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FRAMING UP WORKPLACE COMPASSION: THE ROLE OF LEADERS' PROSOCIAL FRAMING IN COWORKERS' INTENTION TO PROVIDE SOCIAL SUPPORT

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NATALIE CHRISTENE DAUGHERTY
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FRAMING UP WORKPLACE COMPASSION: THE ROLE OF LEADERS' PROSOCIAL FRAMING IN COWORKERS' INTENTION TO PROVIDE SOCIAL SUPPORT

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

BY

Dr. Ryan S. Bisel, Chair

Dr. Michael W. Kramer

Dr. Sun Kyong Lee

Dr. Justin Reedy

Dr. Shane Connelly

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To Mom and Dad

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the influence of leaders' prosocial framing on coworkers' intent to provide social support to fellow coworkers. This study contributes to the growing literature on positive organizational communication scholarship (POCS) by investigating the relationships among framing, prosociality, compassion, and social support in leadership, peer coworker relationships, and organizational communication contexts. This dissertation followed two 3 x 2 experimental designs—a pilot and a study. Participants were randomly assigned to one of six hypothetical conditions. Conditions differed in terms of type of leader message [i.e., Autobiographical Prosocial Leader Message (APLM), prosocial directive, or control group] and type of relationship with peer coworker (i.e., close or distant). In the hypothetical scenario, a coworker (close or distant) is experiencing a personal hardship that may interfere with work. Participants indicated their intent to provide social support and fear of expressing compassion to the coworker. Hypotheses state APLM messages increase employees' intention to provide instrumental social support, emotional social support, and decrease fear of expressing compassion as compared to the other experimental conditions. Additionally, hypotheses state that participants in the APLM condition perceive the hypothetical leader as more credible that those assigned to other hypothetical leader message experimental conditions.

A pilot sample of full-time working adults ($N = 112$) participated in the experimental survey design. Results indicate a significant main effect for type of coworker on intention to provide emotional social support and instrumental social support to a peer coworker. Participants assigned to the close coworker condition were

more likely to show more intent to provide emotional social support and instrumental social support than those participants assigned to the distant coworker condition. Results indicated a main effect for leader message on decreasing fear of expressing compassion to peer coworkers. Specifically, participants assigned to the APLM condition reported lower levels of fear of expressing compassion to coworkers as compared to coworkers assigned to the prosocial directive and control condition leader messages.

Another sample of full-time working adults ($N = 225$) participated in a replication of the experimental survey design. Results indicate a main effect for type of coworker on intention to provide emotional social support and instrumental social support. Participants assigned to the close coworker condition were more likely to provide social support compared to participants assigned to the distant coworker condition. Results indicated leaders in the APLM condition were perceived to be more credible than leaders in the control condition. After one of the manipulation checks was not successful, participants assigned to the prosocial directive were removed from further analysis. A final subset of the sample consisting of full-time working adults ($N = 148$) were included in the 2 x 2 experimental survey design. Results indicate a main effect for type of coworker on intention to provide emotional social support and instrumental social support. Participants assigned to the close coworker condition were more likely to provide social support compared to participants assigned to the distant coworker condition. APLM and type of coworker interacted. Specifically, in the presence of APLM, participants were more likely to provide emotional social support to a distant coworker as compared to participants assigned to the control/distant condition. Results also indicated leaders in the

APLM condition were perceived to be more credible than leaders in the control condition.

This dissertation contributes to organizational communication research in several ways: First, this dissertation contributes to the leadership framing literature, specifically in terms using the framing device of autobiographical stories. Second, by sharing an autobiographical story about experiencing a personal hardship, a leader's credibility was not harmed. Third, this dissertation demonstrates differences in communication markers associated with type of coworker relationship. Fourth, a unique contribution of this study of organizational communication is that it included a measurement of participants' fear of expressing compassion to others. Overall, this dissertation takes a Positive Organizational Communication Scholarship (POCS) approach in its contribution to Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS). This dissertation concludes with practical implications, limitations, and future directions that result from this study.
Keywords: leadership framing, autobiographical stories, prosocial motivation, peer coworker relationships, emotional social support, instrumental social support, fear of expressing compassion, workplace compassion, leadership credibility, Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS), Positive Organizational Communication Scholarship (POCS).

Chapter 1: Introduction

This dissertation explores the influence of leaders' framing on employees' intentions to be prosocial. Specifically, this dissertation investigates whether a strategically-framed leader message (i.e., an autobiographical story of hardship) can measurably increase members' intent to express compassion and to provide social support at work. "Prosocial behavior covers the broad range of actions intended to benefit one or more people other than oneself—behaviors such as helping, comforting, sharing, and cooperation" (Batson, 1998, p. 282). Existing prosocial organizational scholarship investigates three prosocial constructs: motives, behaviors, and impact (Bolino & Grant, 2016). A central premise of this dissertation is that leadership framing may serve as an antecedent to employees' prosocial motives and behaviors. Framing is the process of asserting an interpretation over conflicting or competing interpretations (Fairhurst, 2011). Framing research in management and organizational literature has been investigated at the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). This dissertation explores the role of framing at the meso-organizational level, primarily. Framing at the meso-level focuses on how language is used to mobilize members by shaping their view of organizational reality (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). I define *prosocial leadership framing* as communication that encourages hearers to benefit others by reshaping perceptions of organizational reality.

To date, the prosocial literature tends to focus on beneficiaries who are the recipients of the organization's goods or services, such as scholarship recipients (Grant, 2007). However, organizational members are also at times recipients of prosocial behaviors from other members, such as when compassion is expressed through

coworkers' organized efforts (Dutton, Worline, Frost, & Lilius, 2006). Organizational members generally spend much of their time at work and with peer coworkers, as compared to supervisors or upper-level management. The stresses organizational members experience at work are not always work-related, but also, arise from personal life experiences outside of work (Lilius et al., 2008). There is more to be learned about how to encourage social support to others at work for non-work related stresses.

There is little known about how strategic leadership framing could enhance others' willingness to extend peer social support. This dissertation explores whether a leader's autobiographical story (a framing device; Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996) about his or her own experience as a beneficiary increases employees' intention to provide social support and compassion as compared to a directive-based or a control message. The leader's autobiographical narrative involves receiving social support from coworkers. Social support takes many forms. In the organizational context, "support results from the ongoing, stable relationships that develop as organization members work together and help each other through times of high uncertainty" (Ray, 1987, p. 174). Of course, social support can be manifested in compassionate communication. Compassion is a relational process in that it affects the person receiving, the person providing, others observing, and the quality of connectedness among communicators (Dutton, Workman, & Hardin, 2014). Compassion in the workplace is both an individual and organizational relational response (Atkins & Parker, 2012; Dutton et al., 2006). Both social support and compassion are influenced by relational dynamics. At the interpersonal level, relationships developed in the workplace vary in terms of relational closeness, which affect the nature of interactions (Sias, 2005a). Another layer of complexity to relationship dynamics in the workplace are

due to hierarchical distance. For example, relationships between supervisors and subordinates have different qualities than peer coworker relationships, which influences how employees interact with one another.

Rationale

This dissertation adds to the growing body of knowledge, loosely defined as, positive organizational communication scholarship (POCS). POCS emerged from a general movement in organizational science labeled positive organizational scholarship (POS), which focuses empirical attention on human flourishing in organizational settings. POS provides a different worldview to the study of the workplace (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003). Instead of approaching the organization as a site with problems to be fixed, POS shifts attention to positive dynamics, such as flourishing, resilience, courage, and positive deviance. To be clear, POS does not deny the troubles and corruption so common of organizational settings, but, instead seeks to supplement such investigations with empirical studies of activities and behaviors deemed honorable, virtuous, and worthy of emulation. The POS literature is comprised of scholarship done by various disciplines, such as organizational psychology, organizational behavior, management, and organizational communication. POCS research focuses on the life-giving communication characteristics of the organization. A positive approach to organizational life opens avenues to explore new or understudied variables. Importantly, Lutgen-Sandvik (2017) suggests two areas of investigation for future POCS include positive leadership and prosocial behaviors. Likewise, Dutton et al. (2014) write, "Although books suggest that leadership is central to work-based compassion (e.g., Frost 2003), to date no systematic empirical studies address how leadership matters in terms of

compassion at work" (p. 292). This dissertation answers those calls by adding to the nascent, burgeoning POCS literature by focusing on the role of leadership communication in stimulating coworker social support and compassion.

This dissertation contributes to theory by expanding what is known about the role played by strategic leadership communication in members' well-being and organizational well-being. As communication research builds theory of the well-being of individuals and organizations, this dissertation adds to that development by testing premises assumed by literature on leadership framing, social support, compassion, and peer coworker relationships. First, the dissertation tests whether framing messages are more persuasive than directive-based messages in triggering intentions to communicate supportively. The basic premise of framing is that transactional meaning making, steeped in rhetorical flourishes (e.g., story, metaphor), is more persuasive to hearers than communication indicative of a mere transmission-model of information (Fairhurst, 2011). To date, most framing research relies on historical or case-based qualitative and inductive approaches, whereas the present experimental investigation offers an opportunity to test claims made regarding the persuasiveness of framing by leaders with employees.

Second, in addition to contributing to the leadership framing research, this dissertation adds to the peer coworker communication literature—an understudied area of communication research. Specifically, this dissertation explores whether hearing leaders talk about compassion reduces coworkers' fear of expressing compassion to one another. Suffering at work can arise from personal life outside of work and suffering at work can come from the job itself (Dutton et al., 2014). Expressing compassion takes courage because "one must often go beyond the technical, the imperative, the rules of the

organizations" (Frost, 2003, p. 129). To state it clearly, employees may hesitate to express compassion to others because of uncertainty and lack of communication norms and culturing for doing so (Keyton, 2011). Hearing leaders' talk about compassion may lead, in turn, to reduced fear of expressing compassion among coworkers.

Also, the present study is warranted in that compassion and social support have benefits for employees' well-being. Compassion has potential psychological benefits for the recipient's well-being, such as reduced stress and the experience of positive emotions (Dutton et al., 2014). Research in communication demonstrates that emotional support expressions are important for maintaining subjective well-being (Chen & Feeley, 2012). When social support is reciprocated among individuals, well-being is enhanced and relationships are strengthened (Nahum-Shani, Bamberger, & Bacharach, 2011). Furthermore, compassion and social support might benefit the organization's well-being. Importantly, compassion providers are perceived as emerging leaders (Melwani, Mueller, & Overbeck, 2012). Likewise, communication research suggests that increased social support among coworkers reduces unintentional employee turnover, which benefits the organization (Feeley & Barnett, 1997). The following literature review explains the core concepts of framing, prosociality, social support, compassion, and peer coworker relationships. Then, ten hypotheses are presented followed by a method section outlining an experimental survey design.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Framing

The process of framing involves asserting an interpretation as real compared to alternative or competing interpretations (Fairhurst, 2011). Formally, framing is defined as "the ability to shape the meaning of a subject, to define its character and significance through the meanings we include and exclude, as well as those we emphasize when communicating" (p. 212). Framing challenges the notion that communication is confined to merely the transmission of information, as expressed by the sender-message-receiver model. Rather, framing implies that communication has the ability to construct and shape meaning and the experience of that meaning. In that sense, framing is a communicative tool that constructs reality for the self and others. Framing defines the situation in the here and now and, in turn, shapes how we think of and react to it. Fairhurst and Sarr (1996) argued, "When we share our frames with others (the process of framing), we manage meaning because we assert that our interpretations should be taken as real over other possible interpretations" (p. 3). To be clear, framing is not manipulation. Fairhurst and Sarr argued framing itself is not inherently good or bad, moral or immoral; however, a person's intention and messaging content can make the use of framing ethical or unethical. Put directly, framing is a kind of *form* that is used to communicate a wide variety of *content*. The content could potentially be manipulative if it does not balance self-interest with other-interest. The following paragraphs explain the components and processes of framing. First, framing is comprised of mental models/frames, which can be conceptualized at the individual and organizational level. Second, framing—not equivalent to frames—is a sensemaking process. Third, leadership framing is a skill that

can be developed and used to shift existing mental models. Fourth, framing is a craft that draws from communication tropes (e.g., story, metaphor). Lastly, the possibility of priming for spontaneous framing is key for transferring leadership communication insights to those who lead.

Frames. The concept of fram*ing* is associated with cognitive frames. A cognitive frame is defined as "a knowledge structure that directs and guides information processing" (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014, p. 184). In short, frames are beliefs about how the world does or should work. Frames are mental models, where mental models are "deeply held internal images of how the world works, images that limit us to familiar ways of thinking and acting" (Senge, 2006, p. 163). Mental models can range from simple generalizations to complex theories. For example, a simple generalization can be an employee's assumption that all bosses are self-serving. An example of a complex theory a person could have is the just-world theory that attempts to rationalize why good or bad things happen to people (Lerner, 1980). Such mental models are often tacit and unarticulated; they are not necessarily known or realized to the individual, but they influence actions nonetheless. For example, employees who assume that all bosses are self-serving will likely interact with their bosses with caution. If employees thought bosses were generally other-oriented, employees would interact with the bosses differently, perhaps more openly. Employees might not realize that they are interacting with their bosses with caution. Importantly, whole groups of individuals, such as work teams or organizations, can also share frames. Cornelissen and Werner (2014) defined an *institutional frame* as "a naturalized and taken-for-granted cognitive frame that structures expectations and scripts behaviors in an institutional field" (p. 184). Another type of

macro-level cognitive frame is a *cultural frame*, which refers to individuals' shared meanings, which shapes collective interpretation and collective action in the organization (Howard-Grenville & Hoffman, 2003). Individuals share meanings together that shape their collective understandings and actions within and about the organization.

Framing as a sensemaking processes. Mental models guide how people interpret what happens in their environment and are used to make predictions about how actions taken in the present might affect the future (Fairhurst, 2011). To be clear, frames and framing are different. "Frames are distinguished from acts of framing, which involve the ways in which individuals use language or other symbolic gestures in context either to reinforce existing interpretive frames or to call new frames into being" (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014, p. 197). In other words, frames—whether tacit or explicit, equivocal or deeply-held—are psychological perspectives, and framing is a communicative way psychological states are altered. Framing therefore can be conceptualized as a sensemaking process that includes linking cues and frames (Weick, 1995). Frames are ideologies formed from past socialization experiences, and cues are what is occurring in the present environment:

> Frames and cues can be thought of as vocabularies in which words that are more abstract (frames) include and point to other less abstract words (cues) that become sensible in the context created by the more inclusive words. Meaning within vocabularies is relational. A cue in a frame is what makes sense, not the cue alone or the frame alone. (Weick, 1995, p. 110)

Frames come from socialization and communication experiences across the lifespan. Since frames might be tacit and ambiguous, linguistic devices, such as metaphors, are used to articulate mental models (Hill & Levenhagen, 1995). Put differently, metaphors make the unfamiliar familiar and make the abstract more concrete (Lakoff & Johnson,

1980). Metaphorical sayings, such as "the organization is a machine," and "thrown under the bus," when repeated throughout an organizational setting are moments of framing that can create taken-for-grantedness and culture (Keyton, 2011). In turn, employees may tend to view themselves as easily disposable parts of the organization in the machine metaphor. They may tend to see that they are not valued as an individual with unique qualities to add to the organization. If a metaphorical saying, such as being *thrown under the bus* becomes a common utterance, it could lead to widespread mistrust among employees and less open collaboration.

Leadership framing. Mental models are often deeply rooted and tacit; however, they are also susceptible to strategic change. One of the tasks of framing is asking the question: "For whom am I managing meaning?" (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996, p. 14). Framing is a powerful tool for managing meaning. Fairhurst and Sarr explain that powerful framing increases likelihood for goal achievement. In other words, framing has the potential to "frame courses of actions and social identities in order to mobilize others to follow suit" (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014, p. 182). If a goal is to have a more compassionate workplace, leaders can use framing to manage meaning for the employees. For example, if employees have a just-world mental model, a view that people get what they deserve from the environment whether it is positive or negative, expressing compassion to those who suffer might be a problem (Hafer & Bègue, 2005). In this case, a coworker who is suffering from a personal hardship might not receive social support from coworkers. The coworkers might believe that the coworker's behaviors or attributes appropriately led to the negative consequences. Put differently, the

coworker deserved to suffer. The challenging task for a leader is to shift employees' just-world mental models into more compassionate mental models.

As explained in the previous section, frames can be are established at the organizational level. Changing the frame of the organization is not an easy task, and the task requires frame (re)alignment between encouraging action on new initiatives and the existing cultural frames (Howard-Grenville & Hoffman, 2003). Framing tactics at the individual level need to create a vision for change to initiate institutional change (Werner & Cornelissen, 2014). For example, an organization with a frame that workplace relationships are not valued as an essential part of organizational life might have high employee turnover. Changing the culture of the organization would take a collective effort.

Importantly, Fairhurst (2011) argues framing is a skill that can be developed and improved. Some leaders struggle with framing while other leaders have a disposition to grasp the concept and application of framing more easily (Fairhurst, 2005). Fairhurst (2005, 2011) provided a means of self-assessment and a model for developing framing skills by borrowing from message design logic theory (O'Keefe, 1998). Message design logic theory challenged the rational view of message creation by showing that there are individual differences in message design, which produce wide variation in message production quality. "Individuals can differ systematically in their concepts of message design and, consequently, employ systematically different methods of associating messages and goals" (O'Keefe, 1991, p. 148). O'Keefe (1988) identified three different types of message design logics: expressive, conventional, and rhetorical. The main goal of the expressive design logic is to communicate what a person is thinking and feeling.

The expressive produces messages that are literal, disregarding the relational level of communication and meaning. The expressive sees little room for exploring and exploiting relational or task-related opportunities via their discursive moves. Expressive communicators are the least sensitive to framing (Fairhurst, 2011). Generally, expressive communicators do not edit their language, and one advantage is that people may perceive them as trustworthy since they say what they are thinking. The conventional design logic includes the goal of expressing thoughts and feelings and adds socially conventional rules (O'Keefe, 1998). Conventional communicators are in the middle in terms of framing sensitivity (Fairhurst, 2011). Conventional communicators consider both their and others' needs in the present context. A challenge to the conventional communicator is to see that the context is not fixed. The rhetorical design logic views "Communication [as] the creation and negotiation of social selves and situations" (O'Keefe, 1988, p. 87). Fairhurst (2011) substitutes the term *strategic* in place of the term *rhetorical*. They are used interchangeably.

Leaders' sensitivity with framing differs depending on their communication style of expressive, conventional, and strategic framing (Fairhurst, 2005, 2011). Of the three communication logics, strategic communicators are the most sensitive to the uses of framing. Strategic communicators are sensitive to ways that language can create and negotiate situations. When self-interest dominates, strategic communicators can be perceived as manipulative. While framing may come easier to strategic communicators compared to expressive and conventional communicators, expressive and conventional communicators can learn to engage in framing more successfully (Fairhurst, 2011). Another interesting aspect of communicator styles and framing is how leaders deal with

conflict (Fairhurst, 2011). When two people are in conflict and they share the same communication style, the conflict is focused on the content. However, if the parties have different communication styles, such as an expressive and a strategic, the conflict goes beyond the content. The conflict expands to the meta-communicative domain in that how messages are being created and delivered becomes another point of contention.

Tools for framing. Strategic framing is defined as "the use of rhetorical devices in communication to mobilize support and minimize resistance to a change" (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014, p. 185). Leaders' framing consists of strategic vocabulary of words and symbols (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). Leaders manage meaning by using language to create frames, or mental models, for their employees. The messages leaders construct with the language tools should consider the attitudes, values, and beliefs of his or her members. Fairhurst and Sarr identified five language tools. The following paragraphs review the Fairhurst and Sarr's language tools: jargon or catchphrases, contrast, spin, metaphors, and stories.

Jargon and catchphrases. Jargon and catchphrases function in a way that presents the subject in familiar terms. Jargon is the language peculiar to the organization (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). People outside of the organization or new to the organization typically do not know the meaning of the organization's jargon. In other words, jargon represents the organizational culture and affiliation as being able to perform the language of the group authentically. Fairhurst and Sarr (1996) explain, "a *catchphrase* is a common expression that comes from our everyday language or the language if the organization" (p. 108). Catchphrases are common expressions used in daily interactions that includes jargon along with colloquialisms, slogans, and slang (Fairhurst & Sarr,

1996). Overall, jargon and catchphrases enhance meaning by comparing familiar concepts to a vision. The disadvantages of jargon and catchphrases is that they lose effectiveness if overused (e.g., “think outside the box”) and can merely serve to reinforce the taken-for-granted frames implicitly (e.g., “drinking the Kool-Aid,” “It is what it is”).

Contrast. As a language form, contrast illuminates the subject in terms of its opposite (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). The advantage of contrast is when it is easier to describe a concept or object in terms of its opposite. The limitation of contrast is the danger of dichotomizing thought, decisions, and actions. When there are alternative ways of thinking, doing, and acting, contrast may oversimplify. In other words, contrast can possibly eliminate important alternative meanings.

Spin. Spin casts a new light on a subject (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). Spin can be negative or positive. Positive spin illuminates strengths while negative spin illuminate weakness. A combination of both positive and negative spin could potentially enhance effectiveness. For example, the positive-negative-positive spin sequence is one combination strategy. Spin should be avoided when the ratio of the positive or negative spin is excessively different than reality.

Metaphor. Metaphor is the language form that describes the subject’s likeness to something else (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Effective metaphors bring new, clearer meaning to events, people, processes, and concepts at work (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). Not all metaphors are successful, however. Metaphors that have been overused and no longer influential are called dead metaphors or clichés. A caveat of metaphors is that it could possibly mask alternative meanings. In organizational settings, metaphors can help explain contradictions in the organization (e.g., organized chaos; Hill & Levenhagen,

1995). Metaphors are useful tools for changing mental models of members (Hill & Levenhagen, 1995). Metaphors can provide language that interprets uncertainty. Effective metaphors can be sensegiving and shape mental models over time. Cornelissen, Holt, and Zundel (2011) explain, "Within acts of framing, analogies and metaphors…can guide thinking and can create understanding and social acceptance" (p. 1706). There are different triggers for leaders to engage in sensegiving (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007). One common trigger for leaders is organizational change. However, other triggers include complex sensemaking environments.

Stories. Important to the present study, stories bring a subject into reality through real or fictional examples (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). Storytelling is the most complex language form since stories can include the use of the four aforementioned language forms. "Stories engage our attention because they are often about the problems that people experience and the resolutions they work out" (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996, pp. 116-117). Not only do stories engage members, stories build rapport and create emotional involvement with the characters. Similar to metaphors, stories have the potential drawback of masking important alternative meanings.

Selecting framing devices. There is no systematic formula to determine which language forms will guarantee framing success (Fairhurst, 2011). Instead, language forms are a means by which content is communicated. In addition to the previous five language forms discussed (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996), Fairhurst (2011) adds analogy, argument, feeling statements, category, three-part list, and repetition are commonly-used language forms. Fairhurst (2011) differentiates the individual language forms from the five types of framing devices commonly used by leaders: master, simplifying, gain and loss,

believability, and metaphorical. The five key framing devices are more complex language forms because they are generally comprised of multiple types of individual language forms.

Of particular note, complex metaphors and stories are especially associated with successful leadership framing (Fairhurst, 2011). Fairhurst explained, "Complex metaphors involve intricate organization of a series of comparisons, not literally applicable" (p. 210). Complex metaphors layer in various language forms including simple metaphors along with other language forms, such as stories, repetition, and contrast. Complex metaphors often provide a foundation for stories and narratives (Fairhurst, 2011). Stories are accounts that serve to guide conduct, though filtered and edited, as a sensegiving device (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Weick, 1995). Story-consuming and constructing are linguistic skills that emerge simultaneous with language acquisition and are much more universal than rigorous reasoning skills (Fisher, 1989).

Stories can provide a springboard for future action (Denning, 2006). Personal stories make a strong framing device for goal achievement; narratives can accomplish goals, such as communicating the self, transmitting values, and leading people into the future (Denning, 2011). A leader could potentially use various narrative strategies to stimulate greater compassion and support expressions among coworkers. The leader can engage employees with a truthful, dramatic story about how he or she was a recipient of prosocial actions. The leader can communicate that compassion and social support is valued and encourage future prosocial behaviors through storytelling.

Priming for spontaneity. A study of strategic leadership framing implies that lessons learned from such investigations can be transferred or taught to other leaders

who, in turn, *are able to* engage in more successful strategic framing. There is a distinction between priming and framing (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). Priming refers to the storing of memories for later use (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). Although apparently paradoxical, framing can be spontaneous. "When we use the process of priming, we call to mind our mental models, anticipated opportunities, and/or desirable language sometime prior to communicating" (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996, p. 145). Thinking consciously about mental models is how to begin preparing for framing in the moment. Thinking and talking about mental models and the assumptions they hold contribute to framing. There are three types of situations to prime for which include specific situations, total surprises, and repeatable contexts. Specific situations refer to those instances that are planned, such as a job interview. Total surprises are instances that can be blindsiding, but that require an immediate response. Repeatable contexts are the most common, such as weekly meetings. The difference between average and skilled framers is that skilled framers seize framing opportunities.

One of the premises of this dissertation is that leaders can use strategic framing to influence employees' intent to provide social support and compassion. If this is the case, leaders should prime for spontaneous prosocial framing. Whether leaders are expressive, conventional, or strategic communicators (Fairhurst, 2011; O'Keefe, 1998), all leader should prime their mental models and improve their framing skills. In naturalized contexts, leaders act in real time.

Credibility and framing. The influence of perceived source credibility is not unique to framing research. The study of source credibility has been an interest of scholarly study as early as Aristotle (McCroskey & Young, 1981; Gardner, 2003).

McCroskey and Young explain that one commonality across credibility research is that credibility is multidimensional. Competence and character are two factors of source credibility that explain the most variance. Competence refers to perceived authoritativeness, intelligence, and expertise (McCroskey, 1966) while character refers to perceived trustworthiness, honesty, and selflessness. There are other dimensions of credibility that have been studied, such as goodwill (Teven & McCroskey, 1997). Goodwill describes whether a leader is perceived to have others' best interest above self-interest. Overall, goodwill is inherent in source credibility as there is shared variance among the constructs (McCroskey & Teven, 1999).

Framing success is influenced, in part, by perceptions of credibility (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). In other words, leaders' use of framing depends on the believability of the frames. If there is a lack of perceived competence and trust in a leader, it is less likely the leader will be successful in framing attempts. For example, Teven (2007) found, "supervisors who do not verbally communicate in prosocial ways to their subordinates, regardless of their level of nonverbal immediacy, are apt to be perceived negatively by subordinates" (p. 170). In other words, supervisors who communicate antisocial messages are perceived to be less credible than those who communicate prosocial messages. However, leaders may fear that voicing autobiographical stories of personal hardship will reflect poorly on their public image with subordinates and, ultimately, undermine their credibility. Thus, it is important to explore whether leaders' openness to talking about personal vulnerabilities diminish the confidence employees have for them.

Thus far, a review of the leadership framing literature suggests that specific language forms can shape hearers' beliefs about how the organizational world should

work; the following paragraphs explore what is known about the role of prosocial motives, behaviors, and consequences as a means of identifying what kinds of leadership message *content* might enhance coworkers' intention to provide compassionate and supportive communication to one another.

Prosociality and Communication

In positive organizational scholarship, much attention has been paid to the positive outcomes of prosocial behavior (Bolino & Grant, 2016). How communication contributes to the prosociality literature is an area of interest in POCS (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2017). This dissertation uses the term prosociality as a broad term that includes the three facets of motives, behavior, and impact. Prosociality refers to "a broad range of behaviors, efforts or intentions designed to benefit, promote or protect the well-being of another individual, group, organization or society" (Ma, Tunney, & Ferguson, 2017, p. 602). To date, organizational researchers have asked why organizational members act or do not act prosocially (Batson, 1998). Practical goal-oriented research sought ways to encourage prosocial behaviors among individuals. Theory-based research sought to challenge existing, dominant, and current theories of motivation, which tend to overemphasize self-interest.

Today, prosocial motivation, prosocial behaviors, and prosocial impact are three facets explored in prosocial organizational research (Bolino & Grant, 2016). Prosocial behavior refers to acts that benefit others. Prosocial impact refers to "the experience of making a positive difference in the lives of others through one's work" (p. 603). Prosocial motives refer to "the desire to benefit others or expend effort out of concern for others" (p. 603). Prosocial motivation can be researched as states, "temporary desire to benefit

specific groups of people" (p. 613), or traits, "stable tendency toward prosocial values, other-orientation and concern for others" (p. 613). Contemporary research approaches prosociality in one or more types of constructs of behavior, impact, and motivation. In the following paragraphs, select research on prosociality-related concepts of perspective taking, gratitude expressions, and beneficiary communication are reviewed.

Perspective taking. An identified characteristic of prosocially-motivated individuals is the ability to engage in perspective taking. Perspective taking is "the human capacity to see the world from another's point of view, either as one imagines it would looks to oneself (imagine self) or as one imagines it looks to the other (imagine other)" (Batson, 1998, p. 306). Grant and Berry (2011) found that intrinsically-motivated employees were motivated to engage in perspective-taking, which was more likely to be associated with higher levels of job creativity. Due to conflicting findings in current research, Grant (2008) explored persistence, performance, and productivity as it relates to prosociality. In a comparative sampling of firefighters and fundraisers, intrinsic motivation mattered. Specifically, prosocial motivation contributes to persistence, performance, and productivity when there are high levels of intrinsic motivation. Grant suggested, "In the absence of intrinsic motivation, however, prosocial motivation may not be sufficient to enhance persistence, performance, and productivity" (p. 54).

Expressions of gratitude. Gratitude is a human virtue where individuals acknowledge the benefits provided to them positively (Emmons, 2003). The three components of gratitude include a benefactor, a benefice (a gift), and a beneficiary. Emmons (2003) explained, "The beneficiary realizes the value of the gift, the intention of the benefactor, and thus experiences the positive emotional state of gratitude" (p. 82).

Gratitude is an emotional response, mood, or a trait that communicates thankfulness (Ma et al., 2017). Gratitude and prosociality are linked (Emmons, 2003; Ma et al., 2017). Ma et al. (2017) found support for a positive, medium-sized effect between prosociality and gratitude. Interestingly, the prosociality-gratitude link was stronger when there was perceived reciprocity. When there was low perceived reciprocity, the prosociality-gratitude link was weakened. Reciprocity influences prosociality.

Grant and Gino (2010) explored the role of gratitude in a series of experiments that employed different sources of gratitude expressions. They wanted to see how the gratitude message delivery would affect employees' performances. Two of their studies had participants provide feedback on a person's cover letter. The recipient expressed gratitude to the participant *directly* via email or in person followed by a request for additional feedback. Participants exposed to the gratitude message were more likely to volunteer additional services. In another experiment, a friend of the original beneficiary emailed participants to say that he heard how grateful the original beneficiary—*indirect* gratitude expression—was with the cover letter help and asked if the participants were willing to volunteer their time to help with his own cover letter. In the final experiment, fundraisers in a call center had a director—not a beneficiary—visit one of the groups to express gratitude on behalf of the organization. They were thanked for their commitment to make fundraising calls to alumni. Overall expression of gratitude across all conditions increased both initiation and persistence of prosocial behavior.

Grant and Gino (2010) suggested that thanking helpers gives them a sense of social value, a feeling of competence, and enhances willingness to help again in the future. These findings related to gratitude expressions, prosocial motivation, and

persistence suggests that communication can shape hearers prosocial motivation and result in measurable outcomes. Beneficiaries embody the meaning that employees' work matters in the world and is relevant. In terms of the present study, these social-psychological patterns suggest that communication about benefit can trigger prosocial action—as would be case with a leader's description of being helped and coworkers' intention to provide social support.

Leaders and beneficiaries. Leaders, when they are perceived to be trustworthy, "play an important role in increasing the performance of prosocially motivated employees by enabling them to see how their work makes a difference" (Grant & Sumanth, 2009, p. 941). Transformational leadership and employees' helping behavior is mediated by trust (Zhu & Akhtar, 2014). In Zhu and Akhtar's study, the prosocial helping behaviors referred to whether employees helped fellow coworkers. Participants' level of prosocial motivation had an interesting relationship with helping behaviors. Highly prosocially motivated employees had a positive association between affect-based trust and helping behavior. Affect-based trust refers to the social relationship exchange between leader and follower. Furthermore, employees with low prosocial motivation had a positive association between cognition-based trust and helping behavior. Cognition-based trust refers to certain leader characteristics, such as integrity, reliability, and ability. Related to trust, suspicion of the leader's authenticity—sincerity of motives—mediated the relationship between the leaders' delivery of a prosocial message and employees' task performance (Grant & Hofmann, 2011).

Leaders with employees with low prosocial motivation can be encouraged to help others by highlighting its benefits to make it salient (Zhu & Akhtar, 2014). The role of the beneficiary influenced prosociality:

> When jobs provide opportunities to affect the lives of beneficiaries, employees become aware of their impact of these beneficiaries. When jobs provide opportunities for contact with beneficiaries, employees become more aware of their impact on beneficiaries, and they also come to care about the welfare of the beneficiaries, provided that they are exposed to favorable social information about these beneficiaries. (Grant, 2007, p. 405)

In a call center of fundraisers, introducing brief contact with a beneficiary measurably increased minutes speaking on the phone and the amount of money raised as compared to those fundraisers who only read text from a beneficiary or had no contact with a beneficiary (Grant et al., 2007). To put it more directly, explicitly explaining how employees' actions make a difference might make employees more likely to continue their prosocial behaviors, as long as the leader is perceived as trustworthy.

Grant (2012) explored the interplay between transformational leadership and employee performance. When beneficiary contact was introduced it moderated the relationship between transformational leadership and workers' performance. In other words, the presence of the beneficiary strengthened the relationship between leadership and performance. Additionally, employees perceived prosocial impact mediated the moderating effect of beneficiary contact on the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance. Grant explains, "Perceived social impact…is a key mechanism through which beneficiary contact strengthens the relationship between transformational leadership and follower performance" (p. 470). Grant and Hofmann (2011) challenged the implicit assumption that formalized leadership roles are the optimal source of ideological messages. In their study, they found that an ideological

message from the beneficiary of the organization's work was more influential than ideological messages from the leader. Specifically, participants who received the prosocial message from the beneficiary had higher task performance than those who received the message from the leader. However, leaders who delivered ideological messages also had influence on increased task performance. The source of prosocial messages matters. Framing is not inherently self-serving or other-oriented but depends on employees' perceived leader motivation, along with the content of the message (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). If self-interest of the leader is perceived to outweigh the other-oriented motivation of the leader, employees may be suspicious of the leader's motives. To date, the researcher is unaware of any study that explores what happens when the leader is also the beneficiary of prosocial organizational activities. Ideological messages with the leader as the beneficiary might help minimize suspicion of self-serving motivations of the leader and increase the effectiveness of the message.

Quality of Peer Coworker Relationships

Research suggests the workplace provides a shared context for mutual understanding (Albrecht & Adelman, 1984). Typically, most of the time spent at work with other employees is with peer coworkers rather than with supervisors (Sias, 2005a). The following paragraphs focus on the quality of peer coworker relationships. Specifically, peer coworker relationships have an element of mutuality that is lacking in most hierarchical working relationships with their attendant power differentials. Peer coworker relationship dynamics manifest in different ways in terms of closeness and trust. Overall, peer coworker relationships lend themselves to avenues of positive

organizational flourishing, with two benefits being social support and compassion expressions.

Reciprocity. Peer coworker relationships provide a unique opportunity of being both receiver and provider of career-enhancing functions (e.g., information sharing) and psychosocial (e.g., emotional support) functions (Kram & Isabella, 1985). Thus, a key feature of peer coworker relationships is mutuality. For example, during uncertainty and stress from organizational change and trauma, peer relationships were used as a source of mutual emotional support (Persoff & Siegel, 1998). Kram and Isabella (1985) explain that peer relationships can be an alternative to traditional mentoring relationships for both personal and professional development. Peer relationships offer similar functions provided by mentors despite lacking the full range of career advancing functions (Persoff & Siegel, 1998). Not all coworker relationships are positive, however. Problematic coworker relationships can have negative emotional consequences (Waldron, 2012). For example, a *troublesome other* (Ploeger-Lyons & Kelley, 2017) is someone who is actively avoided.

Types of peer relationships. Kram and Isabella (1985) offered a continuum of peer relationship types. They explain that they are not the only variations of peer relationships, but rather, they are points of reference. The three types are information peer, collegial peer, and special peer. The primary function of the information peer is information sharing (Kram & Isabella, 1985). Information peers exchange resources related to work with limited to no relational sharing (Sias, 2005b). Information peers are not substantial providers of emotional social support (Sias, 2013). Sias (2005b) found the quality of information shared in information peer relationships is low.

Primary functions of the collegial peer relationship include career strategizing, job-related feedback, and friendship (Kram & Isabella, 1985). This relationship "is distinguished from the information peer relationship by increasingly complex individual roles and by widening boundaries" (p. 119). The collegial peer relationships are characterized with moderate levels of trust. The collegial peers share information and have developed moderate levels of interpersonal trust (Sias, 2005b). Collegial peer relationships exchange higher quality information. The primary functions of the special peer relationship, the third type, include confirmation, emotional support, personal feedback, and friendship (Kram & Isabella, 1985). The special peer is a person with high levels of trust and a source of social support. Special peers have a high level of trust with the other, sharing both work and personal information (Sias, 2005b).

Employee flourishing. Colbert, Bono, and Purvanova (2016) developed a model of positive workplace relationships in employee flourishing. They proposed that positive workplace relationships are comprised of task assistance, career advancement, emotional support, friendship, personal growth, and giving to others. This dissertation focuses on three of these relationship functions specifically: First, giving to others include acts of compassion. In terms of social support, two additional functions include emotional support and task assistance:

> Relationships not only have the potential to increase job satisfaction, but they also promote perceptions of meaningful work, engender positive emotions at work, and support life satisfaction; they support employee flourishing in ways that benefit both individuals and organizations. (Colbert et al., 2016, p. 1219)

Thus far, the preceding paragraphs described the concepts of leadership framing, prosociality, and peer coworker relationships. Recall that leadership framing describes communicative form, but not content. Here, and in contrast, prosociality is a kind of

communication content. Likewise, peer coworker relationships are the relational context of interest. The following paragraphs outline the desired prosocial outcomes in the forms of compassion and social support.

Compassion

Compassion is defined "as an interpersonal process in which both the sufferer and the focal actor play a role in how a particular episode unfolds over time" (Dutton et al., 2014, p. 278). Instead of thinking about the two people in in the compassion process as a "givers" and "receivers," Dutton et al. use the term *focal actor* in order to avoid restricting the process of compassion to a social exchange framework.

Individual-level compassion. Compassion is comprised of three interrelated parts including noticing, feeling, and responding (Kanov et al., 2004). The process of compassion starts with noticing another's suffering (Kanov et al., 2004). The presence of suffering does not necessarily elicit compassion (Atkins & Parker, 2012). Compassion is a process in which a person starts with noticing a need (Kanov et al., 2004). During this first stage, appraisal is involved (Atkins & Parker, 2012). The person appraises whether the suffering is congruent to the person's goals and values. Another factor is whether the observer feels there is a connection to the others' sense of self. Appraisals (i.e., the decision as to whether the person is deserving of compassion) have the potential to lead to empathetic feelings for the suffering person. Feeling—as termed by Kanov et al. (2004)—is the second part of the compassion process, refer to the empathic, other-regarding concern for others (Kanov et al., 2004). Feelings range in intensity across context and individuals. Responding, the third part, refers to the actions that result from the noticing and the feeling of someone's suffering. Kanov et al. (2004) provided the "term *compassionate responding* to refer to any action or display that occurs in response to another's pain" (p. 814),

Organizational-level compassion. Compassion is not limited to the individual level of interaction. Dutton et al. (2006) developed a theory of compassion organizing: "A collective response to a particular incident of human suffering that entails the coordination of individual compassion in a particular organizational context" (p. 61). The three interrelated process of noticing, feeling, and responding can be applied to the organizational context (Kanov et al., 2004). Organizational compassion processes are not a mere sum of individuals' expressions. Instead of individual practices of noticing, feeling, and responding, organizational-level compassion is a set of social practices shared among organizational members. Compassion at the organizational level is "a process carried out by and directed toward the members of an organization" (Kanov et al., 2004, pp. 815-816). The processes are termed collective noticing, collective feeling, and collective responding. To make this a collective effort coordination is required.

Communicative compassion perspective. Way and Tracy (2012) reinterpreted the three-stage compassion process (Kanov et al., 2004) in order to emphasize compassionate communication. Way and Tracy's conceptualization marks communication as integral to compassion. Instead of beginning with the act of noticing, the model starts with recognizing. Recognizing is "understanding and applying meaning to others' verbal and nonverbal communicative cues, the timing and context of theses cues as well as, cracks between or absences of messages" (Way & Tracy, 2012, p. 307). Instead of feeling (Kanov et al., 2004), Way and Tracy (2012) term the second part of the model as relating, which focuses on communicatively connecting with others in terms of emotions, values, and decisions. The last part of Kanov et al.'s (2004) model is responding. Way and Tracy (2012) label this step as (re)acting: "Engaging in behaviors

or communicating in ways that are seen, or could be seen, as compassionate by the provider, the recipient and/or another individual" (p. 307). The most importance is placed on the last part, (re)acting, since they argue compassion is not compassion without communicative action.

Some sufferers are filled with negative emotions, such as anger and fear. Gilbert, McEwan, Matos, and Rivis (2011) found support for the notion that those who experience fear of receiving compassion also have a fear of expressing self-compassion and a fear of expressing compassion to others. Such findings suggest that fear of expressing compassion must be disrupted to encourage individuals to engage in compassion expressions more readily. Compassion as a communicative device provides a repertoire of strategies for expressing compassion to those in fear (Tracy & Huffman, 2017). Tracy and Huffman investigated the exchange of compassion to a potential school shooting. They analyzed the 911 call between the school staff in the front office and the former student armed with firearms. In this case, the sufferer, the potential shooter, was filled with anger, and the social actor, the bookkeeper, managed to express compassion and social support to the hostile shooter. The interaction led to the would-be school shooter's surrender with no physical harm to any person. Tracy and Huffman proposed that compassion providers should engage in deferential, face-saving communication, mimicking and converging to the sufferer's conversational actions to increase the likelihood of the sufferer's perception and acceptance of compassion. Co-creating hope with the sufferer is also important and can be accomplished by minimizing severity of the situation, using positive language, and framing the sufferer in respectable and lovable terms. The provider can also consider self-disclosure of a similar suffering to foster

feelings of social oneness or identification. Physical proximity is also a factor in successful compassion expressions.

People experience compassion in various social contexts. When compassion is experienced in the workplace, employees experience positive emotions and experience increased affective organizational commitment (Lilius et al., 2008). In Lilius et al.'s pilot study, hospital employees reported that coworkers provided more acts of compassion compared to supervisors. Lilius et al. also solicited participants to provide stories about their experiences of compassion in the workplace. A content analysis categorized accounts from the vantage point of the witness, recipient, and provider. Six types of suffering were identified. Four of the types of suffering are likely to occur in different types of organization while two of the suffering triggers are likely unique to the type of organization, a hospital. The majority suffering that triggered compassion was serious illness of the coworker or his or her loved one (44%). Death of a colleague or a loved one was the second most frequent (17%). Family or personal issues (15%), such as divorce, was another type of suffering that triggered compassion. The least common trigger of compassion was stress from work duties. The two types of suffering likely unique to the hospital-related organizations were interactions with ill-patients and their families and employees with family in their hospital as patients. Importantly, the majority (80%) of compassion described in the accounts was provided by a coordinated effort among multiple coworkers or entire departments. 10% was from a single individual and 7% percent was from a single supervisor. The top three types of compassion were emotional support, providing time and flexibility, and giving material good.

Social support

Social support has been used to explain how organizational members deal with stress (Monge & Contractor, 2003). Albrecht and Adelman (1987) defined social support as the "verbal and nonverbal communication between recipients and providers that reduces uncertainty about the situation, the self, the other, or the relationship, and functions to enhance a perception of personal control in one's life experience" (p. 19). Albrecht and Adelman stressed that social support is communicative in nature in that it is transactional and symbolic. Opportunities to provide social support exist in the workplace. Ray (1987) explains that socialization, performance appraisals, and organizational change are stress-inducing events commonly experienced at work. All three of these have a high level of uncertain outcomes and coworkers can be supportive. "Supportive interactions are those in which coworkers are able to vent feelings, clarify perceptions, and mutually define the work environment" (Ray, 1987, p. 188). However, people experience stresses at work that originate from personal life. Whether stress originates from personal or professional circumstances, the workplace provides a place where social support can be provided. The following paragraphs reviews forms of social support and coworker social support.

Forms of emotional support. There are several forms of social support. This dissertation focuses on two types of social support: emotional support and instrumental support. Emotional social support "fosters feelings of comfort and leads an individual to believe that he or she is admired, respected, and loved (Jacobson, 1986, p. 252). Emotional support can come in the form advice giving (Goldsmith, 2004). Advice giving occurs when a person provides possible solutions to the party dealing with a problem.

While advice giving can be helpful, not all advice giving is effective, as advice could be harmful and unsupportive (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997). Other forms of emotional support include being an empathetic listener and giving words of encouragement (Albrecht & Adelman, 1987). Instrumental social support includes support that is tangible, such as providing financial assistance or performing someone else's tasks (Albrecht & Adelman, 1987).

Other forms of social support have been investigated in organizational contexts; however, emotional support and instrumental support have been found to be two distinct, overarching dimensions of support (Morelli, Lee, Arnn, & Zaki, 2015). According to research by Shakespeare-Finch and Obst (2011), "Other types of social support can be circumscribed by these two categories" (p. 484). For example, informational social support can be categorized as a form of instrumental support. Lee, Kim, and Piercy (2019) investigated both informational and tangible social support through a social network analysis of a Korean immigrant church. Instances of informational support received included receiving information about childcare facilities. Employees need informational support in the organization, and employees' access to internet creates another avenue—other than employees—for obtaining that support (Kramer, Lee, & Guo, 2018). This dissertation investigates a coworker experiencing a hardship that would likely benefit from information, and that information is considered to be instrumental support.

Coworker social support. In successful social support interactions, the relationship is strengthened between the recipient and the provider. Non-job related social support with coworkers is reciprocal (Bowling, Beehr, & Swader, 2005). The amount of social support provided is positively associated with the amount of social support

received by coworkers (Bowling et al., 2005). Emotional and instrumental support is mediated by the relational closeness to coworkers (Cranmer, Goldman, & Booth-Butterfield, 2017). The more employees considered their coworkers as friends, the more they perceived receiving emotional and instrumental social support.

Coworker emotional social support and supervisor emotional social support have different outcomes on employees (Snyder, 2009). In a study on a health services organization, caregivers reported on both their supervisor and coworker emotional support. There was a distinction between supervisor support and coworker support. Specifically, coworker emotional social support, but not supervisor emotional social support, was positively related to the communicative responsiveness participants had with their own clients. Supervisor emotional social support was significant in terms of participants reduced levels of depersonalization of their clients. In other words, how supervisors supported their employees in turn affected how employees supported their clients.

Boren (2014) examined the dark side of coworker social support. Specifically, Boren's goal was to investigate what the negative consequences of co-rumination in organizational outcomes, such as burnout and stress. Emotional support consists of talking, or venting, and the content of those messages may not be good. Co-rumination is problem-centric and does not seek a solution and the problem could be that it could escalate the problem in their minds. While there are positive outcomes of social support, co-rumination is associated with negative consequences. Co-rumination is counter-productive in that it increases perception of burnout and stress. If the co-rumination episode keeps the goal of finding a solution, the negative consequences can be curbed.

Autobiographical Prosocial Leader Messages Stimulate Prosocial Intention

This dissertation investigates the role of leaders' strategic framing of prosocial behaviors on coworkers' intentions to extend compassion and social support to peer coworkers. Positive organizational scholarship does not deny the presence of trouble in the organization (Cameron et al., 2003). Instead, "Viewing organizations through a positive lens means recognizing that difficulties, problems, successes, and victories often occur side by side" (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2017, p. 1). Indeed, at times, organizations *are* sites of suffering, which affects members at all levels of the organization (Dutton et al., 2014). While leaders might be pressured to hide their own suffering in work settings (Bento, 1994), there could be benefits to employees and the organization if they shared those instances—through prosocial framing—of when they were recipients of social support and compassion from coworkers. As reported above, contact with and grateful messages from beneficiaries motivate employees to engage in more prosocial organizational behaviors, which help the beneficiary or future potential beneficiaries (Grant & Gino, 2010).

This study extends that line of research by testing whether similar effects result from leader messaging that narrates a biographical experience in which (a) the leader was a beneficiary of (b) other coworkers (c) from the past. In other words, are coworkers prosocially motivated by a story of others' good works done for their leader? If so, it would be established that prosocial leadership framing is broadly contagious by enhancing others' prosocial intentions and reducing fear of expressing compassion. Such an effect of leadership framing would be especially remarkable if it was shown to result in comparatively more coworker intention to provide social support than a leadership

directive. Organizational communication scholars have noted consistently that leadership directives are common speech acts in workplace settings. In fact, scholars contend directives are partially constitutive of organizations themselves (Bisel, 2009; McPhee & Zaug, 2009; Taylor & Cooren, 1997; Taylor, Cooren, Giroux, & Robichaud, 1996). Yet, directive speech acts tend to reflect a transmission-model of communication, especially when compared with transactional meaning making models, such as strategic framing. Strategic leadership framing is much less common, although it is considered by organizational communication scholars to be a hallmark of excellent communication practice. Establishing experimentally that the effect of strategic leadership framing exceeds those of directive-based messaging would lend support to the mostly theoretical and qualitative scholarship in organizational communication that espouses framing is an exemplary communication skillset. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed for both a 3 x 2 design (see Table 1) and a 2 x 2 design (Table 2):

H1a: Participants assigned to the APLM condition report greater intention to provide *emotional* social support to their coworker than participants assigned to the prosocial directive and control conditions.

H2a: Participants assigned to the APLM condition report greater intention to provide *instrumental* social support to their coworker than participants assigned to the prosocial directive and control conditions.

H3a: Participants assigned to the APLM condition report lower *fear of expressing compassion* to their coworker than participants assigned to the prosocial directive and control conditions.

H4a: Participants assigned to the close coworker condition report greater intention to provide *emotional* social support to their coworker than participants assigned to the distant coworker condition.

H5a: Participants assigned to the close coworker condition report greater intention to provide *instrumental* social support to their coworker than participants assigned to the distant coworker condition.

H6a: Participants assigned to the close coworker condition report lower *fear of expressing compassion* to their coworker than participants assigned to the distant coworker condition.

H7a: The greatest difference in intention to provide *emotional* social support exists between participants assigned to the APLM/close coworker condition and participants assigned to the control/distant coworker condition.

H8a: The greatest difference in intention to provide *instrumental* social support exists between participants assigned to the APLM/close coworker condition and participants assigned to the control/distant coworker condition.

H9a: The greatest difference in *fear of expressing compassion* exists between participants assigned to the APLM/close coworker condition and participants assigned to the control/distant coworker condition.

H10a: Participants assigned to the APLM condition report greater perceived leader credibility than participants assigned to the control condition.

Table 1 Hypotheses (Pilot; 3 x 2 Design)

Hypothesis	IVs	DVs	Analysis	Statistic
H1a: Participants assigned to the APLM condition report greater intention to provide emotional social support to their coworker than participants assigned to the directive/control condition.	APLM Directive Leader Message Control Leader Message	Emotional Social Support	Two-way ANOVA	F, Tukey
H2a: Participants assigned to the APLM condition report greater intention to provide instrumental social support to their coworker than participants assigned to the directive/control condition.	APLM Directive Leader Message Control Leader Message	Instrumental Social Support	Two-way ANOVA	F, Tukey
H3a: Participants assigned to the APLM condition report lower fear of expressing compassion to their coworker than participants assigned to the directive/control condition.	**APLM Directive Leader Message Control Leader Message**	**Fear of Expressing Compassion to Others**	**Two-way ANOVA**	**F, Tukey**
H4a: Participants assigned to the close coworker condition report greater intention to provide emotional social support to their coworker than participants assigned to the distant coworker condition.	**Close Coworker Distant Coworker**	**Emotional Social Support**	**Two-way ANOVA**	**F, Tukey**
H5a: Participants assigned to the close coworker condition report greater intention to provide instrumental social support to their coworker than participants assigned to the distant coworker condition.	**Close Coworker Distant Coworker**	**Instrumental Social Support**	**Two-way ANOVA**	**F, Tukey**
H6a: Participants assigned to the close coworker condition report lower fear of expressing compassion to their coworker than participants assigned to the distant coworker condition.	Close Coworker Distant Coworker	Fear of Expressing Compassion to Others	Two-way ANOVA	F, Fisher's LSD, Tukey

H7a: The greatest difference in intention to provide emotional social support exists between participants assigned to the APLM/close coworker condition and participants assigned to the directive/control/distant coworker condition.	APLM Control Leader Message Directive Leader Message Close Coworker Distant Coworker	Emotional Social Support	Two-way ANOVA	F, Tukey
H8a: The greatest difference in intention to provide instrumental social support exists between participants assigned to the APLM/close coworker condition and participants assigned to the control/distant coworker condition.	**APLM Control Leader Message Directive Leader Message Close Coworker Distant Coworker**	**Instrumental Social Support**	**Two-way ANOVA**	**F, Tukey**
H9a: The greatest difference in fear of expressing compassion exists between participants assigned to the APLM/close coworker condition and participants assigned to the control/distant coworker condition.	APLM Control Leader Message Directive Leader Message Close Coworker Distant Coworker	Fear of Expressing Compassion to Others	Two-way ANOVA	F, Tukey
H10a: Participants assigned to the APLM condition report greater perceived leader credibility than participants assigned to the control condition.	**APLM Directive Leader Message Control Leader Message**	**Perceived Leader Credibility**	**t-Test**	**t**

Note. Bolded rows indicate hypothesis is partially or fully supported.

H1b: Participants assigned to the APLM condition report greater intention to provide *emotional* social support to their coworker than participants assigned to the control condition.

H2b: Participants assigned to the APLM condition report greater intention to provide *instrumental* social support to their coworker than participants assigned to the control condition.

H3b: Participants assigned to the APLM condition report lower *fear of expressing compassion* to their coworker than participants assigned to the control condition.

H4b: Participants assigned to the close coworker condition report greater intention to provide *emotional* social support to their coworker than participants assigned to the distant coworker condition.

H5b: Participants assigned to the close coworker condition report greater intention to provide *instrumental* social support to their coworker than participants assigned to the distant coworker condition.

H6b: Participants assigned to the close coworker condition report lower *fear of expressing compassion* to their coworker than participants assigned to the distant coworker condition.

H7b: The greatest difference in intention to provide *emotional* social support exists between participants assigned to the APLM/close coworker condition and participants assigned to the control/distant coworker condition.

H8b: The greatest difference in intention to provide *instrumental* social support exists between participants assigned to the APLM/close coworker condition and participants assigned to the control/distant coworker condition.

H9b: The greatest difference in *fear of expressing compassion* exists between participants assigned to the APLM/close coworker condition and participants assigned to the control/distant coworker condition.

H10b: Participants assigned to the APLM condition report greater perceived leader credibility than participants assigned to the control condition.

Table 2 Hypotheses (2 x 2 Design)

Hypothesis	IVs	DVs	Analysis	Statistic
H1b: Participants assigned to the APLM condition report greater intention to provide emotional social support to their coworker than participants assigned to the control condition.	APLM Control Leader Message	Emotional Social Support	Two-way ANOVA	F, Tukey
H2b: Participants assigned to the APLM condition report greater intention to provide instrumental social support to their coworker than participants assigned to the control condition.	APLM Control Leader Message	Instrumental Social Support	Two-way ANOVA	F, Tukey
H3b: Participants assigned to the APLM condition report lower fear of expressing compassion to their coworker than participants assigned to the control condition.	APLM Control Leader Message	Fear of Expressing Compassion to Others	Two-way ANOVA	F, Tukey
H4b: Participants assigned to the close coworker condition report greater intention to provide emotional social support to their coworker than participants assigned to the distant coworker condition.	**Close Coworker Distant Coworker**	**Emotional Social Support**	**Two-way ANOVA**	**F, Tukey**
H5b: Participants assigned to the close coworker condition report greater intention to provide instrumental social support to their coworker than participants assigned to the distant coworker condition.	**Close Coworker Distant Coworker**	**Instrumental Social Support**	**Two-way ANOVA**	**F, Tukey**

H6b: Participants assigned to the close coworker condition report lower fear of expressing compassion to their coworker than participants assigned to the distant coworker condition.	Close Coworker Distant Coworker	Fear of Expressing Compassion to Others	Two-way ANOVA	F, Tukey
H7b: The greatest difference in intention to provide emotional social support exists between participants assigned to the APLM/close coworker condition and participants assigned to the control/distant coworker condition.	**APLM Control Leader Message Close Coworker Distant Coworker**	**Emotional Social Support**	**Two-way ANOVA**	**F, Tukey**
H8b: The greatest difference in intention to provide instrumental social support exists between participants assigned to the APLM/close coworker condition and participants assigned to the control/distant coworker condition.	APLM Control Leader Message Close Coworker Distant Coworker	Instrumental Social Support	Two-way ANOVA	F, Tukey
H9b: The greatest difference in fear of expressing compassion exists between participants assigned to the APLM/close coworker condition and participants assigned to the control/distant coworker condition.	APLM Control Leader Message Close Coworker Distant Coworker	Fear of Expressing Compassion to Others	Two-way ANOVA	F, Tukey
H10b: Participants assigned to the APLM condition report greater perceived leader credibility than participants assigned to the control condition.	**APLM Control Leader Message**	**Perceived Leader Credibility**	**t-Test**	**t**

Note. Bolded rows indicate hypothesis was partially or fully supported.

To explore whether leaders' prosocial framing can increase coworkers' intent to provide social support and reduce fear of expressing compassion an experiment was conducted. Two samples of full-time working adults, from a variety of occupations,

participated in the study. The following methods section provides a detailed explanation of the studies. While prosocial outcomes extend beyond compassion and social support at work, this dissertation focuses on the role of beneficiary, or a focal actor (Dutton et al. 2014) message on the intent to provide social support and express compassion.

Chapter 3: Methods

Power Analyses

To determine the number of participants needed, I used the power analysis program G*Power 3 (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). I conducted three a priori power analyses with the power level set at .80, the alpha level set at .05, and different effect sizes ranging from small to medium. For an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), a small effect size is .10 and a medium effect size is .25 (Cohen, 1992). The power calculation with the effect size set at .10 indicated a needed sample size of 1,634. A second power calculation with a .15 effect size yielded a needed sample size of 731. The third power calculation with a .25 effect size yielded a needed sample size of 269. To balance the projected effect size and the financial constraints associated with compensating working adult participants, the sample size goal for this study was set to 210 with the goal of 35 participants per cell (6 conditions total).

Participants (Pilot)

An initial sample of 112 full-time working adults was collected. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 67 years of age (M = 36.32, SD = 8.64) and included 39 females and 73 males. Participants lived in 32 different states in the United States. Participants' education levels ranged from some high school to a master's degree, with bachelor's degree as the most common educational level (50%). Participants represented a wide variety of industries, with the top three representing health services (10.7%), manufacturing (9.8%), and other (13.4%). Participants' total work experience ranged from less than a year to 42 years (M = 12.88, SD = 9.93), and participants' total supervisory work experience ranged from 0 to 20 years (M = 4.12, SD = 4.88).

Participants (3 x 2 Design)

Additionally, a sample of 225 full-time working adults participated in a larger replication of this online experiment. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 67 years of age (M = 36.63, SD = 11.45) and included 165 females and 60 males. Participants lived in 40 different states in the United States. Participants' education levels ranged from some high school to an earned doctorate, with some college as the most common educational level (22.2%). Participants represented a wide variety of industries, with the top four representing health services (12.4%), retail trade (10.7%), educational services (7.6%), and other (27.1%). Participants' total work experience ranged from less than a year to 55 years (M = 11.17, SD = 10.46), and participants' total supervisory work experience ranged from 0 to 42 years (M = 3.65, SD = 6.50).

Procedure and Design

Participants were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk and Qualtrics® Panel and completed a Qualtrics®-hosted survey. Amazon's Mechanical Turk provides access to a more generalizable population of full-time working adults, as compared to a convenience sample of non-working college students, in a reliable and cost-effective way (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Obtaining samples of working adults for survey experiments has been found useful in other organizational communication research (Cameron, Barki, Ortiz de Guinea, Coulon, & Moshki, 2018; Minei, Eatough, & Cohen-Charash, 2018). Additionally, the survey was only available to full-time working adults. Also, potential participants indicated their age in years. Participants under 18 were excluded from participating. In accordance with institutional board oversight, qualified respondents read an unsigned electronic consent form. Upon consenting, participants

gained access to the survey experiment. After completing the survey, participants were compensated as long as their responses were usable (e.g., passed attention checks).

Participants were randomly assigned to one of six conditions (see *Appendix A*). The hypothetical message and coworker scenario differed on two independent variables. The first independent variable is a leader message consisting of three levels (autobiographical prosocial leader message (APLM), prosocial directive leader message, control). Participants assigned to the APLM condition read a leader message employing storytelling, a common framing device (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996), about a time the leader received social support from their[*sic*] coworkers (word count: $n = 98$). Participants assigned to the prosocial directive leader message read a message telling them to provide social support to their coworkers (word count: $n = 98$). Participants assigned to the control group read a leader message without elements of prosociality and story (word count: $n = 98$). The second independent variable is coworker immediacy (close coworker, distant coworker). Participants read a hypothetical scenario about a coworker that is either close (word count: $n = 39$) or not close (word count: $n = 38$) to them. After reading the randomly assigned leader message and scenario, participants respond to a series of statements regarding their intention to provide social support and level of fear in expressing compassion to the coworker.

Intent to provide emotional social support to coworker. A five-item modified version of giving emotional social support from the 2-way social support scale (Shakespeare-Finch & Obst, 2011) was used to measure intent to give emotional social support to a coworker (see *Appendix B*). Items including the word "other" were replaced with "coworker." Items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly*

disagree, 5 = *strongly agree*). Sample items included "I would be there to listen to my coworker's problems" and "I would give my coworker a sense of comfort in their time of need." Previous internal consistency of this measure was good, Cronbach's alpha = .86 (Hermanto & Zuroff, 2016). The social support scale has evidence for predictive and convergent validity (Shakespeare-Finch & Obst, 2011). In the pilot study, Cronbach's alpha = .88. In the 3 x 2 design, Cronbach's alpha = .86. In the 2 x 2 design, Cronbach's alpha = .87.

Intent to provide instrumental social support to coworker. A five-item modified version of giving instrumental social support from Shakespeare-Finch and Obst's (2011) 2-way social support scale was used to measure intent to give instrumental social support to a coworker (see *Appendix B*). Items including the word "other" were replaced with "coworker." Items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Sample items included "I would help my coworker with their responsibilities when they are unable to fulfill them" and "I would give financial assistance to my coworker." Previous internal consistency of this measure was good adequate, Cronbach's alpha = .78 (Hermanto & Zuroff, 2016). The social support scale has evidence for predictive and convergent validity (Shakespeare-Finch & Obst, 2011). In the pilot study, Cronbach's alpha = .87. In the 3 x 2 design, Cronbach's alpha = .80. In the 2 x 2 design, Cronbach's alpha = .82.

Fear of expressing compassion to coworker. A 10-item modified version of Gilbert, McEwan, Matos, and Rivas' (2011) Fear of Expressing Compassion for Others Scale was used to measure fear of expressing compassion to coworker (see *Appendix B*). Items including the word "other" were replaced with "coworker." Items were measured

on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Sample items included "My coworker will take advantage of me if they see me as too compassionate" and "My coworker needs to help themselves rather than waiting for others to help them." The scale was determined to have face validity (Gilbert et al., 2011). Previous internal consistency of this measure is adequate, Cronbach's alpha = .85 (Gilbert, et al., 2012). In the pilot study, Cronbach's alpha = .94. In the 3 x 2 design, Cronbach's alpha = .93. In the 2 x 2 design, Cronbach's alpha = .93.

Leader source credibility. McCroskey's (1966) 12-item source credibility scale was used to measure leader credibility (see *Appendix B*). Items were measured on a 7-point semantic differential scale. Sample adjective pairs included "reliable/unreliable" and "honest/dishonest." Cronbach's alpha determined scale reliability. In a previous study with a sample of working adults, internal consistency was .95 (Teven, 2007). In the pilot study, Cronbach's alpha = .94. In the 3 x 2 design, Cronbach's alpha = .93. In the 2 x 2 design, Cronbach's alpha = .93.

Manipulation checks. Manipulation checks were performed to assess whether participants likely perceived distinctions between the type of leader message and the type of coworker (see *Appendix C*).

***Story*.** Participants responded to Likert-type statements about the nature of the leader message in terms of story (see *Appendix C*). Participants indicated how much they agreed their leader's message "was a story about their past," "told us about their own past experiences," and "included personal details about themselves." In the pilot study, Cronbach's alpha = .97. In the 3 x 2 design, Cronbach's alpha = .91. In the 2 x 2 design, Cronbach's alpha = .94.

Directive. Participants responded to Likert-type statements about the nature of the leader message in terms of directive (see *Appendix C*). Participants indicated how much they agreed their leader's message "was a command," "was a directive," and "'told' rather than showed.'" In the pilot study, Cronbach's alpha = .74. In the 3 x 2 design, Cronbach's alpha = .70. In the 2 x 2 design, Cronbach's alpha = .69.

Prosociality. After the pilot study was completed, a four-item modified version of Grant's (2008) Prosocial Motivation Scale was added as a manipulation check for leader message (see *Appendix C*). Items were modified to add "My leader's comments were meant to encourage me to" to the statement. Items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). A sample items included "My leader's comments were meant to encourage me to help others at my work." In the 3 x 2 design, Cronbach's alpha = .89. In the 2 x 2 design, Cronbach's alpha = .89.

Coworker closeness. Participants responded to semantic-differential scales about relational closeness-related adjective pairs (see *Appendix C*). Items were measured on a 7-point semantic differential scale. Participants responded to the following semantic pairs: "Close/Not close," "Intimate/Not intimate," "Friendly/Unfriendly," "Near/Distant," "Warm/Cold," and "Familiar/Unfamiliar." The lower the score, the closer the relationship was perceived by the participant. In the pilot study, Cronbach's alpha = .96. In the 3 x 2 design, Cronbach's alpha = .88. In the 2 x 2 design, Cronbach's alpha = .89.

Message realism. After the pilot study was completed, a measure of message realism was added to the study. Participants responded to Likert-type statements regarding the realism of the leader message (see *Appendix C*). Items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Sample items

included “The leader message felt realistic” and “No leader would have spoken that way (reverse-coded).” In the 3 x 2 design, Cronbach’s alpha = .79. In the 2 x 2 design, Cronbach’s alpha = .78.

Chapter 4: Pilot

Manipulation Checks (Pilot)

To assess whether the manipulations were successful, manipulation checks were performed. First, the manipulation of the leader message was evaluated for elements of storytelling. A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if participants randomly assigned to the autobiographical prosocial leader message (APLM), prosocial directive message, and control condition leader message conditions perceived the prompt differently in terms of the use of leader stories (see *Appendix C*). A significant difference was detected between group means, $F(2, 109) = 80.36$, $p < .001$. A Tukey HSD post hoc indicated that participants perceived the use of stories significantly more in the APLM condition ($M = 4.53$, $SD = .76$) as compared to the prosocial directive ($M = 2.21$, $SD = 1.17$) and the control ($M = 1.74$, $SD = 1.11$) conditions. This pattern indicates that the manipulation was successful. The APLM condition was perceived to have more presence of "story" than both the prosocial directive and the control conditions.

To test whether the conditions differed in terms of directives, a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. A significant difference was detected between group means, $F(2, 109) = 18.79$, $p < .001$. The Tukey HSD post hoc indicated that participants perceived the message as a directive significantly less in the APLM condition ($M = 2.35$, $SD = 1.01$) as compared with the prosocial directive ($M = 3.26$, $SD = .96$) and the control ($M = 3.62$, $SD = .77$) conditions. The manipulation was successful. Participants randomly assigned to the APLM perceived less of a directive than

participants assigned to either the prosocial directive message or control condition leader message conditions.

To test whether the coworker type was successful, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted. Results revealed that participants assigned to the close coworker condition ($M = 2.39$, $SD = .86$) reported higher perceived relational closeness to the hypothetical coworker than participants assigned to the distant coworker condition ($M = 5.11$, $SD = 1.38$), $t(110) = 12.92$, $p < .001$. Recall that low scores on the coworker closeness scale represents *greater* perceived closeness (and less social distance). Therefore, the manipulation of the coworker type condition was successful.

Emotional Social Support (Pilot)

To test the hypotheses involving participants' intention to provide emotional social support (i.e., H1a, H4a, and H7a), a 3 (APLM vs. prosocial directive vs. control) X 2 (close vs. distant coworker) factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted (See Table 3 for descriptive statistics). These hypotheses predicted leader message and coworker type would have an effect on participants' intention to provide emotional social support at work.

Table 3 (Pilot) Emotional Social Support

	Leader Message Condition											
	Control			Prosocial Directive			APLM			All		
	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*
Close Coworker	4.48	.37	19	4.43	.55	19	4.40	.60	20	4.44	.51	58
Distant Coworker	3.14	1.08	17	3.77	.57	18	3.81	.63	19	3.59	.82	54
All	3.85	1.03	36	4.12	.64	37	4.11	.68	39	4.03	.80	112

There was no significant main effect for leader message type, $F(5, 106) = 2.36$, $p = .10$. Thus, H1a was not supported. Results indicated a significant main effect for coworker type, $F(5, 106) = 48.40$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .03$. Specifically, participants assigned to the close coworker condition ($M = 4.44$, $SD = .51$) reported significantly more intention to provide emotional social support than participants assigned to the distant coworker condition ($M = 3.59$, $SD = .82$). Thus, H4a was supported. Finally, results indicated a significant interaction effect for leader message and coworker type (See Figure 1), $F(5, 106) = 3.65$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .04$. Thus, 7a was supported. The greatest difference was between the control condition leader message/distant coworker and the prosocial directive/autobiographical prosocial leader message conditions.

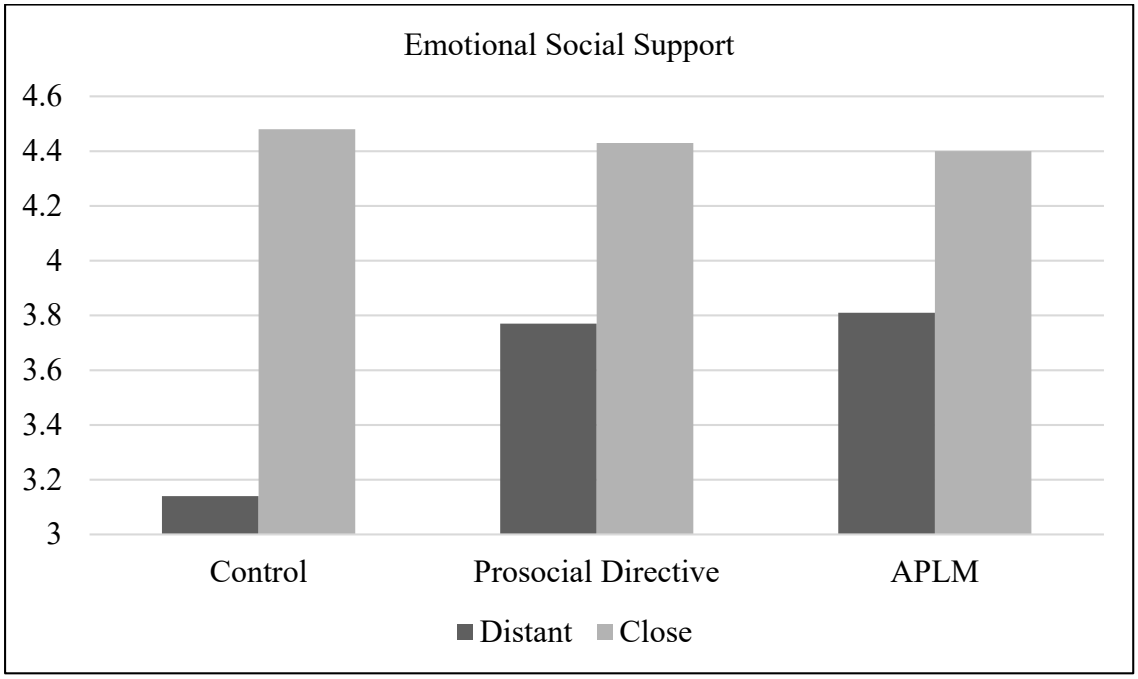

Figure 1 (Pilot)

Instrumental Social Support (Pilot)

To test the hypotheses involving participants' intention to provide instrumental social support (i.e., H2a, H5a, and H8a), a 3 (APLM vs. prosocial directive vs. control) X

2 (close vs. distant coworker) factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted (See Table 4 for descriptive statistics). These hypotheses predicted leader message and coworker type would have an effect on participants' intention to provide instrumental social support at work.

Table 4 (Pilot) Instrumental Social Support

	Leader Message Condition									All		
	Control			Prosocial Directive			APLM					
	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*
Close Coworker	4.31	.46	19	4.19	.56	19	4.11	.58	20	4.20	.53	58
Distant Coworker	3.19	1.02	17	3.80	.50	18	3.84	.98	19	3.62	.90	54
All	3.78	.95	36	4.00	.56	37	3.98	.79	39	3.92	.78	112

There was no significant main effect for leader message, $F(5, 106) = 1.38$, $p = .26$. Thus, H2a was not supported. Results indicated a significant main effect for coworker type, $F(5, 106) = 19.31$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$. Specifically, participants assigned to the close worker condition ($M = 4.20$, $SD = .53$) reported significantly higher levels of instrumental social support than participants assigned to the distant coworker condition ($M = 3.62$, $SD = .90$). Thus, H5a was supported. Finally, results indicated a significant interaction effect for leader message and coworker type (See Figure 2), $F(5, 106) = 3.83.$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .06$. Thus, H8a was supported. The greatest difference was between the control condition leader message/distant coworker and the prosocial directive/autobiographical prosocial leader message conditions.

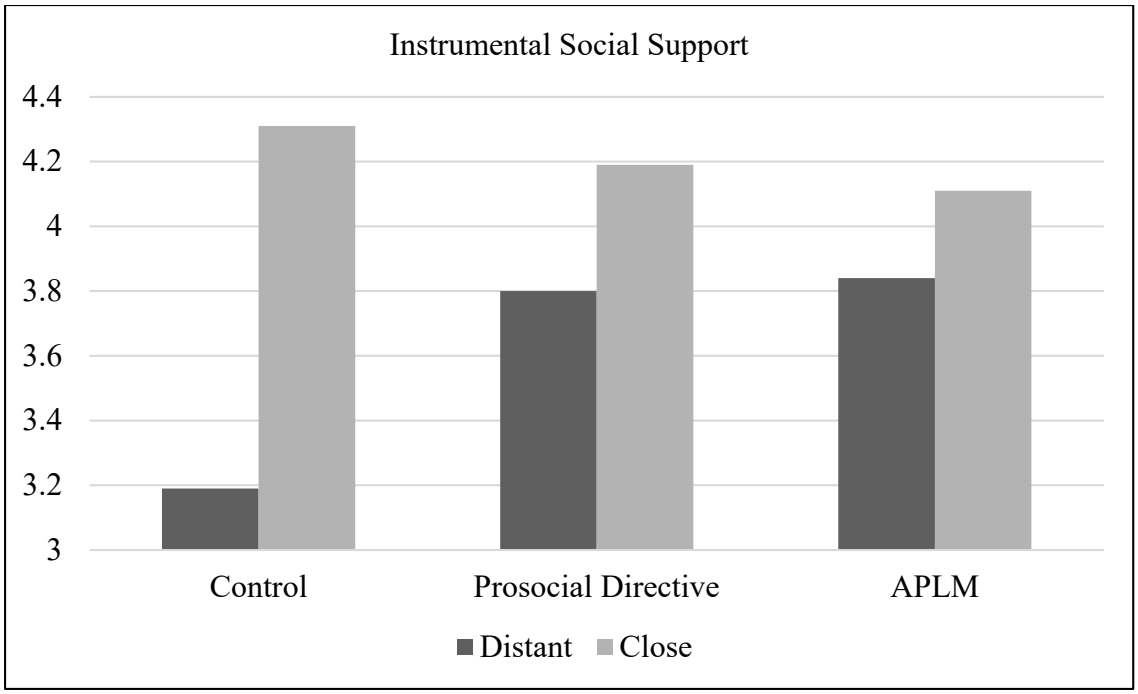

Figure 2 (Pilot)

Fear of Expression Compassion to Others (Pilot)

To test the hypotheses involving participants' fear of expressing compassion to coworkers (i.e., H3a, H6a, and H9a), a 3 (APLM vs. prosocial directive vs. control) X 2 (close vs. distant coworker) factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted (See Table 5 for descriptive statistics). The hypotheses predicted the effects of leader messages and coworker type on participants' fear of expressing compassion at work. There was a significant main effect for leader message, $F(5, 106) = ., p < .03, \eta^2 = .05$. Fisher's LSD post hoc indicated participants assigned to APLM condition ($M = 1.87$, $SD = .79$) reported significantly lower levels of fear of expressing compassion to coworkers than both the prosocial directive ($M = 2.35$, $SD = .90$) and control conditions ($M = 2.33$, $SD = .97$). Thus, H3a was supported. The results indicated no significant main effect for coworker type, $F(5, 106) = 3.27$, $p = .07$. Thus, H6a was not supported. There was no

significant interaction effect for leader message and coworker type, $F(5, 106) = 1.17$, $p = .31$. Thus, H9a was not supported.

Table 5 (Pilot) Fear of Expressing Compassion to Coworkers

	Leader Message Condition									All		
	Control			Prosocial Directive			APLM					
	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*
Close Coworker	2.04	.89	19	2.35	1.04	19	1.72	.67	20	2.03	.90	58
Distant Coworker	2.65	.97	17	2.33	.77	18	2.03	.89	19	2.32	.90	54
All	2.33	.97	36	2.34	.90	37	1.87	.79	39	2.17	.91	112

Perceived Leader Credibility (Pilot)

To test the hypothesis that predicted that participants would perceive the hypothetical leaders in the Autobiographical Prosocial Leader Message (APLM) condition as more credible that the hypothetical leaders with the prosocial and control messages, a one-way factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. Results revealed no significant difference among the APLM, prosocial directive, and the control conditions, $F(2, 109) = 2.54$, $p = .08$. Thus, H10a was not supported.

Chapter 5: Results

Results 3 x 2 Design

Manipulation Checks (3 x 2 Design)

To assess whether the manipulations were successful, manipulation checks were performed. First, the manipulation of the leader message was evaluated for elements of storytelling. A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if participants randomly assigned to the autobiographical prosocial leader message (APLM), prosocial directive message, and control condition leader message conditions perceived the prompt differently in terms of the use of leader stories (see *Appendix C*). A significant difference was detected between group means, $F(2, 224) = 32.96$ $p < .001$. A Tukey HSD post hoc indicated that participants perceived the use of stories significantly more in the APLM condition ($M = 3.90$, $SD = .76$) as compared to the prosocial directive ($M = 3.26$, $SD = .91$) and the control ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 1.08$) conditions. This pattern indicates that the manipulation was successful. The APLM condition was perceived to have more presence of story than both the prosocial directive and the control conditions.

To test whether the conditions differed in terms of directives, a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. A significant difference was not detected between group means, $F(2, 224) = .56$, $p = .57$. The manipulation was not successful. Participants assigned to the APLM did not perceive less of a directive than participants assigned to either the prosocial directive message and control condition leader message conditions.

To test whether the coworker type was successful, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted. Results revealed that participants assigned to the close coworker condition ($M = 2.91$, $SD = .1.26$) reported higher perceived relational closeness to the

hypothetical coworker than participants assigned to the distant coworker condition (M = 4.00, SD = 1.31), $t(223) = 6.29$, $p < .001$. The lower the score on the coworker closeness scale, the closer the relationships were perceived by the participants. Therefore, the manipulation of the coworker type condition was successful.

A realism check was assessed with a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). There were no significant differences among the three conditions, $F(2, 224) = .20$, p = .82. The APLM (M = 3.58, SD = .81), prosocial directive (M = 3.50, SD = .87), and control (M = 3.52, SD = .79) conditions did not significantly differ from one another. Furthermore, one-sample t-test was computed across conditions in order to determine whether participants perceived the scenario to be realistic (M = 3.53, SD = .82). The test value was set at 3, the midpoint of the scale. Results indicated participants perceived the realism of the leader message scenarios to be significantly greater than the test value, $t(224) = 9.81$, $p < .001$.

Emotional Social Support (3 x 2 Design)

To test the hypotheses involving participants' intention to provide emotional social support (i.e., H1a, H4a, and H7a), a 3 (APLM vs. prosocial directive vs. control) X 2 (close vs. distant coworker) factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted (See Table 6 for descriptive statistics). These hypotheses predicted leader message and coworker type would have an effect on participants' intention to provide emotional social support at work. There was no significant main effect for leader message type, $F(2, 219) = 1.30$, p = .28. Thus, H1a was not supported. Results indicated a significant main effect for coworker type, $F(1, 219) = 9.39$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .04$. Specifically, participants assigned to the close coworker condition (M = 4.18, SD = .61) reported significantly more

intention to provide emotional social support than participants assigned to the distant coworker condition (M = 3.89, SD = .69). Thus, H4a was supported. There was no significant interaction effect for leader message and coworker type on emotional social support, $F(2, 219) = 2.21$, $p = .11$. Thus, H7a was not supported.

Table 6 (3 x 2 Design) Emotional Social Support

	Leader Message Condition									All		
	Control			Prosocial Directive			APLM					
	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*
Close Coworker	4.25	.51	34	4.11	.59	35	4.17	.73	37	4.18	.61	106
Distant Coworker	3.75	.64	43	3.86	.74	42	4.12	.65	34	3.89	.69	119
All	3.97	.63	77	3.97	.68	77	4.14	.68	71	4.02	.67	225

Instrumental Social Support (3 x 2 Design)

To test the hypotheses involving participants' intention to provide instrumental social support (i.e., H2a, H5a, and H8a), a 3 (APLM vs. prosocial directive vs. control) X 2 (close vs. distant coworker) factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted (See Table 7 for descriptive statistics). These hypotheses predicted leader message and coworker type would have an effect on participants' intention to provide instrumental social support at work. There was no significant main effect for leader message, $F(2, 219) = .96$, $p = .39$. Thus, H2a was not supported. Results indicated a significant main effect for coworker type, $F(1, 219) = 6.92$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .03$. Specifically, participants assigned to the close worker condition (M = 3.96, SD = .60) reported significantly higher levels of instrumental social support than participants assigned to the distant coworker condition (M = 3.72, SD = .68). Thus, H5a was supported. There was no significant

interaction effect for leader message and coworker type, $F(2, 219) = .06$, $p = .95$. Thus, H8a was not supported.

Table 7 (3 x 2 Design) Instrumental Social Support

	Leader Message Condition											
	Control			Prosocial Directive			APLM			All		
	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*
Close Coworker	3.90	.54	34	3.95	.67	35	4.02	.60	37	3.96	.60	106
Distant Coworker	3.66	.59	43	3.70	.67	42	3.83	.79	34	3.72	.68	119
All	3.76	.58	77	3.81	.68	77	3.93	.70	71	3.83	.65	225

Fear of Expression Compassion to Others (3 x 2 Design)

To test the hypotheses involving participants' fear of expressing compassion to coworkers (i.e., H3a, H6a, and H9a), a 3 (APLM vs. prosocial directive vs. control) X 2 (close vs. distant coworker) factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted (See Table 8 for descriptive statistics). The hypotheses predicted the effects of leader messages and coworker type on participants' fear of expressing compassion at work. There was no significant main effect for leader message, $F(2, 219) = .11$, $p = .90$. Thus, H3a was not supported. The results indicated no significant main effect for coworker type, $F(1, 219) = 1.18$, $p = .28$. Thus, H6a was not supported. There was no significant interaction effect for leader message and coworker type, $F(2, 219) = .11$, $p = .90$. Thus, H9a was not supported.

Table 8 (3 x 2 Design) Fear of Expressing Compassion to Coworkers

	Leader Message Condition									All		
	Control			Prosocial Directive			APLM					
	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*
Close Coworker	3.06	.84	34	3.01	1.09	35	2.98	.90	37	3.02	.94	106
Distant Coworker	2.87	.83	43	2.95	.83	42	2.84	.94	34	2.89	.86	119
All	2.96	.83	77	2.97	.95	77	2.91	.92	71	2.95	.90	225

Perceived Leader Credibility (3 x 2 Design)

To test the hypothesis that predicted that participants would perceive the hypothetical leaders in the Autobiographical Prosocial Leader Message (APLM) condition as more credible that the hypothetical leaders with the prosocial and control messages, a one-way factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. Results revealed that while participants assigned to the APLM condition ($M = 5.42$, $SD = 1.07$) reported higher perceived leader credibility than participants assigned to the control condition leader message ($M = 4.82$, $SD = 1.23$), it was not significantly different from the prosocial directive condition ($M = 5.34$, $SD = 1.20$), $F(2, 222) = 5.82$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .05$. The hypothetical leader is perceived as more credible when the leader provided the autobiographical story as compared to the leader with the control message. Thus, H10a was partially supported.

Results 2 x 2 Design

Because the degree to which participants were not able to distinguish the APLM and the control conditions from the prosocial directive condition, the directive was removed from the dataset. The following results have the directive condition removed from the dataset.

Participants (2 x 2 Design)

After eliminating the group exposed to the prosocial directive condition, the subset of the sample consisting of 148 full-time working adults participated in this online experiment. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 67 years of age (M = 36.74, SD = 11.58) and included 110 females and 38 males. Participants lived in 37 different states in the United States. Participants' education levels ranged from some high school to an earned doctorate, with some college as the most common educational level (31.8%). Participants represented a wide variety of industries, with the top four representing educational services (10.1%), retail trade (10.1%), health services (12.2%), and other (29.1%). Participants' total work experience ranged from less than a year to 55 years (M = 11.76, SD = 11.37), and participants' total supervisory work experience ranged from 0 to 42 years (M = 3.82, SD = 6.80).

Manipulation Checks (2 x 2 Design)

An independent samples t-test was conducted to assess whether the APLM condition was perceived to have more story elements than the control group. Results indicated participants assigned to the APLM condition (M = 3.90, SD = .75) significantly differed from the control condition (M = 2.63, SD = 1.14), $t(146) = 7.93$, $p < .001$. The APLM condition was perceived to have more presence of "story" than the control condition. Therefore, the APLM manipulation was successful.

To test whether the coworker type was successful, an independent samples t-test was conducted. Results revealed that participants assigned to the close coworker condition (M = 2.92, SD = 1.28) reported higher perceived relational closeness to the hypothetical coworker than participants assigned to the distant coworker condition (M =

4.03, *SD* = 1.31), $t(146) = 5.18$, $p < .001$. The lower the score on the coworker closeness scale, the closer the relationships were perceived by the participants. Therefore, the manipulation of the coworker type condition was successful.

A realism check was assessed with an independent samples *t*-test. There was no significant difference between the conditions, $t(146) = .50$, $p = .62$. The APLM (*M* = 3.58, *SD* = .81.) and control (*M* = 3.52, *SD* = .78) conditions did not significantly differ from each other. Furthermore, one-sample *t*-test was computed across conditions in order to determine whether participants perceived the scenario to be realistic (*M* = 3.55, *SD* = .79). The test value was set at 3, the midpoint of the scale. Results indicated participants perceived the realism of the leader message scenarios to be significantly greater than the test value, $t(147) = 8.44$, $p < .001$.

Emotional Social Support (2 x 2 Design)

To test the hypotheses involving participants' intention to provide emotional social support (i.e., H1b, H4b, and H7b), a 2 (APLM vs. control) X 2 (close vs. distant coworker) factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted (See Table 9 for descriptive statistics). These hypotheses predicted leader message and coworker type would have an effect on participants' intention to provide emotional social support at work.

Table 9 (2 x 2 Design) Emotional Social Support

	Leader Message Condition								
	Control			APLM			All		
	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*
Close Coworker	4.25	.51	34	4.17	.73	37	4.21	.63	71
Distant Coworker	3.75	.64	43	4.12	.65	34	3.91	.66	77
All	3.97	.63	77	4.14	.68	71	4.01	.66	148

There was no significant main effect for leader message type, $F(1, 148) = 1.75$, $p = .19$. Thus, H1b was not supported. Results indicated a significant main effect for coworker type, $F(1, 148) = 6.80$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .04$. Specifically, participants assigned to the close coworker condition ($M = 4.21$, $SD = .63$) reported significantly more intention to provide emotional social support than participants assigned to the distant coworker condition ($M = 3.91$, $SD = .66$). Thus, H4b was supported. Finally, results indicated a significant interaction effect for leader message and coworker type (See Figure 3), $F(1, 148) = 4.56$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .03$. In other words, as predicted, the APLM was particularly potent in encouraging participants to intend to provide emotional social support to a distant coworker experiencing distress. Thus, H7b was supported.

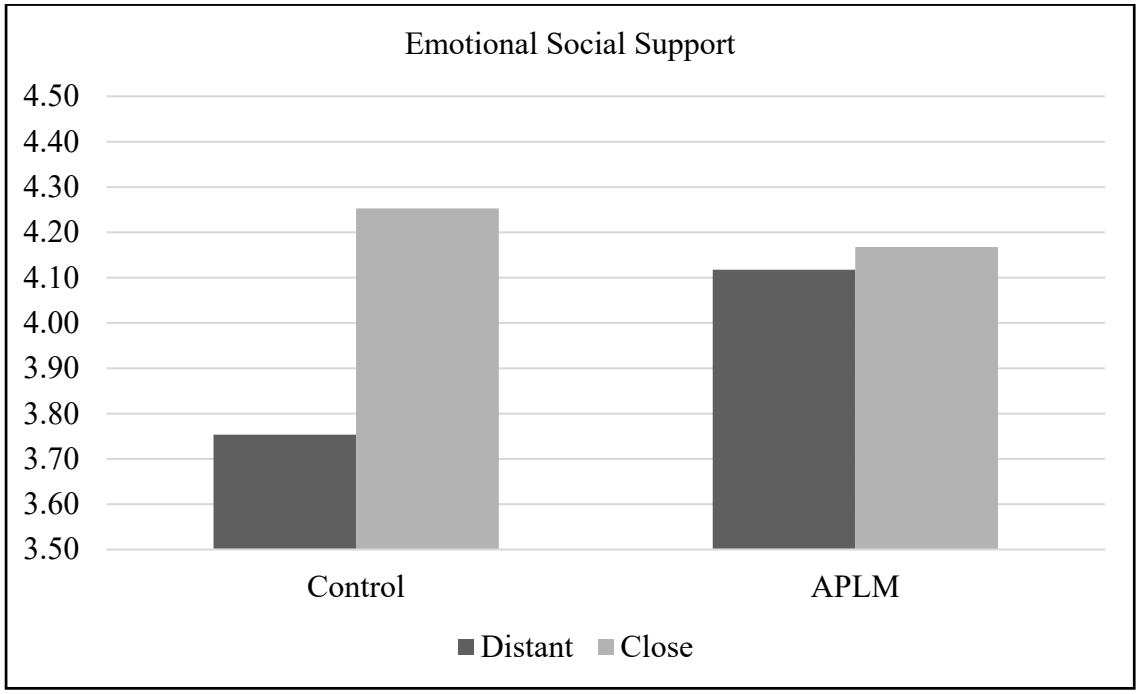

Figure 3 (2 x 2 Design)

Instrumental Social Support (2 x 2 Design)

To test the hypotheses involving participants' intention to provide instrumental social support (i.e., H2b, H5b, and H8b), a 2 (APLM vs. control) X 2 (close vs. distant

coworker) factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted (See Table 10 for descriptive statistics). These hypotheses predicted leader message and coworker type would have an effect on participants' intention to provide instrumental social support at work. There was no significant main effect for leader message, $F(1, 148) = 1.91$, $p = .17$. Thus, H2b was not supported. Results indicated a significant main effect for coworker type, $F(1, 148) = 4.23$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .03$. Specifically, participants assigned to the close worker condition ($M = 3.96$, $SD = .57$) reported significantly higher levels of instrumental social support than participants assigned to the distant coworker condition ($M = 3.73$, $SD = .69$). Thus, H5b was supported. There was no significant interaction effect for leader message and coworker type, $F(1, 148) = .08$, $p = .79$. Thus, H8b was not supported.

Table 10 (2 x 2 Design) Instrumental Social Support

	Leader Message Condition								
	Control			APLM			All		
	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*
Close Coworker	3.90	.54	34	4.01	.60	37	3.96	.57	71
Distant Coworker	3.66	.58	43	3.83	.79	34	3.73	.69	77
All	3.76	.58	77	3.93	.70	71	3.84	.64	148

Fear of Expression Compassion to Others (2 x 2 Design)

To test the hypotheses involving participants' fear of expressing compassion to coworkers (i.e., H3b, H6b, and H9b), a 2 (APLM vs. control) X 2 (close vs. distant coworker) factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted (See Table 11 for descriptive statistics). The hypotheses predicted the effects of leader messages and coworker type on participants' fear of expressing compassion at work. There was no

significant main effect for leader message, $F(1, 148) = .15$, $p = .70$. Thus, H3b was not supported. The results indicated no significant main effect for coworker type, $F(1, 148) = 1.33$, $p = .25$. Thus, H6b was not supported. There was no significant interaction effect for leader message and coworker type, $F(1, 148) = .04$, $p = .85$. Thus, H9b was not supported.

Table 11 (2 x 2 Design) Fear of Expressing Compassion to Others

	Leader Message Condition								
	Control			APLM			All		
	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*
Close Coworker	3.06	.84	34	2.98	.90	37	3.02	.87	71
Distant Coworker	2.87	.83	43	2.84	.94	34	2.86	.88	77
All	2.96	.83	77	2.91	.92	71	2.94	.87	148

Perceived Leader Credibility (2 x 2 Design)

Hypothesis 10b predicted that participants would perceive the hypothetical leaders in the Autobiographical Prosocial Leader Message (APLM) condition as more credible that the hypothetical leaders with the control message. Results from an independent samples *t*-test revealed that participants assigned to the prosocial story leader message condition ($M = 5.42$, $SD = 1.07$) reported higher perceived leader credibility than participants assigned to the control condition leader message ($M = 4.82$, $SD = 1.23$), $t(146) = 3.17$, $p < .01$, $d = .52$. The hypothetical leader is perceived as more credible when the leader provided the autobiographical story as compared to the leader with the control message. Thus, H10b is supported.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This dissertation tested the role of leadership framing and its influence on employees' intention to provide social support and to reduce fear of expressing compassion to peer coworkers. Specifically, this experiment tested the influence of type of leader message and type of coworker on participants' intention to provide emotional social support, instrumental social support, and willingness to express compassion to coworkers. Additionally, this experiment tested the role of autobiographical leader stories on perceived leadership credibility. Overall, results contribute experimental evidence to positive organizational scholarship that a single leadership message can increase employees' intention to provide emotional support even to those coworkers they consider to be information peers (Kram & Isabella, 1985).

Results contribute to the literatures associated with framing, coworker relationships, compassion at work, and leadership communication. First, this dissertation contributes to leadership framing literature the notion that leaders can shape followers' intentions by using the framing device of autobiographical stories. Second, this dissertation demonstrated that a leader's credibility was boosted—and not harmed—by voicing an autobiographical story about being a beneficiary of others' generosity after experiencing a hardship. Third, this dissertation provides evidence that supports communication research which differentiates types of coworker relationships on the basis of specific communication markers (Kram & Isabella, 1985). Fourth, this study of organizational communication was unique in that included a measurement of participants' fear of expressing compassion to others and found no systematic differences among participants. Fifth, this dissertation contributes to Positive Organizational

Scholarship (POS) through a communicative approach, known as Positive Organizational Communication Scholarship (POCS; Cameron et al., 2003). The following paragraphs explore each of these contributions in detail.

Strategic Leadership Framing

First, and perhaps most notably, this study contributes to leadership framing literature the notion that leaders can shape followers' intentions to provide emotional social support by using the framing device of *autobiographical stories*. Leadership communication scholars are emphatic that leaders attempt to shape others' interpretations of key identities and events. In doing so, they persuade followers to hold similar views of the world, which serves as springboards for action (Weick, 1995). For example, leaders may collect stories of beneficiaries of employees' work and retell them frequently (e.g., Grant & Gino, 2010). Such stories persuade followers into a view of their work as meaningful in terms of helping others. That view of one's own work can in turn trigger commitment, persistence, and job satisfaction (Grant, 2008).

For leadership communication scholars, the key point is that leaders attempt to shape followers' mental models in ways that ultimately help themselves and the organization. Leaders are known to engage in framing through rhetorical flourishes, such as metaphor, story, contrast, jargon, and spin (Fairhurst, 2011; Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). Leadership framing draws from message design logic theory (O'Keefe, 1998), which rejects a transmission view of communication. The theory replaces transmissional views of communication with a perspective that emphasizes the constitutive and socially constructed nature of meaning making. O'Keefe (1998) identified three message design logics: expressive, conventional, and rhetorical. Fairhurst (2005, 2011) argued that each

of the three communication styles—expressive, conventional, and strategic/rhetorical—vary in terms of sensitivity to framing. Fairhurst employed message design logic theorizing to claim that the most communicatively competent leaders tend to be strategic/rhetorical; in other words, skillful leaders are adept at finding and defining uncertainty in the moment communicatively.

Many organizational scholars have noted that narrative and story are key means through which leaders and organizational members create organizational reality (e.g., Boje, 2001; Fisher 1984; Gabriel, 2000; Weick & Browning, 1986). Vaara, Sonenshein, and Boje (2016) explain how narrative research is pluralistic in terms of epistemological and methodological approaches. Classical narrative research assumes stories are complete with a beginning, middle, and end; however, organizational narratives are often fragmented. Some definitions of narratives are more traditional, but narratives are not always formalized (Boje, 1991). Narratives or stories in organizations do not necessarily have beginning and ends. According to Vaara et al. (2016) organizational narratives are "temporal, discursive constructions that provide a means for individual, social, and organizational sensemaking and sensegiving" (p. 496). Thus, it is not surprising that leaders depend upon stories as a key framing device.

This dissertation contributes to these literatures an investigation of one specific form of story, *autobiographical stories*. Autobiographical stories are typically used in everyday conversations as a means to present one's personal history and identity to others. Like other forms of story, autobiographical stories invite the listener to experience the world emotionally though the eyes of key characters, in this case the storyteller him or herself (Barbour, 2017; Smith & Keyton, 2001). Thus, in the context of leadership

framing, autobiographical stories should be particularly useful strategy for shaping others' views of who the leader is and what the leader values. In the present study, a leader voiced an autobiographical story in which he or she experienced the generosity of others at work in response to a personal crisis (i.e., house flood). Presumably, such a story should imply to followers that the leader values the giving and receiving of social support.

Results did in fact indicate that participants were significantly more likely to intend to provide emotional social support to information or non-close peers after reading a leader's prosocial autobiographical message. In other words, the framing device of an autobiographical story measurably affected participants' communicative intentions with their hypothetical coworkers. These findings are socially significant in that they hint at the possibility that when leaders share their own past vulnerabilities—in addition to descriptions of others' generosity—it can encourage others into a readiness to be prosocial with their coworkers. Affirming the value of social support within an organizational culture (Keyton, 2011) can foster a compassionate working environment (Dutton et al., 2014). In sum, this experiment is the first of its kind to provide empirical support for the relationship between leaders' autobiographical prosocial framing and followers' intention to provide emotional social support to others at work.

Perceived Leadership Credibility

Second, this dissertation supported the notion that a leader's credibility can be boosted—and not harmed—by voicing an autobiographical story about being a beneficiary of others' generosity after experiencing a hardship. Credibility is essential to successful leadership influence (Northouse, 2015). Communication theorists and

researchers have observed that credibility is a foundational concern of persuasive processes from Aristotle through contemporary times (McCroskey & Young, 1981). Credibility is known to facilitate successful student-teacher interactions (Finn et al., 2006), online support group interactions (Campbell & Wright, 2002), doctor-patient interactions (Paulsel, McCroskey, & Richmond, 2006), and supervisor-subordinate interactions (Mikkelson, Sloane, & Hesse, 2017). Importantly, credibility can be fragile. A single severe transgression—or admission of a weakness—can deteriorate credibility quickly and can create a context in which credibility is difficult to regain.

Fairhurst (2011) theorized the role of credibility in successful leadership communication. For Fairhurst, leadership communication involves shaping others' mental models about how the world does or should work. In this framework, credibility itself is a meaning followers attribute (or not) to those they deem "leaderly." The design problem of leadership involves the double challenge associated with shaping others' mental models while shaping others' perspective of the communicator-as-leaderly. For example, a leader who intends to encourage followers to be supportive of one another must use language in such a way as to shape their mental models while not undermining their followers' ability to see them as leaderly. Harsh directives to "be more supportive!" may undermine the credibility of a communicator for failing to "practice what they preach." In this way, strategic leadership messaging has a design quality in which problems-in-use are anticipated and solved through linguistic innovations.

The present study explored an aspect of this design problem. There is a potential problem of sharing autobiographical stories that involve personal hardships and vulnerability. Sharing these stories could harm a communicator's public image such that

one is seen as too weak. After all, research documents the widespread belief that successes and failures, rewards and punishments, thriving and hardships are deserved by their recipients (i.e., Just World Theory: Lerner, 1980; Pfeffer, 2009). Within this mental model, admissions of past hardship by a leader may challenge their credibility with followers. Yet, given that the experience of hardship is so common voicing autobiographical stories of hardship may create identification with leaders and enhance their perceived credibility.

Results indicated that participants perceived a leader who voiced an autobiographical story of hardship to be more credible as compared to a leader who voiced standard bureaucratic information. This finding is socially significant in that it hints leaders may not necessarily harm their own perceived credibility and public image by signaling past vulnerability. In fact, these data suggest a situation in which an autobiographical story of hardship measurably *bolstered* perceived credibility. A willingness to describe hardship authentically may form a strong foundation for enriching human relationships in work settings. Furthermore, these findings are theoretically significant in that they contribute to Fairhurst's (2011) notion of the design problem of leadership a specific speech act, which illustrates a framing device through which the double challenge of leadership can be negotiated.

Coworker Relationships

Third, this dissertation supports the notion that there are different types of coworker relationships on the basis of specific communication markers. Previous communication research has identified types of communication markers among peer coworker types, such as information seeking (Myers et al., 2018) and lateral dissent

(Sollitto & Myers, 2015). Specifically, this dissertation was interested in the differences in intent to provide social support to collegial and information peers (Kram & Isabella, 1985). Results indicated differences in intention to provide emotional social support and instrumental social support depending on the closeness to the coworker (Sias, 2005a). Coworkers that were considered to be collegial peers were more likely to be intended recipients of both instrumental social support and emotional social support that information peers. This provides more support that information and collegial peers are marked by differences in communicative expectations and intentions. Perhaps unsurprisingly, collegial peer relationships are more likely to be characterized as having social support compared to information peers.

One of the findings of this dissertation was that emotional social support is more influenced by autobiographical leader messages than instrumental social support. This finding suggests that it may be easier to shape employees' intention to provide emotional support as opposed to their intention to provide instrumental support. Due to the communicative nature of emotional support, it may be easier and less costly to provide as compared with instrumental support and the financial expense it implies. Put directly, shaping employee's intentions to provide instrumental support may be more resistant to rapid influence as compared with emotional social support. This observation seems to align with social exchange theories of human communication in which resources are exchanged based on self-interest and on the norm of reciprocity (Roloff, 1981). Individuals are hesitant to provide resources if they do not anticipate that they will receive equivalent or more resources in return from the recipient. By providing instrumental social support, such as acquiring another person's workload, it is less likely

that the recipient will take on that person's work. This dissertation provides evidence that a strategic leader message can close the gap between the differences of intention to provide emotional social support in collegial and information peers. In other words, one of the communication differences between collegial and information peers is social support, but a leader could influence information peers to add social supportive communication to their relationships.

Fear of Expressing Compassion

Fourth, in addition to exploring peer coworker social support, this study of organizational communication is unique in that it included a measurement of participants' fear of expressing compassion to peer coworkers. However, results were unable to detect any systematic differences in participants' fear of expressing compassion. Participant means for the measure were near the scale's midpoint. Participants neither feared nor did not fear to express compassion to the hypothetical coworker. A possible explanation is that an APLM does not seem to affect employees' fear of expressing compassion significantly. Another explanation could be that the hypothetical scenario provided did not initiate the noticing of suffering, the first step of compassion process (Kanov et al., 2004). Future studies could use a multiple message experimental design to test for the differences and confounds in messages (Barbour, Doshi, & Hernández, 2016; O'Keefe, 2015). Additional messages could include different levels of severity to the coworker's hardship. The hardship in this dissertation was a minor vehicle accident caused by a distracted driver. More severe variations can be made to other messages and randomly assigned to participants. Future studies could examine whether there are differences in fear of expressing compassion to others based on the level of suffering.

Positive Organizational Communication Scholarship

Fifth, this dissertation contributes to Positive Organizational Communication Scholarship (POCS), a communicative approach to Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS). Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) continues to grow in organizational science research across different disciplines, such as organizational psychology, organizational behavior, and organizational communication (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003; Cameron, 2013). Over time, POS has been critiqued in three ways: "(a) POS ignores negative phenomena, (b) POS adopts an elitist (managerial) viewpoint, and (c) POS is not defined precisely" (Cameron, 2013, pp. 28-29). Cameron (2013) provides counterarguments to these common criticisms, and this dissertation study also addresses these concerns.

One criticism is that POS ignores negativity in the organization and has an unrealistic view of the world (Cameron, 2013). POC has been incorrectly characterized as Pollyannaish, ignoring the complexities of workplace life to favor hyper-positive interpretations of the workplace. However, the presence of negative phenomenon is often the underlying reason positivity can exist in organizations. For example, this dissertation focuses on a hypothetical employee experiencing a personal hardship, a negative occurrence. The study acknowledges the potential for negative phenomena but focuses on the positivity that can arise from a negative situation in employees' personal lives. Negative events are inevitable in life generally, and organizational life specifically, and a POCS approach not only acknowledges the presence of adversity, but also, seeks ways in which organizational members can respond in ways that promotes resilience and flourishing.

Another criticism of POS questions who benefits from positive organizational actions dynamics and investigations (Cameron, 2013). Put directly, POS is critiqued for benefiting the organization itself and upper management instead of employees with the least amount of power and decision making authority. However, POS seeks outcomes that are positive for everyone involved rather than leveraging one group over another. In other words, all members of the organization benefit. A peer coworker was the beneficiary of social support in this experiment, and the benefits that the peer coworker receives "spills over" to other parts of the organization. This dissertation explores how positive outcomes are for employees at all levels not solely for the benefit of the leader and the organization.

The third criticism of POS is that there is not a clear, precise definition of the term positive (Cameron, 2013). Cameron explains that no one definition of the term positive exists because the term is a construct. Cameron argues that POS scholars have identified a scholarly domain without the need for a precise definition of the word positive. "Similar to other concepts in organizational science that do not have precisely bounded definitions (e.g., culture, innovation, core competence), this mapping provides the conceptual boundaries required to locate POS as an area of inquiry" (p. 27). Thus, POS studies should clearly explicate what it means while discussing the term positive. In this dissertation, the positive-oriented constructs studied include compassion, social support, and perceived leadership credibility at work. Overall, this dissertation contributes to the theorizing of POCS and provides practical implications.

Practical Implications

This dissertation provided empirical support for the influence of autobiographical prosocial leader messages on coworkers' intention to provide emotional social support to both close and distant peer coworkers. This observation suggests sharing autobiographical stories with their employees may yield positive outcomes for leaders. This finding is consistent with how beneficiary expression of gratitude yield prosocial outcomes (Grant & Gino, 2010). Leaders may feel that sharing personal information to their employees has no influence on the culture of the organization; however, there may be benefits for leaders to provide their autobiographical stories about past instances in which organizational members provided compassion and support during personal hardships. Autobiographical stories of leaders can function as a form of identity work for the leader can aid in shaping future narratives for the leader (Watson, 2009). Sharing autobiographical stories may provide models for employees on how they could provide emotional social support to coworkers they do not consider to be close coworkers. In other words, by sharing stories about emotional social support may provide examples—or scripts—to employees regarding how they may be able to be supportive to others at work. Leaders can prime for spontaneity (Fairhurst, 2011). Priming for spontaneity is accomplished by storing memories to be recalled at an appropriate time to shape others' mental models. Leaders may benefit from making note of real life experiences of times that they experienced acts of compassion and social support from their coworkers for opportunities to shape the mental models of employees.

Limitations

With any study, there are limitations. This study was an experimental design, which comes with limitations. For example, participants responded to a hypothetical

coworker situation. Participants generally respond more positively than what would happen in naturalistic situations. Furthermore, there is a possibility that participants were answering questions about the hypothetical leader based on projections about their own personal supervisor. Additionally, only a certain number of dependent variables could be included in the design. While there are many forms of social support, emotional and instrumental social support were the two types of social support included in this dissertation. For example, information social support is an important part of social support literature, but it was not included because of the nature of the coworker scenario. Informational support would likely be highly specialized information from the participant, such as which car rental agency was most reputable in their community.

A number of hypotheses were not supported, and this can be a product of design issues. The coworker personal hardship was a minor, non-injury automobile accident. No support was found for fear of expressing compassion, and that could be a result of not having a more severe personal hardship for the hypothetical hardship (e.g., house fire). Little support was found for a main effect for autobiographical leader messages, and this can be a result of having a hypothetical leader rather than having participants' real-world leader.

Future Research

This dissertation provides avenues for future research. Future studies should examine narratives of people who experienced a personal hardship and how their coworkers were—or were not—supportive. These stories could be content analyzed for the purpose of learning what kind of personal stresses people experienced while at work. Furthermore, the open-ended response would help identify what kind of coworker

messages were—or were not—supportive during their personal hardship. Future research could develop and validate an APLM scale that measures leaders' use of personal-history prosocial stories in supervisor-subordinate communication. An APLM scale could be useful for training purposes and for organizational assessment. Future leadership credibility research should consider whether or if employees perceive a leader as having selfish motives for sharing autobiographical prosocial messages and whether that perception, in turn, harms perceived source credibility. Similarly, future research could test whether sharing a personal story about a hardship has different implications for credibility based on leader gender.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This dissertation contributed to the growing literature within Positive Organizational Communication Scholarship (POCS). Specifically, this dissertation examined the role of strategic leadership framing with the goal of making the workplace more compassionate. This dissertation included a pilot and a study, which followed a 3 x 2 experimental design. Results found support for the use of strategic leadership messages on employees' intention to provide emotional social support to distant coworkers. APLM's are a strategy leaders could potentially use to encourage employees to be more supportive of coworkers. Additionally, APLMs did not hurt leadership credibility, and there are potential benefits to sharing APLMs. This dissertation contributes to the organizational communication literatures on leadership framing, coworker relationships, social support, and leadership credibility.

This dissertation contributes to theorizing about autobiographical prosocial leader messages (APLMs) answering the question: How do leaders make it a norm to take care of one another and ease work-life spillover? Leaders can have influence over the culture of the organization, and sharing personal stories can provide scripts for other employees that demonstrate that caring for coworkers is welcomed and encouraged.

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Appendix A: Scenarios

Autobiographical Prosocial Leader Message (APLM)/Close Coworker
For the following scenario,

Imagine the LEADER of your department concludes your weekly team meeting by saying:

"A couple years ago, my house flooded. My coworkers cared about me and my family's well-being. When I was feeling down, my coworkers noticed and spoke words of encouragement. My coworkers found ways to make me laugh. My coworkers took on some of my projects while I got back on my feet, referred me to contractors for house repair, and even bought me lunch and dinner."

The LEADER concludes by saying "That's the kind of place I want this to be" and adjourns the meeting.

Imagine you learn that a COWORKER was injured in an automobile accident caused by a distracted driver. At work, you communicate with this coworker **frequently**. In your conversations, you **often** share **work-related information** as well as **some personal details**.

APLM/Distant Coworker
For the following scenario,

Imagine the LEADER of your department concludes your weekly team meeting by saying:

"A couple years ago, my house flooded. My coworkers cared about me and my family's well-being. When I was feeling down, my coworkers noticed and spoke words of encouragement. My coworkers found ways to make me laugh. My coworkers took on some of my projects while I got back on my feet, referred me to contractors for house repair, and even bought me lunch and dinner."

The LEADER concludes by saying "That's the kind of place I want this to be" and adjourns the meeting.

Imagine you learn that a COWORKER was injured in an automobile accident caused by a distracted driver. At work, you communicate with this coworker **infrequently**. In your conversations, you **rarely** share **work-related information** and **never** share **personal details**.

Prosocial Directive/Close Coworker

Imagine the leader of your department concludes your weekly team meeting by saying:

"Consider how your coworkers' personal lives can affect us here at the workplace. Do the six following things:

- Care about each other's well-being.
- Encourage one another: Say kind things and give compliments.
- Look for ways to be humorous around the office.
- Help each other on work projects without being asked.
- Assist each other when needed.
- Be generous: Buy lunch every now and then for a coworker."

The leader concludes by saying "That's the kind of place I want this to be" and adjourns the meeting.

Imagine you learn that a coworker was injured in an automobile accident caused by a distracted driver. At work, you communicate with this coworker **often**. In your conversations, you **frequently** share **work-related information** as well as **some personal details**.

Prosocial Directive/Distant Coworker

Imagine the leader of your department calls everyone together one morning and says:

"Consider how your coworkers' personal lives can affect us here at the workplace. Do the six following things:

- Care about each other's well-being.
- Encourage one another: Say kind things and give compliments.
- Look for ways to be humorous around the office.
- Help each other on work projects without being asked.
- Assist each other when needed.
- Be generous: Buy lunch every now and then for a coworker."

The leader concludes by saying "That's the kind of place I want this to be" and adjourns the meeting.

Imagine you learn that a coworker was injured in an automobile accident caused by a distracted driver. At work, you communicate with this coworker **rarely**. In your conversations, you **infrequently** share **work-related information** and **never** share **personal details**.

Control Condition Leader Message/Close Coworker
For the following scenario,

Imagine the LEADER of your department concludes your weekly team meeting by saying:

"HR sent me an email to remind everyone to do these important things before the new year. Please balance your discretionary expense spending with the department office manager. Don't forget to go online and complete your annual fire safety training, hazardous chemicals training, and emergency preparedness training. Lastly, please remember to RSVP for the annual company picnic. First fifty people to RSVP get a free t-shirt.

The LEADER concludes by saying "That is all I have on the agenda for today" and adjourns the meeting.

Imagine you learn that a COWORKER was injured in an automobile accident caused by a distracted driver. At work, you communicate with this coworker **frequently**. In your conversations, you **often** share **work-related information** as well as **some personal details**.

Control Condition Leader Message/Distant Coworker
For the following scenario,

Imagine the LEADER of your department concludes your weekly team meeting by saying:

"HR sent me an email to remind everyone to do these important things before the new year. Please balance your discretionary expense spending with the department office manager. Don't forget to go online and complete your annual fire safety training, hazardous chemicals training, and emergency preparedness training. Lastly, please remember to RSVP for the annual company picnic. First fifty people to RSVP get a free t-shirt.

The LEADER concludes by saying "That is all I have on the agenda for today" and adjourns the meeting.

Imagine you learn that a COWORKER was injured in an automobile accident caused by a distracted driver. At work, you communicate with this coworker **infrequently**. In your conversations, you **rarely** share **work-related information** and **never** share **personal details**.

Appendix B: Study Scales

Intent to Give Emotional Social Support

(Shakespeare-Finch & Obst, 2011)

1. I would be there to listen to this coworker's problems.
2. I would look for ways to cheer this coworker up when they are feeling down.
3. This coworker could tell me their fears and worries.
4. I would give this coworker a sense of comfort in their time of need.
5. This coworker could confide in me when they have problems.

Scale: 1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*

Intent to Give Instrumental Social Support

(Shakespeare-Finch & Obst, 2011)

1. I would help this coworker when they are too busy to get everything done.
2. I would help this coworker with their responsibilities when they are unable to fulfil them.
3. If this coworker got sick, I would help them.
4. I would be a person this coworker could turn to for help with their tasks.
5. I would give financial assistance to this coworker.

Scale: 1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*

Fear of Expressing Compassion to Coworkers Measure

(Gilbert, McEwan, Matos, & Rivis, 2011)

1. Being too compassionate to this coworker makes me soft and easy to take advantage of.
2. This coworker will take advantage of me if I am too compassionate.
3. I fear that being too compassionate to this coworker makes me an easy target.
4. I fear that if I am compassionate, this coworker will become too dependent upon me.
5. This coworker will take advantage of me if they see me as too compassionate.
6. I worry that if I am compassionate, this coworker would be drawn to me and drain my emotional resources.
7. Being compassionate toward this coworker is letting them off the hook.
8. This coworker does not deserve compassion.
9. For this coworker I think discipline and proper punishments are more helpful than being compassionate to them.
10. This coworker needs to help themselves rather than waiting for others to help them.

Scale: 1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*

Perceived Leader Credibility Measure

(McCroskey, 1966)

Reliable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unreliable*
Uninformed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Informed
Unqualified	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Qualified
Intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unintelligent*
Valuable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Worthless*
Inexpert	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Expert
Honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Dishonest*
Unfriendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Friendly
Pleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unpleasant*
Selfish	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unselfish
Awful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Nice
Virtuous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Sinful*

*reverse scoring

Appendix C: Manipulation Checks

Leader Message Story

1. My leader's message was a story about their past.
2. My leader's message included personal details about themselves.
3. My leader told us about their own past experiences.

Scale: 1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*

Leader Message Directive

1. My leader's message was a command.
2. My leader's message was a directive.
3. My leader's message "told" rather than "showed."

Scale: 1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*

Leader Message Prosocial

(Grant, 2008)

1. My leader's comments were meant to encourage me to care about others at my work.
2. My leader's comments were meant to encourage me to help others at my work.
3. My leader's comments were meant to encourage me to have positive impact on others.
4. My leader's comments were meant to encourage me to do good for others at my work.

Scale: 1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*

Type of Coworker Relationship

Close	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not close
Intimate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not intimate
Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unfriendly
Near	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Distant
Warm	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Cold
Familiar	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unfamiliar

Message Realism

1. The leader message felt realistic.
2. The leader message was completely unrealistic. *
3. No leader could have said those things. *
4. No leader would have spoken that way. *

Scale: 1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*

*reverse scoring