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# The Mission in Sight: How a Leaders' Motivation and Awareness relates to their Followers' Mission Valence

Marcel Lee Mayr

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# **The Mission in Sight: How a Leaders' Motivation and Awareness relates to their Followers' Mission Valence.**

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# **The Mission in Sight: Are Leaders Aware of How Attractive the Organizational Mission is to Their Followers?**

## **Abstract**

The organizational mission can function as a major asset in recruiting and motivating employees in public service organizations. However, it is up to the respective team leaders to encourage their follower's perception of the mission's attractiveness. Therefore, this article examines a leader's awareness of his or her follower's level of mission valence. Based on responses from 86 team leaders and 414 team members, the results of the multilevel analysis indicate that leaders that are more aware of mission valence breed teams that are more receptive of the organizational mission. Moreover, a leader's extrinsic motivation weakens the relationship between leader-perceived and member-perceived mission valence, while intrinsic motivation shows no sign of interaction. In terms of practical implications, the results illustrate that leaders should be encouraged to utilize their awareness to deliberately apply leadership practices that enhance the attractiveness of the mission for their team. Implications for theory include the notion that mission valence can be meaningfully conceptualized as a multilevel phenomenon.

## **Keywords**

mission valence, self-other agreement, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, multilevel analysis, public and nonprofit organization

## **Introduction**

In a recent and extensive review of leadership theories, Dinh and colleagues (2014) found that *neo-charismatic theories* (e.g., transformational and charismatic leadership) received the most attention from scholars (39%). Since the practices of transformational and charismatic leaders are aiming at making employees believe in and identify with the organization's mission (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003; Carter & Greer, 2013), the concept of mission valence is essential in this context (Wright, 2007). Mission valence refers to "an employee's perception of the attractiveness or salience of an organization's purpose or social contribution" (Wright, Moynihan, & Pandey, 2012, p. 206).

Organizations that successfully enhance the mission valence of their workforce are likely to benefit from a range of desirable human resource outcomes. In particular, recent studies provide evidence that mission valence is positively related to employee satisfaction (Wright & Pandey, 2011; Wright et al., 2012), lower turnover-intention (Caillier, 2015) and extra-role behavior (Caillier, 2016). In this regard, leaders are critical in unlocking the benefits of higher perceptions of mission valence through articulating clear and attractive visions of the organizational mission (Wright et al., 2012).

Despite the growing interest related to leadership and employee's mission valence, it remains understudied. More specifically, most research has been conducted in exploring the role of mission valence by relying exclusively on employee responses. However, little research has incorporated the leader's perception in studying mission valence. For example, are leaders aware of and able to predict their team's mission valence? And if this is the case, what drives a leader's perception of his or her team's mission valence? In this sense, Wright and Pandey (2011) have argued that leaders are likely to benefit by understanding and facilitating the conditions that enhance employee perceptions of mission valence. If, however, leaders are generally unaware of the outcomes of their

leadership practices, it becomes difficult to adjust their practices in order to change employee perceptions and behaviors (Tekleab, Sims, Yun, Tesluk, & Cox, 2008; Jacobsen & Andersen, 2015). Therefore, leaders require at least a certain level of awareness of their team's level of mission valence in order to deliberately affect these perceptions and realize the desired outcomes associated with it.

Against this background, the first aim of this article is to determine whether leaders are able to predict their follower's perception of mission valence. In doing so, this article draws from the rich literature on self-other agreement of leadership (Fleenor, Smither, Atwater, Braddy, & Sturm, 2010; Braddy, Gooty, Fleenor, & Yammarino, 2014). The central idea is that a high degree of congruence between leader self-ratings and the ratings of others (e.g., team members) is generally associated with a higher self-awareness of the leader (Fleenor et al., 2010). More self-aware leaders, in turn, are able to utilize this information to change their leadership behavior in a more beneficial way (Tekleab et al. 2008; Ham, Duyar, & Gumus, 2015). Moreover, the simultaneous consideration of leader- and member-perceptions potentially provides a more nuanced and accurate picture of mission valence (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014). To date mission valence has been predominantly treated as an individual-level phenomenon and research methods were limited to single-level analysis (e.g., Caillier, 2016; Wright et al., 2012). However, the present article suggests that mission valence might best be examined at both the individual and team level of analysis. Such an approach has the potential to yield empirical knowledge that bridges multiple levels of the organizational system together (Mathieu & Chen, 2011). Therefore, this study theorizes and tests the relationship between leader- and member-perceived mission valence from a multilevel perspective.

In addition, the second aim is to examine how a leader's individual work motivation (i.e., intrinsic and extrinsic motivation) affects the congruence between leader- and

member-perceptions of mission valence. According to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) the experience and behavior of a leader is greatly shaped by his or her motivational state. This means that a leader's ability to predict the team's mission valence is likely to be dependent on the extent of a leader's intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. Specifically, more intrinsic motivated leaders may place greater value on the mission of the organization and therefore expect similar perceptions of their team when compared to more extrinsically motivated leaders (Wright et al., 2012). As a consequence, it can be expected that a leader's work motivation interacts with his or her perception of team mission valence in explaining member-perceptions of mission valence.

### **Theoretical Background on Mission Valence**

The mission of an organization represents a powerful instrument designed to provide a clear and compelling statement of the purpose and values of the organization (Brown, Carlton, & Yoshioka, 2003; Wright & Pandey, 2011). In their seminal article, Rainey and Steinbauer (1999, 16) argue that “the more engaging, attractive, and worthwhile the mission is to people, the more the agency will be able to attract support from those people, to attract them to join the agency, and to motivate them to perform well”. In this line, Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) first advance the concept of mission valence by drawing on the expectancy theory of work motivation (Locke & Henne, 1986). While the term *valence* can have a positive or negative denotation, the later definition of Wright and colleagues (2012) narrows it down to its positive and inspirational features, which is in line with the extant literature (e.g., Caillier, 2016; Wright & Pandey, 2011). Consequently, the growing number of empirical studies display a range of positive outcomes associated with employees perceiving the organizational mission as more salient and attractive. More specifically, Wright (2007) finds in his initial study that mission valence is

positively related to perceptions of job importance, which is in turn associated with a higher work motivation. In this line, Wright and Pandey (2011) show in their study that mission valence is positively related to job satisfaction and negatively to absenteeism. Additionally, Caillier (2015, 2016) provides further evidence that mission valence is positively associated with job satisfaction as well as extra-role behavior.

Given the positive relationship with desired human resource outcomes, the primary concern is to whether and how leaders can affect their follower's perception of mission valence. In this line, Caillier (2016) provides empirical evidence of a direct relationship between transformational leadership behaviors and employee's perception of mission valence. Moreover, Wright and colleagues (2012) show that transformational leadership is related to mission valence through goal clarity and public service motivation. Taken together, the existing empirical evidence suggests that leaders are able to affect an employee's level of mission valence both through direct and indirect means. However, in order to apply the appropriate leadership practices, leaders have to be first aware of their follower's mission valence or the lack thereof. For example, if leaders overestimate or are simply unconscious of their follower's mission valence, they see no necessity to adjust their leadership behaviors (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992; Ham et al., 2015).

Consequently, only leaders that have a certain level of awareness can deliberately choose the required leadership practices (Jacobsen & Andersen, 2015). Therefore, the next section derives hypotheses in respect to the leader's awareness of mission valence and the potential motivational factors that may interact with these perceptions.

### ***Leader and Team Member Perceptions of Mission Valence***

There is a substantial body of research on the self-other rating agreement in the leadership literature (for a review see Fleenor et al., 2010), which generally argues that the congruence between a leader's self-rating and ratings of others can function as an



indicator of the leader's self-awareness. By drawing on self-awareness theory (Wicklund, 1979), Atwater and Yammarino (1992, 143) have argued that "self-awareness ... stems from the ability to assess other's evaluations of the self, and incorporate those assessments into one's self-evaluation". They reason further that the level of agreement between self- and other observations is particularly relevant for the self-rater's future behavior. Although self-awareness is traditionally analyzed in terms of a leader's personal performance, skills, behavior or traits (Atwater, Wang, Smither, & Fleenor, 2009), the present study adopts a broader view of awareness. In this regard, the leader's awareness is understood as his or her perception of the team's state of mission valence.

As mentioned above, article argues that mission valence can be viewed as an emergent phenomenon and may thus be present at both the individual and team level of analysis. Emergence depicts a bottom-up process whereby social interactions may over time converge on consensual views, which potentially yields a higher level property of the team (Kozlowski & Klein 2000; Kozlowski, Chao, Grand, Braun, & Kuljanin, 2013). Kozlowski and colleagues (2013) distinguish between two forms of emergence, namely composition (i.e., convergent form) and compilation (i.e., divergent form). In this light, mission valence is more likely to be characterized by a compositional type of emergence for the following reasons.

The first reason is that employee perceptions of mission valence are equally affected by characteristics and processes at higher levels of analysis (e.g., leadership), which reduces the variability of individual differences and perceptions (Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). For example, Wright and Pandey (2011) suggested that mission valence is determined at different levels such as goal clarity at the organizational level. The second reason is that convergent interaction dynamics are generally assumed to result in increasing homogeneity on a phenomenon over time (Kozlowski, 2015).

Specifically, team member's interaction and sharing of perceptions over time should align their perceptions and yield a team-level property (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). Moreover, given that the organizational mission does usually not change over time, perceptions are less likely to diverge after sudden changes. Therefore, this article seeks to explain both individual perceptions of mission valence and the degree to which they overlap within the team (Klein, Conn, Smith, & Sorra, 2001; Kozlowski, 2015).

In this regard, since team leaders interact with their followers on a regular basis and often spent considerable time with them (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000), they have the potential to provide a reliable rating of their team's mission valence. For example, through individual evaluations or collective team meetings, leaders are likely to obtain a certain perception of how much the mission matters to their team members. In addition, Caillier (2016) provides empirical evidence that leaders are able to enhance the salience and attractiveness of the mission by utilizing transformational leadership behaviors. Consequently, leadership behaviors are likely to lead to a more homogeneous perception of mission valence among team members. Taken together, through the interaction over time and the deliberate choice of leadership practices, leaders should have a certain awareness of their team's level of mission valence. Therefore, based on the theoretical arguments and prior empirical findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 1:** The leader's perception of the team's mission valence is positively related to their team member's perception of mission valence.

### ***Leader Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation***

Given the fundamental role of motivation in leadership behavior (Barbuto, 2005; Cerasoli, Nicklin, & Ford, 2014), it is likely that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation interact with the leader's judgement of his or her follower's mission valence. While intrinsic motivation

can be understood as “the desire to expend effort based on interest in and enjoyment of the work itself” (Grant 2008, 49), extrinsic motivation depicts “the desire to expend efforts to obtain outcomes external to the work itself, such as rewards and recognition” (Grant 2008, 49). Consequently, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation has different relationships with specific behavioral and attitudinal outcomes (Park & Rainey, 2008). Therefore, depending on the leader’s form of motivation represented in their self-concept, the proposed relationship between leader- and member-perceived mission valence should vary in strength.

More specifically, a leader’s intrinsic motivation is expected to strengthen the positive relationship between leader- and employee perceptions of mission valence. The underlying rationale is that leaders who are more intrinsically motivated are more concerned and sensitive to the intrinsic value of the organizational mission (Barbuto, 2005), which ultimately benefits a leader’s awareness of his or her follower’s mission valence. Such leaders may also actively adopt the values of the mission in their leadership practices and monitor their follower’s reaction. In contrast, leaders with lower intrinsic motivation should be less receptive to their follower’s mission valence, since their effort is not contingent on the work itself and the values it presents (Park & Rainey, 2008). In this line, Wright and colleagues (2012) find that public service motivation, an other-oriented form of motivation, which is positively related to intrinsic motivation (Grant, 2008), can increase an individual’s perception of mission valence. Similarly, Bellé (2013) argues that employees with higher public service motivation care more about doing work that benefits others, thus also being more susceptible for the organizational mission. In this context, it is expected that intrinsic motivation strengthens the leader- and employee perceptions of mission valence. To determine whether leader-

perceived mission valence positively interacts with intrinsic motivation, the following hypothesis is derived:

**Hypothesis 2a:** A leader's intrinsic motivation strengthens the positive relationship between leader- and member-perceived mission valence.

Conversely, leaders who are more extrinsically motivated are expected to be less receptive to the intrinsic value of the organizational mission, which should weaken the relationship between leader- and member-perceived mission valence. More extrinsically motivated leaders have a greater desire for explicit rewards and recognition (Grant, 2008) and thus, might be less interested in the intrinsic reward provided by the mission of the organization. Therefore, such leaders should be less receptive to the signals that indicate their team member's state of mission valence. In this line, scholars have argued that, in general, extrinsic sources of motivation can be detrimental to an employee's intrinsic motivation (Cerasoli et al., 2014; Park & Rainey, 2008). Consequently, leaders with a higher extrinsic motivation are likely to pursue more tangible goals and be less concerned in respect to the intrinsic values inherent to the organizational mission. As a result, such leaders should have greater difficulties to put themselves in the position of their followers, which attenuates their ability to estimate their follower's level of mission valence. In sum, the arguments and evidence presented above lead to the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 2b:** A leader's extrinsic motivation weakens the positive relationship of leader- and member-perceived mission valence.

## **Method**

### *Data Collection and Analytic Strategy*

The data in this article are part of a larger survey data collection that took place between September 2015 and February 2016, which was conducted by the University of (\*\*\*) in Germany. One section of the survey covered leadership behaviors, knowledge management practices, and performance outcomes (\*\*\*), which are not in the scope of this article. Over the survey period, leaders and their followers from ten German public service organizations were invited to participate through a web-based questionnaire. Teams working in public service organizations were invited to participate due to the inherently strong nature of the service- and community-oriented mission (Wright & Pandey, 2010; Wright et al., 2012). Prior research has shown that mission valence is particularly relevant in such settings (Wright & Pandey, 2011). These teams worked in various fields of activities, which is useful for the generalizability of findings (see Appendix A for more details). Leaders and their team members were invited individually via e-mail and responded to separate questionnaires. Respondents participated on a voluntary basis and were promised anonymity. Team membership was either clarified beforehand through the management or through a unique team code.

This procedure resulted in a sample consisting of matched responses from 86 team leaders and 414 of their team members (on average 4.8 responses per team). The slight majority of these leaders were male (51.2%), and most were older than 40 years (73.3%). Team leaders were in a leadership position for averagely 11.6 years and led their followers on average for 4.1 years, which indicates they are well experienced with their team.

## *Measures*

The present article relies on perceptual measurement constructs given that “individual perceptions are a critical determinant of individual behavior in organizations, mediating the relationship between objective characteristics of the work environment and individual responses” (Wright et al., 2012, 209). In this context, employee perceptions of mission valence are expected to vary to a certain extent, since both leaders and employees will have different views on the value and purpose of their organization’s mission (Wright & Pandey, 2011). The measures utilized in this article are previously tested and accepted multi-item constructs adopted from prior studies (see Appendix B). All measures use a 7-point Likert response scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”).

Individual team member perceptions of mission valence are measured through four items adopted from Wright and Pandey (2011). This measure captures an employee’s perception of the extent to which the organization provides a valuable public service as well as the excitement this mission instills in the team member (Wright & Pandey, 2011). An exemplary item is: “This organization provides valuable public service”. The Cronbach’s alpha value for this construct is 0.93, which is well above the recommend threshold of 0.70 (Peterson, 1994). The level of analysis is at the individual level since the referent is the individual. Accordingly, the leader’s perception of their team member’s mission valence is captured through the same four items after changing the referent accordingly (e.g., “My team ...”). Leaders were instructed to take the perspective of their team members and respond to this set of questions. The Cronbach’s alpha value is equally high at 0.91. Leader perceptions of their team’s mission valence are positioned at the team level, because the referent is the team and in order to be able to test the proposed relationships (Richards & Duxbury, 2015).

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are measured through three items respectively, which are adopted from the Motivation at Work Scale (MAWS) (Gagné, Forest, Gilbert, Aubé, Morin, & Malorni, 2010). The MAWS is based on self-determination theory and is designed to measure the variety of motivational aspects to do a particular job (Gagné et al., 2010). A sample item for intrinsic motivation is: “Because I enjoy this work very much”. The according Cronbach’s alpha value is 0.85. An exemplary item for extrinsic motivation is: “Because this job affords me a certain standard of living”. The respective Cronbach’s alpha value is 0.84.

In terms of control variables, the age, gender and tenure on the team of team leaders are included in the subsequent analyses. As for the members of the team, a member’s age, gender, and tenure on the team are included.

### ***Data Analysis and Agreement Indices***

The data analysis is conducted in several steps. First, it is tested whether the individual employee’s perceptions of mission valence meet the required statistical requirements for multilevel analysis. More specifically, the level of interrater reliability (ICC1) and interrater agreement ( $r_{wg(J)}$ ) are calculated to determine if there is sufficient agreement (Kozlowski et al., 2013; LeBreton & Senter, 2008; Willems, 2016). A high agreement between individual team member perceptions of mission valence is a prerequisite condition for testing hypothesis testing. Second, leader ratings of their team’s mission valence are used as an independent variable, to determine whether team leader perceptions are related to their follower perceptions. Third, after establishing the proposed relationship, it is tested whether leader motivation (i.e., intrinsic and extrinsic motivation) interacts with leader-perceptions in explaining member-perceived mission valence.

As mentioned above, in order to justify the use of multilevel modeling for hypothesis testing, it is necessary to determine the interrater reliability and interrater agreement scores (LeBreton & Senter, 2008). Consequently, reliability and agreement tests are conducted to test whether the data supports the a priori defined multilevel structure. In a first step, the intra-class correlation (ICC1) is calculated, which indicates how individual responses are influenced by team membership (Kozlowski et al., 2013). According to LeBreton and Senter (2008) the ICC1 can be interpreted as an effect size that indicates the extent to which an employee's rating is affected by team membership. For employee perceptions of mission valence the computed ICC1 is 0.10, which indicates a "medium effect size" of team membership affecting individual member-perceptions of mission valence (LeBreton & Senter, 2008).

Subsequently, the extent of within-team agreement of member-perceived mission valence is assessed by calculating the  $r_{wg(J)}$  index (Klein et al., 2001; Kozlowski et al., 2013). The  $r_{wg(J)}$  indicates whether the degree to which responses of team members are interchangeable and can range from 0 to 1 (LeBreton & Senter, 2008). The  $r_{wg(J)}$  is obtained by comparing the observed variance in a team to the variance expected if team members would respond randomly (Van Mierlo, Vermunt, & Rutte, 2009). The estimated  $r_{wg(J)}$  for member-perceived mission valence is 0.82 using a uniform null distribution (Biemann, Cole, & Voelpel, 2012) which indicates a strong within-team agreement. This value suggests a strong within-team agreement (LeBreton & Senter, 2008). Taken together, these results emphasize the multilevel data structure and the use of multilevel analyses to test the proposed hypotheses.



## Results

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics of the applied measures at both the team level and individual member level. Leader perceptions of their team's mission valence are slightly lower ( $M = 5.36$ ) than the individual team member perceptions of mission valence ( $M = 5.67$ ). A t-test showed that this difference is significant at a 5% significance level. Results for the leader's intrinsic ( $M = 5.92$ ) and extrinsic motivation ( $M = 3.96$ ) are consistent with prior literature and expectations regarding the relative availability of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards in public service organizations (Lee & Wilkins, 2011; Wright, 2007).

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics.

|  | M    | SD   | Min. | Max.  |
|--|------|------|------|-------|
| <b>Team level variables (N=86)</b>       |      |      |      |       |
| 1. Leader-perceived team mission valence | 5.36 | 1.07 | 1.00 | 7.00  |
| 2. Leader intrinsic motivation           | 5.92 | 1.09 | 1.33 | 7.00  |
| 3. Leader extrinsic motivation           | 3.96 | 1.38 | 1.00 | 6.33  |
| 4. Leader age <sup>a</sup>               | 4.17 | 0.94 | 2.00 | 7.00  |
| 5. Leader gender <sup>b</sup>            | 0.51 | 0.50 | 0.00 | 1.00  |
| 6. Leader tenure on team in years        | 4.10 | 4.64 | 0.08 | 25.00 |
| <b>Member level variables (N=414)</b>    |      |      |      |       |
| 1. Member-perceived mission valence      | 5.67 | 1.18 | 1.00 | 7.00  |
| 2. Member age <sup>a</sup>               | 3.73 | 1.14 | 1.00 | 7.00  |
| 3. Member gender <sup>b</sup>            | 0.35 | 0.48 | 0.00 | 1.00  |
| 4. Member tenure on team in years        | 5.92 | 7.23 | 0.05 | 37.00 |

<sup>a</sup> Age in years: Below 20 = 1; 20-29 = 2; 30-39 = 3; 40-49 = 4; 50-59 = 5; 60-64 = 6; above 64 = 7.

<sup>b</sup> Female = 0; Male = 1.

Subsequently, a correlation analysis is conducted to provide the bivariate correlations for each of the team level measures. As shown in table 2, leader perceptions of their team's mission valence are positively correlated with their intrinsic motivation (0.449), while extrinsic motivation does not show a significant correlation (0.043). Moreover, leader-perceived team mission valence is significantly correlated to their team's aggregated perceptions of mission valence (0.264) (see Appendix C for a scatter plot).

**Table 2.** Bivariate Correlation Analysis.

|  | 1      | 2    | 3     | 4 |
|--|--------|------|-------|---|
| <b>Team-level variables (N=86)</b>               |        |      |       |   |
| 1 Leader-perceived team mission valence          | -      |      |       |   |
| 2 Leader intrinsic motivation                    | .449** | -    |       |   |
| 3 Leader extrinsic motivation                    | .043   | .034 | -     |   |
| 4. Member-perceived mission valence (aggregated) | .264*  | .195 | -.038 | - |

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01.

To test the proposed hypotheses, a series of multilevel models are estimated with member-perceived mission valence as the dependent variable and through using the multilevel software package MLwiN v.2.35 (Rasbash, Charlton, Browne, Healy, & Cameron, 2009). More specifically, a null model is estimated in a first step, the control variables are entered in another step (Model 1), the leader variables including their interaction in the last step (Model 2). The results are displayed in table 3.

**Table 3.** Multilevel Models Predicting Member-Perceived Mission Valence.

| Models:                               | Null Model |      | Model 1  |      | Model 2  |       |
|---------------------------------------|------------|------|----------|------|----------|-------|
|                                       | Estimate   | SE   | Estimate | SE   | Estimate | SE    |
| Intercept                             | 5.659***   | .069 | 4.728*** | .235 | 1.252*** | 1.152 |
| <b>Control variables</b>              |            |      |          |      |          |       |
| Member age                            |            |      | .229***  | .061 | .217***  | .061  |
| Member gender                         |            |      | -.075    | .127 | -.066    | .127  |
| Member tenure                         |            |      | -.015    | .009 | -.014    | .009  |
| Organization type <sup>a</sup>        |            |      | .523***  | .137 | .273     | .189  |
| <b>Leader variables</b>               |            |      |          |      |          |       |
| Leader-perceived mission valence (MV) |            |      |          |      | .582**   | .201  |
| Intrinsic motivation (IM)             |            |      |          |      | .086     | .068  |
| Extrinsic motivation (EM)             |            |      |          |      | -.009    | .048  |
| MV × IM                               |            |      |          |      | .021     | .046  |
| MV × EM                               |            |      |          |      | -.129**  | .048  |
| -2 × log                              | 1312.16    |      | 1160.12  |      | 1143.10  |       |
| Δ-2 × log                             |            |      | 152.04** |      | 17.02**  |       |
| df                                    |            |      | 4        |      | 5        |       |
| Individual level variance             | .913       |      | .961     |      | .969     |       |
| Team level variance                   | .087       |      | .039     |      | .031     |       |

Note. Multilevel analysis based on responses from 86 team leaders and 414 team members.

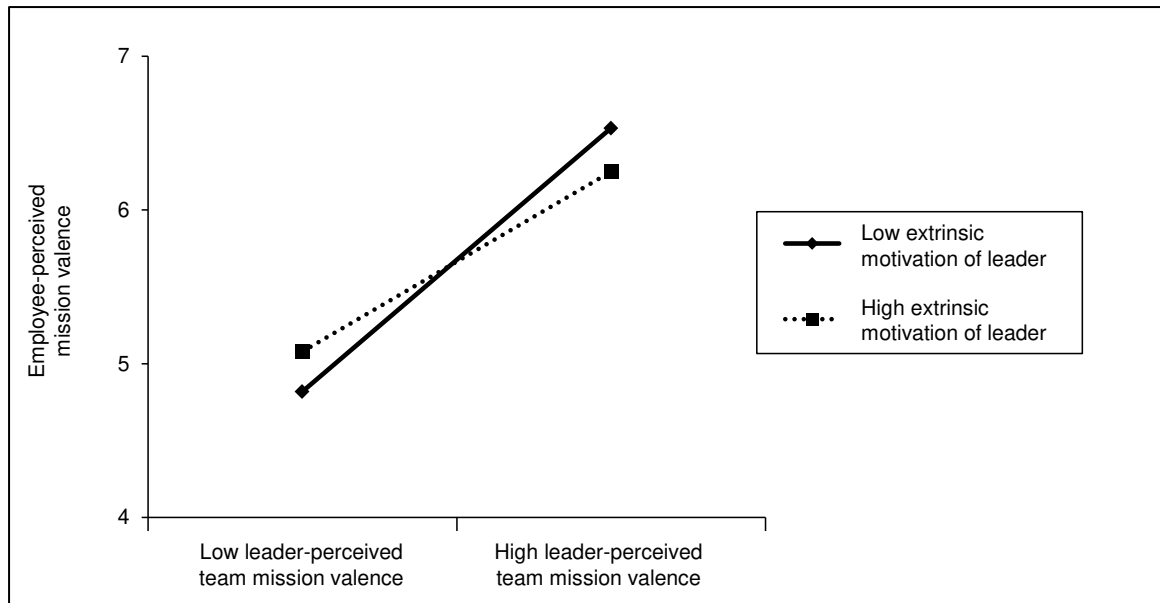
<sup>a</sup> Public organization = 0; Nonprofit organization = 1.

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

Hypothesis 1 states that leader perceptions of their team's mission valence are related to member-perceived mission valence. As shown in Model 2, leader perceptions of their team's mission valence are significantly and positively related to member-perceived mission valence ( $\gamma = .582, SE = .201, p < .01$ ). Moreover, a significant model improvement is achieved based on the change in '-2 $\times$  log' and a conducted chi-square test ( $p < .01$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is supported by the data.

Hypotheses 2a and 2b propose that a leader's work motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) moderates the relationship between leader- and member-ratings of mission valence. As displayed in Model 2, a leader's intrinsic motivation ( $\gamma = .021, SE = .046, n.s.$ ) is not significantly moderating this relationship. Thus, Hypothesis 2a is not supported. However, a leader's extrinsic motivation significantly interacts with his or her perception of the team's mission valence ( $\gamma = -.129, SE = .048, p < .01$ ) in explaining member-perceived mission valence. In other words, a leader's extrinsic motivation weakens a leader's awareness of member-perceived mission valence. As a result, Hypothesis 2b is supported.

Subsequently, in order to obtain a visual representation of this interaction, the simple slopes are plotted at one standard deviation above and below the mean of extrinsic motivation (Aiken & West, 1991). As shown in figure 1, the relationship between leader perceptions of team mission valence and member-perceived mission valence is weaker when leaders are more extrinsically motivated.



**Figure 1.** Interaction of Leader-Perceived Team Mission Valence and Leader Extrinsic Motivation on Employee-Perceived Mission Valence.

When taken together, the results show that leader perceptions of their team’s mission valence are positively related to the actual perceptions of team members. Moreover, this relationship is significantly weaker when leaders are more extrinsically motivated. In terms of control variables, a team member’s age ( $\gamma = .217, SE = .061, p < .001$ ) is also positively related to perceptions of mission valence, while gender and the tenure on the team are not related. As far as the type of organization is concerned, employees who work for a nonprofit organization appear to provide higher ratings of mission valence, as displayed in Model 1, but this relationship does not hold in Model 2.

## Discussion

Through the presented findings, this article extends the literature on leader awareness and mission valence in several important ways. First, based on the multilevel analysis, this article provides empirical evidence that leader ratings of their team’s mission valence are related to the actual perceptions of their team members. Given the rising number of

studies that highlight the role of mission valence to encourage desired outcomes such as job satisfaction and extra-role behaviors (Caillier, 2016; Wright & Pandey, 2011), this article shows that leaders are able to recognize their team's state of mission valence. Along with this awareness comes the ability to deliberately apply leadership practices (e.g., charismatic or transformational leadership behaviors) to raise their member's perception of mission valence. Interestingly, team leader ratings of team mission valence are slightly lower than the ratings provided by their team members. One possible explanation is that, despite being promised anonymity, team member self-ratings might have been more prone to be affected by a social desirability bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). Therefore, future studies may consider additional procedural remedies (Podsakoff et al., 2012) in order to obtain a potentially less-biased estimate of mission valence.

Second, exploring the work motivation of team leaders reveals that extrinsic motivation interacts with a leader's ability to estimate his or her team's mission valence. More extrinsically motivated leaders are less aware of the salience and attractiveness that the organizational mission poses for their followers. As a result, such leaders are less likely to deliberately encourage the development of their team member's mission valence. However, the findings also show that leaders of public service organizations are generally more intrinsically motivated than extrinsically, which corresponds with the expected self-selection of employees and the limited availability of extrinsic motivators (Lee & Wilkins, 2011; Wright, 2007). Conversely, intrinsic motivation appears not to interact with leader perceptions of their team's mission valence. Although no significant interaction is detected, the correlation analysis has shown that a leader's intrinsic motivation is correlated with his or her estimation of the team's mission valence. While intrinsic motivation does not strengthen the relationship between leader- and member-ratings of

mission valence, it might directly contribute to the leader's rating. In this context, other relevant mechanisms such as trust (Carnevale & Wechsler, 1992) as well as public service motives (Houston, 2000) might provide venues for further research.

Third, the conducted aggregation tests indicate that individual perceptions of mission valence are likely to manifest as a team-level property over time. More specifically, the high interrater agreement suggests that perceptions of mission valence may converge when sufficient interaction has occurred (Kozlowski, 2015). At the same time, the obtained intra-class correlation indicates that individual perceptions of mission valence are moderately affected by team membership (LeBreton & Senter, 2008). This finding substantiates the notion of Wright and Pandey (2011), who suggest that mission valence is determined at different levels of analysis. Taken together, the theoretical and empirical arguments provided here even suggest that mission valence is likely to manifest as a team level property if sufficient convergence is achieved. Therefore, scholars interested in team dynamics may treat mission valence as a team level phenomenon in future research. For example, it would be interesting to explore how different leadership styles, are related to a team's level of mission valence.

In terms of practical implications the presented findings suggest that leaders should use their awareness of the team's condition to deliberately apply leadership practices, which are designed to increase team member perceptions of mission valence. Given the high within-team agreement of mission valence, team leaders ought to apply team-oriented leadership practices, such as creating a shared vision and identity for the team (Wang & Howell, 2012), to further enhance these perceptions of mission valence. On the one hand, leaders have to emphasize the attractiveness of the mission. On the other hand, they have to make clear how both the individual and the team contribute to the accomplishment of the mission.

As for human resource managers, the present findings suggest a stronger emphasis on the value of the mission in leadership development initiatives. A leader's awareness of his or her team's level of mission valence does not necessarily mean that leaders will act upon it. Therefore, leadership development programs should convince participating team leaders of the positive workplace outcomes attributed to higher mission valence (e.g., job satisfaction and extra-role behavior). Moreover, given that more extrinsically motivated leaders are considerably less aware of their team's mission valence, human resource managers might consider the extent of extrinsic rewards used in the organization (e.g., pay-for-performance). In particular, since extrinsic rewards arguably undermine intrinsic motivation (Gerhart & Fang, 2014).

The findings presented in this article are not without several limitations. One limitation is related to the transferability of the findings presented here. As mentioned above, the attractiveness or salience of the organizational mission is likely to be particularly relevant for public service organizations, since employees are prone to value intrinsic rewards over extrinsic rewards (Wright, 2007). However, there is a growing body of leadership research that highlights the importance of meaning and social impact of work to inspire employees (e.g., Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015; Grant, 2012). Moreover, in respect to the central role of the organizational mission for certain leadership styles such as transformational leadership, transferring knowledge from the public management may contribute to the field of organizational studies (Vogel, 2014). Therefore, future studies should explore whether these findings can be extended into a for-profit context.

Another limitation is that team leaders provide ratings of the mission valence of their entire team instead of individual ratings per team member. Consequently, if team member ratings of mission valence are varying significantly within a specific team, any

correlation could be misleading. However, due to the strong agreement within the teams of the study sample, individual responses from team members are interchangeable to a certain degree (LeBreton & Senter, 2008). Nonetheless, there is no perfect agreement between team members, which limits the generalizability of these findings. Therefore, future research may consider collecting individual leader-ratings of their team members.

## **Conclusion**

In light of the growing interest of scholars in leadership practices that take advantage of the organizational mission (e.g., Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015; Bolton, Brunnermeier, & Veldkamp, 2013), this article empirically explores whether leaders show awareness of their followers perception of mission valence. The few existing studies that empirically analyze the relationship between leadership behaviors and mission valence treat mission valence as a desirable outcome (Caillier, 2016). This article relies on multi-source data and multilevel analyses to show that leaders, in fact, are to a certain extent aware of their follower's perception of mission valence. Only this awareness in turn enables leaders to make a purposeful choice of leadership practices to further enhance their leadership effectiveness. In this context, a leader's extrinsic motivation inhibits his or her awareness of their follower's state of mission valence. Although most of the research on self-other agreement is related to leadership behaviors and effectiveness (Fleenor et al., 2010), (self-)awareness and agreement are relevant in various team settings in explaining desired outcome variables. In terms of theoretical advancement, this article theorizes and tests mission valence as a multilevel phenomenon, which is likely to offer new insights about the conditions under which mission valence can be fostered. Given the vital role of the organizational mission to motivate and inspire employees, this article seeks to encourage more multilevel approaches in exploring the team and organizational dynamics that shape the positive perceptions of the organizational mission.



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## Appendix A

**Table A1.** Origin and Area of Activity of Participating Teams.

|                 | Organization type | Number of teams | Area of activity                          |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|---|
| Organization 1  | Public            | 3               | Municipal economic authority              |
| Organization 2  | Public            | 3               | Chamber of Trade                          |
| Organization 3  | Public            | 1               | University teaching                       |
| Organization 4  | Public            | 6               | University student service                |
| Organization 5  | Public            | 46              | Municipal employment office               |
| Organization 6  | Nonprofit         | 5               | Youth education initiative                |
| Organization 7  | Nonprofit         | 1               | Integration of handicapped people         |
| Organization 8  | Nonprofit         | 2               | Blood donation service                    |
| Organization 9  | Nonprofit         | 4               | Nursing home care                         |
| Organization 10 | Nonprofit         | 15              | Development and humanitarian organization |
| <b>Total</b>    |                   | <b>86</b>       |   |



## Appendix B

**Table B1.** List of Multi-Item Measures Applied in the Analysis.

| Measures and Authors  | $\alpha$  | CR        | AVE       |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Mission valence (Wright &amp; Pandey, 2011)</b>                                    | .93 (.91) | .95 (.93) | .83 (.78) |
| <i>Respondent: Team member and team leader</i>  |           |           |           |
| 1. This organization provides valuable public service.                                |           |           |           |
| 2. I believe that the priorities of this organization are quite important.            |           |           |           |
| 3. The work of this organization is very significant in the broader scheme of things. |           |           |           |
| 4. For me, the mission of this organization is exciting.                              |           |           |           |
| <b>Intrinsic motivation (Gagné et al., 2010)</b>                                      | .85       | .91       | .77       |
| <i>Respondent: Team leader</i>  |           |           |           |
| 1. Because I enjoy this work very much.   |           |           |           |
| 2. Because I have fun doing my job.   |           |           |           |
| 3. For the moments of pleasure this job brings.                                       |           |           |           |
| <b>Extrinsic motivation (Gagné et al., 2010)</b>                                      | .84       | .84       | .65       |
| <i>Respondent: Team leader</i>  |           |           |           |
| 1. Because this job affords me a certain standard of living.                          |           |           |           |
| 2. Because it allows me to make a lot of money.                                       |           |           |           |
| 3. I do this job for the paycheck.  |           |           |           |

*Note.* Displayed here is a subset of the larger data collection conducted by the University of \*\*\*, which are in the scope of this study. A copy of the full questionnaire can be obtained from the corresponding author upon request. Values in brackets represent the values for leader-perceived mission valence.

## Appendix C

**Figure C1.** Scatter Plot of Leader- and Member-Perceived Mission Valence (Aggregated).

