



Research paper

Matchmaking in organizational change: Does every employee value participatory leadership? An empirical study

Sofie Rogiest^{a,c,*}, Jesse Segers^{a,c}, Arjen van Witteloostuijn^{b,c}

^a Antwerp Management School, Sint-Jacobsmarkt 9-13, 2000 Antwerp, Belgium

^b Tilburg School of Management and Economics, Tilburg, Netherlands

^c University of Antwerp, Antwerp, Belgium



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ABSTRACT

Although leadership is generally considered an important lever to increase commitment during organizational change, empirical research has yet to unravel many of the underlying mechanisms. In this paper, we propose that the impact of participative leadership on affective commitment to change will be contingent on employees' orientation toward leadership. In our empirical study in two police organizations, we find evidence that followers' orientation toward leadership is a useful interacting variable. Participative leadership lowers affective commitment to change for individuals with high dominance orientation. In contrast, participative leadership increases affective commitment to change for employees with high development orientation toward leadership. Implications for theory and practice are discussed.

1. Introduction

The present study analyzes the effect of participative leadership on affective commitment toward two mergers in police organizations. These mergers have been the first large-scale organizational transformations since the reform of the Belgian Police in 2001 (Lemmens, 2011), and are critically followed by the entire Belgian police as they are considered the first of many to come. Due to the retirement of the baby boomers, maintaining the local police forces at their current strength would increase the financial contribution of the Belgian municipalities with, on average, 17.07 percent by 2017, *ceteris paribus* (Van Heddeghem, 2012). As a result, many police forces consider mergers to reduce operational costs. They aim to integrate staff functions such as finance and human resources, and generate synergies through economies of scale for primary functions such as intervention, neighborhood policing and crime investigation.

Studies in the field of organizational change are increasingly focusing on individual workers, as employees have been found to play an essential role in determining the success of organizational change (Donahue & O'Leary, 2012; Oreg et al., 2013). Our study considers affective commitment to change, which previously has been associated with multiple positive outcomes such as supportive behavior during the change, overall job satisfaction and retention (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Neves, 2009; Rafferty & Restubog, 2010). For the police, as for other public organizations, the benefits of affective commitment to

change go beyond the added value to the organization. The positive effects may contribute to people's experiences with government services, and hence might affect the perception of the agency as a legitimate entity (Vigoda-Gadot & Beeri, 2012).

Leadership of change is probably one of the most critical levers to achieve successful organizational transformation (Ahn, Adamson, & Dornbusch, 2004; By, 2005; Schweizer & Patzelt, 2012). Effective leadership practices are required to successfully introduce changes to inspire, motivate and empower those who are affected (Herold, Fedor, Caldwell, & Liu, 2008). Participative leadership during organizational change has generally proved an effective way to increase employees' supportive behavior during organizational change (de Poel, Stoker, & van der Zee, 2012). The strength of the relationship between participation and positive outcomes, however, has been found to differ, depending on the selected moderator (Lines & Selart, 2013; Vakola et al., 2013). Follower perspectives on the relevance and value of leadership have been advanced as a powerful lens to be entered into the equation (Blom & Alvesson, 2014). In the current study, we posit that the impact of participative leadership on affective commitment to change will depend on employees' orientation toward leadership, or the reflection of individuals' beliefs about the nature of leadership (Hiller, 2005). Our results indicate that participative leadership lowers affective commitment to change for individuals with high dominance orientation who associate leadership with authority and a formal leadership position. In contrast, participative leadership enhances affective commitment to

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: sofie.rogiest@uantwerpen.be, sofie.rogiest@ams.ac.be (S. Rogiest), Jesse.segers@uantwerpen.be (J. Segers), Arjen.vanwitteloostuijn@uvt.nl (A. van Witteloostuijn).

change for employees with high development orientation toward leadership who view leadership as a skill that can be developed independent of any formal assignment.

The current research aims to advance the literature in at least three ways. First, although leadership is considered a key variable during organizational change (By, 2005), the growing number of studies that integrate the leadership and organizational change literatures still have to unravel many of the dynamics through which leadership can enhance the success of organizational change (Bommer, Rich, & Rubin, 2005; Herold et al., 2008; Hill et al., 2012; Nemanich & Keller, 2007; Oreg & Berson, 2011). We introduce orientation toward leadership as a novel moderator to offer a more profound understanding of the relationship between participative leadership and affective commitment to change. Second, leadership has primarily been studied from a leader perspective, with followers receiving less attention (Junker & van Dick, 2014). We advance orientation toward leadership as a powerful moderator from a follower-centered leadership perspective. Third, our research is relevant for public organizations. Insight into organizational change in a policing context will not only be interesting for other safety and security organizations, but also for other public administrations as they operate under similar political, legal and budgetary constraints.

In the first part of the article, we develop hypotheses on the moderated effect of participative leadership on affective commitment to change. We introduce three orientations toward leadership as possible moderators: dominance, developmental and shared. Next, we describe our research design, data and measures. The results of our regressions are then presented. Finally, we discuss the implications of our findings for theory and practice, and conclude with reflecting upon the study's limitations.

2. Affective commitment to change and participative leadership

The model in Fig. 1 summarizes the hypotheses central to the current study. Below, we introduce our model, step by step.

In the literature, affective commitment to change is steadily gaining ground as a critical success factor for effective organizational transformation (Meyer & Hamilton, 2013). Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) define commitment to change as “a force (mind-set) that binds an individual to a course of action deemed necessary for the successful implementation of a change initiative.” In their three-component model, which received considerable empirical support (Choi, 2011), they identify affective commitment to change as the “desire to provide support for the change based on a belief in its inherent benefits”, continuance commitment to change as “a recognition that there are costs associated with failure to provide support for the change”, and normative commitment to change as “a sense of obligation to provide support for the change” (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002, p. 475). In our research, we study affective commitment, as this dimension has been found to be the most effective in generating support for the organizational change (Meyer & Hamilton, 2013). Additionally, in a previous study, transformational leadership and change leadership were found to positively impact affective commitment to change (Herold et al., 2008).

Participative leadership has been defined as “shared influence in decision-making by a superior and his or her employees” (Somech, 2003, p.1003). During organizational change, we can translate this to workers having input regarding the proposed change (Wanberg &

Banas, 2000). Participative leadership is generally associated with beneficial outcomes such as increased readiness for change, and greater change acceptance of and higher overall support for the change (Holt, Armenakis, Feild, & Harris, 2007; Oreg, Vakola, & Armenakis, 2011; Russ, 2011; Wanberg & Banas, 2000). These results may be explained by at least three underlying dynamics. First, workers actively involved in designing, planning and executing the change have the opportunity to influence the outcome of the change, which provides them with a sense of agency and control. Second, the interactive process during participation creates the opportunity for voicing concerns and for the consideration of input, which will affect the perception of fairness and the feeling of being respected (Korsgaard, Schweiger, & Sapienza, 1995). Third and last, participation facilitates organizational sense making by triggering employees to change their existing attitudes and beliefs through the interaction with change agents and other change recipients. It challenges individuals to open up and not to interpret communication based on existing predispositions (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005).

However, research results are mixed and several studies fail to find a direct effect of participative leadership (Kim & Schachter, 2015; Lam et al., 2015). Based on follower-centered leadership research (Junker & van Dick, 2014), we posit that individual-level interacting variables are at play and that follower characteristics impact this relation. Previous research demonstrated, for example, the impact of an individual's controllability attributional style, self-efficacy and idiocentrism on the effectiveness of participative leadership (Huang, 2012; Lam et al., 2002). This research suggests that follower psychological predispositions might be used to explain employees' attitudes toward change and leadership.

3. Orientation toward leadership as a potential moderator

There is abundant research of the effect of leaders on followers, but much less attention has been given to the effect of followers on the leadership relation, and ultimately on leadership effectiveness (Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, & Carsten, 2014). Followers will compare leadership with their implicit expectations, and adjust their attitudes and behaviors depending on the outcome of this comparison (Junker & van Dick, 2014). Hence, followers' orientation toward leadership could be a cornerstone to understand the effect of participative leadership. In line with follower-centered research, we propose that followers may react differently to participative leadership because of different cognitive structures. As Singer (1974) stated, “While the necessity for determining a ‘one best’ leadership style for the ‘composite worker’ is understandable from a financial and expediency standpoint, to assume that all workers desire participation opportunities is to lack sensitivity to individual needs – the antithesis of the humanization that ardent proponents of participation advocate.” (p. 359) Several empirical studies underscore this line of thought, and the following three illustrate the findings. First, Neumann (1989) found that 67 per cent of the employees chose not to participate in organizational decision-making processes. Second, Wanberg and Banas (2000) indicate that employees low in resilience do not enjoy opportunities for participation. Third, Maynard et al., 2007 report that some workers even actively resist the implementation of involvement-based processes.

We propose that differences in orientations toward leadership, influencing a person's leadership preferences, will impact the effect of participative leadership on affective commitment to change. According to Hiller (2005), leadership involves processes and actions, and individuals are likely to have differing views about which ones are important, and which ones should characterize leadership. These views or orientations toward leadership, which can be translated into implicit theories or paradigms, will impact the way individuals perceive and recognize leadership. Very much like implicit leadership theories, orientation toward leadership focuses on a framework that exists in the eye of the beholder, which can differ across individuals. But while

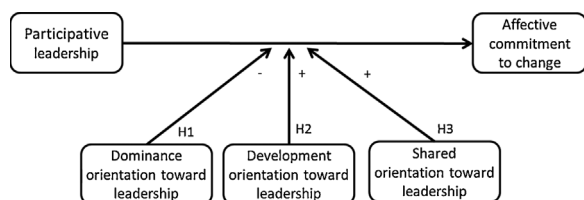


Fig. 1. Research framework.

implicit leadership theory analyzes the question ‘what makes a person a leader’, and translates this into qualities that leaders are expected to possess (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002), orientation toward leadership zooms in on the paradigm behind the leader as a person, asking the question ‘what is leadership?’ The answer to this question is likely to guide leaders’ and followers’ attitudes and behaviors (Engle & Lord, 1997; Hiller, 2005) since individuals know reality in terms of the internal representations they construct (Schyns & Meindl, 2005).

Hiller (2005) develops a system for categorizing these mental frameworks regarding leadership based on Drath’s (2001) orientations toward leadership. According to the classification of Hiller (2005), three fundamentally different worldviews about leadership can be distinguished. First, from a dominance orientation toward leadership approach, leadership is inherently linked to the most powerful person in the group, and is associated with authority and position as formal leader. Next, from a development orientation toward leadership perspective, leadership can be developed (independent of any formal assignment) and is closely related to influencing people as a way to increase and improve leadership skills. Third, from a shared leadership angle, leadership is the property of the group, being a process where group members collectively cooperate and make decisions (Hiller, 2005).

Individuals can change their orientation toward leadership, depending on the challenges they face (Gao, Arnulf, & Henning, 2011). Dominance leadership answers the need for clear guidance, provided by a solid leader. When team members have very different opinions, however, this leader will need to be flexible to embrace these differences, to be capable of influencing team members to commit to a unified course of action. Hence, an orientation toward developmental leadership may emerge, proposing that leadership can evolve based on the interaction between leaders and followers. Very complex situations may not require the integration of different worldviews into an encompassing view though, or this may not be possible. This will stimulate the emergence of a third view: shared leadership. The three orientations toward leadership provide an answer to different leadership challenges, and an individual may consider different views depending on the task at hand. For simple, self-evident problems, dominance leadership may be seen as the appropriate form; for more complex tasks, development or shared leadership may be considered most effective.

Individual experiences and encounters with different challenges will impact personal views on leadership. Organizational members who have worked in relatively stable contexts, where dominance leadership perfectly meets their needs, are expected to have a high dominance orientation toward leadership, and low development and shared leadership orientation. Individuals who were confronted with conflicting worldviews that could not be tackled by a single, appointed leader, however, are expected to develop alternative views on leadership. While they still accept dominance leadership as an appropriate style in stable conditions, they may believe that development or shared leadership is better for complex tasks such as organizational change. Therefore, one might expect that older workers or individuals in a management position will develop higher development and shared orientations toward leadership.

In line with follower-centered research, we posit that the positive effect of participative leadership on affective commitment to change will depend on the expectations of the follower. For instance, congruence between individual’s implicit view on leadership and perceived leadership behavior has been shown to increase job satisfaction (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Hence, we focus on employees’ orientation toward leadership as a moderating variable. We suggest that followers’ mental framework about leadership will define their desired level of involvement, and impact the relationship between participative leadership and affective commitment to change, based on two underlying mechanisms. On the one hand, we expect that the individuals’ preference for structure and clear direction (House, 1996) will negatively impact the

relation between participative leadership and affective commitment to change. On the other hand, we argue that the level of employees’ desire for control (Burger, 1992) and self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1995) will positively impact this relation.

First, individuals with high dominance orientation toward leadership consider providing direction and facing adaptive challenges as the sole responsibility of the formal leader (Hiller, 2005). We expect these employees to prefer directive leadership during change. They favor a delineated change plan with a clear goal set by the leader, and do not want to be involved in decision making (House, 1996). These direction-oriented individuals are likely to resent the lack of focus and clear course of action, inherent to a participatory process, and may become disengaged when requested to contribute (Russ, 2008).

Hypothesis 1. *There is a negative interaction between participative leadership and dominance orientation toward leadership. High participative leadership reduces affective commitment to change for individuals with high dominance orientation toward leadership.*

Second, persons with high development orientation toward leadership believe that leadership can be developed as a skill-set in an interactive process with followers to negotiate influence (Hiller, 2005). They prefer to be involved as this will allow them to influence the leaders’ behavior and the outcome of the change.

Hypothesis 2. *There is a positive interaction between participative leadership and development orientation toward leadership. High participative leadership increases affective commitment to change for individuals with high development orientation toward leadership.*

Third, employees with high shared orientation toward leadership (Hiller, 2005) move away from the idea of a leader, rather recognizing leadership as a collective process. Every person in the team will be involved in the leadership process, implying that participation in decision making is self-evident. Shared leadership enables individuals to take initiative and express one’s abilities, while functioning in a team. As such, shared leadership answers their need for autonomy, competence and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1995). We expect these employees, too, to report higher affective commitment to change when called upon.

Hypothesis 3. *There is a positive interaction between participative leadership and shared orientation toward leadership. High participative leadership increases affective commitment to change for individuals with high shared orientation toward leadership.*

4. Method

4.1. Research context

This study tests our hypotheses by collecting data through an employee survey in two different police organizations, both being the result of a merger seven and nine months prior to the survey, respectively. The first police force (158) is at service of the population, whereas the second force (20 employees) primarily delivers support to other police forces.

The first police force (158 employees) is the result of a merger between two geographically adjacent police areas, and entails a re-organization of the hierarchical structure as well as changes in individual responsibilities in all ranks. Of the 158 distributed surveys, 116 were returned completed, giving a 73.4 per cent response rate. In the second police organization, teams were combined and processes optimized. All teams moved to a central location and worked with new colleagues. Of the 20 distributed questionnaires, 18 were returned completed, producing a 90 per cent response rate. In both cases, the change was introduced by the highest-ranking officer in the police force; hence, top management support for the change was assured. The day-to-day change management was in the hands of a staff member reporting directly to the leading officer (first organization) or of the

leading officer himself (second organization). They can be considered as change managers, even though they did not officially bear the title. In both entities, change management was concerned with employee communication and involvement. Discussion sessions were organized on a regular basis, and every employee could share his or her personal expectations in individual sessions with the change manager.

Participants gave their opinion on different aspects of the change. First, they described the impact on their work in an open-ended question. Next, the perceived change impact, participative leadership, and quality of the change communication were inquired through closed-ended questions. Additionally, they responded to items about their orientation toward leadership. The survey was distributed in name of a major academic institution, and confidentiality was assured. Of the 178 distributed surveys in the two organizations, 134 were returned completed. The average participant was male (65.7%), did not hold a management position (78.5%), was younger than 45 years (61.7%), and worked longer than 10 years in the organization (57.4%). Based on a comparison of the gender, age, and managerial level the respondents, the sample is representative for the organizational population at large (N = 178).

4.2. Analyses

Several precautions were taken to reduce common-method variance, such as using multiple end-points for Likert scales, randomizing items, and including reversed items. The risk of common-method variance is lower in moderation models since respondents are unlikely to be guided by a mental model that correctly reflects the complex theorized relationships. To confirm this presumption, we checked *ex post* for common-method variance bias through the calculation of Harman’s one-factor test (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). No evidence for common-method variance was found. The exploratory factor analysis revealed eight factors, and the first factor only explained 23.40 per cent of the variance.

4.3. Measures

The questions were translated in the respondents’ native language (Dutch) by one of the publishing authors, and translated back into English by an independent researcher in an iterative process, to fine-tune the items. Before data collection, we checked the clarity of all items using a semi-structured interview with a member of one of the target organizations. Unless specified, all items regarding individual-level variables are rated on a seven-point scale, varying from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

4.3.1. Affective commitment to change

Affective commitment to change was measured using the scale developed by Herscovitch and Meyer (2002). Respondents indicated their

degree of agreement on six statements. A sample item for this measure is ‘I believe in the value of this change’. A Cronbach’s alpha of 0.92 indicates that the scale is very reliable (see Table 1).

4.3.2. Participative leadership

We measured participative leadership with three items based on the work of Wanberg and Banas (2000). Employees responded to three statements on their degree of participation during the change process. As such, we measured participatory leadership from the perspective of the follower. A sample item for this measure is: “I have exerted control over the changes that have been proposed and that are occurring”. Cronbach’s alpha is 0.82. Participatory leadership has been measured in different ways such as Vroom (1959) frequency at which a leader displays a participative leadership style (Somech, 2003), Arnold et al. (2000) Empowering Leadership Questionnaire (Huang, 2012), and the level of delegation and perceived empowerment (Kim & Schachter, 2015). We choose to measure perceived behavior, as this reflects the translation of the intended leadership behavior onto the work floor.

4.3.3. Orientation toward leadership

Three orientation toward leadership scales, developed by Hiller (2005), were used. The respondents were presented with sixteen randomized statements measuring their dominance orientation toward leadership (4 statements), development orientation (4 statements) and shared orientation (8 statements). They were asked to which degree they agreed with the statements. Example items are: “Leadership and power are pretty much the same thing” (dominance), “Skills and abilities for leadership can be developed” (development) and “Leadership is the responsibility of everybody in a group” (shared). Cronbach’s alpha is 0.68 for development orientation toward leadership, 0.69 for dominance orientation toward leadership, and 0.83 for shared orientation toward leadership. As these reliabilities are above the threshold of 0.6, they are considered acceptable (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998).

4.3.4. Control variables

First, we controlled for quality change communication, which was measured using an adapted scale originally developed by Miller, Johnson, and Grau (1994). A sample item of the four-item scale is: “The information provided to me has adequately answered my questions about the changes” (α = .89). As participative leadership and quality change communication previously have been considered together as aspects of procedural fairness during organizational change (Caldwell, Herold, & Fedor, 2004), we conducted an explorative factor analysis on these seven items, using principal axis factoring with varimax rotation (see Appendix). This resulted in two factors, accounting for 75.50 per cent of the variance. The items assessing participative leadership load on the first factor (minimum factor loading = 0.79), and the items measuring quality change communication load on the second factor

Table 1
Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and intercorrelations.

| | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. Change impact | 3.24 | 1.46 | (.80) | | | | | | |
| 2. Quality change comm. | 4.05 | 1.60 | .35** | (.89) | | | | | |
| 3. Participative leadership | 2.96 | 1.59 | .30** | .40** | (.82) | | | | |
| 4. Dominance OTL* | 3.38 | 1.14 | −0.02 | 0.08 | −0.06 | (.69) | | | |
| 5. Development OTL* | 5.02 | 0.98 | .26** | 0.15 | 0.14 | −0.05 | (.68) | | |
| 6. Shared OTL* | 4.54 | 0.97 | −0.07 | −0.04 | −0.08 | −0.08 | .18* | (.83) | |
| 7. Affective commitment to change | 3.36 | 1.74 | .56** | .44** | .43** | −0.01 | .25** | −0.08 | (.92) |

* OTL: orientation toward leadership.

Note. Alpha coefficients are presented on the diagonal in parentheses.

* p < 0.05.

** p < 0.01.

(minimum factor loading = 0.82). None of the items had a factor loading above 0.40 across the two factors (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).¹

Next, we controlled for the perceived change impact, using the four-item consequence of the change scale ($\alpha = 0.80$) developed by Fedor, Caldwell, and Herold (2006). A sample item is: “This change has made my unit less effective” (reverse coded). Ratings are on a five-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Finally, we included age, gender, management position and tenure, given that previous research reports significant relationships with attitudes toward change (Oreg, 2006; Vakola et al., 2013).

5. Results

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, correlations and alphas for the variables. The correlations indicate that employees are more committed to the change when they perceive the change impact as beneficial ($r = 0.56, p < 0.01$). Additionally, quality change communication ($r = .44, p < 0.01$) and participative leadership ($r = 0.43, p < 0.01$) are positively related to affective commitment to change. Last, higher development orientation toward leadership ($r = 0.25, p < 0.01$) is associated with increased affective commitment to change.

The hypotheses are tested using moderated ordinary least squares regression analysis. For each model, we checked the assumptions of linearity of the relationships between independent and dependent variables, independence of the errors, homoscedasticity of the errors, and normality of the error distribution. No significant departures from these assumptions were found, nor did we find any influential outliers.

In each model (see Table 2), the demographic variables gender, age, organizational tenure and managerial position,² and the control variables organization, perceived change impact and quality change communication are entered first (Model 0), followed by participative leadership (Model 1), participative leadership and the three orientations toward leadership (Model 2), and the interaction effects between participation and orientations toward leadership (Model 3). The adjusted R² ranges between 0.47 and 0.55, indicating a good fit for the data.

We find evidence for Hypotheses 1 and 2. Dominance orientation toward leadership negatively moderates the relationship between participative leadership and affective commitment to change ($\beta = -0.49, p < 0.05$). In contrast, the interaction between participative leadership and development orientation toward leadership positively impacts affective commitment to change ($\beta = 1.23, p < 0.01$). Hypothesis 3 is not supported: no interaction between shared orientation toward leadership and participative leadership is found. First, the interaction effect of participative leadership and dominance orientation toward leadership on affective commitment to change (Hypothesis 1) is illustrated in Fig. 2A. The conditional effect or simple slope of participative leadership for employees is depicted at both extremes of dominance orientation toward leadership, using the estimated coefficients from the model. The result shows a negative interaction of participative leadership with dominance orientation toward leadership.

Additionally, we formally probed this interaction by using the Johnson–Neyman technique (Bauer & Curran, 2005; Hayes, 2012), which mathematically derives the regions of significance for the conditional effect of dominance orientation toward leadership. We define the values within the range of the moderator, in which the association between participative leadership and change commitment is

Table 2 Stepwise linear regression analysis predicting affective commitment to change (standardized regression coefficients).

| Variable | Model 0 | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 ^a |
|---|---------|---------|---------|----------------------|
| <i>Step 1</i> | | | | |
| Organization | .26** | .24** | .25** | .24** |
| Gender | −0.14* | −0.13 | −0.14 | −0.17* |
| Age | −0.08 | −0.10 | −0.12 | −0.14 |
| Tenure | −0.18* | −0.17* | −0.15 | −0.14 |
| Management position | .18* | 0.14 | 0.13 | 0.09 |
| Change impact | .40** | .36** | .35** | .34** |
| Quality change comm. | .29** | .26** | .24** | .21* |
| Dominance orientation toward leadership | | | 0.07 | .34* |
| Development orientation toward leadership | | | 0.06 | −0.25* |
| Shared orientation toward leadership | | | 0.00 | 0.08 |
| <i>Step 2</i> | | | | |
| Participative leadership | | 0.13 | 0.15 | −0.27 |
| Participation x dominance orientation | | | | −0.49* |
| Participation x development orientation | | | | 1.23** |
| Participation x shared orientation | | | | −0.27 |
| Overall model F | 17.50** | 15.78** | 11.12** | 11.04** |
| R ² | 0.53 | 0.54 | 0.52 | 0.61 |
| Adjusted R ² | 0.50 | 0.51 | 0.47 | 0.55 |
| R ² Change | | 0.01 | 0.03 | .05** |

For organization, 1 = largest organization and 2 = smaller organization. For gender, 0 = male and 1 = female. For age, 1 = < 25y, 2 = 26y – 35y, 3 = 36y – 45y, 4 = 46y – 55y and 5 = > 55y. For organizational tenure, 0 = < 10y and 1 = > 10y. For management position, 0 = no and 1 = yes.

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.

^a The pattern is similar if the interaction terms are introduced separately.

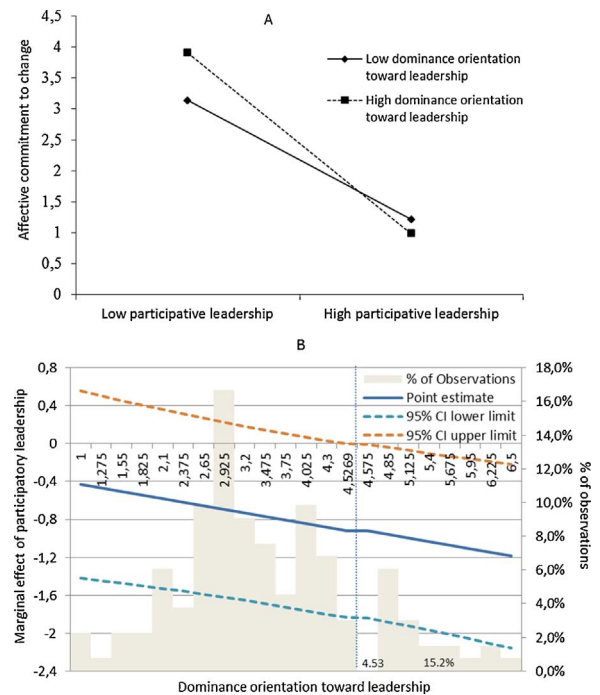


Fig. 2. Change commitment as a function of participative leadership and dominance orientation toward leadership (A) and Johnson-Neyman region of significance for the conditional effect of participative leadership at values of dominance orientation toward leadership (B).

¹ The high factor loadings of the items might indicate multicollinearity. All bilateral correlations are below 0.79, however. We therefore we used all items in the analyses. Additional robustness checks in AMOS, enabling covariance between quality change communication and employee participation, showed that a two-factor structure was indeed appropriate. Detailed analyses are available on request.

² Robustness checks including education and rank as additional demographical control variables did not change the hypothesized relations. These robustness checks are available upon request.

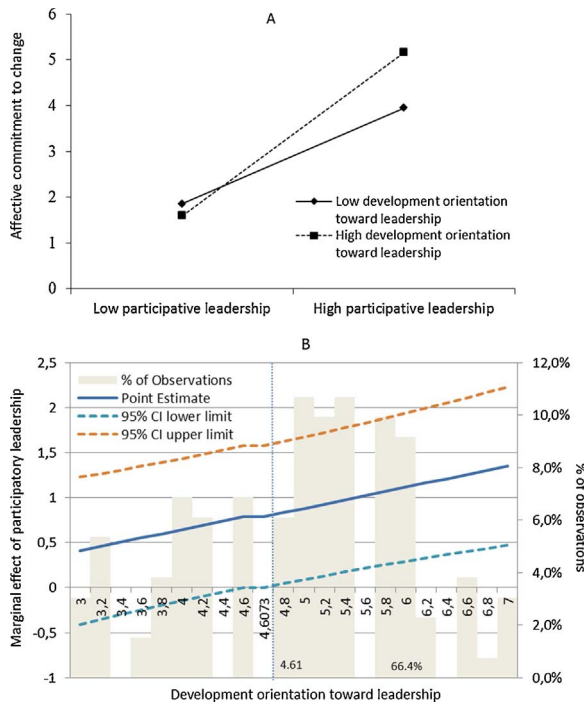


Fig. 3. Change commitment as a function of participative leadership and development orientation toward leadership (A) and Johnson-Neyman region of significance for the conditional effect of participative leadership at values of development orientation toward leadership (B).

statistically different from zero. Fig. 2B shows the coefficient estimates of participative leadership (y-axis) over the range of values of dominance orientation toward leadership (x-axis) in our sample along with 95 per cent bootstrap confidence intervals. The conditional effect of participative leadership is significant when both confidence interval lines lie above or below zero. For our sample, the marginal effect of participative leadership on affective commitment to change turns significantly negative when individuals report a dominance orientation toward leadership above 4.53 on a seven-point scale (15.2% of observations). Beyond this threshold, the higher an employee's dominance orientation, the more participative leadership will reduce affective commitment to change.

Second, the interaction between participative leadership and development orientation toward leadership positively impacts affective commitment to change (Hypothesis 2), as depicted in Fig. 3A. When formally probing this interaction using the Johnson-Neyman technique (Bauer & Curran, 2005; Hayes, 2012), the conditional effect of participative leadership is positive for individuals reporting a development orientation toward leadership above 4.61 on a seven-point scale (66.4% of observations) (see Fig. 3B). Beyond this level, participative leadership will increase affective commitment to change, and this effect will be larger when employees report higher development orientation toward leadership.

6. Discussion, and theoretical and practical implications

Although participative leadership has been a popular subject in the management literature (Lam et al., 2015), research on the relation with organizational outcomes does not reach a consensus. In our study, we propose that there are moderation effects at play. Findings reveal that the impact of participative leadership on affective commitment to change depends on followers' orientation toward leadership. Two of the three hypothesized interaction effects are significant. Participative leadership reduces affective commitment to change for individuals with high dominance orientation toward leadership, and contributes to

affective commitment to change for individuals with high development orientation toward leadership. Overall, our findings show that leadership and followership are inseparably linked, which was already stated by Burns, 1978. Our results demonstrate that participative leadership during organizational change interacts with followers' fundamental views about leadership. We find a distinct difference between workers who regard leadership to be the sole responsibility of the leader, and employees who consider that leadership can be developed in an interactive process of negotiating influence.

Our results do not indicate a positive interaction effect of shared orientation toward leadership, however. A possible reason for these non-findings is that the distinction between leaders and followers becomes blurred and even obsolete with shared leadership, as individuals can take up both roles at different points in time (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Participative leadership, however, departs from the assumption that there is a single leader who shares decision power with followers. Hence, both variables have their origin in different mental models. The perceived impact of employees on the outcome of the change may be unrelated to their view on their orientation toward sharing leadership.

Based on our findings, organizations could be advised, in the short run, to consider their workforce orientation toward leadership when planning organizational change as developing a new view on leadership is a difficult endeavor (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). When dominance orientation toward leadership is leading in the organization, the possible loss in affective commitment to change in the organization could outscore the benefits of employee participation. As increased participation also induces supplementary costs such as a lengthier process, reduced control over the outcome, and (management) time spent on the negotiating process (Ashmos, Duchon, McDaniel, & Huonker, 2002), organizational change leaders might opt for a dominance leadership style. This could be the case for public organizations with a bureaucratic structure in which the dominance leadership paradigm has been enforced for decades. Employees, accustomed to this leadership, could very well resist participatory leadership, which would undermine the benefits and turn dominance leadership into the better option.

In the long run, however, organizational leaders interested in maximizing participation in decision making during change may want to develop workers' development orientation toward leadership, to secure affective commitment to change and reap the benefits of shared problem solving (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). As participative leadership offers a range of potential benefits, including increased quality of decisions, employee motivation and commitment (Somech, 2003), organizations may do well to invest in developing employees' orientation toward leadership. During leadership development programs, the different leadership mental models could be explained, and considered in view of the different organizational contexts. In relatively stable organizational contexts, dominance leadership might be most effective; in more complex and volatile environments, developmental or shared leadership could be more appropriate. As implicit mental frameworks tend to persist over time, a planned intervention may be required to alter employees' orientation toward leadership (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004).

Additionally, organizational leaders should be aware of their own orientation toward leadership, as this will impact their leadership behavior and their perception of appropriate leadership in the organization (Andrew, Jeffery, & Christopher, 2015). As developing employees' orientation toward leadership can be a costly endeavor, special efforts could be invested in the recruitment process to ensure that new employees have a high developmental orientation toward leadership. In the long run, this will foster joint decision making, and will improve efficiency and efficacy in the organization without additional costs. This is especially relevant in the public sector, where budgetary cuts are impacting daily operations. Additionally, as public organizations are frequently confronted with organizational transformations, they would quickly reap the benefits from the fruitful interaction between participative leadership and high developmental orientation toward

leadership.

Based on our findings, orientation toward leadership is a valuable addition to follower-centered leadership research. We suggest that future research should include orientation toward leadership in the quest for a better understanding of the impact of leadership at the individual level. Additionally, it would be interesting to study participatory leadership in teams with dissonant members' leadership orientation. The impact and acceptance of participatory leadership might differ as the interaction between team members will add an extra dimension. Adding organizational climate as a variable at the organizational level, or self-efficacy as a variable at the individual level, could also provide relevant insights.

7. Study limitations

The current study is based on cross-sectional data, and causal relations should be interpreted with care as they are deduced from theory rather than based on empirical findings. Additional longitudinal research is needed to confirm the direction of the relationship between participative leadership and affective commitment to change. Moreover, the use of self-reported data from a single survey raises the concern of common-method bias. Although several *ex ante* measures were taken to reduce this risk and the Harman single factor test pro-

duced a multiple factor solution, this risk cannot be ruled out. Additionally, moderation effects were estimated, which reduces the likelihood that individual respondents were guided by a mental model that correctly reflects the theorized relationships. Still, some care should be taken in interpreting the results of these analyses. Third, our study was limited to mergers in two different police organizations, which provides a uniform context but which raises concerns regarding external validity. Hence, our design should be replicated in other sectors to check for generalizability.

We believe that this study offers a better insight into the impact of participative leadership during organizational change, despite its limitations. It highlights the importance of follower mindsets to gain a better understanding of the underlying mechanisms through which participative leadership impacts attitudes toward change. Additionally, it introduces orientation toward leadership as a valuable concept to increase our understanding of the interaction between leadership practices and individuals' expectations during change.

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Appendix A

See Table A1

Table A1
Items comprising variables and results of principal component analysis (varimax rotation).

| | I | II |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| I. Change communication (adapted from Miller et al., 1994) | | |
| 1. The information provided to me about the changes has been timely | 0.79 | 0.07 |
| 1. The information provided to me about the changes has been useful | 0.87 | 0.22 |
| 1. The information provided to me has adequately answered my questions about the changes | 0.88 | 0.20 |
| 1. I have received adequate information about the forthcoming changes | 0.87 | 0.25 |
| II. Participative leadership (adapted from Wanberg & Banas, 2000) | | |
| 1. I participated in the implementation of the changes that have been proposed and that are occurring | 0.17 | 0.83 |
| 1. I have exerted control over the changes that have been proposed and that are occurring | 0.14 | 0.88 |
| 1. I have given input for the decisions being made about the future of the organization | 0.20 | 0.82 |

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