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Outsourcing inspiration: The performance effects of ideological messages from leaders and beneficiaries

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ABSTRACT

Although ideological messages are thought to inspire employee performance, research has shown mixed results. Typically, ideological messages are delivered by leaders, but employees may be suspicious of ulterior motives—leaders may merely be seeking to inspire higher performance. As such, we propose that these messages are often more effective when outsourced to a more neutral third party—the beneficiaries of employees' work. In Study 1, a field quasi-experiment with fundraisers, ideological messages from a beneficiary—but not from two leaders—increased performance. In Study 2, a laboratory experiment with an editing task, participants achieved higher task and citizenship performance when an ideological message was delivered by a speaker portrayed as a beneficiary vs. a leader, mediated by suspicion. In Study 3, a laboratory experiment with a marketing task, the beneficiary source advantage was contingent on message content: beneficiaries motivated higher task and citizenship performance than leaders with prosocial messages but not achievement messages.

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"Her son had been in a terrible accident... had her son been driving any other car, he would have been killed... The policeman said he was sure the Volvo had saved his life... the work we do at Volvo genuinely saves lives."

– Bob Austin, Volvo manager ([Hemmings Blog, 2010](#))

"My daughter escaped with minor bruises and scrapes... The police officer's statement to me: 'If it wasn't a Volvo, they probably would not have survived.'"

– Beverly Elliott, Volvo customer ([Volvo, 2009](#))

To inspire employees, organizations often make use of ideological messages (Katz & Kahn, 1966; Selznick, 1957). Ideological messages are persuasive appeals designed to convince employees to change their attitudes or behavior by invoking an inspiring set of shared values and ideals (Shamir, Zakay, Breinin, & Popper, 1998). In this respect, ideological messages are sense-giving or meaning-making communications (Pratt, 2000; Smircich & Morgan, 1982) that are thought to infuse meaning into work by providing employees with a stronger belief in the purpose and significance underlying the organization's products and services (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). These messages are designed to inspire employees by appealing to "a principled or altruistic model of human nature" (Thompson & Bunderson, 2003, p. 576).

Scholars have long assumed that ideological messages motivate employees to achieve high performance, but existing research does not depict such a clear-cut picture. Ideological messages are typically studied as one of many behaviors in which charismatic and transformational leaders tend to engage (Bass, 1985; Shamir et al., 1998). Thus, although considerable research has shown that charismatic and transformational leadership is associated with higher employee performance (e.g., Bono & Judge, 2003; Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006), it is difficult to isolate ideological messages as an active ingredient driving these effects (Brown & Lord, 1999). The few studies that have attempted to examine the unique effects of ideological messages have returned inconsistent or insignificant results. For example, in laboratory research, Kirkpatrick and Locke (1996) found that an ideological message about how high-quality products benefit customers weakly increased performance quality but did not influence performance quantity. In a field quasi-experiment in a call center, Grant (in press) found that an ideological message from a leader about why the work was important did not increase employee sales or revenue. Similarly, in a field study in the Israeli military, Shamir et al. (1998) found that ideological messages from leaders did not succeed in inspiring soldiers. Despite the theoretical and practical importance of understanding when ideological messages succeed in inspiring employees to perform more effectively, existing research has yet to clearly articulate the conditions necessary for ideological messages to be effective (Shamir et al., 1998).

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Virtually all of this past research has positioned leaders as the source of ideological messages (Bass, 1985; Yukl & Tracey, 1992). Leaders, however, are not the only individuals who can deliver these messages. In some organizations, ideological messages are delivered by beneficiaries—the clients, customers, patients, and other end users whose lives are affected by the products and services for which employees are responsible (Grant, *in press*). For instance, in addition to the Volvo example above, DaVita, an organization that runs kidney dialysis centers, shares videos in which patients and families articulate how the organization's work keeps patients alive, and SonoSite, a company that develops ultrasound equipment, has invited Army captains to tell employees about how their equipment has saved soldiers' lives in remote locations (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006). Recent studies have shown that when beneficiaries deliver these types of ideological messages, employees are motivated to perform more effectively (Grant, 2008; Grant et al., 2007). Nevertheless, research has yet to compare the impact of ideological messages from leaders vs. beneficiaries.

We propose that ideological messages tend to be more effective when they are delivered by beneficiaries than by leaders. We base this prediction on theory and research on attributional suspicion, which suggests that when audiences question a speaker's motives and intentions, they find the speaker's message less persuasive (DeCarlo, 2005; Oza, Srivastava, & Koukova, 2010; Williams, Fitzsimons, & Block, 2004). We expect that employees are less likely to be suspicious of ideological messages from beneficiaries than from leaders. This is because beneficiaries have less of a direct stake in employees' performance than leaders, who can be perceived as having an ulterior motive of using the ideological message merely to inspire performance for their own gain (e.g., Shamir et al., 1998; Vonk, 1998). However, we also propose that these effects are contingent on the content of the ideological messages: beneficiaries are uniquely qualified to deliver prosocial testimonials about the impact of the organization's products and services based on firsthand experience, but have no distinctive advantage in communicating messages about the organization's achievements.

We test these hypotheses across three experiments. Mindful of the importance of using experimental methods to isolate effects of specific behaviors (e.g., Brown & Lord, 1999; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002), we utilize both laboratory and field experiments, facilitating both internal and external validity. By demonstrating the importance of the source and the content in shaping the effectiveness of ideological messages, our research takes a step toward resolving conflicting results, and offers a contingency perspective on when leaders should deliver their own inspirational communications vs. outsource them to beneficiaries.

Ideological messages: the importance of the source

Our focus is on understanding how ideological messages from different sources influence employee performance—the effectiveness of employees' efforts in achieving organizational goals (Campbell, 1990). Ideological messages are communications that emphasize how the organization's work connects with employees' deep or core values (Shamir et al., 1998), and often are discussed in the context of visionary (Stam, van Knippenberg, & Wisse, 2010), charismatic (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993), and transformational (Bass, 1985) leadership. In theories of visionary leadership, ideological messages are viewed as part of the process of communicating a vision, linking images of the past and future to important values and purposes (Stam et al., 2010; see also Conger & Kanungo, 1987). In theories of charismatic leadership, ideological messages are included as part of a broader set of “behaviors that emphasize collective values and ideologies and link a mission, its goals, and

expected behaviors to those values and ideologies” (Shamir et al., 1998, p. 388). In theories of transformational leadership, ideological messages are associated with behaviors focused on inspirational motivation—creating a meaningful, compelling vision of the future (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). Whether these messages serve the function of inspiring employees, however, is an open question. Ideological and inspirational messages are communicative speech acts (Shamir et al., 1998), while inspiration is a psychological state experienced an employee involving transcendent motivation (Thrash & Elliot, 2003) that may or may not be evoked by an ideological or inspirational message.

We view an ideological message as a specific type of inspirational message. In general, inspirational messages involve articulating a vision with enthusiasm, confidence, optimism, and purpose (Bass, 1985; Joshi, Lazarova, & Liao, 2009; Yukl & Tracey, 1992). Within this category, ideological messages are a type of moral appeal (Chen, Pillutla, & Yao, 2009; Dorris, 1972) that emphasizes the link between the vision and core values or ideals (Shamir et al., 1998). Researchers have typically conceptualized ideological messages as focusing on values that transcend self-interest, communicating how the organization's work advances a greater good or is beneficial to other people (Thompson & Bunderson, 2003).¹

Organizational scholars have often assumed that leaders are the primary source of the ideological messages that are delivered with the intent of inspiring and motivating employees. Indeed, empirical evidence shows that leaders are more likely than peers or subordinates to attempt to inspire employees by delivering ideological messages (Yukl & Tracey, 1992). However, research suggests that leaders seeking to inspire employees by communicating ideological messages often encounter difficulties in establishing their credibility (e.g., Shamir, 1995; Shamir et al., 1998). For example, Lam and Schaubroeck (2000, pp. 988–989) stated that leaders “rarely have the credibility that is needed to persuade employees to alter their behavior.”

Alternatively, ideological messages can be delivered directly by beneficiaries—the customers, clients, patients, and other end users outside the boundaries of the organization who ultimately utilize employees' products and services (Grant, *in press*). Beneficiaries can provide personal stories, feedback, and testimonials that help employees understand their contributions and impact (Grant, 2007). Recent research has shown that these types of ideological messages from beneficiaries can lead employees to perceive their work as more socially beneficial and valued, which motivates them to achieve higher performance (Grant, 2008; Grant et al., 2007).

Ideological messages and suspicion of the source

We build on this evidence to propose that ideological messages are more likely to increase employees' performance when delivered by beneficiaries than by leaders. We base this prediction on

¹ It is important to distinguish our conceptualization of ideological messages from recent developments in research on ideological leadership. Mumford and colleagues have argued that charismatic and ideological leaders share a focus on creating change through presenting a vision that links to core values (Bedell-Avers, Hunter, & Mumford, 2008). However, they propose that charismatic leaders tend to be effective in ordered conditions by articulating a positive future vision that emphasizes human control to a broad audience, whereas ideological leaders succeed in chaotic situations by referencing past failures and situational control to a group of trusted followers (Bedell-Avers et al., 2008). Our approach builds on conceptualizations of ideological emphasis (Shamir et al., 1993; Shamir et al., 1998) and ideological currency (Thompson & Bunderson, 2003), and thus differs from research on ideological leadership in three key ways. First, as noted above, our focus is on specific messages, rather than overall behavioral styles. Second, we consider these messages as being delivered by beneficiaries as well as leaders. Third, we do not constrain ideological messages to focus on past failures or a small group of followers. We view ideological messages as those that define how the organization's work connects to core values, which can be based on past failures, past successes, or future threats or opportunities.

social psychological theory on attributional suspicion (Fein, 1996; Vonk, 1998). According to Hilton, Fein, and Miller (1993, p. 502), “To be suspicious is to question the motives that underlie a person’s behavior or to question the genuineness of that behavior.”² Considerable evidence suggests that when audiences become suspicious of a source’s motives, for two reasons, they are less likely to be influenced by the source’s message. First, when audiences become suspicious of a source, they often simply reject the message altogether. As Fein, Hilton, and Miller (1990, p. 760) explain, “Perceivers who are suspicious may conclude that the presence of more than one motive casts doubt on everything that the actor does and may subsequently suspend virtually all processing of information relevant to the actor.” Indeed, research shows that suspicion elicits psychological reactance (Brehm, 1966), motivating audiences to engage in active efforts to resist influence (DeCarlo, 2005; Williams et al., 2004). According to the persuasion knowledge model (Friestad & Wright, 1994), when suspicion is evoked, a change of meaning occurs: audiences interpret the message as a persuasive attempt, which leads them to evaluate the source more negatively and protect themselves against being influenced (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; DeCarlo, 2005; Szykman, Bloom, & Blazing, 2004; Williams et al., 2004; Yoon, Gürhan-Canli, & Schwarz, 2006).

Second, when audiences become suspicious of a source, they are more likely to carefully scrutinize the message (Fein, 1996; see also Priester & Petty, 1995). Suspicion is a dynamic state of doubt in which audiences recognize multiple possible interpretations for the source’s behavior (Fein, 1996), and the longer and harder the message is scrutinized, the greater the likelihood that the audience will come to doubt its veracity. In other words, contemplating ulterior motives both fuels and reinforces suspicion (Kramer, 1998, p. 263). As Fein et al. (1990, p. 760) elaborate, “once the specter of ulterior motivation is raised, perceivers begin a more controlled, thoughtful processing of information about the actor.” Such thoughtful processing can be particularly problematic for ideological messages, which depend heavily on resonating with employees’ emotions and core values (Shamir et al., 1993; Yukl & Tracey, 1992). When employees are suspicious of a source, the ensuing logical, deliberate, analytical, and systematic processing may interfere with the extent to which an ideological message makes a visceral, intuitive, emotional connection to core values. In the language of dual-system theories (e.g., Chaiken & Trope, 1999; Epstein, 1994; Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999; cf. Keren & Schul, 2009), suspicion of the source may trigger a shift from the “hot” experiential system 1 to the “cool” cognitive system 2, compromising the persuasiveness of the ideological message. More specifically, since employees are more likely to experience strong affective reactions when the “hot” system is engaged, ideological messages may be most compelling when they are processed in this system. As Braverman (2008, p. 668) summarized, “the persuasive effect of testimonials is based not on systematic but rather on heuristic thinking.” Further, since ideological messages are thought to be most inspiring when they emphasize “vague and “distal” goals (Shamir et al., 1993, p. 583), heightened message scrutiny may render them less convincing. As Friestad and Wright (1994, p. 13) explain, suspicion of ulterior motives can:

disrupt the other message response activities that otherwise would have occurred... recognizing someone is using a tactic

of influence ‘on me’ is fundamentally ‘off-putting.’ It detaches one from the ongoing interaction and makes one conscious, or more conscious than otherwise, that the other party sees you as someone on whom they think persuasion tactics can be or need to be used. This... may disrupt the comprehension and elaboration of topic-related statements or images... it may undermine the overall coherence of a story.

Extending these theoretical perspectives to source effects in the context of ideological messages, we expect that leaders will tend to evoke more suspicion than beneficiaries. Research on attributional suspicion shows that employees are most likely to suspect ulterior motives when a source has a vested interest or stake in the outcome being promoted by the message (Ham & Vonk, 2011; Vonk, 1998, 1999). Because they represent the organization and are responsible for its outcomes, leaders have an ulterior motive for inspiring employees to believe in the importance of the organization’s mission or cause. Since leaders have a vested interest in motivating higher performance, they have an incentive to embellish, exaggerate, or even fabricate their ideological messages. As such, employees may feel that leaders have ulterior motives for delivering ideological messages, calling into question their neutrality—and therefore their trustworthiness and credibility (Birnbaum & Stegner, 1979; Pornpitakpan, 2004)—as a source. Indeed, Shamir et al. (1998, p. 406) stated that when leaders deliver ideological messages, employees may interpret them as “evidence that the leader represented ‘the other side’ or the ‘system.’” They further explained that “an ideological emphasis... may be perceived by subordinates as related to a pressure to perform,” and that this “pressure to increase performance, even if it is expressed by ideological messages... may not have the expected positive effects.” As a result, employees may harbor doubts and suspicions about the motives of leaders who deliver ideological messages. For example, Fisher, Ilgen, and Hoyer (1979) found that in general, job applicants view those in the role of interviewer or recruiter as “suspect as a source of information since typically one of his or her goals is to ‘sell’ the organization.” We expect that a similar pattern may hold for how employees view leaders delivering ideological messages. Indeed, research shows that when leaders deliver messages about how a company’s actions are doing good, audiences tend to suspect ulterior motives and react unfavorably (Yoon et al., 2006).

Social psychological theory and research on persuasion indicates that, in comparison to potentially biased sources, third parties are typically perceived as more neutral—and thus as more credible (Pfeffer, Fong, Cialdini, & Portnoy, 2006; Yoon et al., 2006). Compared to leaders, beneficiaries are a relatively independent third party. They are outside the boundaries of the organization, and have less to gain than leaders from inspiring greater performance among employees. Given that leaders are not independent of the organization, they have a greater vested interest in employees’ performance and a stronger reason to embellish their claims, as they have a financial stake in employees’ performance. Consequently, employees are more likely to be suspicious of leaders’ motives and thus of their messages (Vonk, 1998, 1999). Indeed, research shows that customers and clients are quite willing to share complaints and negative feedback when they are dissatisfied with the quality or quantity of employees’ work (e.g., Conlon & Murray, 1996; Liao, 2007). Leaders, on the other hand, are known to be more biased in favor of positive messages (e.g., Fisher, 1978; Molinsky & Margolis, 2005). As such, when beneficiaries deliver ideological messages, they are less likely to have an ulterior agenda of motivating employees, and can be trusted to be more neutral and unbiased. Accordingly, employees may react to ideological messages delivered by beneficiaries with less

² It is important to note that suspicion is distinct from trustworthiness. Whereas suspicion involves questioning motives or the sincerity of behavior (Fein, 1996), trustworthiness is a multidimensional construct assessing a target’s ability, benevolence, and integrity (Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). In fact, Ferrin and Dirks (2003) proposed and demonstrated that suspicion is a psychological process that influences judgments of trustworthiness: when individuals become suspicious of another person’s motives, they are subsequently less likely to trust this person.

suspicion, as their incentives to be honest may be greater than those facing leaders, who have a greater stake in employees' performance.

When employees accept an ideological message without suspicion, they will be more likely to feel that their work is personally meaningful and socially valued, and more willing to dedicate additional time and energy to their work (Grant, 2008; Purvanova, Bono, & Dzieweczynski, 2006; Thompson & Bunderson, 2003). This, in turn, will increase their effectiveness in accomplishing organizational goals. In effect, ideological messages from beneficiaries will signal to employees that their work can advance valued outcomes, motivating them to work harder in order to achieve these outcomes (Vroom, 1964). Thus, we propose that ideological messages will be more likely to enhance employees' performance when they are delivered by beneficiaries than by leaders, and that this effect will be mediated by suspicion. As Gandhi stated, "The moment there is suspicion about a person's motives, everything he does becomes tainted."

Hypothesis 1. The effect of ideological messages on employees' performance depends on the source. Ideological messages will have stronger performance effects when delivered by beneficiaries than by leaders.

Hypothesis 2. The differential effect of ideological messages from beneficiaries vs. leaders on employees' performance is mediated by suspicion.

The moderating effects of message content

These source effects may be qualified by the content of the ideological message. As noted above, scholars have traditionally assumed that ideological messages emphasize how "some constituency" will "benefit from the organization's actions" (Thompson & Bunderson, 2003, p. 576). We refer to this type of ideological message as a prosocial message, as it communicates how the organization's products and services are beneficial to others (Grant, 2008, *in press*). However, research has identified a second type of ideological message that emphasizes success (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996), which we refer to as an achievement message. Research shows that a fundamental dimension underlying value hierarchies across the world's cultures is self-transcendence vs. self-enhancement, or guiding principles that emphasize the importance of protecting and promoting the welfare of others vs. attaining success and superiority (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz & Bardi, 2001). Prosocial messages appeal to self-transcendent values, enabling employees to understand how their contributions will benefit others (e.g., Grant, 2008). These prosocial messages are often displayed in the core purpose and values statements released by companies, such as "preserving and improving human life" (Merck), "making people happy" (Disney), "making technical contributions for the advancement and welfare of humanity" (Hewlett-Packard), and "democratizing home ownership" (Fannie Mae; Collins & Porras, 1996, p. 69). On the other hand, achievement messages appeal to self-enhancement values, enabling employees to understand how their contributions will benefit the organization, setting the stage for pride in the organization's status, distinctiveness, and accomplishments (e.g., Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). For example, consider Nike's core purpose of "experiencing the emotion of competition, winning, and crushing competitors," Sony's core value of "being a pioneer... doing the impossible," and Nordstrom's core values of "hard work, individual productivity, never being satisfied, and excellence" (Collins & Porras, 1996, p. 68).

We predict that the beneficiary advantage will emerge for prosocial messages but not for achievement messages. According to social psychological theory and research on persuasion, source effects are contingent on the messages being delivered (Crano & Prislin, 2006; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Prosocial messages possess

inherently subjective qualities: the benefit of a contribution is ultimately in the eye of the beholder—the beneficiary (Flynn, 2006; Flynn & Brockner, 2003). Thus, beneficiaries have the firsthand knowledge and direct personal experience necessary to speak credibly about the prosocial impact of employees' work. Indeed, evidence suggests that firsthand sources are viewed as having more credible knowledge "because these individuals are closer to the... situation" (Walker, Feild, Giles, Armenakis, & Bernerth, 2009). An ideological message from a beneficiary provides what Heath and Heath (2007, p. 6) refer to as a "testable credential," which "outsources the credibility" of a message to a speaker who has firsthand experience with the organization's products or services. A beneficiary can provide firsthand insights about how the organization's work "has helped him or her personally" (Cantor, Alfonso, & Zillman, 1976, p. 295)—or how it has failed to do so. Beneficiaries can thus wield expert power (French & Raven, 1959) by providing testimonials about their own personal experiences.

Since the goal of a prosocial message is to convey how other people benefit from the organization's actions (Thompson & Bunderson, 2003), employees are likely to view leaders as second-hand sources who are less qualified to speak to these benefits than the recipients themselves. As Fisher et al. (1979, p. 95) explained, employees are most likely to "believe an individual who is perceived as being very knowledgeable about the subject at hand." Indeed, communicating a convincing prosocial message often involves providing concrete examples of how the organization's mission has come to life in the past and impacted others in meaningful and substantive ways (Shamir et al., 1993; see also Heath, Larrick, & Klayman, 1998). Thus, employees will be more suspicious of prosocial messages from leaders, as they lack the cognitive authority of personal experience (Wilson, 1983)—as well as the neutrality—to provide trustworthy firsthand testimonials.

Whereas prosocial messages focus on how employees' efforts influence beneficiaries outside the boundaries of the organization, achievement messages emphasize how employees contribute to the success of the organization itself. By virtue of their status within the organization, leaders are in a position to acquire firsthand knowledge about an organization's accomplishments, rendering them more qualified and credible to speak about achievement based on personal experience (Birnbaum & Stegner, 1979; Pornpitakpan, 2004). Compared with prosocial messages, achievement messages have a stronger basis in factual information. When discussing past accomplishments, leaders can point to verifiable evidence, such as goals achieved, revenues, products and patents, news stories, recognition and awards. As such, there is less reason for employees to be suspicious of achievement messages delivered by leaders (e.g., Braverman, 2008).

Employees may also be inclined to scrutinize leaders' prosocial messages more carefully than their achievement messages. According to the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion, when a source delivers an unexpected message, audiences become more attuned to scrutinizing the content of the message (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; for a review, see Crano & Prislin, 2006). This is consistent with extensive evidence that audiences engage in more systematic attributional processing and active sensemaking—key catalysts of suspicion (Fein, 1996; Kramer, 1998)—in response to unexpected actions (Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1981; Weick, 1995). Prosocial messages from leaders may be perceived as surprising since leaders are highlighting how a third party benefits from employees' efforts, whereas audiences generally expect speakers to advocate on behalf of their own self-interest (Ratner & Miller, 2001). In contrast, since leaders benefit personally from the organization's success, an achievement message from leaders is likely to fall within the range of expected communications. Further, employees are likely to expect

leaders to deliver achievement messages not only because they have a vested interest in the organization's success, but also because they are in positions of authority and responsibility with respect to the organization's success. As a result, employees will spend less time and energy scrutinizing achievement messages from leaders, which will leave them open to processing the messages in the "hot" experiential system and reduce suspicion (Kramer, 1998). For these reasons, we expect that employees will perceive leaders who speak about internal success as credible authorities (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004) who have expert power (French & Raven, 1959), which will lead employees to respond as favorably to achievement messages from leaders as from beneficiaries. Achievement messages from beneficiaries are also unlikely to be surprising, because the organization's success is in their interest. However, even if employees are surprised, the factual basis of achievement messages—as well as the neutrality and independence that beneficiaries bring to the table (Pfeffer et al., 2006)—is likely to temper suspicion. In summary, we expect that employees will perform more effectively in response to prosocial messages from beneficiaries than from leaders, but this source difference will be attenuated for achievement messages.

Hypothesis 3. The effect of the source of ideological messages on employees' performance depends on the content, such that beneficiaries have stronger performance effects than leaders when delivering prosocial messages but not achievement messages.

Overview of the present research

We examined our hypotheses sequentially across three experiments. Although inspiration is often viewed as an ongoing process, single messages are the basic building blocks of this process (e.g., Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996). Thus, as a conservative test of the impact of discrete ideological messages, we focused on the effects of single messages delivered by leaders and beneficiaries. In Study 1, we tested Hypothesis 1 in a field quasi-experiment. In Study 2, we constructively replicated our test of Hypothesis 1 in a laboratory experiment and investigated Hypothesis 2 by examining the mediating role of suspicion. In Study 3, we tested Hypothesis 3 by varying the content of ideological messages as well as the source. To facilitate fair comparisons (Cooper & Richardson, 1986), we compared the effects of ideological messages delivered by unknown beneficiaries vs. leaders in a field quasi-experiment (Study 1), and by the same unknown individual portrayed as either a leader or a beneficiary in the laboratory (Studies 2 and 3).

Study 1

Method

Participants and design

Sixty fundraisers at a university call center in the Southeast US participated in this field quasi-experiment. The fundraisers were 78.6% female with an average of 5.25 months of tenure ($SD = 5.38$), and they were responsible for contacting university alumni by telephone and persuading them to donate money to the university. We studied the fundraisers over the course of a 3-month period. The fundraisers worked in shifts averaging 4 h each, and each fundraiser worked approximately four shifts per week.

In this context, we conducted a naturally occurring quasi-experiment using an interrupted time-series design with multiple non-equivalent comparison groups, which is the strongest of all quasi-experimental designs (Cook & Campbell, 1979). We obtained

objective measures of the fundraisers' performance on a daily basis. The interventions occurred when a manager invited two leaders and one scholarship student to deliver ideological messages at the beginning of fundraising shifts. We coded which fundraisers attended each ideological message and examined daily changes in performance as a function of whether each fundraiser was present or absent. This allowed us to assess the relative effects of ideological messages from leaders vs. beneficiaries on fundraisers' performance over time. Thus, for each ideological message, there was an experimental group of callers who heard it and a control group who did not. Fundraisers were not able to self-select into conditions, as they were not informed in advance when visitors would be speaking.

Measures

We collected objective data on the fundraisers' performance over the course of 64 days. We measured performance in terms of the total amount of money collected from alumni by each fundraiser during each daily shift. This measure of performance was recorded by fundraisers and verified by a manager on duty. We also measured the number of hours that each fundraiser worked each day as a control variable. It is important to note that over the course of the study, all of the fundraisers were calling potential donors drawn from the same general population (i.e., potential donors with similar giving histories) and, therefore, had an equal opportunity to perform.

Procedures

In the second month of our 3-month daily tracking of fundraisers' performance, the manager of the call center invited two leaders and one scholarship student to deliver ideological messages at the beginning of calling shifts. The three speakers arrived over the course of a 4-week period: the first two speakers were leaders from the university's development office, which oversaw the work that the fundraisers performed, and the third was a scholarship student beneficiary. The manager asked each speaker to spend approximately 10 min presenting inspiring information about why the fundraisers' work is significant, and the three presentations were equivalent in length.

The first speaker addressed 14 fundraisers. He was a graduate of the university, and he had risen to a leadership role as the Director of Young Alumni at the university's development office, which oversaw the call center. He delivered an ideological message about the importance of the work that fundraisers perform. He described how even small donations can make a large difference, and how the donations are used to benefit other people in the university.

The second speaker arrived during the following week and addressed 23 fundraisers. He was a member of the Board of Trustees at the university, as well as an alumnus, and he delivered an ideological message about why university fundraising matters. This leader had directed several of the university's major capital campaigns and was in charge of overseeing multiple development activities associated with the call center. He was widely regarded as a charismatic, dynamic, and gifted speaker; in a past visit, a manager noted that "his presentation style won over the students." He spoke about how the donations that the fundraisers collect contribute to the university community.

The third speaker, a scholarship student beneficiary, visited during the subsequent week and addressed 18 fundraisers. His ideological message focused on how he received a scholarship that enabled him to study abroad in China. He noted that this was a life-changing experience, and it allowed him to meet the requirements of his Asian Studies major. He also informed the fundraisers that their work made it possible for him to attend the university; without the donations that they collected, he would not have been able

Table 1
Study 1 means, standard deviations, and correlations.

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Linear trend (performance observation)	33.91	17.19	—						
2. Quadratic trend (linear ²)	1396.85	1186.06	.97	—					
3. Hours	3.35	.84	-.12	-.13	—				
4. Leader 1 (director of young alumni)	.11	.31	.48	.54	-.09	—			
5. Leader 2 (board of trustees member)	.12	.32	.54	.63	-.13	.60	—		
6. Beneficiary (scholarship student)	.08	.27	.44	.52	-.07	.41	.63	—	
7. Performance (dollars raised)	\$683.81	888.51	.23	.29	.20	.17	.22	.27	—

Notes. Linear trend is coded 1–64 for performance time periods (not all individuals worked all time periods). Leader 1, leader 2, and beneficiary are coded 0 prior to the intervention and 1 following the intervention. For statistical significance, $r > .14$ signifies $p < .001$, $r > .10$ signifies $p < .01$, and $r > .07$ signifies $p < .05$.

to afford the university's tuition. Three managers recorded which fundraisers were in attendance for each ideological message, and we tracked each fundraiser's performance on a daily basis before and after each message.³

Results

Means, standard deviations, and correlations appear in Table 1. The structure of the data consisted of repeated observations nested within participants. Given this nesting in our interrupted time-series design, we analyzed the data using Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM; Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992; Hofmann, Griffin, & Gavin, 2000). This is consistent with advice from methodologists to analyze time-series data using random coefficient modeling (Moskowitz & Hershberger, 2002). We tested Hypothesis 1 using a random intercepts model where the level-1 model consisted of the performance dependent variable regressed on dummy codes representing when each of the ideological messages occurred (coded 0 prior to the message and 1 following the message). The level-2 model consisted only of a randomly varying intercept.

In addition to the level-1 independent variables, we also included several control variables. We controlled for the number of hours worked during each day, as this would obviously affect both the number of calls made as well as the total dollars raised. In addition, because the fundraisers were relatively new to the position, their performance would be likely to improve over time as they became more familiar with and skilled in the job. This suggests that the validity threat of history (Cook & Campbell, 1979) could confound our results, as performance following an ideological message could exceed performance prior to the message merely due to the fundraisers becoming more effective as they gain job knowledge, skills, and experience. In order to control for this possibility, we also included in the model a linear trend (coded 1–64 representing the 64 performance observations) and a quadratic trend (time per-

Table 2
Study 1 HLM results predicting performance.

	Parameter estimate	Error	t(1134)
Hours	254.95	28.64	2.32*
Linear trend	-22.82	7.52	-3.03**
Quadratic trend	1.28	.23	5.47***
Leader 1	-31.88	102.36	-.31
Leader 2	143.74	110.79	1.30
Beneficiary	496.53	119.63	4.15***
R ²			.18**

Notes. Number of observations was 1134 at level-1 and 60 at level-2.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

iod squared). These two variables allowed us to control for any linear and quadratic changes in performance that might occur over time as a result of learning, experience, or knowledge and skill development.

Table 2 presents the results of our HLM analysis investigating Hypothesis 1. The results indicated that all three of the control variables (hours, linear trend, and quadratic trend) were significantly related to performance (see Table 2). The results also revealed that the ideological messages from the leaders were not significantly related to performance (Leader 1 $b = -31.88$, ns ; Leader 2 $b = 143.74$, ns). The ideological message from the beneficiary, however, displayed a statistically significant positive relationship with performance ($b = 496.53$, $p < .01$).

To examine our finer-grained prediction that the message from the beneficiary would have a significantly greater effect than the messages from the leaders, we tested the significance of the difference between the parameter estimates. We used the multivariate hypothesis testing option within the HLM software. The magnitude of the effect of the beneficiary's ideological message was significantly larger than the effect for Leader 1, $\chi^2(1) = 6.14$, $p < .01$, and for Leader 2, $\chi^2(1) = 3.03$, $p < .05$. Based on these results, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

In order to investigate more specifically the magnitude of change in terms of actual dollars raised before and after the ideological message, we examined the 2-week periods before and after each ideological message. Repeated-measures ANOVAs showed a significant time-condition interaction for performance as a function of the beneficiary's message, $F(1, 58) = 10.68$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .12$, but no significant effects for either of the leaders' messages. We interpreted the significant time-condition interaction for the beneficiary's message by conducting paired-samples t -tests within each condition over time. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, the fundraisers who received the ideological message from the beneficiary increased significantly after the intervention in performance, from an average of \$2459.44 ($SD = 4019.50$) to \$9704.58 ($SD = 6240.92$),

³ Although evidence calls into question whether presentation style matters in shaping the effectiveness of ideological messages (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996), to ensure that the scholarship student did not have an advantage over the two leaders in terms of presentation style or identification, in the weeks after the study was complete, we collected independent ratings of the ideological messages from ten observers who attended all three presentations. We asked these coders to rate the extent to which each speaker was *inspiring* and the extent to which the fundraisers *identified with each speaker* (1 = not at all, 7 = very much). The observers were managers and new callers who were blind to our research questions and hypotheses, did not participate in the study, and did not know in advance that they would be evaluating the speakers. For inspiration, across the 10 coders, the means were 5.20 for the first leader ($SD = 1.87$), 5.22 for the second leader ($SD = 1.99$), and 5.00 for the scholarship student ($SD = 1.50$), and a one-way ANOVA showed that they did not differ significantly, $F(1, 28) = .04$, ns . For identification, the means were 5.50 for the first leader ($SD = 1.96$), 5.56 for the second leader ($SD = 1.59$), and 4.89 for the scholarship student ($SD = 1.69$), and a one-way ANOVA showed that they did not differ significantly, $F(1, 28) = .40$, ns . These results suggest that the scholarship student did not have an advantage over the two leaders in terms of presentation style or identification.

$t(17) = 5.66, p < .001, d = 2.55$. The fundraisers who did not receive the ideological message did not change significantly in performance from before the intervention ($M = \$2775.33, SD = 3134.42$) to afterward ($M = \$3790.67, SD = 6243.24$), $t(41) = .91, ns$.

Discussion

Our results support the notion that an ideological message from a beneficiary was more effective than ideological messages from leaders. These findings, however, are subject to several important limitations. We were not able to obtain survey data from the fundraisers, which limited our ability to understand the underlying processes responsible for our findings. It is necessary to measure these processes in order to fully understand the mechanisms behind our observed effects. In addition, because we did not randomly assign fundraisers to controlled treatment conditions, our results are vulnerable to several validity threats (Campbell & Stanley, 1966; Cook & Campbell, 1979).⁴ Speakers arbitrarily selected shifts based on their availability, and fundraisers were not informed in advance when speakers would be arriving. Although using this approach ensured that fundraisers were not able to self-select into treatment conditions, it is important to note that individual fundraisers were not randomly assigned to treatment conditions. Given this, it is still possible that selection threats were a possible confound. For example, it may be the case that the fundraisers who happened to arrive for the shift in which the scholarship student spoke were more committed to their jobs than the fundraisers who did not arrive for this shift. We also cannot rule out the possibility of a selection–treatment interaction: the fundraisers who heard the scholarship student speak may have been more receptive to the ideological message than other fundraisers. In order to rule out selection and selection–treatment interaction threats, it is necessary to randomly assign employees to intervention groups (Cook & Campbell, 1979).

Our design is also vulnerable to multiple treatment interference, whereby treatments may interact to influence each other or produce outcomes that would not be caused by a single treatment. More specifically, the ideological messages varied simultaneously in both source and content: because the leaders and the scholarship student naturally delivered different messages, we cannot rule out the possibility that it was the nature of the information shared in the scholarship student's message, rather than the source, that caused the performance increases. In order to prevent multiple treatment interference, it is necessary to utilize controlled manipulations in which leaders and beneficiaries share common messages with the same content and length; this will make it possible to assess whether ideological messages from beneficiaries are more effective than the same ideological messages from leaders.

⁴ Our interrupted time-series design protected against the other validity threats listed by Cook and Campbell (1979). Because we measured performance daily, our findings are unlikely to be influenced by history (events occurring between measurements along with the experimental treatment). Testing, instrumentation, and test-treatment interaction are also unlikely to be factors, as we measured performance unobtrusively, and the measurement methods did not change over time. Statistical regression is not a concern, as we controlled for both linear and quadratic trends in the data, and experimental mortality is also not an issue, as we had no attrition in our sample. Experimental arrangements are unlikely to be an issue, as our design allowed us to measure naturally occurring interventions rather than introducing intrusive experimental interventions. Finally, it is improbable that our results were affected by the four implementation threats related to becoming aware of treatments in other conditions. All fundraisers were aware that speakers were assigned by shifts, which signified that no fundraisers were receiving preferential treatment; this is likely to prevent both resentful demoralization and compensatory rivalry. Furthermore, we interviewed multiple managers and verified that there were no cases of compensatory equalization (managers reallocating inspirational appeals to even out treatments) or treatment diffusion (managers or fundraisers copying the treatments that one or more groups received).

Study 2

To address these limitations, we moved to the laboratory to conduct a second study. We designed the experiment to test the mediating role of suspicion with self-report data, and to rule out validity threats by randomly assigning participants to carefully controlled treatment conditions. We created a video of an individual introducing a task with one of two different ideological messages. Holding the content and style of the messages constant, we varied whether the individual described herself as a leader in charge of the program that created the task or a beneficiary of the task. This allowed us to examine whether simply describing the source of the ideological message as a beneficiary rather than a leader—even when the content, style, and actual person delivering the message were identical—was sufficient to inspire higher performance among participants.

Method

Participants and design

The study involved 103 students at a large public US university who completed the task of correcting grammatical errors and typos in an operations research paper written by an international doctoral student. We divided them between three conditions: control ($n = 29$), leader message ($n = 38$), and beneficiary message ($n = 36$). In the control condition, they immediately began working on the task. In the two message conditions, participants viewed a video of a woman of Indian descent with a slight accent sitting in an office with the university logo behind her. She opened by stating, "Our university has started a new program to help international PhD students publish their research." She then introduced the source manipulation. In the leader condition, she stated, "I am Priya Patel, the director in charge of the program." In the beneficiary condition, she stated, "I am Priya Patel, a PhD student in economics who benefited from the program." She then explained the importance of the program:

Many international PhD students have important ideas that they have difficulty getting published because of minor grammatical errors, and this makes it very difficult for them to find professor positions even though they speak fluent English. The purpose of the program is to enlist students to help international PhD students improve their grammar so that they can publish their research and obtain faculty positions. Although the program is brand new, it has already shown dramatic success. Last year, [I/a PhD student in economics] was the first to submit a paper for editing. [I/she] found the feedback enormously helpful, and it made it possible for [me/her] to publish the paper in a leading economics journal. As a direct result of this publication, [I/she] was invited to interview for faculty positions at Cornell, Michigan, and Florida, and [I/she] was offered jobs at all three schools. I cannot overstate the importance of this program—it changed [my/her] life.

Both videos concluded with the following statement: "Since the program is short on editors, we are partnering with the business school to recruit help. You will receive a paper written by a PhD student. Please edit it using Microsoft Word's 'track changes' feature, save the file, and then email it to us at the link provided. Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate." Participants then edited an operations paper written by an international doctoral student, sent their edits to the research team, and completed a brief questionnaire about the experience.

Measures

To examine the robustness of our effects, we measured performance using multiple metrics (Bono & Judge, 2003). Extensive research has distinguished between two core types of work performance: task and citizenship (e.g., Borman, 2004; Kamdar & Van Dyne, 2007; Rotundo & Sackett, 2002). Task performance is the degree to which an individual completes assigned responsibilities proficiently, accurately, and effectively (Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007). Citizenship performance is the value of an individual's discretionary contributions to the social and psychological context of work (Organ, 1997; Rotundo & Sackett, 2002).

Task performance. We assessed task performance in terms of accuracy, counting the number of spelling and grammatical errors in the paper that each participant corrected successfully (Bono & Judge, 2003). The paper that participants edited was an actual draft of an operations research paper by an international doctoral student. It was 11 pages long, and we embedded a total of 88 spelling and grammatical errors in the paper. We enlisted an English teacher and a business professor to independently screen the paper for errors, which verified that our count was correct. We then scored each participant's edits according to the number of mistakes and errors correctly identified per page. By measuring the number of mistakes correctly identified per page in the manuscript, we were able to compute an internal consistency reliability estimate across the 11 pages of the manuscript ($\alpha = .91$). We then summed the total number of errors identified to represent task performance.

Citizenship performance. We assessed citizenship performance by enlisting an expert coder to rate the quality of the comments offered by each participant to the doctoral student. This is an exemplar of the helping dimension of citizenship performance, as it reflects the degree to which participants voluntarily gave useful advice and assistance over and above the task instructions (Bono & Judge, 2003). The coder was a doctoral student in management specializing in feedback and citizenship behavior. We asked him to evaluate each participant's comments on three items—helpfulness, quality, and constructive advice—using a 7-point scale anchored at 1 = not at all, 4 = somewhat, and 7 = very much. To establish the reliability of the coder's perspective, we asked him and an undergraduate student to separately evaluate an independent sample of 29 sets of comments collected previously as pilot data. The two coders demonstrated excellent inter-rater reliability, $ICC(1) = .79$, $ICC(2) = .88$, $p < .001$. We then asked the expert coder to evaluate the full set of comments. The coders' ratings were reliable across the helpfulness, quality, and constructive advice items ($\alpha = .81$), and we averaged them to represent citizenship performance.

Suspicion. In a posttest survey, participants rated how suspicious they were of the speaker who delivered the ideological message in the video. Since the control condition included no ideological message, and our goal was to explain the differential effects of the message delivered by the leader vs. the beneficiary, we measured suspicion only in the leader and beneficiary conditions, not in the control condition. To assess suspicion, we asked participants to rate the speaker's message on six items drawn from existing measures of suspicion and sincerity (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; DeCarlo, 2005; Priester & Petty, 1995; Vonk, 1998; Yoon et al., 2006), including "authentic," "honest," and "truthful" ($\alpha = .84$). The items used a 7-point Likert-type scale anchored at 1 = disagree strongly and 7 = agree strongly, and we reverse-scored them so that higher values indicated greater suspicion. We selected these items based on the conceptual definition of suspicion in terms of questioning the genuineness or sincerity of motives or behavior (Hilton et al., 1993), as the sincerity of the

speaker was the target of suspicion. According to Merriam-Webster (2011), "suspicious" is a near antonym of "sincere," and our approach mirrored previous studies by examining suspicion in terms of the degree to which participants viewed the speaker as sincere (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; Fein, 1996; Vonk, 1998; Yoon et al., 2006).⁵

Manipulation check. To ensure that participants in the leader and beneficiary conditions watched, encoded, and remembered the source manipulation in the video, we asked, "In the video that you watched introducing the task, what was the speaker's role?" We gave them four options: (a) Director in charge of the program, (b) Student who benefited from the program, (c) Professor in charge of the program, or (d) Professor who benefited from the program. The correct answers were (a) for the leader conditions and (b) for the beneficiary conditions. We also included an open-ended question asking participants to describe what they saw in the video. As described in the procedures below, we excluded participants whose answers did not correspond to their experimental conditions.

Procedures

To develop the video instructions, we hired a professional videographer employed by the university. We recruited a woman of Indian descent in her early 30s with an MBA, as well as both leadership and management experience, to deliver the instructions. We reasoned that her Indian appearance, slight accent, and age would make it realistic for her to be the director of the program or a student who had benefited from the program. We presented her with the scripts, asked her to memorize them, and then began the videotaping. We did not inform her of our hypotheses, and asked her to use the same speech style, pace, and emotion in delivering each message. After creating the videos, we enlisted four undergraduates to screen them for speech and style differences. Two of the coders watched the videos with the sound turned off and were unable to identify any noteworthy differences in her facial expressions. The other two coders listened to the videos without watching her expressions and were also unable to identify any obvious discrepancies in inflection or emotion. We thus proceeded with the study.

We sent an email to a university-wide subject pool offering a \$10 Amazon.com gift certificate in exchange for participation in a 60-min online study. The email contained a link to a consent form. Upon signing the consent form, participants were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions by the Qualtrics randomization tool. We offered no incentives for good performance, other than achieving the program's goal of helping the doctoral student, but we disabled the automatic spelling and grammar check features. When participants had finished editing the paper, they sent it via email to a Gmail account, and received an auto-reply thanking them for editing the paper and providing a link for completing a brief posttest survey. A total of 129 participants completed this process; we excluded data from 7 who were non-native English speakers, 9 who failed the manipulation check, 8 who questioned whether their feedback would truly be sent to the student, and 2 who experienced technical difficulties, resulting in a final sample of 103 participants.

⁵ To provide empirical evidence of the unidimensionality of our measure, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis of the Study 2 data using EQS software version 6.1 with maximum-likelihood estimation procedures. A single-factor solution with all six items loading on one factor achieved excellent fit with the data, $\chi^2(9) = 64.16$, CFI = .96, SRMR = .03, and was superior to all alternative models.

Table 3
Study 2 hierarchical regression analyses predicting performance.

	DV: task performance		DV: citizenship performance	
	β Step 1	β Step 2	β Step 1	β Step 2
Condition (0 = leader, 1 = beneficiary)	.27*	.20	.25*	.19
Suspicion		-.32**		-.25*
R ²	.08*	.17**	.06*	.12*
Change in R ²		.09**		.06*

Note. *** $p < .001$. The correlation between task performance and citizenship performance was $r = .79$ ***

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

Results and discussion

Independent-samples *t*-tests showed that participants in the beneficiary condition achieved higher task performance ($M = 32.89$, $SD = 15.48$) than those in the leader condition ($M = 24.55$, $SD = 14.14$), $t(72) = 2.42$, $p < .05$, and the control condition ($M = 24.03$, $SD = 18.13$), $t(63) = 2.12$, $p < .05$.⁶ Participants in the beneficiary condition also achieved higher citizenship performance ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.39$) than those in the leader condition ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.25$), $t(72) = 2.17$, $p < .05$, and the control condition ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 1.65$), $t(63) = 2.32$, $p < .05$. Thus, providing additional support for Hypothesis 1, the ideological messages led to higher performance when they were delivered by the beneficiary than by the leader. Interestingly, participants in the leader and control conditions did not differ significantly in terms of task performance, $t(65) = .13$, *ns*, or citizenship performance, $t(67) = .59$, *ns*.

To examine whether suspicion mediated the effect of the source manipulation on the differences in performance between the beneficiary and leader conditions, we began by following the steps recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986). Our prior analysis fulfilled the first criterion, that the independent variable affects the dependent variable: participants in the beneficiary condition achieved higher task and citizenship performance than those in the leader condition. Second, supporting a significant effect of the independent variable on the mediating variable, participants in the beneficiary condition reported less suspicion ($M = 2.50$, $SD = .74$) than those in the leader condition ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.07$), $t(72) = 2.12$, $p < .05$. We assessed the third criterion, which holds that the mediator should affect the dependent variable while controlling for the independent variable, with OLS regression analyses for both task and citizenship performance (see Table 3). When we included suspicion in the equations, the effects of the source manipulation decreased to non-significance, and suspicion was a significant predictor of both task and citizenship performance.

The final criterion holds that the size of the indirect effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable through the mediating variable should differ significantly from zero (MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007). Although Baron and Kenny (1986) suggested that researchers use the Sobel test to estimate the size of the indirect effect, subsequent research and simulations have shown that the Sobel test assumes a normal distribution for indirect effects that tend to be heavily skewed, especially in small samples (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002). Methodologists and statisticians thus recommend using bootstrap procedures, which draw repeated random samples from the dataset and use these samples to estimate standard errors and derive confidence intervals (Bollen & Stine, 1990). Bootstrap procedures thus have greater power and accuracy for detecting mediating ef-

fects, and can be used effectively in samples as small as 20 (Shrout & Bolger, 2002).

We used the coefficients from our previous analyses, and then applied bootstrapping methods to construct bias-corrected confidence intervals based on 1000 random samples with replacement from the full sample (Stine, 1989). The indirect effect of the source manipulation on performance through the mediator of suspicion had 95% confidence intervals that excluded zero for both task performance (indirect effect: -2.40 ; 95% $CI = -.40, -6.81$) and citizenship performance (indirect effect: $-.17$; 95% $CI = -.02, -.50$). These results show that, consistent with Hypothesis 2, suspicion mediated the effect of the source manipulation on performance. However, we have yet to test whether the comparative effectiveness of leader and beneficiary messages is contingent on the content of the messages.

Study 3

In this study, we independently varied the source and the content of ideological messages. Following recommendations for constructive replication (Lykken, 1968), we used a task, sample, manipulations, and dependent measures that differed from those in the first two studies. We asked participants to contribute to a healthcare company's marketing efforts, and evaluated the quality of their contributions and whether they chose to help the company with an optional task. Rather than having the ideological messages delivered in person (Study 1) or by video (Study 2), we delivered them via typed electronic messages. In the advent of increasing organizational size, geographically dispersed groups, and technological advances, electronic messages are increasingly common vehicles through which values and inspiring messages are communicated in organizations (e.g., Avolio, Kahai, & Dodge, 2001; Hoyt & Blascovich, 2003; Purvanova & Bono, 2009). Because electronic messages have lower richness and symbol variety than face-to-face messages, they tend to carry less emotional force (Maruping & Agarwal, 2004). As such, we expected weaker effects of the electronic ideological messages, and consulted Cohen's (1992) guidelines to determine adequate statistical power.

Participants and design

The study involved 371 undergraduate and graduate students in a university subject pool at an east coast US university. The participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions based on a 2 (message source: leader vs. beneficiary) \times 2 (message content: prosocial vs. achievement) factorial design with both factors varied between subjects.

Message source manipulation. In all four conditions, participants read a short message about a patient who had switched from traditional pharmacy to the healthcare company's mail-order pharmacy. In the beneficiary source conditions, the message was from one of the company's patients, Eric Sorenson. It opened, "My name

⁶ For task performance, the relatively low number of errors identified across conditions appeared to be a function of task difficulty: participants reported that it was extremely challenging to locate errors in the context of a technical, monotonous manuscript.

is Eric Sorenson. I'm 73 years old, I live in Minnesota, and I have a heart condition." In the leader source conditions, the message was from the company's VP of marketing, Phil Strickland. It opened, "I want to tell you about a patient named Eric Sorenson. He's 73 years old, he lives in Minnesota, and he has a heart condition." The messages were identical other than uses of the first-person vs. third-person pronouns as appropriate.

Message content manipulation. In the prosocial message conditions, participants read about how the healthcare company had helped the patient, Eric Sorenson. Instead of going out in the cold every 30 days to pick up prescription refills, he receives a 90-day supply of heart medication at his doorstep. The message also noted that the company has specialist pharmacists available 24–7 to answer questions, and stated that Eric truly appreciates how the convenience and expert consultation demonstrate that the company truly cares about patient health. The message concluded by asking participants to complete several tasks in order to help more people like Eric receive the benefits of the company's services.

In the achievement message conditions, participants read about how the healthcare company had been highly successful. The message explained that Eric chose the company because they have the world's most advanced pharmacy, get medication to patients faster than traditional pharmacies, offer specialist pharmacists, have doubled their revenue in the past decade, and have earned several innovation awards. The message concluded by asking participants to complete several tasks in order to help the company continue growing and becoming a leader in healthcare.

According to the theoretical distinction that we drew between prosocial vs. achievement ideological messages, these messages differ in their emphasis on helping others vs. achieving success for the organization independent of helping others. To link our manipulations clearly to this distinction, we concluded each message with a specific "ask" for our participants. In the prosocial condition, we asked participants to complete several tasks to benefit Eric and similar patients, linking participants' efforts to helping others. In the achievement condition, we asked participants to complete several tasks to enable the organization to continue its track record of growth and innovation, linking participants' efforts to the organization's success independent of helping others. Thus, our content manipulation focused on two different outcomes of the task: helping others (prosocial) vs. enabling the organization to be successful (achievement).

Measures

As in the previous study, we measured both task and citizenship performance. Unless otherwise indicated, all items used a 7-point Likert-type scale anchored at 1 = disagree strongly and 7 = agree strongly.

Task performance. The core task was for participants to draft a marketing campaign to highlight the benefits of switching to the company's mail-order pharmacy. Consistent with previous experimental studies using tasks in which participants construct business documents (e.g., Rietzschel, Nijstad, & Stroebe, 2010; see also Chen, Yao, & Kotha, 2009), we measured task performance in terms of the overall quality of the campaign. We enlisted two knowledgeable coders—business students majoring in marketing—to rate the quality of each campaign (1 = extremely poor quality, 4 = average, 7 = exceptional quality). The two coders demonstrated good inter-rater reliability, $ICC(1) = .54$, $ICC(2) = .70$, $p < .001$, and we averaged their ratings to represent each participant's task performance.

Citizenship performance. To assess citizenship performance, consistent with previous laboratory experiments examining citizenship, extra-role, and helping behaviors (Bono & Judge, 2003; Grant & Gino, 2010; Wright, George, Farnsworth, & McMa-

han, 1993), we provided participants with an optional opportunity to help the marketing team. We presented a list of 50 statements and phrases that may be used in campaigns, and indicated that the marketing team was seeking feedback on them. We measured citizenship performance in terms of whether participants offered help by voluntarily completing this optional task.

Manipulation check. To ensure that they paid attention to the source manipulation, we asked participants whether the initial message about the company was delivered by a patient or a vice president of marketing. To check the content manipulation, we asked participants to indicate which of several options was the primary theme of the message that they read. As expected, the vast majority of the participants in the prosocial message conditions selected the theme of benefiting patients (76.6%), compared with a minority of participants in the achievement message conditions (41.0%), $\chi^2(1) = 47.80$, $p < .001$. Further, the proportion of the participants who selected the theme of succeeding, innovating, and growing was significantly higher in the achievement message conditions (46.5%) than the prosocial message conditions (2.3%), $\chi^2(1) = 93.10$, $p < .001$.

Procedures

After participants signed up for the study and signed consent forms, we informed them that we were partnering with a large healthcare company to identify the best strategies for marketing a mail-order prescription service. We explained that the company was seeking their feedback on marketing campaigns, and we were conducting research on their reactions. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions with a random number generator that directed them to a website featuring an ideological message. After they read the prosocial or achievement message from the beneficiary or the leader, participants in all four conditions completed the same process. Across conditions, we provided all participants with the same sample marketing campaign from the company, and asked them to draft an alternative campaign, which the coders later evaluated to assess task performance. After participants had completed their campaigns, we collected our measure of citizenship performance. We presented them with the optional task of providing feedback on a list of possible marketing statements and phrases to help the company identify the most effective statements and phrases. In total, there were 50 statements and phrases, and across conditions, 52.8% of participants provided feedback on them, whereas the other 47.2% of participants skipped this task. All participants completed a brief questionnaire containing our manipulation checks. A total of 431 individuals initiated participation; we excluded data from 51 who did not complete the full study or failed the source manipulation check, and from another 13 who guessed the true purpose of the study, yielding a final sample of 371 participants.⁷

Results and discussion

Means and standard deviations by condition appear in Table 4. A 2×2 ANOVA showed a significant interaction of the message source and content manipulations on task performance, $F(1, 367) = 8.07$, $p < .01$. Neither of the main effects was significant (see Table 5). Simple effects showed that participants achieved significantly higher task performance when the prosocial message

⁷ Including the full set of participants in the analyses did not change any of the results significantly. There were still statistically significant interaction effects of the source and content manipulations on task and citizenship performance, such that participants performed better when the prosocial message was delivered by the beneficiary than the leader, but there were no significant source effects for the achievement message.

Table 4
Study 3 means by condition.

Condition	Task performance	Citizenship performance
Source = beneficiary, Content = prosocial (<i>n</i> = 90)	4.13 (1.10)	66.67% (47.41)
Source = leader, Content = prosocial (<i>n</i> = 81)	3.73 (1.06)	45.69% (50.12)
Source = beneficiary, Content = achievement (<i>n</i> = 99)	3.98 (1.01)	49.49% (50.25)
Source = leader, Content = achievement (<i>n</i> = 101)	4.16 (.76)	49.50% (50.25)

Notes. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

Table 5
Study 3 analyses.

Condition	Task performance <i>F</i> (1, 367)	Citizenship performance Wald (1, 367)
Source (0 = leader, 1 = beneficiary)	1.21	.00
Content (0 = achievement, 1 = prosocial)	1.67	.26
Interaction	8.07**	4.18*

Notes. Standard deviations are in parentheses. Whereas task and citizenship performance were strongly related in the previous study, separating them by presenting a core task and an optional binary task created greater distinctiveness in the present study ($r = .09$, *ns*).

was delivered by the beneficiary than by the leader, $F(1, 367) = 6.94$, $p < .01$, but no significant differences in task performance when the achievement message was delivered by the beneficiary vs. the leader, $F(1, 367) = -1.67$, *ns*. Because the citizenship performance measure was binary, we examined the effects using logistic regression and contingency table analyses. A logistic regression analysis showed a significant source X content interaction on citizenship performance, $b = \text{Wald}(1) = 4.18$, $p < .05$. Once again, neither of the main effects was significant (see Table 5). Contingency table analyses showed that participants were more likely to engage in citizenship when the prosocial message was delivered by the beneficiary than by the leader, $\chi^2(1) = 7.65$, $p < .01$, but there were no significant differences in the proportions of citizenship behavior as a function of the source for the achievement message, $\chi^2(1) = .00$, *ns*. Thus, in support of Hypothesis 3, the beneficiary source led to higher task and citizenship performance for prosocial but not achievement messages.

General discussion

We proposed that in general, ideological messages would be more effective in inspiring employees' performance when they were outsourced to beneficiaries rather than delivered by leaders. In Study 1, a field quasi-experiment, an ideological message from a beneficiary was more effective than those from two leaders in motivating higher performance. We then turned to the laboratory to identify a key mechanism and a boundary condition for these effects. In Study 2, even after holding constant the content and style of the message, as well as the speaker, merely framing the speaker as a beneficiary rather than a leader was sufficient to increase performance in an editing task, and this difference was mediated by lower suspicion. In Study 3, the beneficiary source

advantage depended on the content of the message: a beneficiary motivated higher performance than a leader when delivering a prosocial message but not an achievement message. Across the three studies, we constructively replicated the source effects across face-to-face, video, and written ideological messages, with different samples, tasks, beneficiaries, and outcome variables. Together, these findings contribute to theory and research on leadership, influence, and motivation.

Theoretical contributions

Our findings extend theory and research on leadership by challenging the implicit assumption that individuals who occupy formal leadership roles in organizational hierarchies are always the optimal source of ideological messages. Much of the literature on transformational and charismatic leadership is based on this premise, emphasizing that it is the leader's duty to deliver inspiring messages that link employees' efforts to a greater good, in the form of vision statements (Collins & Porras, 1996), purpose stories (Senge, 1990), and sense giving and meaning-making communications about how the organization's work contributes to a greater good (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006; Podolny, Khurana, & Hill-Popper, 2005; Pratt, 2000; Smircich & Morgan, 1982; Thompson & Bunderston, 2003). However, a number of researchers have identified risks that leaders take in delivering ideological messages, which include setting unrealistic expectations (Cha & Edmondson, 2006; Conger, 1990) and causing employees to resist messages that are perceived as controlling, manipulative, or exploitive (Howell & Shamir, 2005; Kets de Vries & Miller, 1986). Little research to date has examined how leaders can minimize these risks. Our research addresses this question by suggesting that leaders may benefit from outsourcing inspiration by inviting the direct beneficiaries of employees' efforts to deliver ideological messages focusing on the prosocial aspects of the work.

In doing so, our findings broaden existing conceptualizations of ideological and inspirational leadership behaviors. In studying transformational and charismatic leadership, researchers have tended to focus on inspiration as conveyed through the words that leaders use, as reflected in articulating a motivating vision, expressing confidence in employees, talking enthusiastically about goals, and using persuasive language (e.g., Bass, 1985; Bono & Judge, 2004; Burns, 1978). Our research complements this focus by considering the role that leaders' actions can play in inspiring employees. By inviting beneficiaries to visit their organizations, leaders can fill structural holes between employees and beneficiaries (Burt, 1997), playing the role of linking pins (Grant, *in press*; Katz & Kahn, 1966). Our research thereby highlights new behavioral steps that leaders can take to inspire employees by connecting them to beneficiaries who deliver ideological messages.

Our research thereby helps to provide insights into the previous mixed results for the effects of leaders' ideological messages on employee performance (e.g., Grant, *in press*; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Shamir et al., 1998). Whereas the majority of research has focused on the structure and presentation style involved in ideological messages (e.g., Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Shamir et al., 1998; Yukl & Tracey, 1992), our research calls attention to the source and content of these messages as critical forces. We developed and tested a contingency perspective that extends theory and research on ideological messages by differentiating between prosocial and achievement content, and by specifying that beneficiaries tend to be a more inspiring source than leaders of prosocial messages—but not of achievement messages. Rather than assuming that one source is always superior, our study documents the value of adopting a more nuanced, fine-grained perspective on how source effects are content-dependent.

Our results also contribute to theory and research on influence in two noteworthy ways. First, our findings highlight that the effectiveness of inspirational appeals and ideological messages may depend on their source. We introduced beneficiaries as a new source of ideological messages that has received little consideration in existing research on influence. Our findings suggest that ideological messages from these individuals who have directly benefited from employees' work may be especially powerful in enhancing employees' performance. Second, our research specifies suspicion as a key psychological mechanism through which the source of ideological messages affects performance. These findings strengthen the conceptual and empirical basis of our knowledge of the mechanisms underlying ideological message effects, an issue that has received little attention in past research (e.g., Yukl, Kim, & Falbe, 1996).

Limitations and future directions

Our research is subject to a number of limitations that point to avenues for future research. In all three studies, we focused on unknown leaders who hold formal positions of power in the organization's hierarchy. Although this facilitated fair comparisons, it is likely that meaningful interactions between leaders and employees can reduce suspicion about ulterior motives and remove the shadow of doubt, enabling leaders to deliver ideological messages effectively. For example, employees may be more receptive to leaders' messages when individual and organizational levels of trust are high (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001), when employees have high-quality relationships with leaders (Gerstner & Day, 1997), and when leaders have established influence through informal rather than formal mechanisms (Lam & Schaubroeck, 2000). In addition, leaders' reputations may help to buffer against suspicion, and leadership categorization and social identity theories suggest that employees will be more receptive when the message is delivered by an individual who is prototypical of a leadership exemplar (Lord & Maher, 1991) or of the group itself (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Further, in terms of audience effects (e.g., Gardner & Avolio, 1998; Klein & House, 1995; Shamir, 1995), leaders' ideological messages may be more motivating to employees with congruent goals (Colbert, Kristof-Brown, Bradley, & Barrick, 2008), prosocial values (Grant, 2008), and extraverted personalities (Cable & Judge, 2003). In these ways, our findings can only be generalized to ideological messages that are delivered by unknown formal leaders.

Since we only tested suspicion as a single mediating mechanism in Study 2, and did not test a mediating mechanism in Study 3, it will be critical to gain a broader and deeper understanding of additional mechanisms that may help to explain our effects. For example, beneficiaries may capture greater attention because they are a more novel source of information. The act of inviting beneficiaries to deliver prosocial messages may signal leaders' benevolence (concern for others) and integrity (linking words and deeds by connecting with beneficiaries and the organization's impact), which may inspire higher trust in and identification with leaders. Further, it may be the case that beneficiaries' messages place employees in a position of power, highlighting the way that employees can help beneficiaries, while leaders' messages may signal to employees that they lack power. In addition, beneficiaries may motivate greater performance by making the consequences of the task more salient, thus strengthening the links of effort and performance with prosocial outcomes (Grant, 2007, *in press*; Grant et al., 2007). Achievement messages may operate by strengthening employees' perceptions of leaders' commitment to the organization and its goals. On a related note, in Study 3, a significantly larger proportion of participants correctly identified the prosocial message than the achievement message. This may be an artifact of the focus of Study 3 on the healthcare industry, where messages are often prosocial.

Since the company's products were designed to benefit patients, it is not surprising that a sizeable minority of participants saw benefiting patients as a key theme of the message. In fact, this may signify that our study represented a conservative test of source effects for achievement messages: if the message and industry were purely achievement-oriented, with no mention of helping others, would leaders be seen as more knowledgeable, and actually possess an advantage over beneficiaries? In future studies, researchers should independently vary the industry to examine whether our results would replicate in a less mission-driven industry, such as retail or manufacturing.

Researchers should also explore the conditions under which beneficiaries' ideological messages are more and less effective. The length of the message may be an important factor, but we did not systematically vary it in our studies; the same can be said for the age of the speakers. Moreover, it remains to be seen whether beneficiaries' messages are as effective in building external support from funders and stockholders (Chen et al., 2009; Flynn & Staw, 2004) as they are in inspiring employees inside the organization. Finally, source and content effects may vary as a function of employees' motivation and ability (Braverman, 2008; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), and it remains unclear how messages from multiple beneficiaries or leaders—and the (in)consistency between these messages (Ziegler, Diehl, & Rutherford, 2002)—matter.

Practical implications and conclusion

Our research has important practical implications for leaders and managers. Our findings suggest that the responsibility for inspiring employees may not always lie in the words of authority figures. When leaders and managers seek to show employees how their work benefits others, it may be most fruitful to ask beneficiaries to deliver these messages directly. This evidence may be particularly reassuring to leaders who lack charisma or introverted managers who feel uncomfortable speaking in public: rather than stepping outside their comfort zones, they can outsource the task to knowledgeable beneficiaries who can share their own personal experiences. Indeed, leaders and managers in a number of organizations have begun to recognize the advantages of inviting beneficiaries to deliver ideological messages directly. For example, at the medical technology company Medtronic, rather than attempting to convince salespeople that their products protect and promote patient health, leaders invite patients to an annual party to tell their stories directly to salespeople. Observers report that this practice enhances the credibility and emotional impact of ideological messages, creating "defining moments" in which salespeople come to believe in the important purpose that their work serves for the patients who depend on their products. As former CEO Bill George (2003: 89) explains, "As I heard T.J. tell his story that day, my eyes filled with tears. . . I saw the mission come to life. This one young life crystallized what our work at Medtronic was all about." Our findings suggest that one of the best ways for leaders to create these "defining moments" for employees is to leverage beneficiaries' capabilities to communicate credible messages about the impact of the organization's products and services. In a slight departure from traditional leadership recommendations, when leaders are seeking to inspire employees by conveying how their work makes a difference, it may be productive for them to outsource aspects of their communications to beneficiaries.

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