

**MOTIVATION IN WORDS: PROMOTION- AND PREVENTION-ORIENTED LEADER
COMMUNICATION IN TIMES OF CRISIS**

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When during the 2008 US presidential elections a financial crisis erupted, the US people overwhelmingly voted for Barack Obama, the candidate who had adopted the slogan “change we can believe in” and who emphasized hope and optimism when he addressed the people. In line with this example, research demonstrates that situational uncertainty or crisis strongly influences the endorsement of the more charismatic or decisive leadership styles and that inspirational communication is at the heart of these styles (see Bligh, Kohles, & Meindl, 2004 and Bligh, Kohles, & Pillai, 2011 for an overview). However, there is little understanding of that what makes leader communication predictive of support in times of crisis. In other words, it is not clear *what* leaders should communicate in order to be endorsed in difficult times. We argue that regulatory focus (Higgins, 1987, 1997) of leader communication, which we refer to as regulatory orientation, is an important determinant of leadership endorsement during crisis.

Studies on the role of regulatory focus in leadership mostly seem to focus on regulatory fit effects (Avnet & Higgins, 2006; Cesario, Grant, & Higgins, 2004). Regulatory fit theory posits that persons whose regulatory focus is sustained by the environment, will be experiencing a situation of “feeling right”. If individuals feel right they become more persuaded, more motivated, more engaged and their evaluations of the elements that sustain their regulatory focus intensify. Hence, followers may perceive a leader as effective and motivating when the regulatory orientation of the leader’s communication fits followers’ regulatory focus (cf. Stam, van Knippenberg & Wisse, 2010a). Based on this argument, some researchers have speculated that leaders who use prevention-oriented communication may be especially endorsed in times of crisis because the negative affect and uncertainty associated with crisis induce a prevention focus in

followers and prevention-oriented leader communication sustains a prevention focus (cf. Bruch, Shamir, & Eilam-Shamir, 2007; Stam et al., 2010a).

In the current research we challenge this idea. We acknowledge that the uncertainty and negative feelings engendered by crises may induce a prevention focus in individuals, but based on regulatory focus literature (e.g., Hamstra, Sassenberg, van Yperen, & Wisse, 2013; Johnson, Smith, Wallace, Hill, & Baron, 2015) we argue that fit caused by prevention-oriented communication during crisis serves to intensify the uncertainty and negative feelings related to the crisis. This will lead to less motivation to realize the leader's plans and less leader endorsement. In contrast, regulatory misfit caused by promotion-oriented communication serves to disrupt the uncertainty and negative feelings related to the crisis. This will increase motivation to realize the leader's plans and lead to more leader endorsement. In other words, we propose that in times of crisis leader endorsement is contingent on promotion-oriented communication.

Leader Endorsement and Crisis

Leader endorsement is defined as the *voluntary acceptance of and cooperation with a leader* (van Vugt & de Cremer, 2003). Such acceptance and cooperation can be enacted in different ways. For instance, voting for a leader (Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001) indicates endorsement because individuals clearly demonstrate their acceptance of an individual as a (potential) leader. Another demonstration of leader endorsement is contributing to the leader's plans or helping the leader to realize his or her plans (van Vugt & de Cremer, 2003). Such behavior signals the acceptance of the leader and his/her plans as well as cooperation with the leader. Leader endorsement is a crucial precursor of leader effectiveness. Without the acceptance and cooperation of followers leaders cannot hope to be effective and accomplish their goals (cf. Hogg, Hains, & Mason, 1998). Getting followers to accept you and cooperate with you is a

crucial part of leadership (cf. van Vugt & de Cremer, 2003). We are interested in what determines leader endorsement in times of crisis when the acceptance of leaders is all but self-evident.

Pearson and Clair (1998, p. 60) define a crisis as an event that ‘...is characterized by ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution, as well as by a belief that decisions must be made swiftly’ (see Madera & Smith, 2009). Crises are usually strongly related to environmental uncertainty as well as to high risk and turbulence (Waldman, Ramirez, House, & Puranam, 2001). For example, economic crises are considered to increase suicide, crime, and unemployment rates and to decrease the general population’s well-being (Cutler et al., 2002; Waters, Saadah, & Pradhan, 2003). Important for the current analysis, crises have a strong psychological component. Crises are often accompanied by distress, negative emotions, and feelings of uncertainty (Stubbart, 1987). The inadequacy of existing resources to counter a negative course of events undermines the feeling that one is in control of one’s environment and one’s future. In this respect, crises have been compared to traumatic events which cause psychological breakdown and undermine self-identity (Pearson & Clair, 1998). Following Stubbart (1987), we consider crises as *events that are associated with intense feelings of negative affect regarding the current situation and strong feelings of uncertainty regarding the future.*

Guiding others through times of crisis, when leaders are often scapegoated and blamed, may be seen as a litmus test for leaders. But what should a leader do to be accepted as a leader and to motivate others to cooperate in order to overcome those turbulent times? Previous research offers some preliminary answers. Several studies show that especially leaders who are perceived to be more charismatic are likely to be endorsed in times of crisis and turmoil (Beyer & Browning, 1999; Davis & Gardner, 2012; House, Spangler, & Woycke, 1991; Waldman et al., 2001). Given that the ability to communicate an inspiring vision is considered the single most

defining element of charisma (Bass, 1985; Shamir et al., 1993) it seems that leader communication skills may be particularly important in times of crisis. The underlying idea in prior research is that in times of turmoil, followers look for a beacon; someone who can guide them through hard times by communicating clearly what needs to be done in order to reach a more positive end state. A leader who is capable of being such a beacon and source of guidance can count on the endorsement of followers. However, there is currently no understanding of *what leaders should actually communicate* to be endorsed in times of crisis. Regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1987, 1997) can shed light on this issue.

Regulatory Focus and Leadership

Self-regulatory focus theory posits that two strategic inclinations for self-regulation play a key role in directing behavior (Higgins, 1987, 1997). A promotion focus refers to a tendency to aim for reaching an end-state because the end-state is desirable. The motivating force of a promotion focus is the approach of pleasure. Promotion-focused individuals are eager to achieve, emphasize ideals, focus on advancement, and set promotion goals. A prevention focus denotes a tendency to aim for reaching an end-state because of a fear of an undesirable alternative. The motivating force of a prevention focus is the avoidance of pain. Prevention-focused individuals are vigilant and careful, emphasize fears, focus on avoiding threats, and set prevention goals.

Regulatory focus has been associated with leadership (see Johnson, et al., 2015 for an overview). For instance, Kark and van Dijk (2007) argued that chronic regulatory focus shapes leaders' motivation to lead and determines leaders' styles in terms of transformational leadership (in case of promotion) and transactional leadership (in case of prevention, see also Brockner & Higgins, 2001). They also proposed that transformational leadership encourages promotion strategies and is related to creativity, speed and positive affect, while transactional leadership

encourages prevention strategies and is related to vigilance, accuracy and negative affect (cf., Hamstra et al., 2014). Importantly, recent studies showed that leader communication can vary in its regulatory orientation (Stam et al., 2010b). Promotion-oriented communication emphasizes ideals, focuses on growth and achievement, and conveys positive affect, while prevention-oriented communication emphasizes responsibilities, focuses on safety and vigilance, and conveys negative affect. We argue that regulatory orientation of leader communication may also be important to the endorsement of leaders in times of crisis.

Regulatory Orientation of Leader Communication and Leader Endorsement During Crisis

Regulatory fit theory (Avnet & Higgins, 2006; Cesario et al., 2004) proposes that individuals will pursue goals that sustain their regulatory focus more fervently than goals that do not sustain it. This effect occurs because the environment sustains the currently experienced regulatory focus of the individual leading to unconscious goal-directed information processing benefits that translate into a state of “feeling right” (Cesario et al., 2004). The individual is unable to reflect upon these unconscious goal-directed processing advantages and this unconscious state of “feeling right” can therefore be (mis)attributed to elements in the environment and lead to preferences for those elements, motivation to achieve those elements, and/or behaviors that help to obtain those elements (Cesario et al., 2004).

Regulatory fit effects also hold for leader-follower interactions. For instance, promotion-focused individuals endorse leaders who communicate a promotion orientation while prevention-focused individuals endorse leaders who communicate a prevention focus (Stam et al., 2010a). If crisis situations engender the aversive states of negative affect and uncertainty (which are related to prevention focus rather than promotion focus; Higgins, Bond, Klein, & Strauman, 1986; Higgins, Shah, & Friedman, 1997; Kark & van Dijk, 2007), crises may induce a prevention focus

in followers. This has led some researchers to assume that in crisis situations prevention-oriented leader communication creates fit and subsequently leads to more endorsement than promotion-oriented leader communication (cf. Bruch et al., 2007; Stam et al., 2010a). Notably, other leadership scholars have suggested that in times of crisis, more than in times of prosperity, followers are especially open to leadership that focuses on hope and faith in a positive future (Shamir et al., 1993; Shamir & Howell, 1999). As promotion orientation is associated with hope and faith in a positive future (Higgins et al., 1997; Kark & van Dijk, 2007; Stam et al., 2010a), this suggests that crisis may cause more endorsement of promotion-oriented leadership. At first glance it appears that these two streams of literature would thus suggest different predictions: Whereas literature on regulatory fit in leadership suggests that more prevention-oriented leader communication in times of crisis leads to more leader endorsement (cf. Bruch et al., 2007; Stam et al., 2010a), the literature on charismatic and transformational leadership seems to argue that promotion-oriented leadership under crisis would lead to more leader endorsement (Shamir et al., 1993; Shamir & Howell, 1999). Yet, we argue that this apparent incompatibility of predictions derived from the two different theoretical frameworks can be addressed by a more closely scrutinizing the regularity fit literature.

Recent studies on regulatory fit demonstrate that regulatory fit does not simply influence the *valence* of feelings (i.e. does not simply increase positive affect) as much as it enhances the *intensity* of what is felt (i.e. increase the strength of experienced positive or negative affect; Hamstra et al., 2013). A study by Cesario et al. (2004) for instance showed that when individuals had negative thoughts about an ambiguous message, regulatory fit (relative to misfit) made the message even less persuasive: Fit increased the strength of the negative feelings. Importantly, Hamstra and colleagues (2013) found that such negative effects of regulatory fit can also be

found in interpersonal contexts. They showed that interpersonal regulatory fit (relative to misfit) enhanced the liking that individuals felt for an initially liked target person, but also that it enhanced their disliking for an initially disliked target person. They argued that the ‘rightness’ individuals experienced from interpersonal regulatory fit may transfer to the evaluation of the other person, and thus it may strengthen individuals' initial evaluations, be they positive or negative. Interpersonal regulatory fit may thus not always influence interpersonal relationships, evaluations or motivations in a positive fashion; sometimes regulatory misfit may engender better results. Therefore, we argue that fit (misfit) between regulatory orientation of leader communication and the extent to which followers experience crisis may increase (reduce) the negative feelings that people experience based on the crisis. Just as interpersonal regulatory fit in some contexts may lead to more disliking (Hamstra et al., 2013), the fit between regulatory orientation of leader communication and follower’s experience of crisis may sustain negative feelings caused by crisis. Notably, since the leader and his or her communication are the source of the fit that increases negative affect, this increase in negative feelings may consequently be attributed to the communicated plans of the leader and subsequently the leader him or herself (cf., Bono & Illies, 2006; Erez et al., 2008), which is likely to negatively affect leader endorsement.

In a way then fit between regulatory orientation of leader communication and followers experience of crisis serves to intensify the negative affect that individuals are experiencing during crisis (cf. Hamstra et al., 2013). The consequence of this is that the perceived source of the fit, the communicated plans of the leader and subsequently the leader him or herself, are associated with this intensified negative affect and will receive less endorsement from followers. Since it is prevention-oriented communication that fits with crisis we arrive at the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Crisis moderates the relationship between the prevention orientation of the

communication of the leader and the leader's endorsement by followers such that this relationship is more negative the more followers experience crisis.

On the other hand misfit between regulatory orientation of leader communication and followers' experience of crisis serves to reduce the intensity of the negative affect that individuals are experiencing during crisis (cf. Hamstra et al., 2013). The consequence of this is that the source of the fit, the leader, will be associated with a relief of negative affect and will receive more endorsement from followers. Since it is promotion-oriented communication that creates a misfit with followers during crisis we arrive at the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Crisis moderates the relationship between the promotion orientation of the communication of the leader and the leader's endorsement by followers such that this relationship is more positive the more followers experience crisis.

A question that remains is through what mechanism the combined influence of leader communication and followers' experience of crisis affects leader endorsement. Given that leaders communicate their plans concerning what needs to be done in order to reach a more positive end state, we argue that followers' attitude toward these plans and their motivation to realize these plans may explain the effects on leader endorsement. Indeed, we argue that fit (misfit) enhances (reduces) the intensity of negative affect causing more favourable or less favourable attitudes towards and motivation for the *source of fit*. In our case the primal source of fit concerns the leader's prevention-oriented or promotion-oriented communication that convey which strategies the group should follow in order to reach a more positive end state. Importantly, given that motivation and goal pursuit occur when future states are associated with more positive (and less negative) affect (Custers & Aarts, 2005), we believe that the intensified negative affect resulting from fit between prevention-oriented communication of the leader and the experience of crisis by

followers will lead to less motivation to help the leader realize his or her plans. In contrast, a reduction of the intensity of negative affect resulting from regulatory misfit between promotion-oriented communication of the leader and the experience of crisis by followers will lead to more motivation to help the leader realize his or her plans.

Hypothesis 3: Crisis moderates the relationship between the prevention orientation of the communication of the leader and followers' motivation to realize the leader's plans such that this relationship is more negative the more followers experience crisis.

Hypothesis 4: Crisis moderates the relationship between the promotion orientation of the communication of the leader and followers' motivation to realize the leader's plans such that this relationship is more positive the more followers experience crisis.

Importantly, we also argue that the effects on follower motivation to realize the plans of the leader then influence leader endorsement by followers. Our argument is based on the attitude-behavior consistency theory proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1973). Attitude-behavior consistency concerns the degree to which people's attitudes (opinions) predict their behavior (actions). In the case of this research it refers to the consistency between attitudes concerning the plans of the leader and endorsement of the leader. Attitude-behavior consistency exists when there is a strong relation between opinions and actions. Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) review a variety of contexts in which attitude and behavior are strongly related and leader elections and votes, both clear examples of leader endorsement, are amongst them. The reason why attitude and behaviour are closely related for elections and votes is the specificity of the attitudes related to them. Indeed, they state (p. 891) "...the act of voting for a candidate or issue reflects to a large part the voter's evaluation of the candidate or issue under consideration" and draw upon several studies that support this notion (amongst others Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960 and

Fishbein & Coombs, 1974). Although there may be multiple ways to show support for a certain plan, endorsing the leader that communicated the plan is, in many circumstances, the most direct way to show support. For instance, voting for a presidential candidate is a direct way of helping that candidate to realize his or her plans. We argue, based on the above that motivation to realize the plans of the leader will mediate the interactive relationship of regulatory orientation of communication of leaders and followers' crisis experience on leader endorsement by followers.

Hypothesis 5: The interactive effects of regulatory orientation of the leader's communication and crisis experience of followers on the leader endorsement by followers is mediated by follower's motivation to realize the leader's plans.

Overview of Studies

The full theoretical model is depicted in Figure 1. We tested this model with three studies. All three studies focus on economic crises because economic crisis are regularly encountered by organizations and are also very impactful (Cutler et al., 2002; Waters, Saadah, & Pradhan, 2003). The first study is an archival study that tests Hypotheses 1 and 2. In this study we investigated regulatory orientation of communication of US presidents (their inaugural speeches), economic crisis while in office (measured through inflation and economic growth), and scores of the endorsement of presidents (ratings of presidential greatness and reelection success). In a second study we tested Hypotheses 3 and 4. We investigated the effects of promotion- and prevention-oriented communication on the mediator – motivation to realize the plans of the leader - in a crisis versus non-crisis (control) context using a laboratory experiment. In a third study we investigate the whole theoretical model (i.e. Hypothesis 5), a moderated mediation model with moderation in the first stage. In this scenario experiment participants played the role of a company advisory board member tasked to vote for a new CEO. We manipulated whether the

company was in crisis or not and we manipulated the communication of the CEO candidates to be promotion-oriented or prevention-oriented. We then measured the extent to which the participants were motivated to realize the communicated plans of the CEO candidate and eventually whom the participants endorsed as CEO.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

STUDY 1: ARCHIVAL STUDY OF US PRESIDENTS

In this study we investigate US presidential endorsement. We predict that presidential leaders' regulatory-orientation of communication interacts with the country's economic circumstances (i.e. crisis) to explain presidential endorsement in the sense that promotion-oriented communication would be a stronger predictor of presidential endorsement under bad economic circumstances (crisis) than under more positive economic circumstances. The economy (our moderator of choice) is very important for US politics and has been shown to outweigh most other factors, like military action (Curry & Morris, 2010; Kenney & Rice, 1988). Importantly, research suggests that, although an economy in crisis has a strong negative effect on the performance assessments of the president who is held accountable for the countries downfall, it also increases the publics' attraction to presidents or presidential candidates who convincingly present themselves as capable of taking the nation forward during such times of distress and uncertainty (Chappell Jr., 1983). In order to assess economic crisis we focused on inflation and economic growth (cf. Burdekin, 1988; Fair, 1978; Harrington Jr., 1993; Powell & Whitten, 1993). As measures of leader endorsement we focus on two variables: Re-election success and presidential greatness. Re-election success reflects voting behavior thus acceptance of the leader. Presidential greatness focuses on the extent to which presidents get bills implemented and manage constituents and the general population. To implement new policies and generally be

seen as a great leader, presidents need to motivate a majority of stakeholders to accept them and their plans and to cooperate with them. Presidential communication is crucially important in this process (cf. De Luque, Washburn, Waldman, & House, 2008). Thus we believe presidential communication during economic hardship is a good start for research on the effects of regulatory orientation of leader communication during crisis.

METHOD

Promotion- and Prevention-Oriented Communication

To operationalize promotion- and prevention-oriented communication, we created a list of words connected to promotion and a list of words connected to prevention. The creation of these lists followed three steps. First, an expert in regulatory focus theory documented every word in these speeches associated with promotion and prevention orientation. This procedure led to a list of 68 base words. Second, two experts on regulatory focus theory reviewed the list and highlighted words they judged to best capture the core of promotion and prevention orientation. Subsequently, the three experts discussed words they did not immediately agree upon during a face-to-face meeting. This procedure led to a list of 20 base words that were strongly related to promotion and prevention orientation. The list of promotion-oriented words contained: ideal, promotion, enthusiasm, eager, change, revolution, growth, development, progress, and advancement. The list of prevention-oriented words contained: ought, fear, threat, danger, responsible, duty, obligation, prevention, anxiety, and safety. Third, we created a long-list of words to code for that included various variations of these base words. For instance, based on the word ideal we coded for variations of this word like idealistic, idyllic etc. In total we coded for 99 promotion-oriented words and 98 prevention-oriented words¹.

To measure promotion- and prevention-orientation of presidential communication we

investigated the first inaugural addresses of chosen US presidents from Washington to Bush Jr². We note here that, similar to how prior research (Emrich et al., 2004; Mio et al., 2005) has regarded inaugural addresses, we view these addresses not as ordinary speeches at specific moments in time, but rather as the most important proxies of presidents' use of visionary communication. Using the count function of a word-processor (Word for windows) the computer counted the promotion-oriented and prevention-oriented words in a total of 35 inaugural addresses. We summed all promotion-oriented words and all prevention-oriented words. To control for speech length, we divided these summations by the number of words in the speech.

Economic Crisis

Inflation. Inflation refers to a general increase in prices and a fall in the purchasing value of money. Although in recent years a small amount of inflation is not seen as a negative economic indicator, in general higher inflation coincides with more negative economic circumstances as it means prices rise and money becomes less valuable. In order to investigate inflation in the US we investigated the consumer price index (CPI). CPI represents the cost of a standard bundle of consumer goods (i.e. food, housing) as an approximation of the cost of living. Although multiple CPI measures can be computed (since bundles of goods can differ between measures) we made use of a measure by Officer (2011), because it is well documented and provides us with a valid CPI measure for the whole period we are interested in (1789 to 2009). For an extensive discussion of the measure we refer to Officer (2011). We calculated the growth of CPI per year, which reflects the inflation rate. We averaged the growth per year for the years in which a president held his function (excluding the year he got out of office to avoid overlapping years between presidents) to arrive at an average inflation rate per president.

Economic growth. Economic growth refers to an increase in size of the economy. In

order to investigate economic growth in the US we investigated gross domestic product (GDP). GDP is the market value of all final goods and services produced and purchased within a country during a given time period. We used real GDP per capita (as opposed to nominal GDP), which gives values of GDP per head of the population given the prices in a base year (2005) to be able to compare years and calculate growth. We used the real GDP per capita series of Johnston and Williamson (2011), because it is well documented and provides us with a valid GDP measure for the whole period we are interested in (1789 to 2009). We calculated the *growth* of the real GDP per capita. We averaged the growth per year for the years in which a president held his function (excluding the year he got out of office to avoid overlapping years between presidents) to arrive at an average economic growth rate per president.

Presidential Greatness

Multiple measures of presidential greatness with a diverse nature and from different points in time exist. These measure range from simple one-dimensional ranking of presidents by a panel of experts such as the Schlessinger poll from 1962 and the Murray and Blessing (1983) measure to rankings by panels of experts based on multiple dimension (up to 10) such as one developed by Winter (1987), by Smith and colleagues (2000) and the C-Span ranking from 2009 (<http://www.c-span.org/PresidentialSurvey/Overall-Ranking.aspx>). Given that these rankings usually differ in their outcomes to some extent we wanted to use all 5 above mentioned measures. Thus we created an overall greatness score by standardizing the greatness measures above and taking the mean of all five³. In order for this overall measure of presidential performance to be meaningful the different performance measures that are part of it should measure the same construct. To provide more evidence for the construct validity of the overall measure of presidential performance we conducted an exploratory factor analysis with the five measures as

input with pairwise deletion of missing values. The results favor a one-factor solution that explains no less than 92% of the variance of the items. Variance explained of the individual ratings varied from 89% to 97% and factor loadings were all above .94. A second factor had an eigenvalue of only 0.26 suggesting that only one factor underlies these five variables⁴.

Reelection Success

An important part of the job that a president needs to do is relate to the public and create public support for his policy. Being reelected would be a measure of such public support. To measure reelection success we scored which president was reelected directly after his first term (scoring a one) and which president was not elected directly after his first term (scoring a zero)⁵.

Controls

We argue that promotion- and prevention-oriented communication are quite different from constructs that are investigated in prior research about communication and presidential greatness. To ensure that indeed the effects we find are not due to any overlap with such constructs we control for a number of measures. First, Emrich and colleagues (2001) measured image-based communication in inaugural addresses using a computer count of image-based words as documented in a regressive imagery dictionary and found it was related to presidential greatness. Second, Mio and colleagues (2005) measured the number of metaphors in inaugural addresses using two trained coders and found it related to charisma. Third, Winter (1987) measured motive profiles of presidents (i.e. achievement motive, affiliation motive, and power motive) using two expert coders and found them related to a host of outcomes. Finally, Simonton assessed the charisma of presidents using an Adjective Checklist Approach by having experts judge how certain adjectives were typical for anonymized abstracts of presidential behavior, factor analyzing them and computing charisma scores based on this factor analysis (Simonton,

1988). We note that for the current research the scores of all of the above measures were taken directly from the articles cited. Given the amount of control variables, adding all of them in the same analysis would have created serious power problems. Adding any one of these variables as controls in our analysis did not change any of our conclusions regarding the findings, providing strong evidence that effects of regulatory orientation in presidential communication on our measures of presidential greatness and re-election success is independent from the variables used in prior research. In combination with the finding that these controls do not correlate with our independent variables, in the following we report the analyses without controls (Becker, 2005).

When comparing the effects of presidential communication on presidential performance from 1790 to 2009, time obviously plays an important role. Specifically, because many of our measures of presidential performance are post-hoc measures it could be the case that ratings are influenced by how long ago a president was in office (cf. Emrich et al., 2001). Thus, given that time also correlates with promotion orientation, we control for the effects of time by adding a variable noting the first year the president was in office.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

As a first investigation of the data we computed correlations between our focal variables (see Table 1). Promotion-oriented communication, prevention-oriented communication, inflation, and economic growth do not show any statistically significant correlations, although the correlations of promotion and prevention with inflation are negative and substantial (-.20 and -.28 respectively).

[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Both promotion- and prevention-oriented communication have no significant correlations

with the outcome measures (although the correlation between promotion-orientation and reelection is marginally significant) nor with any of the control variables (with the exception of the promotion-oriented communication and the time variable as well as prevention-oriented communication and affiliation motive). Inflation was correlated significantly with all outcomes.

Presidential Greatness

To test our hypotheses we used regression analyses with the overall greatness score as the dependent variable (see Table 2 for results). In the first step we only used first year in office as a predictor variable. In a second step we added standardized scores for inflation, economic growth, promotion-oriented communication and prevention-oriented communication.

[INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

In the third step (3a) we added the interactions between inflation and economic growth with promotion-oriented communication. The interaction of inflation and promotion-oriented communication was significant. The plot of this interaction is shown in Figure 2. Regions of significance analysis analysis (Preacher et al., 2006) showed that the effects of promotion-oriented communication on presidential greatness were significant if the standardized scores of inflation fall outside of the interval (-17.42; -0.18). In other words, promotion-oriented communication would have a negative effect when inflation would be extremely negative (lower than 17 SD below the mean). Interestingly, it already becomes a positive predictor of presidential greatness when inflation scores are higher than 0.18 SD below the mean. With a mean of 1.33 and a SD of 3.91 this means that promotion-oriented communication is a significant positive predictor of performance if inflation is larger than 0.63. So even with an inflation score slightly below average promotion-oriented communication is a positive influence.

The interaction of economic growth and promotion-oriented communication was also

significant. The plot of the interaction can be seen in Figure 2. We conducted region of significance analysis using the method of Preacher, Curran, and Bauer (2006). We found that the effects of promotion-oriented communication on presidential greatness were significant if the standardized scores of economic growth fall outside of the range of Z-values between 0.16 and 42.18. In other words, promotion-oriented communication only has a negative effect on presidential greatness when economic growth would be extremely and unlikely positive (higher than 42 SD above the mean). Interestingly, it becomes a positive predictor of presidential greatness when economic growth scores are lower than 0.16 SD above the mean. With a mean of 1.75 and a SD of 2.42 this means that promotion-oriented communication is a significant positive predictor of presidential greatness when economic growth is lower than 2.14. Therefore, in the situation ranging from negative growth to slightly above average economic growth promotion-oriented communication is positively related to scores of presidential greatness.

[INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

We repeated this third step (3b), but then with the interaction of prevention-oriented communication and both inflation and economic growth. The interactions of prevention-oriented communication did not significantly predict performance and effect sizes were rather small (although they were mostly in the predicted direction). We note that in steps 3a and 3b we decided to use two independent regressions to investigate the interaction of promotion- and prevention-oriented communication for power-related issues. As a robustness check we added a step in which all four interactions are added to the regression. As shown in table 2, there are no large differences in effect sizes and all significant effects retain their statistical significance.

Reelection Success

For the analysis of reelection success we recalculated the inflation and economic growth

scores to reflect only the years of the first term in office (i.e., up to the reelection moment).

Because reelection success is not a post-hoc measure we did not control for time. Furthermore, seeing as the number of observations was lower in this analysis ($n = 32$) we decided to change our alpha level and to consider p-values lower than .10 as significant.

[INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

To investigate reelection success we conducted a logistic regression analysis (see Table 3). In step zero we tested a model with no predictors. This model basically predicted that all presidents would be reelected and this was true in 62.5 percent of the cases (20 out of 32 presidents). In step one we entered promotion- and prevention-oriented communication, inflation, and economic growth as predictors and found that only promotion-oriented communication was a significant predictor of reelection success. This model correctly predicted 24 out of 32 elections (or 75 percent). In step 2a we entered the interactions between promotion-oriented communication and both inflation and economic growth. We found that the interaction of promotion-oriented communication and economic growth was a significant predictor, whereas the interaction of promotion-oriented communication and inflation was not, even though it was close to being significant and the pattern of results was in line with our predictions (see Table 3). This model predicts reelection success in 81.3 percent of the cases (26 out of 32 presidents).

We then further investigated the pattern of these interaction effects. For economic growth, scoring one standard deviation *below* the average on promotion-oriented communication gives presidents a 93 percent chance for being reelected when economic growth is high, but when economic growth is low this percentage drops to one percent. Scoring one standard deviation *above* the average on promotion-oriented communication gives presidents a 66 percent chance for being reelected when economic growth is high but when economic growth is low this

percentage increases to 100 percent. This pattern of results is thus in line with our expectation that when economic circumstances are unfavorable (low growth), promotion-oriented communication feeds into reelection success.

A similar pattern emerged for inflation. When inflation is low (positive economic circumstances) scoring one standard deviation *below* the average on promotion-oriented communication gives presidents a 36 percent chance for being reelected and this percentage drops to 14 percent when promotion-oriented communication is high. Importantly, when inflation is high, scoring one standard deviation *below* the average on promotion-oriented communication gives presidents a 28 percent chance for being reelected and this percentage increases to 100 percent when promotion-oriented communication is high. Again, this pattern of results is thus in line with our expectation that when economic circumstances are unfavorable (high inflation), promotion-oriented communication feeds into reelection success.

In an alternative second step (Step 2b) we entered the interactions between prevention-oriented communication and both inflation and economic growth. We found that neither of these interaction was a significant predictor of reelection success. We note that in steps 2a and 2b we decided to use two independent regressions to investigate the interaction of promotion- and prevention-oriented communication for power-related issues. As a robustness check we also added a step (2c) in which all four interactions are added to the regression at the same time. As shown in table 2, there are no large differences in effect sizes and although the statistical significance of the interaction effects diminishes, both interactions are still close to being statistically significant and the size and direction of the effects remained the same.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study show clearly that promotion-oriented communication interacted

with economic situation and that it became a significant positive predictor of leader endorsement when economic circumstances were worse than average. The results for reelection also seem to indicate that in situations of positive economic circumstances promotion-oriented communication can also have a negative influence, emphasizing that promotion-oriented communication is only a positive influence in negative economic circumstances. We found no significant effects for prevention-oriented communication (and rather low effect sizes).

Even though we were able to investigate almost the entire population of US presidents, the sample size of the study is low, which may explain a lack of findings for prevention-oriented communication. Also the findings could be an artifact of our specific operationalization of regulatory orientation of leader communication and it is questionable to what extent the findings for US presidents could generalize to other leaders (and specifically business leaders). Finally, we only investigated the interaction effect on the dependent variable in the theoretical model and not on the mediating variable and due to the nature of the study were unable to test for causality. Therefore, in a second study we investigate organizational leaders, use a manipulation of regulatory orientation of leader communication and use motivation to realize the leader's plans as an outcome variable in an experimental design.

STUDY 2: EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

Business students were either given a cover story about the effects of the current economic crisis on their job opportunities as future managers or they were not given such a cover story (the crisis versus control manipulation). They subsequently listened to a speech by a business professor about essential competencies of future managers. The speech which comprised our regulatory orientation manipulation stressed that creativity is of the utmost importance for future managers to become successful. We then provided participants with a task that we

introduced as a measure of their ability to become a creative manager. Thus, participants who were more motivated by the leader's appeal should perform better on the task because it allowed them to show that they had what it takes to become a successful manager (cf. Stam et al., 2010a).

We manipulate regulatory orientation of leader communication by contrasting a promotion-oriented speech with a prevention-oriented speech (cf. Higgins et al., 1997; Stam et al., 2010a). As a consequence, the effects of promotion orientation (or prevention orientation) are reflected by the differences of scores between the promotion and prevention conditions, and we test these differences in both the crisis condition and the control condition. Specifically, we expect that particularly in case of crisis (as compared to the control condition), promotion-oriented communication leads followers to be more motivated by a leader's plans than prevention-oriented communication. Note that this approach is different to the approach in Study 1 where we assessed the strength of both the promotion and the prevention orientation of leader communication and tested their separate effects on leader endorsement.

METHOD

Participants and Design

The participants in this study were 113 business and economics students. Because this study relies on the concern of students of the downstream effects of economic crisis on their job opportunities, we only relied on older-year students (age between 19 and 29, $M = 20.2$, $SD = 1.76$) who are closer to the job-market. Data of 2 participants were deleted because a coding error in their participant number. Data of 5 participants were removed because experimenter notes and very limited answers on open questions indicated they did not take the experiment seriously. This resulted in 106 usable cases (41 females and 65 males). We used a 2 (Leader communication: promotion-oriented versus prevention-oriented) X 2 (Crisis: crisis versus control) between

persons design. Participants were randomly assigned to experimental conditions.

Procedure

Participants were seated in individual cubicles and completed the study via a computer. For half of the participants the study started with a cover story concerning the effects of the economic crisis on job opportunities of business students (the crisis manipulation). It continued with a speech by a business professor concerning the necessity of creative abilities for business students to become successful managers (the regulatory orientation of leader communication manipulation). Finally, students were asked to showcase such creative behaviors through a behavioral task. After completing the task participants were carefully debriefed, paid 10 euro (approximately USD 13), and thanked. All participants later confirmed that they understood that the information about the job market had not been the truth and they were provided with accurate information about the actual job market situation.

Crisis manipulation. Because the feeling of crisis is stronger when there is personal involvement, we opted to focus the crisis manipulation on something that was genuinely important for our participants: the downstream effects of crisis on job prospects for students. In the crisis condition we told participants that, due to the current economic crisis, these prospects were dire and that many students did not find a job or found only temporary jobs. In the control condition we did not give such information⁶.

Leader communication manipulation. In order to create leader communication that was relevant for the students as well as connected to the crisis manipulation, we used a manipulation designed by Stam et al. (2010a). They created promotion- and prevention-oriented visionary speeches about the importance of innovative and creative management for future managers. In the promotion-oriented condition the leader communicated a promotion orientation by

emphasizing the positive consequences of becoming an innovative manager. In the prevention orientation condition the leader communicated a prevention orientation by emphasizing the negative consequences of not becoming an innovative manager (for the complete speeches see Stam et al., 2010a). Both speeches were of exact equal length⁶.

Motivation to realize the plans of the leader measure. We wanted to measure motivation to realize the plans of the leader by providing a task that measured the effort of the participants to act in line with the leader's plans (i.e. be creative). As a task we used the computerized version of the d2 concentration task by Brickenkamp (1981) as used by Brunstein and Gollwitzer (1996). We told participants that this was a "concentration" task and that measures of concentration were good predictors of creative ability. As a consequence a higher score on this scale indicates a higher motivation to be seen as creative. Participants were presented a line of d's and p's with either none, one, or two apostrophes. They were asked to click with their mouse on the ds with two apostrophes. The participants were given 8 seconds per line to complete this task. In the beginning of the experiment we first allowed participants to practice this task with several lines. Immediately after this we tested their base line performance with 8 consecutive lines. The score of this base line performance measure was the number of ds with two apostrophes clicked upon, averaged over the 8 lines. Participant's scores could range from 0 (no correct responses) to 7 (because there were 7 ds with two apostrophes in each line). After this test the "real" experiment started, including the manipulations. After the manipulations we once again introduced the task, but with 18 consecutive lines. This time we also told participants that the former test had been a practice concentration test and that this was the 'real' test. To relate task performance to the visionary speech we indicated to participants that the task that they were about to perform was important for innovative managers.

This procedure was modeled after Stam et al. (2010b) who in their turn adapted it from Brunstein and Gollwitzer (1996). Brunstein and Gollwitzer (1996) showed that participants that were highly motivated to become physicians scored higher on a concentration task when it was presented as critical for physicians, but not when the task was presented as irrelevant for physicians. Therefore, we expected participants who were more motivated to become innovative managers to perform better on the concentration tasks.

RESULTS

To analyze the score of participants on the concentration task we controlled for their base line score. Therefore, we conducted a repeated measures analysis with score on the task before or after the manipulations as a within subjects factor and the manipulations as between subject factors. Results show a significant three-way interaction between the within subjects factor and the manipulations, $F(1, 102) = 4.04, p = .047, \eta^2 = .04$. To investigate this interaction further we conducted simple main effects analyses (see Figure 3). In the crisis condition participants who heard the promotion-oriented leader communication scored more positive on the concentration task in relation to their base line score ($M = 1.18, SD = 0.09$), $F(1, 104) = 4.22, p = .04, \eta^2 = .04$, than participants who heard the prevention-oriented leader communication ($M = 0.90, SD = 0.10$). In the control condition participants who heard the promotion-oriented leader communication did not score more (or less) positive on the concentration task in relation to their base line score ($M = 1.04, SD = 0.10$) than participants who heard the prevention-oriented leader communication ($M = 1.15, SD = 0.10$), $F(1, 104) = 0.62, p = ns$.

DISCUSSION

The results of this experimental study demonstrate once more that crisis and regulatory orientation of leader communication interact to determine outcomes. In this case we find that in

times of crisis promotion-oriented leader communication leads to greater enacted motivation to realize a leader's plans than prevention-oriented leader communication. This nicely complements the results in Study 1 concerning the effects of promotion- and prevention-oriented leader communication on leader endorsement. However, neither study reported conducted a test of the full moderated mediation model (see Figure 1). The next study will therefore test the full model.

STUDY 3: SCENARIO STUDY TESTING THE FULL MODEL

In this study participants were presented with a scenario that prompted them to play the role of a member of the board of advisors of a fictional company (Lotech). Participants were given the task to provide the company's top management with advice about a new hire. Participants were provided with information about two candidates for the position; one candidate with promotion- (or prevention-) oriented communication, and one "neutral" candidate (a candidate with no clear regulatory orientation of communication). The promotion or prevention orientation of the communication of the candidate was manipulated by the candidates' written future plans for the company. The company's state of affairs was manipulated to reflect crisis or stability. We measured the extent to which participants were motivated towards realizing the candidate's plans and which candidate they advised the company management to hire. This allows us to assess the full theoretical model of this paper (see Figure 1).

METHOD

Participants and Design

A total of 314 (part-time) students (age between 16 and 67, $M = 26.99$, $SD = 9.60$) were randomly assigned to the conditions of a 2 (Leader communication: promotion-oriented versus prevention-oriented) \times 2 (Crisis: crisis versus control) between persons design. Participants were member of Prolific Academic: a data collection initiative of a British University

(<https://prolificacademic.co.uk/>). They were contacted online and conducted the study on their own computers. Note that previous research has shown that data obtained with online platforms are at least as reliable as those obtained via traditional methods (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010).

Procedure

Participants read a scenario in which they were asked to imagine they were a member of the board of advisors of a fictional company (Lotech). It was their task to give advice about candidates for the position of CEO of the company. Participants read how the company was in trouble or performing well (the crisis manipulation) and then saw the curriculum vitae of two candidates. We added a short written statement about the future plans for the company of each candidate. The first candidate provided a statement that did not communicate a specific regulatory orientation. The second candidate however communicated either a prevention- or a promotion-oriented statement (the leader communication manipulation). Finally, participants were asked to indicate their motivation to realize the candidate's plans and whom they would advise to the company's management for the position of CEO. After completing the task participants were debriefed, paid 1.35 British Pounds (approximately USD 2.03), and thanked.

Crisis manipulation. To manipulate crisis we gave the participants information about the company that was the focus of the scenario. In the crisis condition (scored 1) we made clear that the company's turnover and profit were alarmingly low and shrinking, that the company was in bad shape and the situation was very dire. In the control condition (scored 0) we made clear that the company's turnover and profit were satisfying and were growing steadily, that the company was in good shape and the situation was stable.

Leader communication manipulation. In the promotion-oriented leader communication

condition (scored 0) the statement of the candidate communicated a promotion orientation by emphasizing enthusiastically the challenges that lay ahead, providing hope and focusing on gains. In the prevention-oriented leader condition (scored 1) the statement communicated a prevention orientation by emphasizing the need for being careful and avoiding errors, providing safety and focusing on avoiding losses. The neutral candidate did not specifically communicate a prevention or promotion orientation but emphasized the need for business analytics and the use of data to drive business planning. All speeches were of exact equal length.

Motivation to realize the leader's plans. Motivation to realize the leader's plans was measured with the openness to organizational change scale (Miller et al, 1994; Wanberg & Banas, 2000). The scale consists of 8 items, of which 4 are positively framed and 4 are negatively framed, and uses a 7 point Likert scale (1 = completely disagree; 7 = completely agree). Sample items are "I would consider myself "open" to these plans" and "In light of the proposed plans, I would be quite reluctant to consider changing the way Lotech works now" (reverse coded). The scale was reliable in our sample ($\alpha = .88$, $M = 4.43$, $SD = 1.21$)

Leader endorsement. We measured leader endorsement by asking participants to vote for one of the candidates: Candidate number 1 (the "neutral" candidate) or candidate number 2 (the promotion- or prevention-oriented candidate).

RESULTS

The full model that we are testing is a moderated mediation model with a moderation in the first path (see Figure 1). Therefore we used the bootstrapping PROCESS method (model 7) using 1000 bootstrap samples (Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes 2007; Hayes, 2013). The output is detailed in Table 4. We specifically chose PROCESS as it is able to deal with moderated mediation models that contain binary moderators and outcomes. This method uses two steps to probe the

indirect effects of regulatory orientation of leaders' communication on leader endorsement through motivation to realize the plans in both the crisis and control conditions. We note that the data of 8 respondents were removed from the data set for this analysis due to missing values leading to a sample size of 306. First, we assessed a model with the motivation to realize the leader's plans (the mediator) as a dependent variable and the manipulations and their interaction as independent variables. We found that the company's situation did not significantly affect motivation to realize the leader's plans ($B = -.33, t = 1.86, p = .06$), while leader communication did significantly affect motivation to realize the leader's plans ($B = -.45, t = 2.62, p = .01$). We note that because we coded prevention orientation as a 1 and promotion orientation as a 0, a negative effect means motivation to realize the leader's plans was higher when promotion-oriented communication was provided than when prevention-oriented communication was provided. Importantly, the interaction effect of leader communication and crisis also significantly affected motivation to realize the leaders plans ($B = -.70, t = 2.84, p < .01$). The mean of promotion-oriented communication ($M = 4.70, SD = .13$) is much higher than the mean of prevention-oriented communication ($M = 3.54, SD = .12; F(1, 310) = 44.50, p = .00$) in the crisis condition and the mean of promotion-oriented communication ($M = 5.00, SD = .12$) is also higher than the mean of prevention-oriented communication ($M = 4.54, SD = .13; F(1, 310) = 6.95, p = .01$) in the control condition (see Figure 3).

[INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Secondly, we assessed the model in which the dependent variable is leader endorsement and the independent variables are the leader communication manipulation and motivation to realize the leader's plans. This analysis is based on logistic regression. We found that leader communication ($B = -.43, Z = 1.46, p = .43$) did not predict the choice of candidates significantly.

As expected, choice of candidate was predicted by motivation to realize the leader's plans ($B = 1.31, Z = 8.03, p < .01$). Then, the indirect effects of leader communication on leader endorsement through motivation to realize the leader's plans were tested. In the crisis condition the indirect effect was significant ($B = -1.51, 95\% \text{ CI } \{-2.18, -.96\}$). The indirect effect in the control condition was also significant ($B = -.59, 95\% \text{ CI } \{-1.13, -.19\}$) but weaker. To test whether this difference was significant, we investigated the bootstrapped differences in indirect effects between the crisis and control conditions (Hayes, 2013). The index of this difference is $-.92$ and its 95% interval ranges from -1.59 to $-.24$. Because this confidence interval does not include zero, we can conclude that the indirect effects differ significantly. These results demonstrate an interaction effect of regulatory orientation of leader communication and crisis on the mediator motivation to realize the leader's plans and an effect of motivation to realize the leader's plans on the dependent variable leader endorsement. Combined with the results for the tests of the indirect effects this indicates that promotion-oriented communication (compared to prevention-oriented communication) affects leader endorsement through motivation to realize the leader's plans, and that this effect is stronger in crisis situations than in control situations.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

We argued that times of crisis moderates the effects of regulatory orientation of leader communication on leader endorsement. More specifically, we predicted that in times of crisis more promotion-oriented leader communication would lead followers to be more motivated for the leader's plans and subsequently to endorse the leader more. The results of a field study of US presidents demonstrated that promotion-oriented communication of presidents related strongly to re-election success and presidential greatness, but only when inflation was high or economic growth was low (i.e. in times of economic crisis). The results of a behavioral experiment

demonstrated that in times of crisis, but not in times of prosperity, promotion-oriented communication, rather than prevention-oriented communication, of professional leaders lead to more motivation to realize the leader's plans. Finally, the results of a scenario study showed that in times of crisis, but less so when there is no crisis, potential organizational leaders of companies motivate others to realize their plans more when they communicate a promotion-orientation (as opposed to prevention-orientation) and that such enhanced motivation to realize the leader's plans lead to more leader endorsement. These results have important theoretical implications.

Theoretical Implications

Prior research on leadership in crisis is mainly inspired by theories of transformational and charismatic leadership, which argue that crisis fosters the emergence and success of charismatic/transformational leaders (Bass, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1987). However, although these theories address (vision) communication as one of the key behaviors to display in times of crisis, they do not address content of communication, i.e., what is it that such communication should convey? Addressing this question, the current research contributes to this literature by identifying the importance of promotion-oriented communication. More promotion-oriented communication leads to more leadership endorsement the more followers experience crisis.

Our findings also complement research on regulatory fit (Avnet & Higgins, 2006; Cesario et al., 2004). This literature suggests that a fit between regulatory focus of an individual and regulatory orientation of the environment (for instance the task to be done) determines motivation and performance. This theory also underlies findings of Stam et al. (2010a) that vision communication is more effective if its regulatory orientation fits the regulatory focus of followers. As detailed in the current paper, however, times of crisis are different from the more day-to-day circumstances in which such fit effects have been established, and the negative affect

and uncertainty associated with crisis attenuates prevention fit effects in favor of a focus on promotion misfit. These findings are not just relevant to our understanding of leadership in times of crisis, but also complement the emerging interest in fit between regulatory orientation of leader communication and followers (Benjamin & Flynn, 2006; Stam et al., 2010a, 2010b), by showing that the effects of fit may be dependent on the situation.

Importantly, our conclusion need not be limited to leader communication. Other forms of leader behavior may also be more or less promotion-oriented (cf. Venus, Stam, & van Knippenberg, 2013), and thus play a role in leadership endorsement in times of crisis. An example of such behavior is goal setting. Effective leadership is often argued to follow in part from setting high goals to motivate followers (Bass, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1987). Goals are also related to regulatory focus. So-called maximal goals, goals that are set in terms of what would ideally be achieved as opposed to so-called minimal goals set in terms of what should minimally be achieved (i.e., even when they concern the same target) are for instance closely aligned with a promotion focus (rather than the prevention focus invited by minimal goals; Brendl & Higgins, 1996). Thus in times of crisis setting maximal goals as opposed to minimal goals may be more effective in mobilizing and motivating followers.

Strengths, Limitations and Future Research

Inevitably the current studies have their shortcomings. Study 1 has a small sample size, distal (and mostly post-hoc) measures of leader endorsement, a sample (US presidents) that may not generalize to leadership in organizations and is correlational in nature. Both studies 1 and 2 hold no evidence that may directly speak to the underlying mediating process at the follower side. Moreover, Studies 2 and 3 may raise concerns with external validity. The great strength of the current research, however, is that our conclusions are not dependent on any one of these studies

in and of itself, but rather rely on an interaction effect that is replicated across studies. Because none of the above limitations is shared by all three studies, specific study limitations do not offer a valid account for the consistency of findings across. The experimental evidence from Studies 2 and 3 speaks against an interpretation in terms of third variables or reversed causality, Study 2 and 3 findings suggest that Study 1 findings also generalize to organizations, and Study 1 findings for reelection and Study 2 findings for the behavioral measure of motivation to realize the leader's plans show that results are not contingent on subjective evaluations of leadership.

At the same time we have to acknowledge that, although our findings suggest a strong causal effect of crisis interacting with regulatory orientation of leader communication on follower motivation to realize the leader's plans, we cannot speak to the causality of the relation between motivation to implement the plans of the leader and leadership endorsement. More specifically, our design to test this moderated mediation is what Spencer and colleagues (2005) call a measurement-of-mediator design and the essential problem of this design is that it measures both mediator and dependent variable instead of manipulating the former. As a consequence we could not establish causality of this relationship. Another issue is that our research is based on the idea that crisis is associated with intense negative affect and strong feelings of uncertainty. At the same time, none of our studies presents findings for affect or emotions. This presents a strong limitation of the current research, despite its findings regarding motivation and endorsement.

Practical Implications

The purpose of the present study was to develop fundamental theory in leadership, not to develop interventions, and we believe caution is always in order in formulating implications for practice on the basis of research that was not explicitly designed to evaluate such implications. With that caveat in place, we may note that the present findings would clearly point to the

importance of promotion-oriented communication in times of crisis. This conclusion holds a word of caution for leaders in crisis situations that might be tempted to communicate a prevention orientation. Understandable as such tendencies may be, they would convey their plans to followers less effectively. What would be needed is promotion-oriented communication.

A somewhat different spin on the same issue is that the current findings may also be understood to speak to leader selection and development. Should organizational management explicitly target the selection of leadership to move out of the crisis (e.g., a crisis manager), selection could be based in part on regulatory focus. Leaders with more promotion-focused personality are more likely to communicate in a more promotion-oriented manner (cf. Kark & van Dijk, 2007). Thus, individuals with chronic promotion focus may be especially suited to lead during times of crises. Alternatively, leadership development could focus on the development of promotion-oriented communication skills to develop leaders to effectively lead in times of crisis.

Conclusion

Our findings suggest that for leadership in times of crisis promotion-oriented communication is more effective in getting endorsed by followers both than less promotion-oriented communication and than prevention-oriented communication. Because these findings need not be limited to leader communication (since other behaviors may also display a regulatory orientation), these findings not only yield insights in effective leader communication in times of crisis, but also extend an invitation to leadership research to further develop this regulatory focus perspective on crisis leadership. Given the importance of leadership in times of crisis as well as the currently modest development of our understanding of such leadership, further developments would have value-added for leadership theory and practice.

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FOOTNOTES

¹ To investigate the potential influence of valence, we took those words from the prevention list that were negatively valenced (fear, anxious, danger, and threat) and used these as a measure for negative prevention. We have also made a measure of positive prevention by adding the scores of neutral/positive words (ought, obligation, prevention, responsibility, safety, and duty) as well as an even more positive prevention measure (with only prevention, safety, and responsible). Neither of these measures showed main effect or interactions effects in our model.

² Missing inaugural addresses occurred for a variety of reasons. Five presidents never gave an inaugural address, two presidents gave only one inaugural address despite serving more than a single term, and two presidents' inaugural addresses were not used as they died within 6 months of being elected.

³ We note that the effects we report for the overall presidential greatness measure are very similar to the results of analyses for each of the five individual greatness measures.

⁴ Economic management is part of some of the presidential performance measures. This may create confusion regarding differences between moderator and outcome. To control for this we also conducted analyses with economic management scores taken out of the measures wherever possible. Without economic management being a part of these presidential performance ratings all significant effects remain significant, in the same direction, and of similar size.

⁵ We did not take into consideration five presidents who died during their first term. Four presidents were strictly speaking not reelected but were elected after having taking over the presidency as vice-president. Because they had a first term as president for several years, we did put them in the reelected category. Excluding these presidents who gave their first inaugural speech only after being reelected from the analysis does not result in different findings.

⁶ In Study 2 we used a six item-scale as a check on our crisis manipulation ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 1.00$, $\alpha = .81$). An example item is “I am positive about my future position on the job market” (1 = *disagree*; 7 = *agree*). A 2 x 2 ANOVA only shows a significant main effect of the crisis manipulation, $F(1, 102) = 13.90$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .12$ (crisis condition: $M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.13$; control condition: $M = 4.89$, $SD = 0.13$). We used 2 items (1 = *not at all*; 7 = *very much*) as a check the leader communication manipulation (“To what extent did the speech present the innovative manager as ideal for future managers” ; “To what extent did speech present the innovative manager as a responsibility for future managers [reverse coded]), $M = 4.62$, $SD = 1.24$, $r = .40$, $p < .001$. Results show only a significant main effect of the leader communication manipulation, $F(1, 102) = 86.46$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .46$ (promotion condition: $M = 5.44$, $SD = 0.13$; prevention condition: $M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.13$).

To check the successfulness of the crisis manipulation in Study 3 we used two items pertaining to participant’s perceptions of the situation of the company (i.e., “The company is: (a) stable [(scored 1] or (b) in crisis” [(scored 2)]. Participants could choose the answer option that fitted the described situation. All Chi-square tests were statistically significant (p ’s $< .01$) and in the right direction showing that our crisis manipulation had the intended effect. As our leader communication manipulation checks in Study 3 we used two items pertaining to participant’s perceptions of the communication of the applicant (i.e., “The candidate’s vision: (a) Addresses safety and security [scored 1], (b) Neither addresses opportunities and investments nor addresses safety and security [scored 2], and (c) Addresses opportunities and investments” [scored 3]). Again, all Chi-square tests were statistically significant (p ’s $< .01$) and in the right direction showing that our leader communication manipulation had the intended effect.

Table 1:
Correlation Table of Variables Used in Study 1

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 Promotion Orientation	.004	.003												
2 Prevention Orientation	.005	.002	.14											
3 Inflation (CPI)	1.33	3.91	-.20	-.28†										
4 Economic growth (GDP)	1.75	2.42	-.13	.02	.16									
5 Reelection success	.48	.51	.30	-.05	.22	-.01								
6 Presidential greatness	-.12	.91	.12	.09	.43**	.18	.51**							
7 Year of address	1892	60	.35**	-.15	.36**	.08	.18	.03						
8 Image based communication	.04	.008	.15	-.19	.19	.21	.15	.13	.52**					
9 metaphors	10.9	8.29	.05	-.21	.16	.18	.07	.05	.37**	.66**				
10 Achievement motivation	50.03	10.16	.30	-.11	.17	-.21	.32	-.02	.52**	.16	.18			
11 Affiliation motivation	49.97	10.15	.02	-.49**	.25	.06	.07	.07	.42*	.46**	.47**	.31		
12 Power motivation	50.00	10.09	.10	-.17	.38*	.13	.10	.36*	.51**	.35*	.14	.30	.48**	
13 Charisma	.00	.99	.19	-.10	.28	.25	.22	.48**	.23	.51**	.36*	-.03	.17	.20

Correlations are based on pairwise deletion of missing values with sample size ranging from 27 to 37.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 2:
Regression Table for Presidential Greatness in Study 1

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3a	Step 3b	Step 3c
Step 1	$R^2 = .01$	$\Delta R^2 = .40^{**}$	$\Delta R^2 = .14^{**}$	$\Delta R^2 = .00^*$	$\Delta R^2 = .14^{**}$
Year of address	-.11	-.48*	-.46**	-.48*	-.57**
Inflation (CPI)		.57**	.73**	.57**	.68**
Growth (GDP)		.27	.38*	.27	.44*
Promotion orientation		.41*	.41*	.41*	.46*
Prevention orientation		.02	.01	.02	.02
Promotion * CPI			.47*		.65*
Promotion * GDP			-.53*		-.61*
Prevention * CPI				-.08	-.31
Prevention * GDP				.04	.09

Regression analyses are based on pairwise deletion of missing values

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 3:
Logistic Regression Table for Reelection Success in Study 1

	Reelection (B)	S.E.	Exp (B)
Step 1	$p = .16$		
Inflation (CPI)	.29	.41	1.33
Growth (GDP)	.66	.59	1.93
Promotion orientation	1.32*	.67	3.74
Prevention orientation	-.19	.48	.83
Step 2a	$p = .03$		
Inflation (CPI)	1.84	1.17	6.31
Growth (GDP)	.54	.76	1.72
Promotion orientation	2.27*	1.24	9.72
Prevention orientation	-.50	.58	.60
Promotion * CPI	2.47	1.60	11.86
Promotion * GDP	-3.24*	1.97	.04
Step 2b	$p = .71$		
Inflation (CPI)	.34	.47	1.40
Growth (GDP)	.49	.64	1.63
Promotion orientation	1.48*	.72	4.40
Prevention orientation	-.27	.49	.77
Prevention * CPI	.34	.65	1.41
Prevention * GDP	.47	.75	2.30
Step 2c	$p = .13$		
Inflation (CPI)	1.81	1.16	6.13
Growth (GDP)	.55	.78	1.73
Promotion orientation	2.20*	1.21	8.96
Prevention orientation	-.52	.57	.59
Promotion * CPI	2.27	1.62	9.69
Promotion * GDP	-2.98	2.05	.05
Prevention * CPI	.32	.93	1.37
Prevention * GDP	.38	1.13	1.47

* $p < .1$

Table 4:
Results of PROCESS analysis in Study 3

Variables	Motivation to realize plans		Leader endorsement	
	<i>b</i>	se	<i>b</i>	se
Crisis manipulation	-.45	.17	NA	NA
Leader communication manipulation	-.33**	.18	-.43	.30
Crisis X Leader communication	-.70*	.25	NA	NA
Motivation to realize plans			1.31**	.16
Indirect effects of leader communication on leader endorsement through motivation to realize plans				
	<i>effect</i>	se	95% confidence interval	
Control condition	-.59	.24	-1.13	-.19
Crisis condition	-1.51	.30	-2.18	-.96

N = 306.

* *p* < .05

** *p* < .01

Figure 1:
Overview of the Theoretical Model

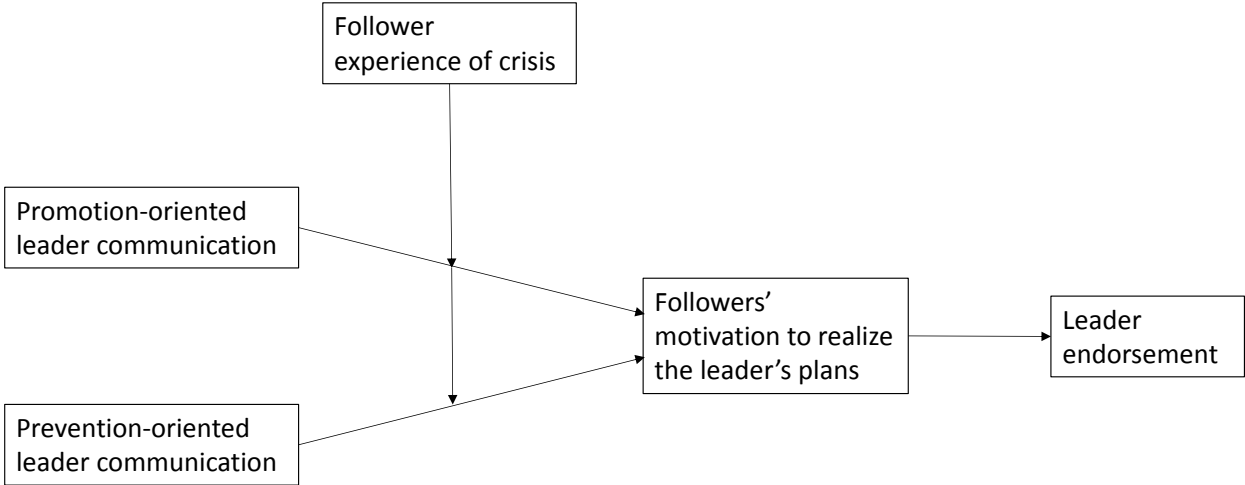


Figure 2:

Study 1: Promotion-Oriented Communication, Presidential Greatness, and Inflation (left) and Economic Growth (right)

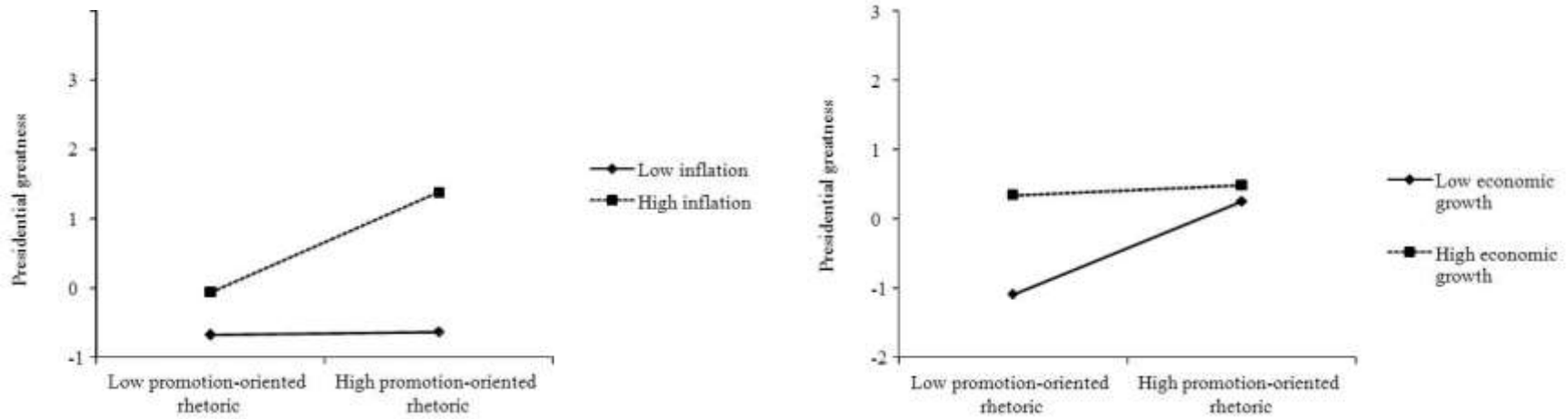


Figure 3:

Crisis, Leader Communication, and Motivation to Realize the Leader’s Plans in Study 2 (left) and Study 3 (right)

