



# Daily transformational leadership and employee job crafting: The role of promotion focus



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## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 13 October 2016

Received in revised form

6 December 2017

Accepted 12 January 2018

Available online 8 March 2018

### Keywords:

Job crafting

Job demands-resources theory

Quantitative diary study

Regulatory focus

Transformational leadership

## ABSTRACT

Transformational leaders are expected to challenge their followers to take greater ownership of their work, allowing the leader to align followers with tasks that enhance their performance. In the present study, we hypothesize that transformational leadership is positively related to followers' job-crafting behaviour – proactive behaviour aimed at optimizing job demands and job resources. Moreover, we argue that followers' promotion focus (i.e. being driven by growth and development needs) positively moderates this relationship. Data were collected from 107 employees from Norwegian knowledge-based organizations (response = 93.2%). Participants responded to a general questionnaire and five daily diary questionnaires (total  $N = 535$  occasions). The results of multilevel analyses revealed partial support for our hypotheses. Followers' day-level perception of their leader's transformational behaviour was positively related to followers' day-level job crafting in the form of increasing structural and social resources. Moreover, daily transformational leadership was particularly beneficial for job crafting when followers scored high (vs. low) on the trait promotion focus. We conclude that transformational leaders can encourage their followers' use of job crafting, and that employees' promotion focus facilitates this effect.

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## 1. Introduction

The renewed interest in the phenomenon of job crafting offers a promising direction for research in organizational psychology. Job crafting is a specific form of proactive work behaviour that entails changing and reshaping the tasks or relationships that make up the job in order to keep the job challenging, motivating and healthy (Demerouti, 2015; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Recent studies have shown that job crafting can result in increased work engagement, creativity and job performance (Bakker, Tims, & Derks, 2012; Demerouti, Bakker, & Gevers, 2015; Gordon et al., 2018; Petrou, Demerouti, Peeters, Schaufeli, & Hetland, 2012; Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012). This is consistent with the idea that job crafting increases the fit between person and organization, as well as the meaningfulness of work. A core assumption in job-crafting theory is that employees' job crafting is a continuous process in which individuals can proactively change and shape the

boundaries of their work (Berg, Wrzesniewski, & Dutton, 2010) – from day to day. Thus, several beneficial outcomes of job crafting have been demonstrated using within-person designs that capture the day-to-day dynamics of job crafting and illuminate its positive short-time outcomes for individual employees (e.g. Petrou et al., 2012; Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2014).

Despite these promising findings, the job-crafting literature is still in its infancy. Among the unresolved questions is the question of what role leaders play in the job-crafting process? The lack of attention to the role of the leader in the job-crafting process is surprising given that the link between leadership and other forms of self-initiated proactivity at work is well established, both theoretically and empirically, in the general literature on proactive workplace behaviour (e.g. Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Schmitt, Den Hartog, & Belschak, 2016). More specifically, research on proactive work behaviour suggests and demonstrates that transformational leadership in particular plays a key role in explaining both individual-level (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Schmitt et al., 2016) and team-level proactivity (Strauss, Griffin, & Rafferty, 2009). However, one limitation of this line of research is that it uses research designs that focus strictly on between-person or between-

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team variances. Consequently, it may fail to take into account short-term, intra-individual variances in the leadership-proactivity relationship. In the present study, we argue that leader perceptions and job-crafting behaviour are likely to vary from one day to the next. Therefore, in addition to using more conventional research designs, we need to use quantitative diary designs to capture these day-to-day dynamics. Compared to cross-sectional or longitudinal designs with time lags of several months or even years, diary methods are useful because they capture the short-term dynamics of experiences within and between individuals in the work context (Ohly, Sonnentag, Niessen, & Zapf, 2010). In this light, the present study aims to expand existing knowledge by being one of the first studies to examine the important link between transformational leadership and proactive work behaviour in the form of job crafting. It does so by applying a quantitative diary design over a period of five days in a field context, contributing new knowledge about the day-to-day dynamics of the relationship between leadership and employee proactivity at work.

A second important question addressed in this study is: to what extent do employees' general proactive profiles influence the day-to-day transformational leadership-job crafting relationship? Drawing on regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 2000), Grant and Ashford (2008) suggest in their integrative framework of proactive behaviour that, over time, individual employees develop generalized proactivity profiles that are likely to influence the extent to which they act proactively in particular work situations. More specifically, individuals can develop two different dispositional, self-regulatory orientations in order to approach pleasure and avoid pain, namely a promotion focus or a prevention focus. Employees with a promotion focus primarily relate their goals to aspirations, possible gains and ideal end-states, whereas employees with a prevention focus relate their goals to duties and responsibilities (Higgins, 2000). A core assumption in the present study is that there is a particular fit between work situations created by transformational leaders, in which they express inspirational visions, common goals, high expectations and confidence in their followers (Bass, 1985), and promotion-focused employees who seek to create, obtain and orchestrate favourable outcomes (Grant & Ashford, 2008). Thus, we expect that a self-regulatory promotion focus enhances the positive day-level relationship between daily transformational leadership and proactive job-crafting behaviour.

In this study, employees' dispositional performance focus is measured prior to the daily data collection. This allows us to examine whether between-person variance in promotion focus moderates the dynamic, within-individual, day-to-day relationship between transformational leader behaviour and job crafting. We test this cross-level interaction by utilising the multilevel structure of the data (Ohly et al., 2010). In this way, our study not only aims to provide new knowledge about the possible day-to-day dynamics between leader behaviour and followers' proactive behaviour, it also aims to provide essential information about the role employees' own proactive profiles may play in these dynamics.

### 1.1. Theoretical background

While Kulik, Oldham, and Hackman (1987) introduced the idea of job crafting almost three decades ago, it was Wrzesniewski and Dutton who coined the term 'job crafting' in 2001. According to the latter authors, job-crafting theory complements existing theories of job design by suggesting that employees can, on their own initiative, alter the task and relational boundaries of their jobs to increase their satisfaction with their work. In contrast, traditional job design perspectives are largely concerned with determining how employees interpret objective task characteristics and social

information in the job setting to produce attitudinal and motivational responses to the work (Griffin & McMahon, 1994).

Building on earlier conceptualisations of job crafting, Tims and Bakker (2010) recently introduced another perspective on job crafting using Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory as the framework. JD-R theory suggests that job demands and job resources are important characteristics of all jobs that influence the development of employees' job strain and motivation. In line with this perspective, job crafting can be operationalised as proactive behaviour through which employees increase their job resources and challenge job demands, while at the same time reducing their hindrance job demands. Accordingly, Tims and Bakker (2010) suggest four dimensions of job crafting: (1) increasing structural job resources, (2) increasing social job resources, (3) increasing challenge job demands, and (4) decreasing hindrance job demands.

In their theoretical model, Tims and Bakker (2010) propose that employees craft their jobs in order to enhance person-job fit and situational control, which has beneficial consequences for employees' wellbeing and job performance. Providing support for these claims, job crafting in the form of increasing job resources and increasing job challenges (but not reducing hindrance job demands) has been found to be positively related to both wellbeing (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2013), and performance (Tims et al., 2012). Moreover, job-crafting behaviour is believed to be part of a dynamic and continuous process (Berg et al., 2010), and recent quantitative diary studies demonstrate that employees' job-crafting behaviour fluctuates from day to day (Demerouti et al., 2015; Petrou et al., 2012; Tims et al., 2014). Thus, in order to fully understand how situational characteristics can trigger the initiation of job crafting and other daily fluctuating proactive behaviour, scholars should focus on short-time processes and possible day-level predictors (Fritz & Sonnentag, 2009).

### 1.2. Transformational leadership and daily job crafting

Transformational leadership means providing inspiration towards constant change through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Because the four dimensions of transformational leadership are consistently found to be highly inter-related, they are typically regarded as and combined into a higher order transformational leadership construct (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Accordingly, we operationalize transformational leadership as an overarching construct, and do not examine specific effects in relation to the sub-dimensions.

Although most studies still use transformational leadership as a predictor at the general level, recent research has started to use quantitative diary designs to investigate transformational leadership on a daily basis (Breevaart et al., 2014; Hetland et al., 2015; Tims, Bakker, & Xanthopoulou, 2011). The use of such a design provides important information about how leaders can show different behaviour from one day to the next, and, consequently, is able to capture the daily dynamics of leadership behaviour and its relationship to other work-related variables, such as job crafting.

Transformational leadership is suggested and demonstrated to play a central role in employees' proactive work behaviour (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Schmitt et al., 2016), and we propose that transformational leaders are also important to the motivational basis for job crafting. Taking into account the short-time dynamics of the job-crafting process (Berg et al., 2010), we further assume that transformational leaders may even trigger the initiation of job-crafting behaviour among their employees on a day-to-day basis. More specifically, we propose that transformational leaders play an important role by both influencing employees' perceptions of their possible ideal-selves and altering

central working conditions, including employees' control and autonomy in terms of how and when they perform certain tasks and whom they interact with in their work. In self-enhancement theory, individuals' desire to maintain or increase the positivity of their self-concept is regarded as a basic human need (Leary, 2007). In line with this, Wrzesniewski and Dutton argue that a need for a positive self-image is an important motivating factor for employees to engage in job-crafting behaviour. Hence, a central assumption in the present study is that, by demonstrating a clear vision about the future, acting as a role model and expressing high expectations and confidence in their followers, transformational leaders are likely to impose a positive future possible self-image on their followers that increases the likelihood of their followers proactively crafting their jobs to maintain or increase their self-image (Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010).

More specifically, according to transformational leadership theory, a primary goal of transformational leadership is to encourage self-management (Avolio & Gibbons, 1988). Transformational leaders are believed to facilitate followers' abilities to think independently and creatively (Bass & Avolio, 1990), and to directly encourage proactive behaviour by developing and empowering employees and by stimulating them intellectually (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Schmitt et al., 2016). Hence, in the present study, we assume that, on days when followers perceive their leader as transformational, the leader's encouragement of his/her followers to be autonomous and creative will stimulate them to craft their job by increasing structural resources. If, for example, on a specific day a leader helps a follower to develop his or her strong points, the follower is more likely to learn new things at work and develop his or her capabilities. Accordingly, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 1.** Daily transformational leadership is positively related to employees' daily job crafting in the form of increasing structural resources.

A work setting characterised by open discussion and social bonds (cf. individual consideration) between leaders and employees could be beneficial to crafting the social dimension of one's resources. According to transformational leadership theory, transformational leaders consistently engage in personalized interactions with their followers, encourage communication and listen effectively to them (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Moreover, research shows that employees trust transformational leaders and connect to them emotionally (Connelly, Gaddis, & Helton-Fauth, 2002). Thus, we argue that, on days when the transformational leader is present and pays attention to his/her followers, the followers are more likely to craft their social resources (e.g. by looking to their leader for inspiration or asking their leader to coach them).

**Hypothesis 2.** Daily transformational leadership is positively related to employees' daily job crafting in the form of increasing social resources.

A core assumption in transformational leadership theory is that transformational leaders move followers to perform beyond expectations (Bass, 1985). More specifically, by articulating inspiring visions about the future and inspiring their employees to work towards common goals, transformational leaders enhance the self-concepts of followers and encourage followers' personal and collective identification with both the leader and the organization's goals and objectives (Bass & Riggio, 2006). We therefore assume that, on days when transformational leaders inspire their followers by articulating their visions and emphasizing the importance of common goals, their followers are more likely to craft their jobs by increasing their challenge demands, for example by taking on new tasks and proactively offering to be a project co-worker in a new

project. Thus, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 3.** Daily transformational leadership is positively related to employees' daily job crafting in the form of increasing job challenges.

### 1.3. The moderating role of promotion focus

In their integrative framework for proactive behaviour at work, Grant and Ashford (2008) encourage scholars to devote more attention in future research to general profiles of proactivity that apply across multiple proactive behaviours, and shed further light on the possible role such profiles may play in relation to different situational antecedents of proactivity. In order to respond to this call, we focus on the possible enhancing role of having a predominantly promotion-focused proactive profile in the day-to-day relationship between transformational leadership and proactive job-crafting behaviour.

Promotion focus is classified as one system within regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997, 1998). More specifically, promotion focus indicates that an individual is driven by growth and development needs, motivated by the ideal self (wishes, hopes and aspirations), and is sensitive to the presence or absence of positive outcomes, such as gains or non-gains. When individuals with a promotion focus are exposed to situations that may lead to future gains, they experience a state of regulatory fit (Higgins, 2000). This regulatory fit has a positive influence on judgements and decision-making, attitudes and behavioural change, and task performance (Higgins, 2005). According to the self-concordance model (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999), goals consistent with individuals' core values and interests are associated with enhanced goal striving. Thus, the more the envisioned future (communicated by a transformational leader) is central to an individual's identity or values, the more the individual will be motivated to bring about that future (Parker et al., 2010). Future work selves are compared to the present self (Carver & Scheier, 2001). They constitute 'motivational resources that individuals can use in the control and direction of their own actions' (Oyserman & Markus, 1990, p. 122) and eventually motivate greater proactive behaviour.

Interestingly, Bass (1985) suggests that transformational leaders' inspiring visions raise the standards that followers feel obliged to achieve and underscore the potential benefits that individuals can accrue. Moss (2009) argues that a particular regulatory focus fit exists between exposure to transformational leadership behaviour and having a promotion focus, because the prospect of gains envisioned by the transformational leader are particularly welcomed by their promotion-focused followers.

In the present study, we expect the proposed regulatory fit between transformational leadership and promotion focus to enhance the hypothesized relationship between transformational leadership and job-crafting behaviour for different reasons. First, we expect the promotion-focused followers to be more sensitive to the positive possible selves and gains envisioned by the leader, and, consequently, to a larger extent seek new ways to structure their job and increase challenges to work towards the future envisioned by the leader. Second, because it is reasonable to expect promotion-focused followers to feel a stronger identification with the transformational leader due to shared values and goal attainment, they are also more likely to seek support from the leader and co-workers in their daily work. Thus, in the present diary study, it seems reasonable to assume that trait-like promotion focus moderates the postulated relationships between daily transformational leadership and the three expansion-oriented job-crafting behaviours (i.e. increasing structural job resources, increasing social job resources, increasing job challenges). Hence, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 4.** Person-level promotion focus moderates the positive relationship between daily transformational leadership and daily job crafting in the form of (a) increasing structural resources, (b) increasing social resources, and (c) increasing challenge demands, so that the effect is stronger for those who score high (vs. low) on promotion focus.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants and procedure

The sample used in the present study consists of 109 employees working in 12 different knowledge organizations in Norway. The main activities of the organizations were within the fields of finance ( $N = 2$ ), education ( $N = 3$ ), public administration ( $N = 2$ ), and consultancy ( $N = 5$ ). Only employees who had daily contact with their immediate leader were invited to participate in the survey. The number of respondents from each of the 12 organizations varied from 1 to 11.

Participants' mean age was 43.5 years ( $SD = 0.11.1$ ), 52.3% of the participants were female and 33.9% had a leadership position that included human resource responsibilities. Moreover, 68.5% of the participants had a university level education, and the mean number of years in work was 21 ( $SD = 11.5$ ).

The organizations and employees that participated in the study were approached and recruited by three research assistants (see Demerouti & Rispens, 2014). Our research assistants contacted 12 random organizations in Hordaland County, Norway. All these 12 organizations allowed the research assistants to approach their employees to inform them about the study and ask if they were willing to participate. The diary booklets, instructions about completion of the diary, and return envelopes were distributed by post. Furthermore, the respondents were assigned a unique number in order to be able to link the general survey to the daily questionnaires. In order to ensure complete anonymity, the numbers were not linked at any point to the name of the respondents. In the instructions, the participants were asked to first complete the general questionnaire, and then to complete a daily questionnaire at the end of the working day (while still at work) for five consecutive days. To ensure that the respondents filled in the daily questionnaires at the designated time, reminders were given by research assistants at the end of the five consecutive working days either by e-mail or by phone. In the daily questionnaires, the respondents reported the time when they filled in the questionnaires, and the reported average time when the questionnaire was completed was 3.22 p.m. over the five days. The data were collected over a three-week period. A total of 117 employees were invited to participate in the study. From the original sample, 109 respondents returned completed questionnaires, resulting in a response rate of 93.2%. However, screening for potential outliers across the study variables revealed two respondents with diverging low scores for the measurement of daily transformational leadership over the five days. Consequently, we decided to exclude them from the data before conducting the analysis. Hence, the final sample consisted of 107 respondents, responding over five days, capturing a total of 535 measurement occasions.

### 2.2. Measures

All measurements were translated from English into Norwegian using the translation-back-translation procedure proposed by Brislin (1970).

#### 2.2.1. General questionnaire

*Promotion focus* was measured using the Work Regulatory Focus Scale (Neubert, Kacmar, Carlson, Chonko, & Roberts, 2008) including five items. Example items are: 'I take chances at work to maximize my goals for advancement', and 'In my work, I frequently imagine how I will achieve my hopes and aspirations'. The respondents were asked to respond on a 5-point scale ranging from 'totally disagree' (1) to 'totally agree' (5). The scale showed adequate reliability ( $\alpha = 0.79$ ).

#### 2.2.2. Diary questionnaire data

In order to assess daily transformational leadership and daily job-crafting behaviour, we adapted existing scales so that they could be answered on a daily basis. We adapted the number of items and wording of the scale items and response categories to make them appropriate for measuring the study constructs on a day-to-day basis. The participants were requested to respond to each of the items on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

*Daily transformational leadership* was measured using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-form 5X). Of the 25 original items measuring transformational leadership, 11 were used in the present diary study. The items were chosen on the basis of face validity. In addition, we selected the items that were deemed most likely to fluctuate across working days. All four key components of transformational leadership (Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individual Consideration) were represented in the selection of items. The questions came after an overall heading: 'Today, my leader has ...'. Example items are: '... talked enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished', '... emphasised the importance of having a collective sense of mission', '... been seeking differing perspectives when solving problems', and '... helped me to develop my strengths', from the components Inspirational Motivation, Idealized Influence, Intellectual Stimulation and Individual Consideration, respectively. Examples of items that were excluded are: '... talked about his/her most important values and beliefs', '... gone beyond self-interest for the group', and '... considered the moral and ethical consequences of decisions'. In the multilevel analysis investigating our hypotheses, we used one average score for daily transformational leadership. The scale showed good reliability ( $\alpha$ ), in the range of 0.91–0.94, across the five workdays.

*Daily job-crafting behaviour* was measured using fifteen items from the Job Crafting Scale (JCS; Tims et al., 2012). *Increasing structural job resources*, *increasing social resources* and *increasing challenge job demands* were each assessed by five items. The introductory text, items and response categories are presented in appendix A. The subscales for increasing structural resources and increasing social resources showed adequate reliability across the five days, with reliability coefficients in the range of 0.60–0.75, and reliability coefficients in the range of 0.68–0.74, for increasing structural resources and increasing social resources, respectively. The subscale for increasing challenge job demands showed low to adequate reliability in the range of 0.50–0.64. However, it should be noted that this scale has shown good reliability in previous research (Petrou et al., 2012). Further, Schmitt (1996) has argued that, in addition to Cronbach's alpha, researchers should inspect observed correlations, correlations corrected for attenuation and the factor structure.

#### 2.2.3. Control variables

Gender, age, tenure, and leadership position were applied as control variables in the analysis.

### 2.3. Analyses

In order to capture the multilevel structure of the data, which implied that the five daily measurements (level 1) of the study constructs were nested within individuals (level 2), we carried out multilevel analyses using MLwiN 2.20. In the analyses, the level 1 (day-level) predictors were centred on the respective person mean, while the level 2 (person-level) variable was centred on the grand mean. Simple slope tests for hierarchical linear models were used to examine whether the slopes in cross-level interactions were significantly different from zero (Preacher, Curran, & Bauer, 2006).

Prior to the multilevel model testing of the hypothesized relationships, the overall measurement model was tested in a Multilevel Confirmatory Factor Analysis (MLCFA) using Mplus version 7. A set of three models was tested and evaluated using recommended cut-off criteria of fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). In all models, promotion focus was modelled as one latent factor reflecting its respective observed indicators on the between level. In order to restrict the number of parameters in the model due to low sample size, the daily measured constructs were modelled as latent constructs reflecting a combination of observed indicators and parcel scores consisting of two items on both the between-person level and within-person level. In the initial measurement model, transformational leadership was modelled as one factor, and the three job-crafting constructs – increasing structural resources, increasing social resources and increasing challenges – were modelled as three separate latent constructs, using their respective indicators. All latent factors were allowed to co-vary on both the within- and between-level. The model showed an overall acceptable fit to the data ( $\chi^2 = 513.01$ ,  $DF = 184$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.058$ ), while the specific fits at the within-person level ( $SRMR^{\text{within}} = 0.036$ ) and between-person level ( $SRMR^{\text{between}} = 0.084$ ) were good and acceptable. In the model, all factor loadings were acceptable, ranging from 0.48 to 0.99 on the within-person level, and from 0.46 to 0.99 on the between-person level. Moreover, at the within-person level, the latent constructs showed positive significant inter-correlations in the range of 0.16–0.58, with the exception of the correlation between transformational leadership and the increasing challenges dimension of job crafting. In the second model, the sub-dimensions of transformational leadership were modelled separately in addition to the three job-crafting constructs. The model resulted in a good overall fit ( $\chi^2 = 363.32$ ,  $DF = 153$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.050$ ), showing good and acceptable fit at the within-person level ( $SRMR^{\text{within}} = 0.031$ ) and between-person level ( $SRMR^{\text{between}} = 0.067$ ), respectively. However, the model demonstrated very high correlations between the transformational leadership sub-factors of intellectual stimulation and individual consideration ( $r^{\text{within}} = 0.99$ ,  $r^{\text{between}} = 0.99$ ), intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation ( $r^{\text{within}} = 0.86$ ,  $r^{\text{between}} = 0.94$ ), and inspirational motivation and individual consideration ( $r^{\text{within}} = 0.74$ ,  $r^{\text{between}} = 0.88$ ), at both the within-person level and the between-person level. Based on these correlations, we decided that it would not be appropriate to model the four sub-dimensions as separate factors in the subsequent multilevel analysis, since it could potentially cause a problem of multicollinearity in the analysis, and because the danger of leaving out important information would be very low. Finally, in order to check for possible common variance, a single factor test was performed by comparing the initial measurement model with a model where all indicators at both the within-person and between-person level were loading on one single factor. The model showed unacceptable overall fit ( $\chi^2 = 1190.78$ ,  $DF = 200$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.096$ ), as well as a just acceptable fit at the within-person level ( $SRMR^{\text{within}} = 0.079$ ) and poor fit at the between-person level ( $SRMR^{\text{between}} = 0.169$ ). Moreover, the overall fit ( $AIC = 13\,944.12$ ) was poorer compared to the initial model

( $AIC = 13\,296.06$ ).

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Descriptive statistics

Means, standard deviations, and day- and person-level correlations for all study variables are presented in Table 1.

### 3.2. Multilevel analysis

Hypothesis 1 stated that daily transformational leadership would be positively related to increasing structural job resources, while Hypothesis 4a stated that trait-like promotion focus would moderate this relationship so that the relationship between transformational leadership and increasing structural resources would be stronger for those with a high (versus low) promotion focus. Table 2 presents the results from the multilevel analysis of the prediction of daily increasing structural resources. Subsequent to testing the predicted model, an unpredicted model (null-model) should be tested in order to confirm that there is sufficient day-level variance in the current dependent variable. As shown in Table 2, the initial unpredicted model revealed significant variation in increasing structural resources at both the day-level (57%) and person-level (43%), allowing us to continue with the predicted models.

In support of Hypothesis 1, the main effects model revealed a significant effect of daily transformational leadership on daily increasing structural resources ( $B = 0.158$ ,  $p < .001$ ), while promotion focus had no significant main effect on daily increasing structural job resources. Moreover, in support of Hypothesis 4a, a significant interaction was found between daily transformational leadership and promotion focus in the interaction model ( $B = 0.102$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The interaction is graphically illustrated in Fig. 1 showing the effect at  $\pm 1$  standard deviation for both predictors.

As shown in Fig. 1, in accordance with Hypothesis 4a, the relationship between daily transformational leadership and daily increasing structural resources was clearly stronger among those reporting a high promotion focus than among those reporting a low promotion focus. Accordingly, formal testing of the significance of the simple slopes reveals a significant positive slope at the critical values of  $\pm 1$  standard deviation among those scoring high on promotion focus (Slope = 0.220,  $z = 3.659$ ,  $p < .001$ ), while the slope for those scoring low on promotion focus was not significant (Slope = 0.088,  $z = 1.400$ , n.s.).

Hypothesis 2 stated that daily transformational leadership would be positively related to increasing social job resources, and Hypothesis 4b stated that trait-like promotion focus would moderate this relationship so that the relationship between transformational leadership and increasing social resources would be stronger for those with a high (versus low) promotion focus.

Table 3 shows the results for the prediction of daily increasing social resources. In the initial, unpredicted model, significant variation in increasing social resources was found at both the day-level (41%) and person-level (59%). In support of Hypothesis 2, the main effect model showed a significant effect of transformational leadership on daily increasing social resources ( $B = 0.247$ ,  $p < .001$ ), while the main effect of promotion focus was not significant. Moreover, in support of Hypothesis 4b, a significant interaction between transformational leadership and promotion focus was found in the interaction model ( $B = 0.098$ ,  $p < .05$ ). We plotted the pattern of this effect to examine whether the simple slopes were in the hypothesized direction (Fig. 2).

In line with Hypothesis 4b, the figure indicates a somewhat stronger positive relationship between daily transformational

**Table 1**  
Means, standard deviation, and day and person level correlations for all study variables ( $N = 545$  occasions,  $N = 109$  participants).

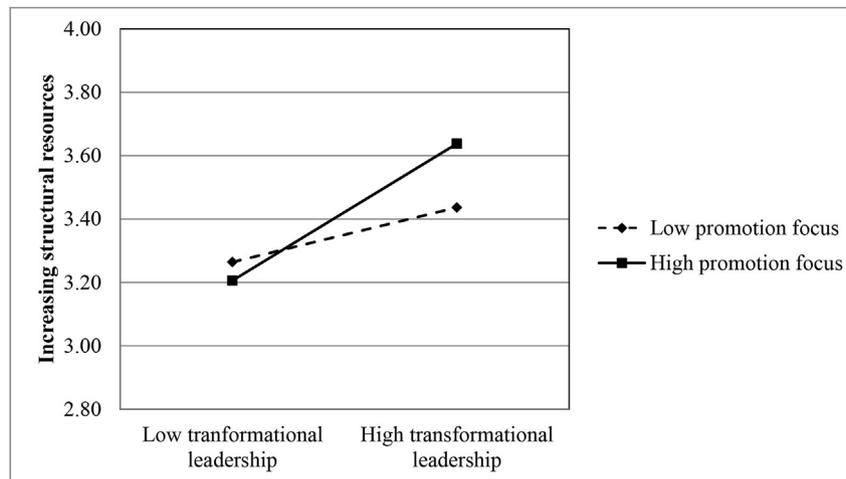
Variables	$\bar{x}$	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
<b>Day-level</b>							
1. Transformational leadership	3.06	0.65	1.00	0.31***	0.46***	0.19	0.09
2. Increasing structural resources	3.39	0.57	0.15***	1.00	-0.02	0.49***	0.12
3. Increasing social resources	2.31	0.65	0.28***	0.21***	1.00	.40***	0.17
4. Increasing challenges	2.72	0.61	0.08	0.36***	0.27***	1.00	0.16
<b>Person-level</b>							
5. Promotion focus	3.26	0.98	–	–	–	–	1.00

Note: Correlations below the diagonal are correlations on the within (day) level and correlations above the diagonal are correlations on the between (person) level.  
\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Table 2**  
Multilevel analysis. Increasing structural resources by transformational leadership and promotion focus ( $N = 535$  occasions,  $N = 107$  participants).

	Null model		Main effects		Interaction model	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Intercept	3.392***	0.041	3.387***	0.040	3.386***	0.041
Transformational leadership			0.158***	0.048	0.154***	0.048
Promotion focus			0.055	0.042	0.055	0.042
Transform lead. * Prom. focus					0.102*	0.048
Variance level 2 (person)	0.140 (43%)	0.025	0.135	0.024	0.136	0.024
Variance level 1 (day)	0.188 (57%)	0.013	0.178	0.013	0.176	0.013
-2 Log likelihood	776.640		703.475		698.987	

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



**Fig. 1.** Daily increasing structural resources by daily transformational leadership and person-level promotion focus.

**Table 3**  
Multilevel analysis. Increasing social resources by transformational leadership and promotion focus ( $N = 535$  occasions,  $N = 107$  participants).

	Null model		Main effects		Interaction model	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Intercept	2.294***	0.051	2.314***	0.052	2.313***	0.052
Transformational leadership			0.247***	0.046	0.244***	0.046
Promotion focus			0.092	0.054	0.091	0.054
Transform lead. * Prom. focus					0.098*	0.046
Variance level 2 (person)	0.247 (59%)	0.039	0.250	0.040	0.250	0.040
Variance level 1 (day)	0.173 (41%)	0.012	0.158	0.011	0.156	0.011
-2 Log likelihood	778.570		700.731		696.306	

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

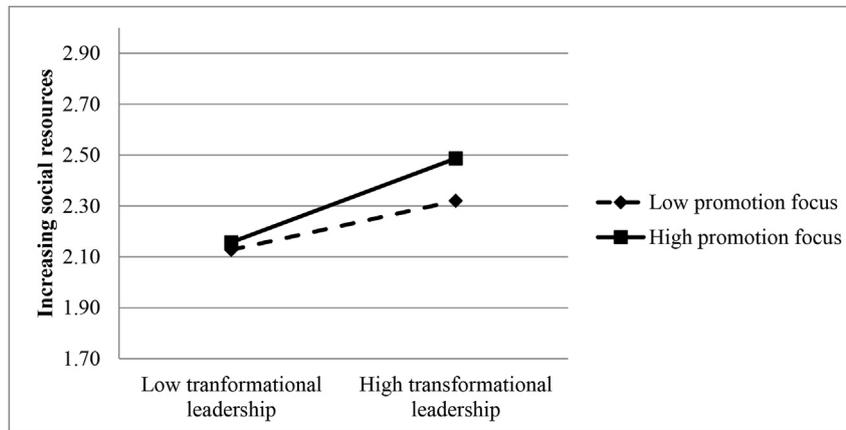


Fig. 2. Daily increasing social resources by daily transformational leadership and person-level promotion focus.

leadership and daily increasing social resources among those who score high on promotion focus compared to those who scored low. This is also supported in the simple slope test, which shows that the positive slopes for both the high (Slope = 0.254,  $z = 5.553$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and low (Slope = 0.148,  $z = 2.683$ ,  $p < .05$ ) promotion focus group were significant at the conditional values of  $\pm 1$  standard deviation, indicating a significant positive relationship for both groups.

**Hypothesis 3** stated that daily transformational leadership would be positively related to increasing job challenges, and **Hypothesis 4c** stated that trait-like promotion focus would moderate this relationship, so that the relationship between transformational leadership and increasing challenges would be stronger for those with a high (versus low) promotion focus. **Table 4** presents the results of the multilevel analysis of the prediction of increasing challenges.

Justifying the subsequent testing of the hypothesized predictions, the unpredicted null model revealed sufficient variation in employees' job crafting in the form of increasing challenges at both the day-level (59%) and person-level (41%). **Hypothesis 3** was rejected for this job-crafting dimension, since transformational leadership did not have a main effect on daily increasing challenges. However, in support of **Hypothesis 4c**, the final model revealed a significant interaction between the predictors ( $B = 0.132$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The slopes of the interaction effect are illustrated in **Fig. 3** at  $\pm 1$  standard deviation for the predictor variables.

The figure indicates a clear positive relationship between daily transformational leadership and increasing challenges among employees with high promotion focus, while a corresponding relationship is not present among those with low promotion focus. This picture was supported by simple slope tests, where the positive slope for those with high promotion focus was significant

(Slope = 0.224,  $z = 3.430$ ,  $p < .001$ ), while the slope for those with low promotion focus was not (Slope =  $-0.034$ ,  $z = -0.03$ , n.s.).

In order to rule out the possibility that the relationships can be explained by other relevant third variables, we ran all the analyses while controlling for gender, age, tenure and leader function. However, the analyses showed that none of the control variables significantly predicted the job-crafting dimensions, and, accordingly, only very small differences in the parameter estimates were found. Based on this, we decided to only report the most parsimonious analysis without including control variables, in line with the suggestions of [Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken \(2003\)](#).

#### 4. Discussion

The main aims of the present quantitative diary study were to illuminate the role of transformational leadership in followers' daily job-crafting processes, and to further investigate to what extent followers' general proactive profile in the form of promotion focus enhances these daily processes. The findings support the hypothesized positive relationship between transformational leadership and daily job crafting in the form of increasing structural and social job resources. However, surprisingly and contrary to what we hypothesized, daily transformational leadership did not have a main effect on the day-to-day crafting of challenge job demands. Further, as hypothesized using regulatory focus theory ([Demerouti & Bakker, 2014](#); [Higgins, 1998](#); [Moss, 2009](#)), promotion focus positively moderated the relationship between daily transformational leadership and all the three forms of daily job crafting (increasing structural resources, increasing social resources and increasing challenge demands). In the following, we will first discuss the hypothesized main effects of transformational

**Table 4**  
Multilevel analysis. Increasing challenges by transformational leadership and promotion focus ( $N = 535$  occasions,  $N = 107$  participants).

	Null model		Main effects		Interaction model	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Intercept	2.720***	0.042	2.730***	0.043	2.730***	0.043
Transformational leadership			0.101	0.052	0.095	0.051
Promotion focus			0.058	0.044	0.058	0.044
Transform lead. * Prom. focus					0.132**	0.052
Variance level 2 (person)	0.152 (41%)	0.027	0.147	0.027	0.148	0.027
Variance level 1 (day)	0.215 (59%)	0.015	0.208	0.015	0.205	0.015
-2 Log likelihood	845.051		774.736		768.312	

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

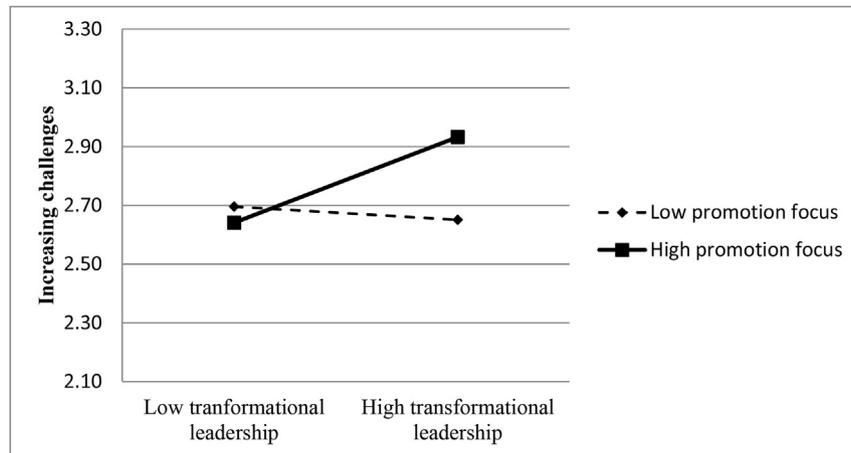


Fig. 3. Daily increasing challenges by daily transformational leadership and person-level promotion focus.

leadership, and then the moderating role of followers' promotion focus.

#### 4.1. Transformational leadership and followers' day-to-day crafting

The finding of a positive relationship between transformational leadership behaviour and daily proactive job-crafting behaviour in the form of increasing structural and social resources supports previous research demonstrating that transformational leaders play an important role in the initiation of proactive behaviour among their followers (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Schmitt et al., 2016; Strauss et al., 2009). In contrast to the general literature on proactive behaviour at work, surprisingly little attention is devoted to the role of the leader in the existing job-crafting literature. The finding of a link between daily transformational leadership and job-crafting behaviour in the present study suggests that leaders may indeed play a more active role in the job-crafting process than earlier theorized (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

Although the link between transformational leadership and employee proactivity is well documented, this is, to our knowledge, the first study to show that intra-individual, day-to-day fluctuations in employees' perceptions of transformational leadership behaviour positively relate to followers' proactive work behaviour from one day to the next. This result suggests that the relationship between leadership and followers' proactive behaviour is more dynamic than demonstrated in previous research (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Schmitt et al., 2016; Strauss et al., 2009). Consequently, it is important to take into account that daily leader behaviour is a potential trigger of proactive job-crafting initiatives among employees. A clear advantage of the quantitative diary design used in this study is that it enables work events and experiences to be captured as they unfold in the work environment (Ilies, Schwind, & Heller, 2007). Thus, the day-to-day relationship between transformational leadership behaviour and job-crafting demonstrated here is likely to be close to a real-time representation of the processes that take place in the workplace during a working week.

A core assumption in transformational leadership theory is that transformational leaders pay special attention to each individual follower's need for achievement and growth by acting as a coach and mentor (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Thus, the finding of positive short-time relationships between transformational leadership and daily job-crafting behaviour in the form of increasing structural and social resources may be caused by a follower, on particular days, perceiving special attention from his or her leader. More

specifically, on days when the leader coaches and stimulates a follower's efforts to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in a new way (Bass & Riggio, 2006), the follower is more likely to craft the structural boundaries of his or her job in order to increase learning, development and responsibility. Similarly, on days when the leader is attentive by providing individual consideration and emphasizing the importance of collective values (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Bass, 1985), a follower is more likely to craft social resources by seeking support from the leader and his or her co-workers. Hence, it is important to increase leaders' awareness of the possible short-time outcomes they achieve by coaching their followers daily. Moreover, by paying special attention to their followers on a daily basis, leaders immediately increase proactivity, development and growth among their employees, which, in turn, may have beneficial consequences for their overall long-term working conditions (Frese, Garst, & Fay, 2007).

According to Bass (1985), transformational leaders behave in ways that motivate and inspire those around them by adding meaning and challenges to their followers' work. Contradictory to this, we did not find support for a direct relationship between daily transformational leadership and followers' daily job crafting in the form of increasing challenges. One possible explanation for this surprising result could be that the employees in our sample already had sufficient challenges in their existing jobs. They were all employed in knowledge-intensive organizations characterised by a fast work pace, and there is reason to assume that their jobs encompassed a high degree of challenge demands in general. Moreover, it is conceivable that transformational leaders, through their use of inspirational motivation, challenge their followers sufficiently as it is. Consequently, their followers may not need to further increase their challenges. Alternatively, and also in line with the second main aim of this study, there could be individual differences in followers' receptivity to transformational leadership. Consistent with this idea, previous research has shown that followers with high susceptibility (Liang & Chi, 2013) to positive emotions and with positive follower characteristics, including being an independent thinker, active learner and innovative (Zhu, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2009), are more sensitive to transformational leadership.

In the present study, we argue that transformational leaders play an important role in followers' initiation of job-crafting behaviour. However, we would like to briefly discuss the possibility that follower behaviour could also influence leadership behaviour. For example, when leaders see that their followers are

proactive and take personal initiatives when necessary, they may decide that less inspiration and intellectual stimulation is needed. Note that this reversed possible effect presumes that leaders are able to see the job-crafting behaviour of their followers, although it is unclear how good they are at doing so. On the one hand, research on leadership and emotional intelligence shows that effective leaders can perceive and regulate the emotions and needs of others (Palmer, Walls, Burgess, & Stough, 2001). On the other hand, job-crafting theory states that job crafting is bottom-up behaviour that leaders may not be aware of at all (Tims et al., 2012; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). It should also be noted that the discussed reversed effect from job crafting to leadership is presumably negative, not positive. Thus, overall, we expect that there may be a dynamic process going on between leaders and followers in which leaders stimulate follower job crafting through transformational leadership, but then reduce such transformational leadership behaviour when they see that followers are sufficiently proactive. Future research could look at possible reversed causal and reciprocal relationships between job crafting and transformational leadership, thereby further informing leadership and job-crafting theories.

#### 4.2. The moderating role of promotion focus

Inspired by Grant and Ashford's (2008) call for future research to address the role of general proactive profiles in proactivity processes at work, we introduced promotion focus in this study as an employee variable that potentially influences the day-to-day relationship between transformational leadership and proactive job-crafting behaviour. The findings demonstrate that employees' promotion focus facilitates the relationships between transformational leadership and followers' daily job-crafting behaviour in the form of seeking structural and social resources, and increasing challenges. Thus, our findings support previous research claiming that promotion focus acts as a moderating mechanism in the relationship between transformational leadership and various outcomes (Hamstra, Van Yperen, Wisse, & Sassenberg, 2011; Moss, 2009).

However, these interactional effects also add significantly to existing research in two important ways. First, our results expand existing research by being the first study to empirically test and demonstrate that the assumed regulatory fit between the gain-oriented work situations created by the transformational leader, and promotion-focused followers' striving to maximize gains (Moss, 2009) facilitates proactive job-crafting behaviour among promotion-focused employees. Second, the present study contributes to the leadership and proactivity literature by testing the hypotheses based on a cross-level design using a general survey to measure trait self-regulation, and daily diaries to assess fluctuations in transformational leadership and proactive job-crafting behaviour. This approach is consistent with Bakker (2015), who argued that, in order to better understand employee wellbeing and behaviour, we need to investigate how stable characteristics of the person determine the impact of daily behaviour. Thus, the findings in this study imply that general promotion-focused proactive profiles, which employees develop over time as a result of dispositional and situational influences (Grant & Ashford, 2008), play an important enhancing role in the day-to-day dynamic relationship between transformational leadership and proactive job-crafting behaviour. In sum, by combining long-term and short-term perspectives on proactivity, this study contributes novel and sought-after knowledge that illuminates the temporal dynamics of proactivity processes at work (Grant & Ashford, 2008).

The finding that promotion focus has a moderating influence on the relationship between transformational leadership and daily job

crafting in the form of increasing challenges offers support for our alternative explanation of the non-existing main effect between the constructs described above. More specifically, simple slope tests showed that the positive slope for those characterised by high promotion focus was significant, while the slope for those with a low promotion focus was not. Hence, while promotion-focused followers perform crafting in order to increase their challenges on days when their leader shows high levels of transformational leadership behaviour, those with a low promotion focus do not. Interestingly, in line with regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1998), this may suggest that, although transformational leaders do provide a challenging work situation, followers with high promotion focus still strive to further maximize their gains.

#### 4.3. Theoretical and practical implications

The present study adds to existing theory in two ways. First, despite the notion that job crafting is argued to be a bottom-up approach, and that leaders are often not aware of the proactive changes employees make in their work environment (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), our findings show that, similarly to other proactive behaviour, leaders can actually stimulate job crafting by displaying transformational leadership on a daily basis. Importantly, this suggests that the extent to which followers take daily initiatives to craft their job is also dependent on the motivation and opportunity provided by their leader from one day to the next, and that transformational leaders in this way stimulate their followers to take a bottom-up approach to work engagement and job performance (Bakker, 2017).

A second theoretical contribution of the present study is that it adds to the long line of research supporting the core assumption of regulatory focus theory, namely that a regulatory fit between situation and regulative focus has a broad influence on judgements and decision-making, attitudes and behavioural change, and task performance. Our study adds to the literature by showing that transformational leaders who are aligned with a promotion focus make individuals who have developed a promotion-focused proactive profile more willing to craft, and thus to adjust, their job so that it fits their preferences.

The present study also has several practical implications. First, in line with other recent studies (Breevaart et al., 2014; Tims et al., 2011), it demonstrates that the extent to which followers perceive their leader as transformational differs from day to day. From a practical point of view, this suggests that organizational leaders should participate in leadership training programmes to learn to use such leadership behaviour on a daily basis (e.g., Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002). In an ever-changing business context, transformational leaders can increase employees' adaptability, with the result that they are willing to and capable of expanding their job scope to better cope with changes and demands in the internal and external organizational environment. In such a context, leaders can display more transformational behaviour, such as communicating a compelling vision and the status quo, to motivate employees to craft their jobs.

It has been found that job crafting could have both productive and counterproductive aspects (Demerouti et al., 2015). Our findings suggest that transformational leadership is promising, tapping into the positive aspects and limiting the negative aspects of job crafting because it emphasizes collective goals and interests and helps employees to understand how their work impacts on the effectiveness of the work unit. Thus, transformational leadership is likely to promote more beneficial job crafting – job crafting that enhances individual motivation and performance without having dysfunctional effects for other people – and to avoid costly job crafting that runs counter to collective objectives.

#### 4.4. Limitations

One possible limitation of the current study is the problem of common method variance. Because we used one source of information (the followers), we cannot rule out that some associations are biased by common method. This pertains particularly to the measurement of transformational leadership. To address whether common method variance was a serious problem in the present study, we applied a single factor test, and the rejection of a one factor model explaining the total variance at both within-level and between-level indicates that common method variance is not a major threat in the study (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). In addition, a recommended remedy to limit common method variance is to introduce temporality in the research design (Podsakoff et al., 2003), which was done in the present study as one out of two predictors was measured at a different point in time than the criteria variables. Accordingly, our findings suggest that the daily relationship between transformational leadership and job crafting was dependent on the trait regulatory focus measured on day one.

Nevertheless, strictly speaking, our measures of transformational leadership capture followers' perceptions of leaders' behaviour rather than leaders' actual behaviour. Although several studies have shown that inflation due to common rater effects should not be a serious problem for studies on transformational leadership (e.g. Jung & Sosik, 2002; Walumbwa, Wang, Lawler, & Shi, 2004), caution must be exercised when interpreting our results. Future research should integrate data from different sources (e.g. group input, leaders' self-reports or observation data) to capture transformational leadership.

A second potential limitation is the use of a convenience sample, as this may limit the generalizability of the findings. However, the heterogeneity of the sample in terms of education and work sectors can also be regarded as a positive characteristic in terms of external validity (see Demerouti & Rispens, 2014). Third, the diary questionnaires were collected using the paper and pencil method. Consequently, we cannot be totally confident that the respondents completed the questionnaire exactly at the end of the working day, as instructed. Similarly, although only employees who interacted with their immediate leader on a daily basis were invited to participate in the study, we cannot be totally sure that the employees actually interacted with their leader before filling out the questionnaire every day. In order to limit this possible lack of compliance, research assistants contacted the respondents at the end of each working day in order to remind them to complete the diary, and the average reported point in time when the daily questionnaire was completed was during the last hour of a normal working day.

Finally, although the daily version of the job-crafting scale used to measure increasing challenge job demands has shown good reliability in previous research (Petrou et al., 2012), the reliability of the scale was low on most of the study days in the present study, which may have affected our findings. One possible explanation could be that translation of the items into Norwegian increased the measurement error. Another possible explanation is that the daily version of the scale is based on a measurement that was originally designed to capture job-crafting behaviour on a general level. Hence, it is possible that some items refer to experiences that cannot be answered every day, resulting in lower inter-item correlations and, consequently, lower internal consistency for the scale on that day (Sonnentag, Dormann, & Demerouti, 2010). Nevertheless, we found the hypothesized interaction effect between transformational leadership and increasing challenge job demands, and this effect was similar to the interaction effect found for the other dimension of job crafting (increasing structural job resources). This

suggests that measurement error was not a major problem in the present study.

#### 5. Conclusion

This study reveals that daily transformational leadership is positively related to daily job crafting, particularly when followers score high on promotion focus – i.e. are driven by growth and development needs. Transformational leaders seem to challenge their followers to take greater ownership of their work, and motivate followers to optimize their own work environment. Resourceful and challenging work environments are important for employees, because they facilitate work engagement and performance (Demerouti & Bakker, 2014). Thus, leaders who inspire, stimulate and pay attention to the individual needs of their followers encourage their followers to take responsibility for their own working conditions and wellbeing, and can therefore have an important impact on follower performance.

#### Appendix A

##### Daily job-crafting behaviour

The following statements are about behaviour at work. Please indicate how often you have shown these behaviours at work today. Choose for every statement the best suitable answer.

##### Increasing structural resources

1. Today, I used my capacities to the fullest
2. Today, I tried to develop myself professionally
3. Today, I decided on my own how to do things
4. Today, I tried to learn new things at work
5. Today, I tried to develop my capabilities

##### Increasing social resources

6. Today, I asked colleagues for advice
7. Today, I asked whether my supervisor is satisfied with my work
8. Today, I ask others for feedback on my job performance
9. Today, I asked my supervisor to coach me
10. Today, I looked to my supervisor for inspiration

##### Increasing challenge job demands

11. Today, I have learned about new developments in my work and tried them out
12. Today, I took on extra tasks at work
13. Today, I have started a new project
14. Today, I tried to make my work more challenging
15. Today, I have offered myself proactively as project co-worker

Items measured on a 5-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

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