**Moderated mediation.** Moderated mediation was tested by estimating bias-corrected confidence intervals for the indirect effect with a sample of 1000 bootstrap estimates. Vision of continuity again was positively associated with collective continuity,  $b = .74$ ,  $t = 3.57$ ,  $p = .000$  (though not in interaction with uncertainty,  $b = .17$ ,  $t = .85$ ,  $p = .00$ ), and collective continuity interacted with self-uncertainty in generating task performance,  $b = .78$ ,  $t = 2.40$ ,  $p = .02$ . Moreover, as in Studies 2-3, the indirect effect was significant when self-uncertainty was high ( $.78 * 1.48 = .93$ ; 99% CI = .04 to 3.17), but not when self-uncertainty was low ( $.78 * -.45 = -.31$ ; 95% CI = -1.57 to .52).

#### **Discussion Study 4**

Study 4 again corroborated our hypothesized process model. Confidence in the validity of our moderated-mediation model was further increased by the inclusion of another measure of perceived collective continuity. And again, we obtained these results with yet another operational measure of self-uncertainty. Thus, Study 4 provides us with even greater confidence that the results we obtained across all studies reflect a causal structure. That is, together with those from Study 3, the results from Study 4 allow us to more confidently draw causal

conclusions regarding the positive impact of visions of continuity on follower support for change.

Figure 2.4. Interaction Between Vision of Continuity and Follower Self-uncertainty on Behavioral Support for Change (Study 4)



General Discussion

Although the communication of a vision has been highlighted as the key leader behavior by which leaders mobilize followers towards change (e.g., Bass & Riggio, 2006; Conger & Kanungo, 1987, 1998), it remains unclear which type of leader vision is conducive to effective change (Yukl, 2010). Accordingly, the aim of the current study was to examine how leader vision can address resistance to

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change – the primary barrier of change success (Conner, 1995). Drawing from social identity analyses of change (e.g., Hogg & Terry, 2000; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003) as well as from uncertainty identity theory (Hogg, 2007), which suggest that employees resist change because it threatens the continuity of their basis of self-definition and uncertainty reduction, we posited that visions of continuity through infusing followers with the perception that, despite change, the essence of the organizational identity remains preserved will motivate follower change acceptance to the extent that follower uncertainty is high. We found support for these predictions in an organizational change context where vision of continuity was measured at the supervisory level (Study 1), in a context that involved the actual communication of a vision of change (Study 2), in a scenario experiment that involved a merger context (Study 3), and in a controlled experiment where student participants read a vision of change regarding educational program changes (Study 4). We found these results across studies that each utilized a different operationalization of uncertainty, not only when followers reported self-ratings of change acceptance (Study 2-4) but also when follower change acceptance was rated by supervisors (Study 1) and when a behavioral measure was employed (Study 4). Together, these findings allow us to claim with substantial confidence that visions of continuity are effective visions of change.

### **Theoretical Implications**

By providing consistent evidence that the willingness of followers to contribute to change is catalyzed by visions which engender a sense of collective continuity, our research contributes to the leadership literature in several major ways. First, the most significant contribution of our research lies in its implications for the study of leadership and change. Since the advent of transformational and charismatic leadership theories, outstanding leadership has been defined in terms of the ability to bring about change (Conger, 1999), an observation that is reflected in such qualifications of effective leaders as “change masters” (Kanter, 1983), “champions of change” (Howell & Higgins, 1990), and “transformational” (Bass & Riggio, 2006) or “transforming” (Burns, 1978). What presumably makes such leaders effective is their articulation of a vision which portrays the status quo as undesirable and change as an opportunity (e.g., Bass & Riggio, 2006; Conger & Kanungo, 1987, 1998). These conceptions of effective visions of change, however, do not only lack empirical support, they also fail to adequately explain how they address resistance to change (Conner, 1995). For example, in one recent attempt to explain the vision-change link, Oreg and Berson (2011) fail to provide a convincing argument when merely stating that “by offering a compelling vision of the future, transformational leaders reduce the uncertainty associated with organizational change” (p.636). By showing that leaders who articulate a vision which assures a continuity of the collective identity mobilize follower support for

change to the extent that follower uncertainty is high, we offer a viable, alternative conception of an effective vision of change, one of which the explanatory power is based on the theoretically grounded and empirically supported notion that self-uncertainty and identity concerns are the underlying sources of resistance to change (Hogg, 2007, 2009; Hogg & Terry, 2000; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003).

Second, our results have several implications for the literature on leadership and vision communication. Of all the leader behaviors that have been proposed to be characteristic of effective leadership, it is the communication of an appealing vision that is specified in all transformational, charismatic, and visionary leadership theories (House & Shamir, 1993; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996). Despite this apparent consensus, however, scholars have only recently started to explore the determinants of effective vision communication (Stam et al., 2010a). Furthermore, although previous work has produced important knowledge about effective rhetorical techniques (e.g., the use of metaphors, Mio et al., 2005; a charismatic communication style, Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996), it has thus far not provided a guiding theoretical framework that allows future researchers to enhance the understanding of why certain visions are effective in mobilizing followers (see Stam et al., 2010a for an exception). The current study provides strong empirical evidence that certain visions are effective in mobilizing followers by providing followers with the notion that the future



naturally evolves from the past and the present. As such, the current study adds to this literature not only by answering calls for more research on the content determinants of effective visions (Beyer, 1999, Conger, 1999, Shamir, 1999), but also by illuminating one mechanism through which effective visions mobilize followers towards action.

Third, our findings may add to the leadership literature through their implications for the understanding of leader-follower influence processes. The recent years have witnessed a surge of research efforts aimed at identifying the processes through which leaders exert their profound influence on followers (for an overview see Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). In this respect, several scholars have advanced the follower self-concept as a critical mediating mechanism of effective leadership (Bono & Judge, 2003; Kark & van Dijk, 2007; Lord & Brown, 2004; Shamir et al., 1993; van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Unfortunately, propositions regarding the role of follower self-continuity have received little empirical scrutiny (e.g., Shamir et al., 1993, 1994). Moreover, allusions to its role are more indirect in that scholars have mainly focused on the role of a sense of consistency or correspondence between followers' values and personal or organizational goals (Bono & Judge, 1993; Shamir et al., 1993). In view of our findings as well as the notion that individuals derive a sense of meaning from a sense of self-continuity (Sani, 2008; Shamir et al., 1993), it may well be that self-

consistency derives its positive influence through its consequences for or relation with a sense of self-continuity. Most importantly, however, by showing that leader vision of continuity positively impacts follower support for change through its influence on follower perceived collective continuity, our findings enrich this stream of literature by illuminating group-based self-continuity as an influential influence mechanism, by answering calls for examining how leaders can affect self-continuity (van Knippenberg et al., 2004), and by extending the proposed importance of follower self-continuity in the leader-follower influence process to the leadership of change (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003).

### **Implications for Practice**

Our findings may have important implications for those who are held responsible for mobilizing follower support for change. Unlike engaging in strategies that are commonly suggested in the literature, such as creating a dissatisfaction with the status quo, and consequently, a need for change (e.g., Kotter, 1995), and portraying change as highly attractive (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1998), managers ought to assure employees that the organizational identity remains preserved. If unwillingness to contribute to change is rooted in concerns about a potential discontinuity of the central aspects of the organizational identity, then managers ought to assure employees that this will not be a concern. This suggests that managers need to emphasize not so much the need for and consequences of

change, but rather what is *not* going to change. Arguably, this critical shift in focus requires from training programs that they teach managers not how to frame or rationalize change in the most positive way, but rather how to frame change such that it will be perceived as a continuation, reaffirmation, or preservation of who “we “ are as a collective. To do so, training programs may assist managers in getting to know how the organizational identity is perceived by employees, and then help them to see how planned changes may be perceived as threatening to this organizational identity. Managers, then, need to find creative ways in framing the change as leaving unharmed the organizational identity.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

The major strength of the current research lies in the combination of different research methods, which provide an optimal balance of external and internal validity (Dipboye, 1990). Field studies allowed us to first establish the existence of the positive relationship between vision of continuity and support for change, after which controlled experiments (Studies 3-4) allowed us to establish causality (Shadish et al., 2002). As for Studies 2-3, one may raise the issue of common method variance which is typically associated with self-report data. Interestingly, while common method bias inflates main effects, it tends to deflate interaction effects. Thus, by revealing significant interaction effects, our results indicate that method bias is not of a concern (Evans, 1985; Podsakoff, MacKenzie,

& Podsakoff, 2012; Siemsen, Roth, & Oliveira, 2009). Moreover, method bias concerns are unequivocally ruled out by the results of Study 1, which obtained data from a different source, as well as by the results of Study 4, which obtained data from a different method. Our strong confidence in the internal and external validity of our results notwithstanding, we encourage researchers to assess the extent that our results can be generalized across time and change outcomes. As for the latter, it would be interesting to see whether future studies could replicate our findings, as we would expect them to do so, in relation to such relevant change outcomes as employee satisfaction, absenteeism, organizational trust, and organizational citizenship behavior.

Another issue that deserves discussion is the role of uncertainty in our vision of change model. The current study was inspired by increasing evidence suggesting that resistance to change is so prevalent because change implies a discontinuity of the organizational identity, employees' basis of uncertainty reduction (e.g., Giessner et al., 2011; Hogg, 2007). Not coincidentally perhaps, uncertainty has often been put forward as a consequence of change and a source of resistance (e.g., Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois, & Callan, 2004; Rafferty & Griffin, 2006; Rodell & Colquitt, 2009; Schweiger & DeNisi, 1991). But what about other purported sources of resistance, such as loss of control (e.g., Bordia et al., 2004; Conner, 1995; Fugate, Prussia, Kinicki, 2012) and loss of meaning (e.g.,

McKinley & Scherer, 2000)? Given the clear correspondence among these sources and uncertainty, it may well be the case that they all center on threats to one's basis of making sense of and reducing uncertainty about the world. This provides interesting avenue for future research. Specifically, we would expect a vision of continuity to facilitate change acceptance also to the extent that employees experience a loss of control and meaning, stress, or any other aversive state that may either reflect a threat to one's meaning-making framework or be reduced by experienced self-continuity.

Our results highlight the importance for future research to explore the various rhetorical and framing strategies leaders may employ to establish a sense of continuity. We propose five specific interrelated strategies that can be used in combination with each other. The first way, which can be considered the most straightforward way, is to emphasize that those aspects which constitute the essence of what defines the collective will remain preserved and continue to exist in the future. This approach may be complemented by one in which leaders frame changes as changes in lower level features such as concrete goals or plans. Such lower level features tend to provide the means by which such higher level features as the organizational mission and the organizational identity are enacted (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Klein, 1989). As a consequence, followers may sense that it is not the identity itself, but rather the expression of it that changes. An application of the

combination of these aforementioned strategies can be found in the vision of continuity as manipulated in Study 3.

A third strategy involves the creation of a link between the past and the future, a strategy that seems to be used often by political leaders (Haslam et al., 2010; Reicher, 2008; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Shamir et al., 1994). By referring to traditions and past actions of older generations, as well as by linking these with the present, leaders may inculcate in followers the feeling that the collective identity must be so self-evident and timeless that it will remain unchanged over time. Importantly, in order to be such effective entrepreneurs of identity (e.g., Haslam et al., 2010), leaders may need to make use of their own versions or constructions of identity and history, which may sometimes even lead to a reconstruction of identity. In this regard, we speculate that yet another means of assuring collective continuity resides in the ability of leaders to envision change such that it will be seen as *required* for a preservation of the collective identity. More specifically, by framing change as necessary for a re-affirmation or reinforcement of identity, leaders may convince followers that non-change will actually threaten rather than preserve continuity of identity (see also van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003b). In sum, there may be various ways through which leaders can develop visions of continuity. In view of the influential role of follower

perceived collective continuity, we hope future research will follow investigating these various strategies.

It should be noted that, aside from identity-rooted resistance, there are other good reasons why visions of change that focus on de-identification and opportunities may be undesirable for change situations. First, recall that scholars have reasoned that the breaking down of current organizational identity will lead to follower uncertainty, which should motivate followers to identify with the envisioned new identity (e.g., Fiol, 2002). While it is true that individuals under uncertainty tend to identify with (new) organizations, they tend to do so especially with collectives that provide a clear and distinctive identity as these will do better in reducing uncertainty than incoherent groups (e.g., Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuis, & Moffitt, 2007; cf. Hogg, 2007). It can be questioned, however, whether changing organizations (e.g., merged organizations) can be perceived as having developed such coherence. Second, given the frequency and pace of today's changes, it may be difficult, even impossible, for organizations to engage in the time-consuming change phases that are part of the identity change process as prescribed by existing conceptions of effective visions of change. Lastly, the desirability of the approach may be questioned in view of the potentially negative consequences it has for employees. In support of the idea that de-identification strategies may lead to follower perceptions of violations of trust (Fiol, 2002), Maguire and Phillips

(2008) found that a merger caused so much identity ambiguity in the eyes of employees that it led to a loss of organizational trust, which did not restore even when a new unambiguous identity was formed after the merger. Perhaps even more worrisome, there is increasing evidence that a perceived discontinuity of identity has several negative consequences for employee well-being (see Jetten & Wohl, 2012; Sani, 2008; Sani, Bowe, & Herrera, 2008). Clearly, these consequences may not be conducive to gaining cooperation from employees for any future requests.

Based on the above discussion, one may raise the question when visions in terms of opportunities do have a positive impact on employee reactions. We speculate that there are at least two situations in which they are effective. First, visions of opportunities should be effective in extraordinary situations such as crises, environments that have been described since Weber (1947, in Bass & Riggio, 2006) as conducive for the emergence of charismatic leaders (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1987, 1998; Shamir & Howell, 1999). These situations are characteristic of follower experiences of high distress and frustration originating from the unbearable nature of the status quo. Consequently, followers are needy of a leader who is able to both recognize their concerns and offer a vision of change in terms of opportunities and solutions. What distinguishes a crisis situation from the typical change context, then, is that in the former followers actually desire change because they experience helplessness and long for a savior, whereas in the



latter followers do not experience any of this and tend to resist most change efforts. Interestingly, this contingency view is consistent with and may explain the finding that leader vision, conceptualized in terms of opportunities, has been related to change-related behavior only for followers who are open to change (Griffith et al., 2010). Second, visions of opportunities may be harmless for organizations that have no history, as is the case for start-up companies (Conger, 1999). A focus on an ideal identity as well as opportunities may in fact be stimulating for employees in such contexts as it is the future that will determine whether the new collective will become coherent, and as such achieve a sense of identity. Unlike in a crisis situation, however, a leader's vision in these contexts can hardly be considered a vision of change since there is no status quo to move away from. In summary, although current conceptions of effective visions may not be well suited for the typical organizational change characteristic of today's business environments, they seem to be effective for motivating followers either when the status quo is experienced as unbearable or when there has never been a well-defined organizational identity that could form the basis for followers' self-definition.

### **Conclusion**

While the importance of leader vision for change seems to be unquestioned, the current state of science leaves us in the dark as to which vision and how this vision mobilizes followers to contribute to the realization of change. In an effort to

disambiguate part of this elusive phenomenon, we demonstrated that leader vision can facilitate change when assuring a continuity of the organizational identity. Although this insight may significantly advance our understanding of how vision impacts support for change, further exploration is needed of the potential ways through which leaders can create visions of continuity. We firmly hope that other researchers build on our study and continue this promising line of research.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **GENERAL DISCUSSION**

Vision communication has been heralded as the most defining aspect of outstanding leadership, yet what makes for effective vision communication has eluded leadership scholars so far. That is, while it takes a central role in any transformational/charismatic/visionary leadership theory (House & Shamir, 1993; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996), and while we know that the use of certain rhetorical techniques may contribute to effective vision communication, it remains unclear which elements of leader vision and how these elements are conducive to the mobilization of followers toward action (Stam et al., 2010a). The central aim of the current dissertation was to clarify part of the mystery surrounding these issues. In what follows, we will discuss how each of the empirical chapters separately contributes to the literature on vision communication. Then, we will both discuss how the current dissertation informs research on vision communication and outline interesting future avenues for research on vision communication.

#### **Summary of Main Findings**

##### **Chapter 2: Leader emotion as a catalyst of effective vision communication**

The research as discussed in this chapter adds to the vision communication literature in several major ways. First, the pivotal aim of this research was to

explore how leader emotional displays can facilitate leaders in communicating their vision. Despite the profound influence that leaders can exert on their followers through their emotions (Gooty et al., 2010), the role of emotional displays is conspicuously absent from the vision communication literature. In two experiments we showed that by arousing in followers a motivational focus that is also conveyed by the leader's vision, leader emotional displays allow leaders to make followers more receptive to act upon their vision. In two additional experiments, we found the same results in relation to the communication of value-laden messages (Study 3) and concrete goals (Study 4), attesting to the powerful role of leader emotions in the vision communication process. Second, these findings imply that the effectiveness of a certain vision is highly contingent not only on follower characteristics, as has been the focus in previous research (Stam et al., 2010a), but also on the way leaders deliver their visions. This grants emotional displays the status of a useful tool for leaders to regulate the effectiveness of their visions. Third, our findings clarify how follower self-processes may be implicated in the vision communication process (e.g., House & Shamir, 1993). In particular, our research implies that the influence of leader verbal communication on eliciting follower self-regulatory focus may not be as self-evident as has been thought (Kark & van Dijk, 2007). Indeed, our research

shows that leader emotional displays may be a far more potent source in engendering follower self-regulatory focus than leader verbal communication.

### **Chapter 3: Visions of Continuity as Visions of Change**

The research as discussed in this chapter was concerned with the role of leader vision in motivating followers to contribute to the successful realization of change efforts. Our findings highlight at least three significant contributions to the vision communication literature. Obviously, the most significant contribution lies in identifying, as well as confirming the validity of, an alternative conception of an effective vision of change. We have contested the viability of prevailing conceptions of effective visions of change, and have proposed and empirically validated a model premised on the recognition that identity concerns are the underlying source of resistance to change (Hogg, 2007, 2009; Hogg & Terry, 2000; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). By showing that visions which assure followers that the core of the organizational identity remains unchanged generate support for change, in particular when follower uncertainty is high, our findings challenge assertions in the literature that leaders who want to realize change need to portray a future that is highly discrepant from the status quo. Second, these findings add to the scarce literature on characteristics of effective vision content (Beyer, 1999, Conger, 1999, Shamir, 1999). Specifically, our findings highlight ‘references to identity continuity’ as a feature of inspiring vision content. Third, our research

adds to the vision communication literature by identifying perceived collective self-continuity as an influential mediator of the relation between vision communication and follower performance. That is, we have shown that part of the inspirational influence of visions resides in their ability to portray a future for the collective that is perceived as evolving from the past and the present.

### **Theoretical and Practical Implications**

A discussion of how the empirical chapters in this dissertation contribute to the vision communication literature is incomplete without reflecting on how they combine to form a whole and make sense together. In the following, we identify and discuss four distinct contributions.

#### **The role of emotions**

It is hard to imagine a vision communication context without imagining that it is impregnated with emotional influences. By exploring the role of leader emotional displays (Chapter 2) and follower uncertainty (Chapter 3), our research makes a first step in incorporating emotion into the study of vision communication. The recent years have witnessed a stream of research which demonstrates that leaders can wield a profound influence through their emotions (Gooty et al., 2010; van Knippenberg et al., 2008). We are not aware, however, of any study that looks at how leader emotions influence the vision communication process, let alone one that takes into equation the role of follower emotional experiences. First of all, our

research demonstrates that leaders can use their emotions to alter the perceived attractiveness of their visions in a major way. Displaying appropriate emotions during vision communication turned out to be effective in engendering support for one's vision. Furthermore, our research reveals that the influential impact of leader emotion can be extended to the communication of inspirational messages and goals. Second, by showing that visions of continuity motivate followers to accept change to the extent that followers experience uncertainty, regardless of the source hereof, our research confirms the notion that how followers feel impacts their reaction to the leader's vision. Together, the current research underscores the critical role played by emotions in influencing the outcome of the vision communication process.

### **The follower self-concept**

Another contribution of our research concerns the role of the follower self-concept as a mechanism by which visions mobilize followers. Many scholars have proposed and empirically verified that the follower self-concept forms a critical link between the effects of leader behavior on desired follower outcomes (Bono & Judge, 2003; House & Shamir, 1993; Kark & van Dijk, 2007; Lord & Brown, 2004; Lord et al., 1999; Shamir et al., 1993; van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Although leader vision has been attributed a key role in self-concept based leadership theories (House & Shamir, 1993; Shamir et al., 1993), to our knowledge



there has been only one study that investigated how visions can achieve such effects (Stam et al., 2010b). The current research adds to this limited body of knowledge by providing evidence that leader emotions rather than vision content impact follower self-regulatory focus (Chapter 2), and that vision can provide followers with a basis for action by instilling in them the sense that the defining aspects of their self-concept remain unchanged (Chapter 3). These results seem to suggest that particular aspects of the follower self-concept are more readily primed than others. At the same time, they underscore the importance of regarding vision delivery as a component of vision communication that deserves to receive as much attention as vision content.

### **Vision content**

Leadership scholars have called for more research on what makes visions inspiring (Beyer, 1999, Conger, 1999, Shamir, 1999). Previous research has focused on such vision elements as metaphors (Mio et al., 2005), image-based rhetoric (Emrich, Brower, Feldman, & Garland, 2001; Naidoo & Lord, 2008), a focus on followers (Stam et al., 2010b), and company-relevant themes (e.g., growth, Baum, Locke, & Kirkpatrick, 1998). These studies, however, do not answer the question what kind of images or representations of the future outstanding leaders communicate to their followers. Recently, Stam et al. (2010a) distinguished two different images purported to reflect inspiring vision content:

promotion visions, which focus on ideals and positive outcomes, and prevention visions, which focus on avoidance and future losses. The same researchers found that the relative effectiveness of these visions is determined by whether followers have a promotion or prevention mind-set. Our research extends this insight by demonstrating that emotional delivery facilitates leaders in communicating their idiosyncratic vision, regardless of follower characteristics (Chapter 2).

Our research adds to this literature also by providing evidence for another type of inspiring vision content. Some leadership scholars have alluded to the ability of leaders to frame the future as naturally evolving from the past and the present (Bobbio et al., 2008; Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Shamir et al., 1993, 1994). Our research provides consistent evidence that supports these claims (Chapter 3). In particular, the current research shows that leaders who have the ability to present the future as a continuation of the organizational identity are particularly successful in mobilizing followers towards change acceptance. This insight also provides a better understanding of how leaders influence followers by referencing the collective.

### **Vision and the management of meaning**

The current dissertation started with describing how leadership can be seen as the management of meaning. According to proponents of this perspective, effective leaders construct reality by framing events and creating connections in

order to provide followers with a viable basis for action (Podolny et al., 2005; Shamir, 2007; Smircich & Morgan, 1982). This perspective is also prominent in transformational, charismatic, and visionary leadership theories, all of which see vision as defining of outstanding leadership (House & Shamir, 1993; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996). It would be highly informative then, to discuss what our research has to say about how vision communication may convey meaning. First, our research implies that leaders can use their emotions to define reality by arousing in followers a particular motivational orientation towards the external world (Chapter 2). Accordingly, leaders can create coherence by connecting their vision with the motivational orientation that they aroused in followers. The resulting meaning is reflected in terms of experienced regulatory fit, the feeling that one's motivational orientation is sustained.

Our research also demonstrates how vision can restore meaning when followers' meaning or sense-making framework comes under threat. Recall that we followed the identity-based perspective of organizational change, according to which followers resist change because change is often perceived as a threat to the organizational identity – followers' basis of self-definition, meaning, and uncertainty reduction. Our research implies that leaders can address this perceived possible loss of meaning by communicating a vision of change that assures followers that the organizational identity remains unchanged. In so doing, leaders

provide followers with a sense that their future collective-based identity evolves from the past and the present. Particularly interesting in this respect, is that a sense of self-continuity by itself is perceived as highly meaningful for followers (Sani, 2008; Shamir, 1991).

### **Visionary leadership and the experimental paradigm**

The current dissertation contributes to the study of visionary leadership by demonstrating the utility of experimental designs in investigating what makes for an effective vision (Stam et al., 2010a, 2010b). The majority of previous research on vision communication has relied on correlational data, which do not allow for establishing causality. Experimental designs allow one to orthogonally manipulate the factors of interest. This is important especially when studying how vision delivery contributes to outcomes of the vision communication process. To clarify, the occurrence of leader displays of particular emotions during vision communication is limited to discrete events. Assessing in an accurate way the influence of vision content and vision delivery in a field setting would be extremely difficult, given the likely possibility that respondents will confound leader emotion with more accessible constructs such as leader mood and liking. To obtain reliable and valid findings, it is necessary to unconfound the effects of both vision components from each other and to prevent any extraneous variable from distorting results. The experimental paradigm is most suitable to realize such

conditions. As a testament to this claim, leadership scholars by using experimental designs have recently been rather successful in identifying elements that determine effective vision communication (Stam et al., 2010a, 2010b). Clearly, the research presented in this dissertation followed this approach and confirmed its suitability in studying vision communication.

Importantly, in the current dissertation we also triangulated the findings we obtained from experimental designs with findings from the field studies we conducted. This mixed-method approach provides an optimal balance of external and internal validity (Dipboye, 1990), a strength that leadership scholars have capitalized on (e.g., Giessner & van Knippenberg, 2008; Ullrich et al., 2009; van Dijke et al., 2010; van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). Our results testify to the utility of such an approach in relation not only to leadership research in general but also, and perhaps more importantly, to vision communication research in particular.

### **Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research**

Empirical research often necessitates researchers to focus on a selected number of interesting variables while neglecting potentially other ones. Since this applies also to the research as presented in the current dissertation, it is important to discuss what these potentially other variables are. In addition to this, we would

like to discuss opportunities for future research that follow from the current dissertation.

### **Self-processes**

In the current dissertation we focused on how vision communication enhances follower motivation and performance through impacting follower self-processes. Specifically, we focused on the role of follower self-regulatory focus (Chapter 2) and follower perceived self-continuity (Chapter 3). However, there are various other parts of the self-concept that are proposed to play a critical role in leadership processes. It has been argued, for example, that effective leaders engender perceptions of collective self-efficacy (Shamir et al., 1993), which can be defined as the extent to which followers believe that they can work together effectively to accomplish their common goals (Maddux & Gosselin, 2003). It sounds plausible that visions may create such perceptions by emphasizing the power of the collective. It would be worthwhile, however, to explore whether particular leader emotions may help leaders to communicate visions that realize such effects. We would argue that leader enthusiasm is the most likely candidate, but frustration or anger may work equally well. Another interesting construct that has been discussed by self-concept based theories of leadership is self-esteem, whether conceptualized at the individual or collective level (van Knippenberg et al., 2004). How could visions enhance follower self-esteem? One intuitive way

leaders may do so, when presenting their image of the future, is by reflecting on past, present, and projected future success, as well as by emphasizing the most salient positive features of the collective. A final example of a self-construct that we discuss and that has been linked with visionary leadership is self-worth (Shamir et al., 1993), which refers to the sense of virtue and moral worth and is grounded in values and norms concerning conduct (Gecas, 1982). We would speculate that visions can address follower self-worth by linking goals and actions with moral and pro-social values. We are strongly convinced that these proposed connections between vision and the follower self-concept are worthy of scientific investigation.

### **Visions and values**

The visions and inspirational messages of inspirational leaders are often laden with values (Grant & Hofmann, 2011; House, 1996; House & Shamir, 1993; Shamir et al., 1993). In the current dissertation, visions and values were discussed only in relation to values along the promotion-prevention value dimension (see Chapter 2, Study 3), as well as more generally, that is in relation to perceived collective continuity in Chapter 3. Clearly, future efforts are needed to study which values, other than those discussed here, are characteristic of inspiring visions. In this respect, scholars have emphasized the importance of such moral or fundamental values as beauty, honesty, and human rights (Burns, 1978; House & Shamir, 1993). If we assume that followers become inspired when their work and

self-concept gets aligned with these values, the ensuing question becomes how leaders can do so. One possible way, we propose, is that leaders communicate possible selves for followers that include these values (see Stam et al., 2010b), thus creating connections between possible future identities of followers, their work, and the moral implications.

### **Antecedents of vision**

In order to assess how certain visions are translated into follower motivation and performance, it is crucial to study how, when, and under which circumstances followers become inspired by a leader's vision. Although this follower-centered approach to the study of visionary leadership is of great usefulness, it may be informative as well to study visionary leadership from a leader-centered approach. This resonates with numerous calls for more research on the antecedents of leader behavior (e.g., Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003; House & Aditya, 1997). It would be interesting to explore, for example, whether there are leader characteristics that would facilitate a leader in developing an inspiring image of the future. We would like to identify four variables as potential candidates in this respect. First of all, a broad time horizon has been highlighted as a necessary characteristic of leaders to conjure up future images (Sashkin, 1988). Interestingly, several measures have been developed to capture the typical length of the future time span over which people conceptualize their thoughts (Strathman, Gleicher,



Boninger, Edwards, 1994). It would be reasonable to expect leaders who score high on such a measure to be engaged in thinking how the organization may look like in the future, and as a result, to come up with future images of the collective.

A second and somehow related construct is leaders' construal level, which refers to the degree to which people perceive stimuli in terms of abstract vs. concrete features (Liberman & Trope, 2008; Trope & Liberman, 2003, 2010; Vallacher & Wegner, 1987, 1989). Low-level construals of actions, events, and objects are concrete, unstructured, and contextualized representations that include subordinate features (i.e., details). High-level construals, in contrast, are abstract, schematic, and decontextualized representations that include only the superordinate, central, and core features of events and objects. It can be argued that leaders who tend to adopt a high-level construal are more likely to see the "big picture", and accordingly be more able to develop a direction for the future. Not coincidentally perhaps, construal level appears to be related with time orientation such that a leader who is adopting a high-level construal by trying to see the big picture will also focus on long-term consequences and implications, and vice versa (Liberman & Trope, 2008; Trope & Liberman, 2003, 2010).

Third, it has been argued that visionary leaders are strongly convinced of the rightness of their own beliefs and ideals (Bass, 1988; House, 1996), and that they often state their vision in terms of these beliefs and ideals (House, 1996; House &

Shamir, 1993; Shamir et al., 1993). It seems reasonable to postulate, then, that visionary leaders have clearly defined self-concepts and clearly know what they want for their organization. A self-construct that might capture this leader characteristic is self-concept clarity, which refers to “the extent to which self-beliefs are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and stable” (Campbell et al., 1996, p. 141). It would be interesting to explore whether self-concept clarity will indeed help leaders to infuse their visions with values.

Finally, the ability to communicate motivating future images for the *collective* implies that leaders should be group-focused. Indeed, a concern with the collective is proposed to be a critical attribute of visionary leaders (e.g., Bass & Riggio, 2006; Shamir et al., 1993) and may become even more critical for future organizational leaders (Venus, Mao, Lanaj, & Johnson, 2012). We would argue that leaders who feel a sense of oneness with the collective are more likely than those who do not to construct future images that are beneficial for the collective and that include references to collective values. Preliminary support for this proposition was recently provided by Johnson and colleagues who found a positive relation between strength of leader collective identity and leader transformational behaviors (Johnson, Venus, Lanaj, Mao, & Chang, 2012). It would be exciting to assess whether this finding can be extended to vision communication and vision content in particular.

## **Concluding Comments**

The output in the current dissertation originated from the following research question (as stated in the introduction): *How can vision communication provide followers with a viable basis for action and motivation?* In this dissertation I illuminated two such ways. The first way involves the use of emotional displays by leaders during vision communication. Specifically, I showed that leader emotions provide useful for leaders by impacting the motivational lens through which followers interpret and respond to the leader's vision. The second way involves the assurance of collective continuity. Specifically, I showed that leaders can effectively generate support for envisioned change by assuring their followers that the most defining features of the collective will remain unchanged in the future. I hope that my research will inspire other researchers to also invest efforts in demystifying the elusive phenomenon that we call visionary leadership.

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## SUMMARY

Vision communication has been heralded as the most defining aspect of outstanding leadership, yet what makes for effective vision communication has eluded leadership scholars so far. Indeed, while vision communication is the only leader behavior that is specified in all influential leadership theories, it remains unclear which elements of leader vision and how these elements are conducive to the mobilization of followers toward action. Accordingly, the goal of the current dissertation was to clarify part of the mystery surrounding these issues.

In this dissertation I highlight two ways by which vision communication can provide followers with a viable basis for action and motivation. The first way involves the use of emotional displays by leaders during vision communication. Specifically, I show that leader emotional displays provide useful for leaders by impacting the motivational lens through which followers interpret and respond to the leader's vision. The second way involves the assurance of collective continuity. Specifically, I show that leaders can effectively motivate followers to help realizing intended change by communicating a vision which assures them that – despite objective change – the most defining features of the collective will remain unchanged. This dissertation concludes by reflecting on these results from the view that regards leadership as the management of meaning.



## **SAMENVATTING (SUMMARY IN DUTCH)**

Het is niet overdreven om te zeggen dat het succesvol over kunnen brengen van een visie (een toekomstbeeld voor het collectief) de essentie is van effectief leiderschap. Inderdaad, de consensus hierover is zo groot en wijdverspreid dat deze uitspraak bijna als een truïsme gekwalificeerd kan worden. Des te verwonderlijk is het dan ook dat het eigenlijk verre van duidelijk is hoe leiders een visie succesvol (kunnen) overbrengen en welke aspecten van een visie mensen motiveert en aanzet tot actie. Deze stand van zaken vormde dan ook de aanzet tot het onderzoek dat beschreven wordt in dit proefschrift.

In de serie onderzoeken die beschreven wordt in hoofdstuk 2 onderzochten we hoe leiders effectief gebruik kunnen maken van emotionele uitingen wanneer zij hun visie communiceren. Het tonen van intense emoties kan leiders helpen om een bepaalde motivationele oriëntatie (of regulatiefocus) in volgers op te wekken: een motivatie die gericht is ofwel op positieve toekomstbeelden en idealen (promotiefocus), ofwel op negatieve toekomstbeelden en verantwoordelijkheden (preventiefocus). Deze motivationele oriëntatie bepaalt vervolgens hoe volgers de visie van de leider zien en interpreteren. Wanneer de visie van de leider aansluit bij de opgewekte motivationele oriëntatie van de volger, dan voelt dit als juist en goed, wat zich zal uiten in acceptatie van en steun voor de visie. De kunst voor leiders is dus om emoties te tonen tijdens visiecommunicatie die dezelfde



motivationale oriëntatie oproepen als die van de visie. Wanneer de visie van de leider gericht is op idealen, zal deze het meest succesvol overgebracht worden wanneer de leider enthousiasme of frustratie toont tijdens visiecommunicatie. Echter, wanneer de visie van de leider gericht is op verantwoordelijkheden, zal deze het meest succesvol overgebracht worden wanneer de leider gevoelens van ongerustheid en bezorgdheid laat zien. Het is belangrijk om te benadrukken dat de visie en emotionele expressie van de leider *niet* moeten overeenkomen in termen van valentie (positief of negatief) maar in termen van motivationele oriëntatie (promotie of preventie).

In de serie onderzoeken die beschreven wordt in hoofdstuk 3 onderzochten we hoe visies volgers kunnen motiveren tot het steunen van veranderingen en zich in te zetten om deze veranderingen te helpen realiseren. We bespreken hoe de literatuur hierover gedomineerd wordt door beschrijvingen van effectieve visies van verandering als visies die de status quo afschilderen als onacceptabel en de toekomstige situatie beschrijven als een ideaal alternatief, vol met nieuwe mogelijkheden. We merken op dat er niet alleen weinig bewijs is voor deze heersende opvatting, maar ook dat het ingaat tegen bewijs dat mensen waarde hechten aan stabiliteit, consistentie, en continuïteit van aspecten in het leven die belangrijk voor hen zijn. Deze continuïteit dient als kompas en reduceert onzekerheid. Omdat mensen deze betekenis grotendeels ontleen aan aspecten van

een collectief (e.g., een organisatie) die dit collectief sterk definiëren, en omdat het deze aspecten zijn die dreigen te veranderen wanneer een collectief de intentie heeft te veranderen, zouden leiders hun mensen juist moeten geruststellen dat deze aspecten *niet* zullen veranderen. Dit lijkt een paradox, maar dit hoeft niet zo te zijn. Ons onderzoek laat zien dat leiders inderdaad mensen kunnen motiveren tot verandering wanneer hun visie benadrukt dat de dingen die veranderen slechts secundaire aspecten zijn van de identiteit van de organisatie en dat de centrale kenmerken die een organisatie typeren zullen blijven voortbestaan. Het is de overtuiging van volgers dat de continuïteit van de identiteit en centrale waarden van de organisatie gewaarborgd blijft, die ertoe leidt dat ze zich willen inzetten voor de verandering, en dit geldt voornamelijk voor mensen in de organisatie die juist behoefte hebben aan richting en orde. Het is dus de kunst voor leiders om veranderingen zodanig te communiceren dat deze lijken te evolueren vanuit het verleden en het heden en dat deze een toekomst beschrijven waarin ‘wie wij zijn als organisatie’ nog steeds zichtbaar is. In tegenstelling tot wat vaak gedacht wordt, zullen leiders, willen ze steun voor verandering genereren, niet alleen moeten benadrukken wat er gaat veranderen, maar ook – en nog veel belangrijker – wat er *niet* gaat veranderen. In hoofdstuk 3 worden voorbeelden uit de praktijk gegeven van leiders die in een veranderingscontext continuïteit van identiteit communiceren (zie pp. 95-97).



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Merlijn Venus was born in 1983 in Dordrecht, The Netherlands. He obtained his MSc degree in Social and Organizational Psychology from Leiden University in 2007 and his MPhil (research master) degree in Management from the Erasmus University Rotterdam in 2009. In 2009, Merlijn started his PhD project in the Department of Organisation and Personnel Management at the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University Rotterdam. In his dissertation, he investigates which factors contribute to and which processes underlie effective leader vision communication. As part of his PhD project, he spent four months as a visiting scholar at Michigan State University. Merlijn's work has appeared in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* and is forthcoming in *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*. Currently, Merlijn is working as a Post-Doctoral researcher in the Department of Management of Technology and Innovation at the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University Rotterdam.





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## DEMYSTIFYING VISIONARY LEADERSHIP IN SEARCH OF THE ESSENCE OF EFFECTIVE VISION COMMUNICATION

Vision communication has been heralded as the most defining aspect of outstanding leadership, yet what makes for effective vision communication has eluded leadership scholars so far. Indeed, while vision communication is the only leader behavior that is specified in all influential leadership theories, it remains unclear which elements of leader vision and how these elements are conducive to the mobilization of followers toward action. Accordingly, the goal of the current dissertation was to clarify part of the mystery surrounding these issues.

In this dissertation I highlight two ways by which vision communication can provide followers with a viable basis for action and motivation. The first way involves the use of emotional displays by leaders during vision communication. Specifically, I show that leader emotional displays provide useful for leaders by impacting the motivational lens through which followers interpret and respond to the leader's vision. The second way involves the assurance of collective continuity. Specifically, I show that leaders can effectively motivate followers to help realizing intended change by communicating a vision which assures them that – despite objective change – the most defining features of the collective will remain unchanged. This dissertation is concluded by reflecting on these results from the view that regards leadership as the management of meaning.

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P.O. Box 1738, 3000 DR Rotterdam,  
The Netherlands

Tel. +31 10 408 11 82  
Fax +31 10 408 96 40  
E-mail [info@erim.eur.nl](mailto:info@erim.eur.nl)  
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