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When Does Self-Sacrificial Leadership Motivate Prosocial Behavior? It Depends on Followers' Prevention Focus

David De Cremer
Erasmus University

David M. Mayer
University of Central Florida

Marius van Dijke
Open University of the Netherlands

Barbara C. Schouten
University of Amsterdam

Mary Bardes
University of Central Florida

In the present set of studies, the authors examine the idea that self-sacrificial leadership motivates follower prosocial behavior, particularly among followers with a prevention focus. Drawing on the self-sacrificial leadership literature and regulatory focus theory, the authors provide results from 4 studies (1 laboratory and 3 field studies) that support the research hypothesis. Specifically, the relationship between self-sacrificial leadership and prosocial behavior (i.e., cooperation, organizational citizenship behavior) is stronger among followers who are high in prevention focus. Implications for the importance of taking a follower-centered approach to leadership are discussed.

Keywords: leadership, self-sacrifice, prevention focus, regulatory focus, cooperation

In most of the groups and organizations that people participate in, it is important that members devote time and energy in being cooperative, setting up collaborations, and being good citizens: all actions believed to benefit the group or organization (De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002; Organ, 1988; K. G. Smith, Carroll, & Ashford, 1995; Tyler & Blader, 2000; Tyler & De Cremer, 2006). The emergence of these prosocial behaviors shapes an enjoyable and efficient work environment that may even further promote performance across a broad range of areas (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997; West, Tjosvold, & Smith, 2003). Indeed, reviews on prosocial behavior in groups and organizations (cf. Brief & Motowidlo, 1986) link organizational citizenship behavior (OCB; Organ, 1988) and cooperation (Schroeder, Penner, Dovidio, & Piliavin, 1995) to positive job attitudes (Lepine, Erez, & Johnson, 2002), improved performance (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000), and decreased counterproductive work behavior (Dalal, 2006).

In the present article, we focus on two specific types of prosocial behavior: (a) cooperation (i.e., a contribution of time, effort, and resources to help the collective; De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002) and (b) OCB (helping in ways that are not formally required by the organization; C. A. Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983) and examine why and when self-sacrificial leaders motivate followers to display these behaviors. Consistent with the notion that leaders are important determinants of prosocial behavior, recent research and theoretical essays have proposed self-sacrificial leadership in particular to be a crucial precursor to follower prosocial behavior in organizations (De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2004; see Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1998, for a review). *Self-sacrificial leadership* refers to a form of leadership that includes "an abandonment or postponement of personal interests and privileges for the collective welfare" (Choi & Yoon, 2005, p. 52).

We argue that self-sacrificial leaders operate as a role model motivating followers to display similar positive behavior because these leaders activate goals and values that include forgoing self-interest for the good of the group, securing the group's welfare, and generally acting in an ethical manner as they fulfill their obligations and moral duties (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1998). These values should motivate followers to reciprocate the leader's self-sacrifice by displaying prosocial behaviors (e.g., Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1999; De Cremer, 2002; De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002, 2004, 2005; B. van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005; Yorges, Weiss, & Strickland, 1999; cf. Lord & Brown, 2004). Importantly, we argue that these values have the most influence on followers' motivation and behavior if they speak more directly to the relevant goals and values of the followers. In other words, we propose that followers will be especially motivated to show similar prosocial behavior as a self-sacrificing leader when there exists congruence between the values and the goals that this leader makes salient and the values and goals that the followers pursue.

David De Cremer, Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University, Rotterdam, the Netherlands; David M. Mayer and Mary Bardes, Department of Management, University of Central Florida; Marius van Dijke, Department of Psychology, Open University of the Netherlands, Heerlen, the Netherlands; Barbara C. Schouten, Communication Science, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to David De Cremer, Rotterdam School of Management, Centre of Behavioral Ethics, Department Business-Society Management, Erasmus University, Burgemeester Oudlaan 50, 3062 PA Rotterdam, the Netherlands. E-mail: ddecremer@rsm.nl

In light of this assumption, we thus adopted a follower-centered approach (something that most previous research has neglected), in which we examined how the regulatory concerns of followers affect the perceptions and interpretations of leader's self-sacrifice, which influences the leader's impact on the emergence of prosocial behavior. A distinction is made between followers' prevention focus (e.g., seeking to avoid unfavorable situations; focusing on duties and obligations; driven by a desire to satisfy basic security needs) and promotion focus (e.g., seeking to attain positive outcomes; focusing on attaining an ideal self; driven by a desire to satisfy growth and development needs) (Higgins, 1997, 1998; Lockwood, Jordan, & Kunda, 2002). We tested the prediction that leader self-sacrifice motivates those with a prevention focus more to display prosocial behavior.

We believed that it was critical to examine more closely how goal regulation plays a role in the self-sacrificial leadership process because it (a) calls for research taking a follower-centered approach to understanding the effects of self-sacrificial leadership. Given that leaders do not exist without followers, it is important to understand how characteristics of the follower influence the effects of leaders, (b) emphasizes the motivational foundation of the effectiveness of leader's self-sacrifice, which helps people to develop a more complete theory of self-sacrificial leadership, (c) identifies an important moderator variable that not only highlights when self-sacrificial leadership is likely to be most effective, but it also speaks to the underlying process of why self-sacrificial leaders influence followers, and (d) provides empirical evidence that regulatory focus also matters in the context of social interactions between leaders and followers, which is important to establish given the remarkably little attention that has been devoted to how regulatory focus affects the behaviors that people display in the realm of interpersonal interactions (see Brebels, De Cremer, & Sedikides, 2008; Galinsky, Leonardelli, Okhuysen, & Müssweiler, 2005, for a similar point of view). In what follows we draw on the self-sacrificial leadership literature (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1998) and regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997, 1998) to formulate the research hypothesis.

Self-Sacrificial Leadership and Prosocial Behavior

Self-sacrificial leaders are ethical and often forgo personal interests and highlight that the mission and purpose of the group are paramount (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1999). Such leaders often engage in personally risky behaviors to benefit the collective. Self-sacrificial leaders have a strong sense of duty to make sure their obligation to the group is satisfied and that ultimately their goals for the group are achieved. They are likely to be concerned with the needs of followers and ensure that employees have a clear idea of their mission and purpose (De Cremer, van Knippenberg, van Dijke, & Bos, 2006). Because of their dutiful nature and their efforts to focus on follower needs, employees generally trust self-sacrificial leaders to have their best interests at heart and thus do not fear exploitation (De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2005).

By virtue of these behaviors, self-sacrificial leaders act as role models to followers and can thus be expected to motivate those followers to display similar group-serving behaviors such as acting prosocially. In line with this idea, recent research has indeed shown that self-sacrificial leadership promotes OCB (De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002, Study 2), interpersonal helping (De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2005, Study 2), cooperation (De Cremer, 2002; De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2004, Study 2), willingness to engage in organizational change (B. van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005, Study 4), contributions to the public good (De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002, Studies 1 and 3; De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2005, Study 1; Yorges et al., 1999), reciprocity behavior (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1999), and job involvement (De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2004, Study 3).

Why such a relationship between self-sacrificial leadership and followers' prosocial behavior exists is, however, not entirely clear. According to writings of Choi and Mai Dalton (1998, 1999), followers feel a sense of indebtedness to reciprocate the favorable treatment they received, as such suggesting that a socially shared goal becomes present that the group's interest should be protected and maintained. Although this idea is intuitively appealing, it is fair to say that hardly any attention, at least to our knowledge, has been devoted to understanding the role that goal regulation plays in the process of self-sacrificial leadership. Therefore, in the present set of studies, we developed a motivational perspective in which the effectiveness of leader self-sacrifice is determined by how congruent and consistent the goals that self-sacrificial leader behavior activates are with the goals that followers wish to pursue.

More precisely, self-sacrificial leaders behave in ways that protect the collective interest (Conger & Kanungo, 1998). We contend that such specific leader behavior activates values that reflect goals considered important to be pursued such as being dutiful, responsible, and willing to fulfill obligations to the group (cf. Lord & Brown, 2001, 2004; Lord, Brown, & Freiberg, 1999). Following the assumption that congruence in values increases the likelihood of behavioral engagement (Dewett & Denisi, 2007; Lord & Brown, 2004), it should follow that the motivation to reciprocate and thus show prosocial behavior would be stronger if the values and goals that are activated by self-sacrificial leadership also speak directly to the concerns of the follower. Thus, we suggested that the motivational foundation of self-sacrificial leadership may be directly related to how consistent the goals of followers are with the ones that are activated by the sacrificing leader behavior (cf. Kark & Van Dijk, 2007; Lord & Brown, 2004).

Our motivational perspective stressing the role of congruency in goals between leaders and followers then implies that the values and goals that a self-sacrificial leader activates should be more appealing to some types of followers, making the effectiveness of leader self-sacrifice dependent on the goal-regulation strategies of the follower. Thus, the theoretical framework advocated in the present article holds the idea that a self-sacrificing leader becomes more influential when there is congruence in the values and goals the leader activates and followers pursue. Therefore, in line with a follower-centered approach, we elaborate on this proposition by discussing the importance of followers' regulatory focus in predicting the effects of self-sacrificial leadership on prosocial behavior.

The Moderating Role of Followers' Regulatory Focus

Consistent with the idea that "the follower remains an underexplored source of variance in understanding leadership processes" (Lord et al., 1999, p. 167), we thus developed the argument that the motivational foundation of leader self-sacrifice is better understood by adopting a follower-centered approach in which we

examined whether the goal-regulation strategy of the follower influences the effectiveness of self-sacrificial leadership.

How people regulate their goals is elaborated upon in the concept of regulatory focus (Higgins, 1997, 1998). Regulatory focus is a basic aspect of motivation and represents the manner in which individuals react toward possible threats to the outcomes and goals that humans (and they themselves) in general pursue. Two distinct motivational systems are distinguished, that is, a promotion and prevention focus. Both foci determine people's specific motivation and information processing (Werth & Foerster, in press). A promotion focus is characterized by a concern for nurturance and growth, whereas a prevention focus is characterized by a concern for security and safety. Because of this motivation, individuals with a promotion focus are generally concerned with seeking positive outcomes, making them eagerly pursue their own autonomous desires and ideals without deliberating about possible social consequences (Brebels et al., 2008; Meyer, Becker, & Vandenberghe, 2004; Van Dijk & Kluger, 2004). Individuals with a prevention focus are directed toward avoiding negative outcomes whereby they evaluate goals like duties, responsibilities, and obligations. In this process, they deliberate more about possible social consequences that represent a threat to things one ought to do (Brebels et al., 2008; Higgins, Idson, Freitas, Spiegel, & Molden, 2003; Oyserman, Uskul, Yoder, Nesse, & Williams, 2007).

As we noted earlier, self-sacrificial leader behavior activates values that are focused on conserving and protecting the group's interest by being dutiful and responsible. Therefore, we reasoned the positive impact of leader's self-sacrifice on the motivation of followers to display prosocial behavior should be most likely to emerge when leader behavior speaks to the regulatory concerns of the follower. Following this line of reasoning, we expected that followers with a prevention focus should be motivated the most to display prosocial behavior by a leader displaying self-sacrificial behavior. Indeed, followers high in prevention focus are concerned more with duties and obligations, goals that are consistent with the values that self-sacrificing leader behavior makes salient. As leader effectiveness depends on the values that are made salient and interpreted as such, and consistency in values between a self-sacrificing leader and follower increases behavioral engagement to act prosocially, we thus predicted the following:

> *Hypothesis 1:* The positive relationship between self-sacrificial leadership and follower prosocial behavior is moderated by follower prevention focus, such that the relationship is stronger for individuals high in prevention focus.

It is important to note that our hypothesis concerns the moderating role of prevention focus. Some scholars have argued that transformational leaders are likely to influence the promotion focus of their followers (Brockner & Higgins, 2001). Additionally, Kark and Van Dijk (2007) posited that promotion focus individuals may respond more strongly to certain types of leadership (such as charisma) because such leaders help them focus on a vision for the future (and thus focus on positive future outcomes). However, these predictions (at least to our knowledge) have not been empirically tested yet and also deviate from our approach in a way that we did not look at whether leaders shape the regulatory focus of followers but rather suggest that self-sacrificial leader behavior appeals more to the goals and needs of followers who are prevention-focused, which motivates those follower to display more prosocial behavior. Because self-sacrificial leadership behavior activates values relating to duties and obligations, the goals that prevention-focused followers pursue are more congruent than the goals that promotion-focused followers pursue (i.e., pursuing desires and aspirations).

Moreover, we hasten to say that since we focused on one specific leadership style, our approach did not preclude the fact that other behavioral styles related to charisma (e.g., vision etc.) might rather reveal congruence with a promotion focus as these leadership behaviors refer to issues of growth and moving toward valued goals. This is an issue that should be addressed in future research, but, for now, in the present set of studies, first of all, we aimed to establish whether or not follower regulatory focus does play a role in explaining the psychological effects of leader self-sacrifice on followers' prosocial behavior.

Overview of Studies

This article reports on the findings of four studies—one experimental lab study (Study 1) and three field studies (Studies 2–4) in two countries (the United States and the Netherlands)—to test the research hypothesis. Our studies include multiple measurements of self-sacrificial leadership and prosocial behavior, and include both measured and manipulated (i.e., primed) operationalizations of prevention focus and self-sacrificial leadership. Consistent with prescriptions by Lykken (1968), the use of constructive replication as utilized here strengthens the validity of the findings by providing a more robust test and thus improves confidence in the findings.

Experimental studies allowed us to draw conclusions about the causal relationships. In addition, the field studies within organizational settings provided increased external validity. Thus, we used a combination of both experimental and field studies to address our research question (see De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002, 2004; Dipboye, 1990). As a brief overview, Study 1 is an experimental lab study in which both leader self-sacrifice and regulatory focus (i.e., prevention and promotion focus) are manipulated and their interaction on cooperation is examined. In Study 2, we sought to extend the lab findings by examining the predicted interaction in a field setting and examining OCB as the dependent variable. We built on Study 2 in Study 3 by examining the predicted interaction using alternative measures of leader self-sacrifice and OCB. Finally, Study 4 includes the same measure of leader self-sacrifice as Study 3 but includes supervisor ratings of the followers' OCB. In all three field studies, we also included measures of promotion focus and entered their main and interactive effects in the analysis, as a stringent test of our hypotheses regarding the interactive effect of prevention focus.

Study 1

Our purpose for Study 1 was to manipulate both leader self-sacrifice and the dominance of people's regulatory focus by using an accessibility technique employed in previous research (e.g., Cesario, Grant, & Higgins, 2004). Thus, half of the participants were placed in a prevention focus state and the other half were placed in a promotion focus state. This approach allowed us to

contrast followers with a prevention versus promotion focus (rather than only looking at whether they possess high vs. low prevention focus) to acquire further evidence that the predicted effect of self-sacrificial leadership has less to do with a promotion focus and more with a strong and dominant prevention focus. We tested the hypothesized interaction using a scenario experiment, which allowed us to draw conclusions concerning causality while maintaining a relatively high degree of mundane realism. It is important to note that most participants in Study 1 were employees at a variety of organizations and they combined their occupation with a part-time education in a university in the Netherlands.

Method

Participants and design. Ninety-four students (67 women and 27 men; average age = 42.01 years, *SD* = 9.10) at the Dutch Open University participated on a voluntary basis. Of the 94 participants, 51% indicated they had a job. Of the participants who indicated having a job, 5% indicated they worked less than 15 hr a week, 22% indicated they worked between 15 and 24 hr a week, 35% worked between 25 and 34 hr a week, and 38% worked for at least 35 hr a week. Of the working participants, 6% indicated they worked in administrative jobs, 18% worked in various other government jobs, 15% worked in consulting, 12% worked in commerce/trade, 36% worked in the medical or social care sector, 9% worked in education, and 3% worked in the art sector. Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (regulatory focus: prevention vs. promotion) × 2 (leader type: self-sacrifice vs. self-benefiting) between-subjects design.

Experimental procedure. Participants were invited to take part in an experimental study that was advertised on the university Web site. Participants could visit the Web site and log in to get access to the advertised study. Once they logged in, participants were welcomed to the study. They were led to believe that they would participate in two (supposedly unrelated) studies. The first study included the regulatory focus manipulation. Participants were told that some researchers in the university's psychology department were interested in the goals that people wished to pursue. The regulatory focus manipulation used a modified procedure used in previous studies (e.g., Brebels et al., 2008; Brockner, De Cremer, Fishman, & Spiegel, 2008; Cesario et al., 2004, Studies 3 and 4; Freitas & Higgins, 2002, Studies 1 and 2; Higgins et al., 2003, Study 4). More specifically, in the prevention condition, participants were asked the following question: "Please, think about the obligations and duties that you have in your life and how you would like to fulfill them." In the promotion condition, participants were asked the same question but with respect to the hopes and aspirations that they have and how they would like to fulfill them. Two judges coded whether participants correctly described either their obligations and duties (i.e., the prevention condition) or their hopes and aspirations (i.e., the promotion condition) in the corresponding experimental conditions. All participants correctly finished this experimental task.

In addition, given that imagination scenarios involving valenced memories can influence mood (Sedikides, 1995), we also asked participants to indicate how sad they felt (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*). An analysis of variance (ANOVA), including regulatory focus as the independent variable, did not reveal an effect of regulatory focus, $F(1, 92) = .32$, $p < .58$, implying that we did not have to control for mood in our main analyses. Overall, these results and the coded analyses show that our regulatory focus manipulation was successful.

After having thought about their hopes and aspirations or their obligations and duties for a fixed amount of time (5 min), participants moved on to the second study that included the scenario. They first read that they had to imagine that they were employed for some weeks now by the organization called WEAOP. Next, they were told that within this organization they worked in a team responsible for a variety of tasks ranging from the production of materials to the marketing and sales of those materials. A group leader supervised the team. Then, they were told that at the moment a restructuring was taking place within the company and that as a result much work had to be done.

Thereafter, the self-sacrifice manipulation was introduced (based on previous research of Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1999; De Cremer, 2002; Yorges et al., 1999). In the self-sacrifice condition, the scenario said,

> The group leader reacts to these changes by putting more effort into the team than on average could be expected. Due to these acts of self-sacrifice he usually ends up not having enough time to do the other things that he normally would do (e.g., enjoying his family and his hobbies). He also invests his own financial resources to assure that the team will be able to keep on going during these changes. Due to his involvement with the team he frequently misses out on opportunities to promote his own self-interest.

In the self-benefiting condition, the scenario said,

> The group leader reacts to these changes by putting less effort in the team than on average could be expected. Due to these acts of self-benefiting he never ends up having too little time to do the other things that he normally would do (e.g., enjoying his family and his hobbies). He never invests his own financial resources to assure that the team will be able to keep on going during these changes. Due to his involvement with the team he frequently ends up in situations in which he can promote his own self-interest, and if this happens he benefits from it the full 100%.

Then, the dependent measures were solicited. All questions were answered on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much so*). To test whether the manipulation of self-sacrificing versus self-benefiting behavior was successful, we asked participants, "To what extent does this leader show self-sacrificing behavior?" and "To what extent does this leader show self-benefiting behavior?" In addition, to provide a more robust test of our manipulation, we also included a four-item measure of leader self-sacrifice based on work by Bass and Avolio (1995) to serve as a manipulation check. The items include "goes beyond self-interest for the good of the group," "considers the moral and ethical consequences of decisions," "emphasizes the importance of having a collective sense of mission," and "specifies the importance of having a strong sense of purpose" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$). Further, we measured participants' cooperation by asking them three questions (based on De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2004): "To what extent would you have a cooperative attitude toward the team?" "To what extent would you collaborate with this leader and the team?" and "To what extent would you voluntarily help the leader and this team?" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$). Finally, participants were thanked and debriefed.

Results

Manipulation checks. A 2 (self-sacrifice) × 2 (regulatory focus) ANOVA on the sacrificing question yielded a significant main effect for self-sacrifice, $F(1, 89) = 210.44$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .70$, indicating that the self-sacrificing leader was evaluated as more sacrificing than the benefiting leader (*M*s = 5.69 vs. 1.81, *SD*s = 0.95 and 1.44, respectively). Neither the main effect of regulatory focus, $F(1, 89) < 1$, $p < .99$, nor the interaction, $F(1, 89) = 1.17$, $p < .29$, were significant.

A two-way ANOVA on the benefiting question yielded a significant main effect for self-sacrifice, $F(1, 90) = 28.20$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .24$, indicating that the benefiting leader was evaluated as more benefiting than the self-sacrificing leader (*M*s = 4.91 vs. 3.02, *SD*s = 1.83 and 1.55, respectively). Neither the main effect of regulatory focus, $F(1, 90) < 1$, $p < .37$, nor the interaction, $F(1, 90) < 1$, $p < .88$, were significant.

A two-way ANOVA on the four-item leader self-sacrifice measure revealed only the expected main effect for self-sacrifice, $F(1, 90) = 97.67$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .49$, indicating that the self-sacrificing leader was evaluated as being more self-sacrificing than the self-benefiting leader (*M*s = 4.87 vs. 2.40, *SD*s = 1.16 and 1.01, respectively). Neither the main effect of regulatory focus, $F(1, 90) = 1.85$, $p < .18$, nor the interaction, $F(1, 90) = 2.92$, $p < .09$, were significant.

Cooperation. A two-way ANOVA on the average cooperation score revealed a significant main effect of self-sacrifice, $F(1, 90) = 20.40$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .19$, showing that a self-sacrificial leader motivated cooperation significantly more than a self-benefiting leader (*M*s = 5.13 vs. 4.09, *SD*s = 1.14 and 1.05, respectively). Also the predicted interaction emerged, $F(1, 90) = 4.58$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .05$ (see Table 1 for means and Figure 1 for a plot).

Simple effect tests showed that the effect of self-sacrifice was significant in the prevention focus condition, $F(1, 90) = 22.02$, $p < .001$, but not in the promotion focus condition, $F(1, 90) = 2.84$, $p < .10$.

Study 2

Study 1 yielded the predicted interaction using a manipulation of leader self-sacrifice and primed assessments of prevention focus on cooperation. Our primary purpose for Study 2 was to extend the findings from the lab to a field setting. Study 2 is a field study including employees in a variety of work organizations in the Netherlands. Leader self-sacrifice was assessed with a measure developed by Conger and Kanungo (1998). Prevention and promotion focus were measured with the respective nine-item scales developed by Lockwood et al. (2002). Further, in Study 2 we operationalized prosocial behavior as OCB as previous research has shown that OCB is positively related to self-sacrificial leadership (e.g., De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002).

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations of Cooperation as a Function of Leader Self-Sacrifice and Follower Regulatory Focus (Study 1)

Regulatory focus for cooperation	Self-sacrifice			
	Self-sacrifice		Self-benefiting	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Prevention	5.39	0.80	3.86	0.86
Promotion	4.86	1.30	4.32	1.23

Note. Entries are means on 7-point scales, with higher values indicating higher cooperation.

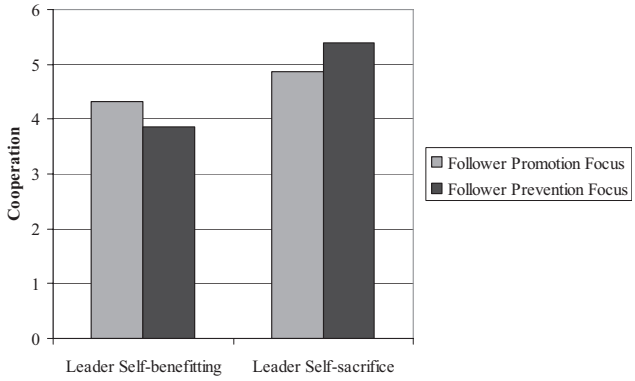

Figure 1. Interaction between leader self-sacrifice and follower regulatory focus on cooperation (Study 1).

Method

Participants. At the head office of an international company in the Netherlands, a research assistant approached employees holding different job duties (37% worked on the administration regarding retirement and legal issues, 31% worked on issues with respect to health and employee benefits, 16% worked on administration with respect to finance and Information Technology Center, and 16% worked on international and marketing issues) and asked them if they wanted to take part in the study. The questionnaire was distributed online and employees had two weeks to access the Web site and participate in the study. In total, 128 employees (out of 369; 35% response rate) responded to the questions used in the present research. In this sample, 50.4% of employees were women and the average age was 35.69 years (*SD* = 9.11). Average organizational tenure was 2.71 years (*SD* = 1.22).

Measures. All answers were provided on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much so*) except where otherwise noted.

Prevention focus was assessed with the Lockwood et al. (2002) measure. The scale ranged from 1 (*not at all true of me*) to 5 (*very true of me*; Cronbach's $\alpha = .66$). To enable a stringent test of our hypotheses, we also assessed promotion focus with the nine-item Lockwood et al. (2002) scale ($\alpha = .81$). As in previous research (e.g., Lockwood et al., 2002), both scales did not correlate significantly ($r = .09$, $p > .33$).

Self-sacrificial leadership was assessed with three items inspired by the work of Conger and Kanungo (1998): "In pursuing organizational objectives, my boss engages in activities involving considerable self-sacrifice," "My boss takes high personal risk for the sake of the organization," and "My boss is somebody who shows a lot of self-sacrifice" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .73$).

OCB was assessed using four items (taken from Konovsky & Organ, 1996): "I develop the necessary skills and knowledge that

are of benefit to my organization," "I undertake action to protect the organization from potential problems," "I have a cooperative relationship with my supervisor and others in the organization," and "If necessary, I am prepared to work overtime" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .62$).

Results

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for the study variables are displayed in Table 2. To test our hypotheses, we conducted a hierarchical regression analysis in which OCB was predicted by main effect terms (follower prevention focus, follower promotion focus, and leader self-sacrifice) at Step 1 and the interaction terms between follower prevention focus and leader self-sacrifice, follower promotion focus and leader self-sacrifice, and follower promotion focus and follower prevention focus at Step 2 (see Table 3).

Following Aiken and West (1991), we centered follower prevention focus, follower promotion focus, and leader self-sacrifice (i.e., by subtracting the mean from each score), and we based the interaction terms on these centered scores.

Table 3 shows the regression results: OCB was positively related to self-sacrifice and negatively to prevention focus. Furthermore, the interaction between follower prevention focus and leader self-sacrifice was significant ($\beta = .39$, $p < .001$; see Figure 2) but not the interaction between follower promotion focus and leader self-sacrifice ($\beta = .17$, $p < .20$) nor the interaction between follower prevention focus and follower promotion focus ($\beta = .09$, $p < .46$). Simple slopes analysis was conducted to further analyze this interaction (Aiken & West, 1991). When follower prevention focus was high (1 *SD* above the mean), leader self-sacrifice was significantly related to OCB ($\beta = .59$, $p < .001$) but not when follower prevention focus was low (1 *SD* below the mean; $\beta = .04$, $p < .72$). These supplemental analyses provide strong support for the notion that leader self-sacrifice has a stronger influence for prevention-focused individuals, as opposed to promotion-focused individuals.

Study 3

In line with Study 1, Study 2 again showed that self-sacrificial leadership significantly affected prosocial behavior but only so among those with a dominant prevention focus. Moreover, the same interaction that was found in the lab Study 1 was replicated in a field setting. To further test the robustness of this interaction, in Study 3 we examined the hypothesized relationship in a field study in the United States using the same Lockwood et al. (2002) measures of prevention and promotion focus, a different measure of leader self-sacrifice (i.e., the four-item Bass and Avolio, 1995, measure used as a manipulation check in Study 1), and a different measure of OCB (based on work by Moorman & Blakely, 1995).

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables (Study 2)

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4
1. Self-sacrifice	4.53	1.21	—			
2. Prevention focus	3.25	0.81	−.05	—		
3. Promotion focus	4.78	0.83	−.03	.09	—	
4. Organizational citizenship behavior	5.69	0.71	.31**	−.26**	.13	—

Note. Higher scores indicate higher self-sacrifice and so forth.
** $p \leq .01$.

Table 3
Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Organizational Citizenship Behavior on Leader Self-Sacrifice and Follower Prevention Focus (Study 2)

Independent variable	β	R^2	Adj. R^2	ΔR^2	*df*s
Step 1		.19	.16	.19	3, 110
Self-sacrifice	.30**				
Prevention focus	−.10				
Promotion focus	.23*				
Step 2		.29	.25	.11	3, 107
Self-sacrifice	.44**				
Prevention focus	.01				
Promotion focus	.29*				
Self-Sacrifice × Prevention Focus	.39**				
Self-Sacrifice × Promotion Focus	.17				
Prevention Focus × Promotion Focus	.09				

Note. $F(3, 110) = 11.55$, $p \leq .001$. $N = 113$, listwise.
* $p \leq .01$. ** $p \leq .001$.

Method

Participants. A total of 187 business undergraduates from an American university participated in the study. In terms of their ethnicity, 63% were White, 16% were Hispanic, 8% were Black, 5% were Asian, 3% were Biracial, 3% were international, and 2% other. The sample was 53% male, and the average age of participants was 24 years old. In terms of work experience, 83% of participants were currently employed at the time of the study and had an average tenure in their jobs of 26 months. In addition, 93% of participants had formally applied to a job in the past, and 100%

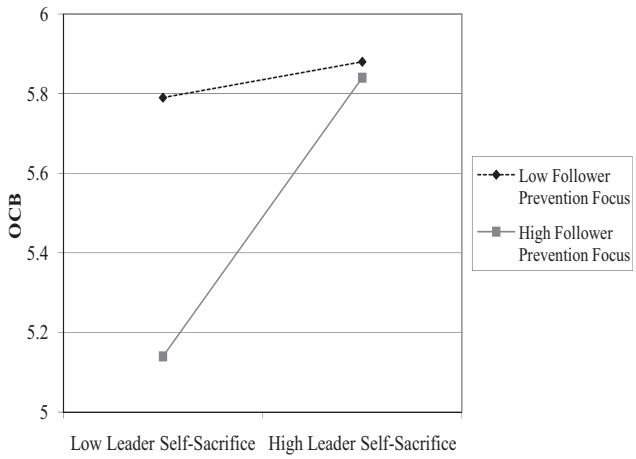

Figure 2. Interaction between leader self-sacrifice and follower prevention focus on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB; Study 2).

of respondents had some work experience (with an average of 7.5 years of work experience).

Procedure. Participants seated in a classroom were asked to fill out a survey. They were asked to think about their current (or most recent) job and respond to a survey about their work experiences and attitudes. They provided assessments of leader self-sacrifice, prevention focus, OCB, and demographics.

Measures. All items were in English and were answered on a 5-point scale.

Leader self-sacrifice was assessed with the same four-item measure used as a manipulation check in Study 1 (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$). The scale ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*frequently*).

Prevention focus was assessed with the Lockwood et al. (2002) measure used in Study 2 (Cronbach's $\alpha = .77$). The scale ranged from 1 (*not at all true of me*) to 5 (*very true of me*). As in Study 2, we assessed promotion focus again with the same nine items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$). Both scales correlated weakly but significantly ($r = .17$, $p < .05$).

OCB was assessed with three items (taken from Moorman & Blakely, 1995; Cronbach's $\alpha = .72$). The scale ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Example items included "I defend the organization when outsiders criticize it" and "I perform my duties with extra-special care."

Results

Means, standard deviations, intercorrelations, and reliabilities for the study variables are displayed in Table 4.

To test our hypotheses, we conducted hierarchical regression analysis. In the first step, the main effects of leader self-sacrifice, follower prevention focus, and follower promotion focus predicted OCB, respectively. In Step 2, the interaction terms between follower prevention focus and leader self-sacrifice, follower promotion focus and leader self-sacrifice, and follower prevention focus and follower promotion focus were entered. Consistent with prescriptions from Aiken and West (1991), we centered leader self-sacrifice, follower prevention focus, and follower promotion focus (i.e., by subtracting the mean from each score), and we based the interaction terms on these centered scores. Table 5 shows the regression results.

Results of this hierarchical regression yielded support for the predicted interaction between prevention focus and leader self-sacrifice ($\beta = .17$, $p < .05$; see Figure 3) but not for the interaction between promotion focus and leader self-sacrifice ($\beta = .05$, $p < .49$) nor the interaction between follower prevention focus and follower promotion focus ($\beta = .01$, $p < .90$). Simple slopes analysis demonstrated that when follower prevention focus was high (1 *SD* above the mean), leader self-sacrifice had a significant positive relationship with follower OCB ($\beta = .63$, $p \leq .001$), whereas when follower prevention focus was low (1 *SD* below the mean), leader self-sacrifice and follower OCB demonstrated a nonsignificant relationship ($\beta = .16$, $p = .14$). Again, these results provide support for the research hypothesis.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables (Study 3)

Variable	*M*	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Self-sacrifice	3.19	1.05	—			
2. Prevention focus	2.92	0.74	.03	—		
3. Promotion focus	4.15	0.62	.16*	.17*	—	
4. Organizational citizenship behavior	3.57	0.93	.37**	.03	.22**	—

Note. Higher scores indicate higher self-sacrifice and so forth.
* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Table 5
Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Organizational Citizenship Behavior on Leader Self-Sacrifice and Follower Prevention Focus (Study 3)

Independent variable	β	R^2	Adj. R^2	ΔR^2	*df*s
Step 1		.17	.16	.17	3, 179
Self-sacrifice	.36**				
Prevention focus	−.01				
Promotion focus	.16*				
Step 2		.21	.18	.03	3, 176
Self-sacrifice	.38**				
Prevention focus	.01				
Promotion focus	.18*				
Self-Sacrifice × Prevention Focus	.17*				
Self-Sacrifice × Promotion Focus	.05				
Prevention Focus × Promotion Focus	.01				

Note. $F(3, 182) = 8.55$, $p \leq .001$. $N = 182$, listwise.
* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Study 4

In Studies 1–3, we used self-report ratings of prosocial behavior (i.e., cooperation, OCB). In Study 4, we built on the previous studies by assessing the follower's OCB from the supervisor. Specifically, the supervisor assessed the follower's voice OCB, which focuses on speaking up to help the organization. We assessed follower prevention focus and leader self-sacrifice using the same measures as in Study 3.

Method

A total of 410 individuals—218 focal employees and 192 supervisors—participated in the study. We had a total of 174 matched leader–follower dyads. Participants were from organizations in a variety of different industries such as technology, government, insurance, financial, food service, retail, manufacturing, and medical. In terms of the focal employees, their average age was 28.2 years old and 39% were female. These respondents were 5.6% African American, 8.6% Asian American, 71.6% Caucasian, 6.1% Hispanic, 2% biracial, and 6.1% other. Employees worked an average of 3.3 years in the organization and 64.5% worked full time. In terms of the supervisors, their average age was 39 years old and 28% were female. These respondents were 11.2% African American, 3.2% Asian American, 73.4% Caucasian, 8.5% Hispanic, 1.6% biracial, and 3.7% other. Supervisors worked an average of 8.4 years in the organization and 95.8% worked full time.

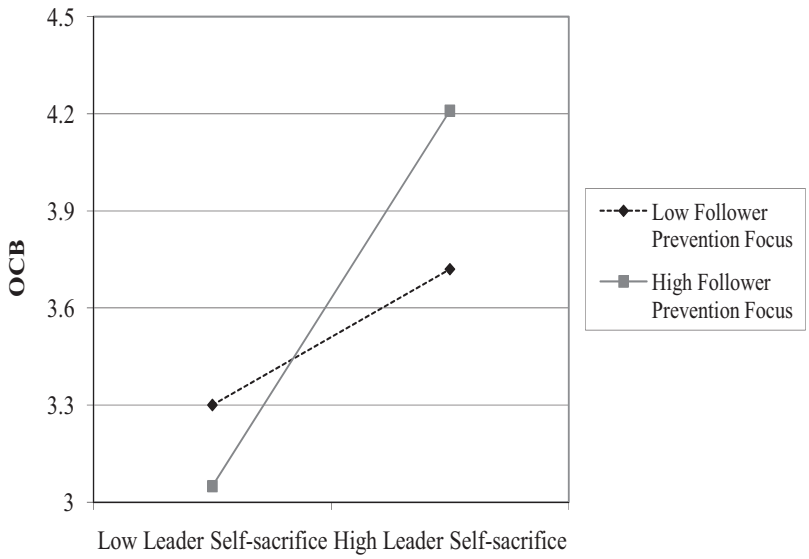

Figure 3. Interaction between leader self-sacrifice and follower prevention focus on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB; Study 3).

Procedure. A total of 324 MBA students from a large southeastern United States university were invited to participate and 218 participated (response rate was 67.2%). We included data from 174 out of the 218 focal employee respondents because we only included respondents who had matched supervisor data. A snowballing method was used whereby MBA students working at least 20 hr per week were able to serve as the focal employee or to choose another working adult (i.e., friend, family member, colleague) to serve as the focal employee. This snowball method was utilized so that we could avoid same source bias concerns by having a supervisor rate the focal employee on the criterion variable (Lee & Allen, 2002; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). The focal employee and supervisor surveys were administered online. Participating students were required to provide information to the focal employee regarding the research project, including a link to the survey Web site. The focal employee was responsible for providing his or her supervisor a link to the online survey. Each respondent had a unique identification number to ensure anonymity and to make sure that we could match the focal employee and supervisor data. The focal employee filled out measures of leader self-sacrifice and prevention focus, and the supervisor provided ratings of the focal employee's OCB.

Measures. Leader self-sacrifice was assessed with the same items used as a manipulation checks in Study 1 and in the field in Study 3 (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$). The scale ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Prevention focus was assessed with the nine-item Lockwood et al. (2002) measure used in Studies 2 and 3 (Cronbach's $\alpha = .77$). The scale ranged from 1 (*not at all true of me*) to 7 (*very true of me*). As in Studies 2 and 3, we again assessed promotion focus with the same nine items as in Study 2 and 3 (Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$). Both scales did not correlate significantly ($r = .11$, $p > .11$).

OCB was assessed by supervisor ratings with the Van Dyne and LePine (1998) six-item OCB voice measure (Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$). The scale ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Example items included "develops and makes recommendations concerning issues that affect this workgroup" and "speaks up and encourages others in this group to get involved in issues that affect the group."

Results

Means, standard deviations, intercorrelations, and reliabilities for the study variables are displayed in Table 6.

To test our hypotheses, we conducted hierarchical regression analysis. In the first step, the main effects of leader self-sacrifice, follower prevention focus, and follower promotion focus predicted OCB, respectively. In Step 2, the interaction terms between follower prevention focus and leader self-sacrifice, follower promotion focus and leader self-sacrifice, and follower prevention focus and follower promotion focus were entered. Consistent with prescriptions from Aiken and West (1991), we centered leader self-sacrifice, follower prevention focus, and follower promotion focus (i.e., by subtracting the mean from each score), and we based the interaction terms on these centered scores. Table 7 shows the regression results.

Regression analyses showed that the main effect of leader self-sacrifice ($\beta = .16$, $p < .05$) was positively related to OCB.

Table 6
Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables (Study 4)

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4
1. Self-sacrifice	5.28	1.21	—			
2. Prevention focus	3.76	1.00	−.06	—		
3. Promotion focus	5.68	.86	.17*	.11	—	
4. Organizational citizenship behavior	5.62	.90	.16*	−.01	.06	—

Note. Higher scores indicate higher self-sacrifice and so forth.
* $p \leq .05$.

Table 7
Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Organizational Citizenship Behavior on Leader Self-Sacrifice and Follower Prevention Focus (Study 4)

Independent variable	β	R^2	Adj. R^2	ΔR^2	*df*s
Step 1		.03	.01	.03	3, 164
Self-sacrifice	.17*				
Prevention focus	−.01				
Promotion focus	−.01				
Step 2		.06	.02	.03	6, 161
Self-sacrifice	.16*				
Prevention focus	.01				
Promotion focus	−.01				
Self-Sacrifice × Prevention Focus	.17*				
Self-Sacrifice × Promotion Focus	−.06				
Prevention Focus × Promotion Focus	.03				

Note. $F(3, 164) = 3.44$, $p \leq .05$. $N = 167$, listwise.
* $p \leq .05$.

Further, it was found that the interaction between prevention focus and leader self-sacrifice was significant ($\beta = .17$, $p < .05$; see Figure 4) but not the interaction between follower promotion focus and leader self-sacrifice ($\beta = -.06$, $p < .44$) nor the interaction between follower prevention focus and follower promotion focus ($\beta = .03$, $p < .75$). Simple slopes analysis demonstrated that when follower prevention focus was high (1 *SD* above the mean), leader self-sacrifice had a significant positive relationship with supervisor's ratings of follower OCB ($\beta = .34$, $p \leq .01$), whereas when follower prevention focus was low (1 *SD* below the mean), leader self-sacrifice and follower OCB demonstrated a nonsignificant relationship ($\beta = -.02$, *ns*). For a third time, these results provide support for the role of prevention focus and not promotion focus.

Discussion

The present article adopts a theoretical framework in which the motivational foundation of self-sacrificial leadership is examined by taking into account the congruence between the leader's self-sacrificial behavior and the goal-regulating strategies of the followers. Taken together, the four studies described here provide strong supportive evidence of our main hypothesis that regulatory focus moderates the effect of self-sacrificial leadership on follower prosocial behavior such that the relationship is stronger for individuals high in prevention focus. This effect was established in one experimental study and three field studies across two different nations (the Netherlands and the United States) and included measured and primed operationalizations of follower prevention focus, two measures of leader self-sacrifice and one primed operationalization of leader self-sacrifice, and a number of different measures of prosocial behavior. In the following paragraphs, we discuss in detail our findings and their implications.

Theoretical Implications

The most important finding of this research is that across all four studies the positive effect of leader self-sacrifice on prosocial behavior (i.e., cooperation, OCB) was strengthened when followers possessed a chronic or accessible prevention focus. Indeed, self-sacrificial leadership had a stronger effect on prosocial behavior if followers were high rather than low in prevention focus (when we controlled for promotion focus; Studies 2–4) or had a prevention rather than a promotion focus (Study 1). These findings support our idea that self-sacrificial leaders can operate as role models motivating prosocial behavior because the behavior of self-sacrifice activates values of being dutiful, fulfilling obligations, and protecting the collective interests. We reasoned that if this is the case, then particularly followers who focus on safety and security needs and thus pursue goals entailing duties and obliga-

Figure 4. Interaction between leader self-sacrifice and follower prevention focus on supervisor's reports of follower organizational citizenship behavior (OCB; Study 4).

tions should be influenced the most in their prosocial behavior. In other words, the behavior of self-sacrifice would thus speak most to the concerns and goals of those with a prevention focus, something the present results support.

It is noteworthy that in the present research we specifically focused on how follower characteristics influence the leadership process or, in other words, moderate the influence that leaders exert on follower actions. Our choice of regulatory focus as such a moderating variable aligned well with our aim to provide empirical support for the supposed motivational foundation of leader self-sacrifice. That is, self-sacrificing leaders elicit behavioral commitment from followers to model prosocial behavior by fostering congruence between the leader's behavioral goals and those of the followers (in this case, those with a prevention focus). Therefore, including follower characteristics into the leadership process will have two immediate benefits to the leadership field. First, it makes for a more dynamic and interactive perspective of how leadership works. Second, identifying specific follower characteristics may facilitate the search (in both conceptual and practical ways) for the psychological processes underlying leadership effects.

Although the present contribution provides much-needed empirical support for a motivational perceptive of leader self-sacrifice effectiveness, we are, of course, not the only ones emphasizing the important role of the follower in this process. Recent leadership theories have also emphasized the idea that followers play an active role in constructing the leadership relationship. One specific subfield in which this idea has rapidly moved to the foreground is research focusing on the role that followers' self-concept and identity plays in the leadership process (De Cremer & Tyler, 2005; Howell & Shamir, 2005; Lord & Brown, 2004; Lord et al., 1999; D. van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, De Cremer, & Hogg, 2004). Indeed, D. van Knippenberg et al. (2004) noted that "as has been highlighted in self and identity analyses of leadership effectiveness (Hogg, 2001; Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003; Lord & Brown, 2004; Lord et al., 1999; D. van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003), follower self-concept may also inform followers' responses to leadership. In this way, follower self-concept may function as a moderator of leadership effectiveness" (p. 830).

Our research can thus also be seen as one of the first to support the importance of the followers' self in the leadership process by focusing on followers' strategies to self-regulate the attainment of their goals (i.e., regulatory focus). In fact, to date, we are only aware of one other published empirical study examining the importance of self-regulation as a moderator in leadership effectiveness. Benjamin and Flynn (2006) showed that transformational leadership (rather than transactional leadership) was more influential when followers possessed a locomotion mode rather than an assessment mode or when this locomotion mode was situationally reinforced. Of course, in the present set of studies we examined another leadership style, but their findings are interesting with respect to the use of self-regulation moderators of leadership. That is, these authors examined regulatory mode as a moderator but acknowledged that this variable is conceptually different from regulatory focus and therefore they argued that, "future research might find it worthwhile to examine those other aspects of self-regulation more closely" (p. 228), something the present research set out to test.

In addition, our research was motivated by our theoretical framework that the values and goals that are activated by self-sacrificial behavior foster the most behavioral engagement (i.e., to act prosocially) if they are congruent with the goals that the follower values and pursues. This idea seems in contrast to prior theorizing suggesting that transformational and charismatic leaders are more likely to influence followers with a promotion focus (Kark & Van Dijk, 2007). Indeed, in all three field studies the interaction with leader self-sacrifice and follower prevention focus was significant, whereas the interaction with promotion focus was not. Of course, this research does not preclude the idea that certain types of leadership should be more influential for promotion-focused followers. In fact, this issue is particularly relevant in light of the practical implications that the present results entail.

Practical Implications

Given that group and organizational performance is often dependent in part on behaviors performed that are outside of one's job description, it is important for groups and organizations to find ways that motivate people to engage in prosocial actions. Leadership, and notably self-sacrificial leadership, is suggested to play an important role in motivating these prosocial behaviors among followers. As such, it is usually advocated that it may be wise for organizations to create procedures for selecting and promoting the types of leaders that are able to engender prosocial behavior. Our findings do show the value of self-sacrificial leader behavior but also provide evidence that self-sacrificial leadership may not motivate all followers to display prosocial behavior. Indeed, our present findings make clear that this potential to impact prosocial behavior strongly goes together with followers having a high prevention focus or being placed in a condition in which a prevention focus is more salient. Under these circumstances of prevention focus, self-sacrificial leaders have their greatest impact upon prosocial behavior because their motivational orientation fits with followers.

Do these findings then suggest that self-sacrificial leader behaviors are limited to some extent and that also self-serving leadership (at least under some conditions) is needed? According to Avolio and Locke (2002), leaders do need to be more rational, implying that leaders should be selfish as it will ultimately serve the interest of the organization. Such leadership style can signal strongly the values that are needed to achieve success, something that may indeed appeal to followers with a promotion focus. As such, it seems to be the case that leadership in organizations may best try to balance both behaviors of self-sacrifice and self-interest to appeal to most followers.

Interestingly, however, in light of balancing both behaviors and motives, Avolio and Locke (2002) noted that effective leadership depends on the eye of the beholder and that as such self-sacrificial behavior also has the potential to signal two different kinds of intent: a selfish one or a true sacrificing one. For example, leaders may self-sacrifice in order to satisfy their own self-interest, something that is articulated well in the notion of pseudotransformational leadership (see Bass, 1998). Alternatively, leaders may also self-sacrifice because they have the intent to give up a greater personal value for one that has less personal value. These examples illustrate that self-sacrificial leadership may still constitute an effective style but that depending on the followers' regulatory

concerns the intent behind self-sacrifice may be communicated differently to motivate people. Moreover, the effectiveness of communicating a self-interested or truly sacrificing message of intent may also depend on the nature of the work task. That is, if the task consists of combining workers' output in an interactive manner, then a truly sacrificing leader might engender much more cooperative behavior and better performance. Alternatively, if employees' output is simply added together and they thus function independently, then a leader emphasizing self-interest may be more effective. Finally, the culture one works in may also moderate the effectiveness of a leader emphasizing self-interest or true self-sacrifice. That is, in Western societies, satisfying one's own interest as a driving force of one's own behavior is usually socially accepted, whereas in Eastern societies this is not the case (Avolio & Locke, 2002).

Limitations and Strengths

Of course, the present research also has its limitations. First of all, perhaps the most obvious limitation of the present research is that we collected self-reports of prosocial behavior in Studies 1–3. However, in Study 4 we collected an independent measure of OCB, and analyses revealed similar results as in Studies 1–3. This finding thus attests to the validity of our findings and interestingly also is in line with meta-analytic work demonstrating that there are not strong differences between correlations attained by self-report and those attained using multiple sources (Crampton & Wagner, 1994). Furthermore, it is important to note that common method variance cannot account for interactions in regression (Evans, 1985), particularly if it replicates across various methodologies as the ones that we have used (i.e., experiments, cross-sectional surveys, and multisource surveys).

Another concern that we need to mention is that the reliability scores of the prosocial and OCB measures were relatively good, but on occasion they can be considered low (see Study 2). Given the fact that we found consistent significant interactions across all our studies, the emergence of an occasional low reliability score is not necessarily a critical concern, but future research exploring further the impact of self-sacrificial leadership on prosocial behavior may be advised to also include other measures of cooperative behavior and/or OCB. In addition to OCB, incorporating other measures such as contributions to collective resources or social loafing on group tasks will indeed help to clarify the effects of this specific leader behavior, as a function of regulatory focus, on prosocial behavior in organizations.

A potential limitation with respect to the use of our theoretical framework in the present article concerns the fact that we did not directly assess the cognitive process involving how self-sacrificial leader behavior activates values related to duties, obligations, and responsibilities (which are in congruence with those of prevention focus followers). Having said this, we, first of all, wish to note that the presence of a moderating effect of prevention focus (when controlling for promotion focus) provides already some evidence that leader self-sacrifice does seem to speak to those values, as particularly those who consider these values as important goals for them to pursue (i.e., high prevention focus followers) did react most strongly in terms of their prosocial behavior (see Spencer, Zanna, & Fong, 2005, for the idea that a moderating variable can also provide evidence about the process involved). Nevertheless, the emergence of this interaction effect does not rule out possible alternative explanations. Therefore, we urge future researchers to examine in greater detail whether and how leader self-sacrifice directly activates values and goals (see also Lord & Brown, 2004). For example, research could look at whether indeed more attention is devoted to leader self-sacrifice when followers' goal orientation is more consistent with the goals activated by the leader behavior. Or research could also examine whether those with a prevention focus indeed value the display of OCB more in the context of a self-sacrificing leader than those with a promotion focus (cf. Higgins et al., 2003).

A final concern that we need to address relates to the fact that in Study 2 a main effect of prevention focus was observed, whereas this was not the case in Studies 3–4. Of course, this effect was only found in one study in which it was also qualified by the interaction term and as such may represent an anomaly. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to elaborate a bit more on this observation, particularly since the concept of regulatory focus has not really been linked yet to the concept of OCB. In fact, only recently, Dewett and DeNisi (2007) noted that regulatory focus might influence how people regulate their actions to display OCB. Our findings in Study 2 did show an effect in a way that particularly low prevention people were most motivated to display OCB. Why this may be the case is unclear. Study 2 was conducted in Europe (the Netherlands), whereas Studies 3–4 were conducted in the United States and as such a cultural factor may possibly account for this result. Future researchers need to start addressing empirically how and why regulatory focus of followers may have direct effects on the display of OCB.

Further, the present findings also testify well with respect to the issue of generalizability and robustness. First of all, as we note above, the interactive effect between self-sacrificial leadership and prevention focus was demonstrated in two different cultures, the Netherlands (Europe) and the United States (North America), as such emphasizing the robustness of our findings. Second, across our studies we used different operationalizations of regulatory focus either by assessing chronic differences or priming a prevention versus promotion state. Third, in our studies we relied on part-time students/part-time employees (Study 1) and employee samples (Study 2, 3, and 4), which revealed all similar results as such promoting the generalizibility of our findings. Taken together, it is thus clear that a major strength of the present research is that the observation of this interactive effect was found using a variety of research methods (across different cultures and samples).

Conclusion

Overall, the important message of the present research is that across four studies evidence was found that follower regulatory focus moderates the effect of self-sacrificial leadership on follower prosocial behavior such that those with a prevention focus are more strongly affected. One important hope emerging from our present findings is therefore that future leadership researchers will empirically explore further the impact that followers' characteristics may have in the leadership process by focusing on how their goals and self-concepts interact with different leader types.

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