

**Future organizational identification: Visionary leadership gives me foresight to identify
with my organization in the future**

Ting Wang¹, Wing Lam², Ziguang Chen³, Qionglei Yu⁴, Xiaowei Geng⁵

¹School of Economics and Management, Southwest Petroleum University, Chengdu, China

²Alliance Manchester Business School, The University of Manchester, Manchester, UK

³Derby Business School, University of Derby, Derby, UK

⁴Newcastle University Business School, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

⁵Department of Psychology, Hangzhou Normal University, Hangzhou, China

Correspondence

Ting Wang, School of Economics and Management, Southwest Petroleum University,
Chengdu, China; E-mail address: t-wang@163.com

Acknowledgments

This research is supported by Sichuan Provincial Social Sciences Project, China (SC22B013), China Scholarship Council (201908515163), and by The Distinguished Scholar Program Supported by the Special Fund for Humanities and Social Sciences, Southwest Petroleum University, China (2018RW006).

**Future organizational identification: Visionary leadership gives me foresight to identify
with my organization in the future**

Abstract

This research introduces the concept of future organizational identification (FOI), an extension of organizational identification (OI) that emphasizes its forward-looking aspect. FOI refers to an individual's projection of their self-definition based on the continuity of their organizational membership. Drawing on construal level theory (CLT) and a future-oriented approach, this research investigates how visionary leadership, which offers vision communication and vision of continuity, may enhance followers' FOI through future focus. Study 1, comprising Studies 1a and 1b, validates the measurement of FOI in workplace contexts. With a three-wave, time-lagged investigation, Study 2 demonstrates that leaders' vision communication fosters followers' FOI by promoting future focus, and vision of continuity positively moderates this mediation effect. These findings advance literature on organizational identification, visionary leadership, and CLT. We conclude by discussing the theoretical and practical implications of our findings and proposing directions for future research.

Keywords: future organizational identification; construal level theory; vision communication; vision of continuity; future focus

1. Introduction

In organizational settings, organizational identification (OI)—“a specific form of social identification where the individual defines him or herself in terms of their membership in a particular organization” Mael and Ashforth (1992, p. 105)—is fundamental to how members define themselves (Ashforth et al., 2008; Cooper & Thatcher, 2010). It offers a sense of belonging that shapes members’ individual self-concept, with influences on their organizational attitudes, motivations, and behaviors (Ashforth et al., 2008). Various research into existing OI reflects members’ sense of identification at the present moment, an emphasis that tends to limit understanding of how employees might envision their future relationship with the organization. Yet people do not perceive themselves solely according to their current circumstances; they also consider their aspirations, expectations, and potential evolution in the future (Markus & Nurius, 1986), as crucial aspects of their self-representations. As Van Knippenberg et al. (2004, p. 828) put it, “there is a future-oriented aspect to self-conception,” such that the self is not confined to the present but rather extends into anticipated futures.

In organizational contexts, employees can imagine their future in various ways, such as anticipating the realization of their personal aspirations and hopes (Strauss et al., 2012) or cultivating relationships (Morandin et al., 2021). Such future-oriented aspects can motivate employees. Envisioning future achievements of personal aspirations can drive proactive career behaviors; imagining future social relationships can enhance social adjustment (Morandin et al., 2021; Strauss et al., 2012). Therefore, we consider it relevant to address the future when seeking to understand how employees develop a sense of identification with their organizations. Recognizing this gap in the existing OI literature, our study proposes a future-oriented perspective of OI—what we term future organizational identification (FOI).

We pursue three main research objectives to address this gap. First, people strive to integrate their current and future selves (Hershfield, 2011; Sedikides et al., 2023), such that

they likely use their present organizational membership as a foundation for developing their future OI, which prompts us to propose extending the concept of OI to FOI. Building on foundational work by Mael and Ashforth (1992), we define FOI as a forward-looking extension of OI, characterized by individual projections of self-definitions, based on the perceived continuity of their organizational membership.

Second, to provide a comprehensive view of FOI, we explore which factors might facilitate it in workplaces. To clarify this forward-looking aspect of OI, we examine both (1) whether an employee's future time perspective—such as future focus (Kooij et al., 2018; Levasseur et al., 2020; Shipp et al., 2009; Zhang et al., 2016)—enables FOI development and (2) which organizational factors might foster such a future-oriented mindset. In particular, we leverage construal level theory (CLT) to predict that visionary leadership, manifested as vision communication, might promote FOI by enhancing employees' future focus. If leaders' vision communication, as a high-level construal construct (Berson & Halevy, 2014), can encourage followers to adopt a future-focused perspective, it may effectively foster FOI.

Third, the effectiveness of vision communication depends on whether it conveys a sense of continuity to followers, such that it offers a vision of continuity (Venus et al., 2019b). Therefore, we test for potential moderating roles of vision of continuity, which represents the specific "content" of leaders' vision (Stam et al., 2014). We anticipate that vision of continuity positively moderates the indirect effect of vision communication on FOI, through future focus. Figure 1 contains the conceptual model illustrating these relationships.

-- Figure 1 about here --

This study makes four key contributions to literature. First, inspired by research on future-oriented self-definitions in the workplace (Morandin et al., 2021; Strauss et al., 2012; van Knippenberg et al., 2004) and people's preference to maintain continuity between their present and future states (Hershfield, 2011; Sedikides et al., 2023), we extend the concept of

OI by introducing its forward-looking aspect—FOI. In so doing, we seek to shift the scholarly focus from static, present-centered studies of OI to a future-oriented perspective that can establish a more comprehensive description of how employees perceive their belonging and membership, not just at a fixed moment in time but as a continual projection of their organizational membership.

Second, with this pioneering effort to apply CLT to understand how visionary leadership can shape followers' future time perspective, we clarify how vision communication, as a high-level construal (Berson & Halevy, 2014), promotes future-focused thinking among followers and thereby fosters FOI. Previous research that employs CLT in leadership studies mainly addresses *leaders'* construal level and future time perspective as antecedents of vision-based leadership (e.g., Venus et al., 2019a; Zhang et al., 2014). As an extension, we reveal how visionary leadership shapes *followers'* outlooks and specify mechanisms leaders can use to inspire followers to envision their long-term membership in the organization.

Third, prior literature on visionary leadership and OI acknowledges that vision-based leadership, manifested as an articulation of the collective's future, can motivate followers to form OI (Epitropaki et al., 2017; Kark et al., 2003; Wu et al., 2010). We extend this line of research by demonstrating that visionary leadership also influences followers' future-oriented identification with their organization (i.e., FOI) by enhancing their future focus. This insight helps demonstrate that visionary leadership can go beyond creating immediate sense of belonging to the organization and foster identification with the organization that looks toward the future.

Fourth, we delineate a moderating role of vision of continuity for promoting followers' future focus and FOI. Specifically, by establishing that vision of continuity moderates the impact of vision communication on FOI through future focus, this study extends Venus et

al.'s (2019b) considerations of vision of continuity and reinforces the idea that "vision communication implies the existence of vision content" (Stam et al., 2014, p. 1173). We address calls for investigations of how leaders' vision content and communication strategies influence their followers (e.g., Berson et al., 2016; Kohles et al., 2012). By highlighting the importance of conveying a sense of continuity, our study also provides actionable insights for leaders seeking to inspire and align their teams in a feeling of sustained organizational membership.

2. Literature and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Future Organizational Identification

Employees' self-concept in the workplace can be defined in terms of the collectives to which they belong in the workplace, a phenomenon theorized as social identification in organizational contexts (Ashforth et al., 2008; Cooper & Thatcher, 2010). As a specific form of social identification, OI derives from employees' organizational membership (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). While OI is typically understood from a present-focused standpoint, employees' self-concept can also be future-oriented, shaped by their personal hopes and aspirations (Strauss et al., 2012) as well as their anticipated interpersonal relationships within the workplace (Morandin et al., 2021). Despite this potential, to the best of our knowledge, OI literature has not accounted sufficiently for people's tendency to connect their current and future states, to attain future self-continuity (Hershfield, 2011; Sedikides et al., 2023). In organizational settings, this tendency may lead employees to project their current self-definition, which is based on their organizational membership, into their future, reflecting their anticipated identification with their organization.

Building on foundational insights into OI (Mael & Ashforth, 1992) and individuals' propensity to maintain self-continuity between their present state and future state (Hershfield, 2011; Sedikides et al., 2023), we introduce the FOI concept. FOI, representing the forward-

looking aspect of OI, is defined as individuals' projection of their self-definition based on the continuity of their organizational membership. FOI encompasses individuals' expectations and aspirations regarding the continuity of their current organizational membership.

Considering that OI, as the foundation of FOI, is associated with positive evaluations of the organization (Ashforth et al., 2008), we propose that the positive association extends to FOI, such that it reflects how employees value their current organizational membership and aspire to integrate that membership into their future. To attain such integration, they project a sense of belonging and alignment with the organization into the future, which implies their dedication to sustained identification. For example, if Charlie, an employee of Company A, envisions their future at work, they likely project their current sense of belonging to Company A into the future and imagine themselves as a continuing member of the organization. That is, Charlie's present OI becomes a forward-looking anticipation of their continued organizational membership in Company A, or FOI.

2.2 Construal Level and Temporal Distance

According to CLT, construal level reflects the representation of objects and events through abstraction; psychological distance (e.g., temporal distance) is one's perception of the degree to which objects and events are distant from the self (Trope & Liberman, 2010). CLT posits that psychological distance is associated with construal level (Trope & Liberman, 2010): the greater the distance (e.g., temporal distance), the higher the construal level and vice versa. Notably, CLT has been applied previously in visionary leadership research (Berson & Halevy, 2014; Venus et al., 2019a; Zhang et al., 2014). We adhere to CLT's premise that construal level and temporal distance, or future time perspective, are linked to ground the ensuing rationale regarding vision communication's influence (conveying high construal level information; Berson & Halevy, 2014) on future focus.

2.3 Visionary Leadership: Communication and Content

Visionary leadership is “the ability to create and articulate clear visions providing meaning and purpose to the work of an organization” (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 567), and it manifests through vision communication and vision content (Stam et al., 2014). Vision communication pertains to leaders’ descriptions of their vision, in a way that persuades followers of its validity and value; vision content refers to what information is conveyed through the vision (Stam et al., 2014). Accordingly, we investigate whether leaders’ vision communication drives followers to be future-oriented and thereby promotes FOI, as well as whether the specific content of vision (i.e., vision of continuity) can shape the impacts of vision communication on followers’ future thinking.

2.4 Leaders’ Vision Communication, Future Focus, and FOI

Leadership that communicates a compelling vision of the future, such as transformational leadership focused on an organization’s mission and goals, helps followers align themselves with the organization, eliciting OI (Epitropaki et al., 2017; Kark et al., 2003; Wu et al., 2010). Vision communication conveys a clear picture of the organization’s future, so it should help foster future-oriented mindsets in followers, including future-focused self-definitions (Guo et al., 2022; Stam et al., 2010). Building on this link between vision communication, OI, and future-oriented mindsets, we aim to explore whether vision communication can also foster FOI—a future-focused form of OI.

Drawing on CLT, we propose that vision communication, as a high-level construal construct (Berson & Halevy, 2014), should enhance followers’ FOI by promoting an even stronger focus on the future (Levasseur et al., 2020; Shipp et al., 2009). Future focus, a type of temporal focus, refers to the allocation of attention to the future (Shipp et al., 2009) and reflects people’s temporal inclination toward a future time frame, also known as future time perspective (Baird et al., 2021). Although temporal focus is often conceptualized as a trait

(Levasseur et al., 2020; Shipp & Jansen, 2021), it can manifest as a situational state, influenced by situational cues and significant experiences (Foo et al., 2009; Levasseur et al., 2020; Shipp & Jason, 2021; Zacher & Rudolph, 2021). As Wiesenfeld et al. (2017) argue, work roles can function as stable situational cues, shaping people's mental representations (e.g., construal level, future time perspective). Similarly, Levasseur et al. (2020) suggest the notion of a "situational state perspective" (p. 237) to study how contextual cues associated with work roles, may shape people's temporal focus. Accordingly, we propose that visionary leadership, as a stable contextual cue in the workplace, may heighten followers' future focus.

Furthermore, we note that vision is a mental image of the future (Rawolle et al., 2017; Stam et al., 2010), entailing long-term outcomes. Research on CLT suggests that vision conveys abstract, future-oriented information, making it a high-construal construct (Berson & Halevy, 2014). High-level construals are associated with greater temporal distance. Therefore, vision communication (abstract, future-oriented construct) should increase followers' future focus. Studies of transformational and visionary leadership through a CLT lens also document associations between *leaders'* construal level or future time perspective and their vision communication. For example, Venus et al. (2019a) find that leaders' construal level facilitates effective vision communication, and Zhang et al. (2014) show that leaders with a future time perspective are more likely to articulate a compelling vision, which enhances their transformational leadership behaviors.

However, no CLT-based empirical evidence has attended to the influence of *leaders'* vision communication on *followers'* future thinking. Despite this limitation, related work has shown that leaders' vision communication can motivate followers to use organizational vision as a guide for daily work (Kohles et al., 2012), and argue that vision communication may promote followers to think about their goals and the organization's future (Stam et al., 2014). This line of research, although not based on CLT, offers useful perspectives for understanding

the potential impacts of vision communication on employees' future thinking.

Taken the above arguments together, we infer that vision communication, by conveying abstract images of the organization's future (i.e., high construal level information), encourages followers to adopt a future-focused perspective. We propose:

H1: Vision communication is positively related to future focus.

Organizational structures often consist of nested collectives, so they can create multiple foci of identification, such as work groups, departments, and the organization as a whole. Within this hierarchy, OI represents the overarching or superordinate focus (Ashforth et al., 2008; Cole & Bruch, 2006). In turn, from a CLT perspective, OI can be considered a high-level construal, because it is abstract, higher-order, and broad with regard to self-categorization (Wiesenfeld et al., 2017). The self represented in the future, is also an abstract, schematic construct that extracts the gist of the self (Wakslak et al., 2008). These insights imply that future-oriented identification (i.e., FOI) also can be understood as a high construal level construct, reflecting core characteristics of an employee's anticipated connection with the organization in the future.

However, because immediate circumstances significantly shape self-concept (Kivetz & Tyler, 2007), FOI, as a future state of identification with abstract information (Wakslak et al., 2008), might not be vivid or easy to imagine. Nevertheless, Zhang et al. (2016) argued that, by focusing on the future, employees gain encouragement to imagine and plan for their future roles. Therefore, future focus may increase anticipated identification with the organization (i.e., FOI). According to CLT, abstract or high construal level mindsets, tend to be activated when people think about the future (Kivetz & Tyler, 2007; Wakslak et al., 2008). Because FOI is a construct with high construal level, we postulate that future focus increases its accessibility and thereby fosters its emergence. This prediction aligns with research on CLT and self-concept, which shows that future time perspective stimulates high-level

construals, including broad, higher-order self-categorization (Wakslak et al., 2008) and the ideal self (Kivetz & Tyler, 2007). Wiesenfeld et al. (2017) also suggest that elevated construal level (associated with future focus as explored in this study), enhance collective identification within organizational settings. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H2: Future focus is positively related to FOI.

Taken together with H1 and H2, we further propose that vision communication enhances followers' future focus, which in turn facilitates FOI. When leaders communicate an organizational vision, it directs followers' attention to long-term goals and prompts them to align their self-concepts with the organization's future (Stam et al., 2014). According to CLT, vision communication, as a high-level construal encourages followers to focus on distant outcomes (Berson & Halevy, 2014; Trope & Liberman, 2010). Future focus then enhances abstract self-concepts (Kivetz & Tyler, 2007; Wakslak et al., 2008), such as FOI, which represents the anticipated alignment with the organization. This aligns with prior argument suggesting that high-level construals, in relation to future time perspective, foster abstract forms of identification (Wiesenfeld et al., 2017), including FOI. Thus, we hypothesize:

H3: Vision communication facilitates FOI through future focus.

2.5 Moderating Role of Vision of Continuity

Vision communication may be more effective if it incorporates continuity, which will help followers perceive the consistent link between the organization's present and future states. Emphasizing continuity gives followers a sense of stability related to the organization's enduring features, which can make the vision more persuasive and motivating (Venus et al., 2019b). When followers perceive a strong sense of continuity in the vision, they are more likely to believe the organization's core attributes will remain stable, even if some changes occur (Griffin et al., 2010; Venus et al., 2019b). In turn, they may be willing

and able to accept changes inherent in the vision and focus more on the envisioned future, which would enhance the impact of the vision communication on their future focus. In contrast, without any mention of continuity, followers may struggle to see a clear link between the organization's present and future states, which creates uncertainty and skepticism about the credibility of the vision itself. Followers then might struggle to align themselves with the future goals outlined by the leader. Without a strong sense of continuity, followers will be less inclined to adopt a future-oriented focus. Thus, we posit:

H4: Vision of continuity positively moderates the relationship between vision communication and future focus.

We further propose that the moderating role of vision of continuity extends its influence on the indirect effect of vision communication on FOI through future focus. When followers perceive continuity in the vision, they are more likely to develop a future-oriented focus, which in turn makes FOI more accessible. By emphasizing continuity, leaders can ensure that the future vision is credible and consistent with the organization's enduring characteristics, which will facilitate followers' acceptance of the envisioned future and enhance their FOI. However, weak vision continuity implies a weak indirect effect; followers may struggle to see themselves as part of the organization's future. Therefore, we expect:

H5: Vision of continuity positively moderates the relationship between vision communication and FOI through future focus.

3. Study Overview

This research consisted of two studies. Study 1, including Studies 1a and 1b, explored FOI by verifying its measurement. Study 1a included two samples. Specifically, with sample 1 of Study 1a, we tested the construct validity of the FOI measure using exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and assessed its items using item response theory (IRT); With sample 2 of Study 1a, we also verified the construct and convergent validity of the FOI measure through

confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Study 1b further tested FOI's construct and convergent validity, as well as its distinctiveness from orbiting constructs including affective organizational commitment (AOC), OI, and future focus. Study 1b also estimated FOI's criterion and incremental validity beyond AOC and OI, by exploring its impacts on job satisfaction, intent to leave, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Finally, with a three-wave, time-lagged study in Study 2, we tested the conceptual model in Figure 1. All the samples were recruited from China, so we used a back-translation procedure (Brislin, 1970) to translate relevant measures from English to Chinese.

4. Study 1

4.1 Method of Study 1a

4.1.1 Participants

With the recognition that online surveys can produce large, representative samples with high-quality data (e.g., Porter et al., 2019), we commissioned an online survey company in China, *Wenjuanxin* (akin to Amazon MTurk), to recruit full-time employees of various companies in different regions of China. Both samples 1 and 2 were hence representative. In detail, sample 1 ($N = 377$) consisted of 213 men and 164 women with a mean age of 32.1 years ($SD = 6.8$) and a mean organizational tenure of 7.5 years ($SD = 8.1$); 80.7% of them had earned at least a bachelor's degree. Sample 2 ($N = 321$) consisted of 178 men and 143 women ($M_{age} = 29.7$ years, $SD = 4.1$). Their mean organizational tenure was 5.1 years ($SD = 3.2$), and 85.1% of them had at least a bachelor's degree.

4.1.2 Measures

Reflecting our definition of FOI as individuals' future-focused self-representation rooted in OI, we modified existing measures of OI (e.g., Mael & Ashforth, 1992) and future-oriented self-definition (Strauss et al., 2012) to evaluate it. We rephrased the items from Strauss et al.'s scale to refer to an OI context, guided by research on self-construal and

social/organizational identification (Cross et al., 2000; Doosje et al., 1995; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Smidts et al., 2001). The instructions asked participants to think about and imagine their future. A prompt then asked about how they viewed their relationship with their current company, while thinking about the future. Using a 5-point scale (1 = *totally disagree*, 5 = *totally agree*), participants considered nine FOI items, such as “When thinking about myself in the future, it is very easy for me to tie myself with this company” (Table 1).

-- Table 1 about here --

4.2 Results and Discussion of Study 1a

We included sample 1 in the EFA and IRT. According to an initial EFA, we deleted two items (6 and 7; Table 1) with item loadings below 0.7. The EFA for the remaining seven items (KMO = 0.90) revealed a one-factor solution that explained 54.30% of the variance. The factor loadings of the seven items were all greater than 0.70 (Table 1), and Cronbach’s α for the seven-item FOI scale was 0.86, indicating a high degree of internal consistency (Hair et al., 2017). The first factor’s eigenvalue (3.80) was more than 5 times greater than that of the second factor (0.69), so the FOI measure met an IRT unidimensionality assumption. In R studio (2023.06.0+421 with mirt package), we conducted the IRT analysis, using the graded response model, because the FOI measure relied on a 5-point Likert scale. As the results in Table 2 indicated, the item discrimination parameters (a) ranged from 1.63 to 2.35, which signified that the seven FOI items offered good discrimination (Baker, 2001). The item difficulty parameters (b), ranging from -3.38 to 0.77, were within the theoretical range (Baker, 2001), without any extreme b values. Collectively, the EFA and IRT results affirmed that the seven-item scale was suitable for our subsequent analyses.

-- Table 2 about here --

With sample 2, we ran a CFA (MLM estimator; CFA hereinafter adopted the same estimator) through Mplus 8.3 for further item refinement and validity test. We removed one

item (9; Table 1) with a factor loading below 0.5 (= 0.48) following the initial CFA. The subsequent CFA revealed that a one-factor model with six items fit the data well, with respective factor loadings of 0.62, 0.70, 0.65, 0.58, 0.72, and 0.65. $\chi^2(9) = 23.95$, TLI = 0.95, CFI = 0.97, SRMR = 0.03, RMSEA = 0.07. These results indicated the construct validity of our FOI measure. Cronbach's α for the six-item instrument was 0.81. We also considered composite reliability (CR), which can offer evidence of convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Lam, 2012). The CR value of 0.82 confirmed that the FOI construct exhibited acceptable convergent validity. In summary, Study 1a provides support for our conceptualization of FOI by demonstrating the measure's construct validity and convergent validity.¹

4.3 Method of Study 1b

4.3.1 Participants

With the sample for Study 2 ($N = 539$), we ran Study 1b. The description of Study 2 provided details about the survey and sample.

4.3.2 Measures

Briefly though, we included seven measures, with items scored on 5-point Likert-type scales (1 = *totally disagree*, 5 = *totally agree*).

FOI. We measured FOI with the six-item scale finalized in Study 1a (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.84$). The CFA results indicated factor loadings for the respective items of 0.65, 0.72, 0.69, 0.66, 0.69, and 0.68. $\chi^2(9) = 33.78$, TLI = 0.95, CFI = 0.97, SRMR = 0.03, RMSEA = 0.07. That is, the Study 1b results corroborated the construct validity of our FOI measure. The CR value of 0.87 also confirmed its acceptable convergent validity.

Future Focus. For future focus, we used a seven-item scale (e.g., "I focus on my

¹ Using sample 2 from Study 1a, we also establish that FOI relates to but is distinct from organizational citizenship behavior towards the organization (OCBO), further confirming its construct validity. These results are available in the Supplementary Materials to conserve space.

future”; Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.72$). Four of the items came from the Future Focus subscale within Shipp et al.’s (2009) Temporal Focus measure. To ensure that we capture people’s future time perspective (Baird et al., 2021, Strauss et al., 2012), we also extracted three additional items from the Consideration of Future Consequences Scale (Strathman et al., 1994).

AOC. The five-item AOC measure (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.83$) was adapted from Meyer et al.’s (1993) six-item scale (e.g., “This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me”). One item pertaining to belongingness (“I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization”) was excluded, because it might refer to self-categorization, which instead should be the basis for OI/FOI.

OI. With a five-item scale adapted from Mael and Ashforth (1992), we measured OI (e.g., “When I talk about this company, I usually say ‘we’ rather than ‘they’”; Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.81$).

Job Satisfaction. We adapted a three-item scale from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann et al., 1979), which Bowling and Hammond (2008) included in a meta-analysis, to assess overall job satisfaction (e.g., “All in all, I am satisfied with my job”; Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.77$).

Intent to Leave. A four-item scale adapted from Farh et al. (1998) served to assess intent to leave (e.g., “I often think of quitting my present job”; Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.89$).

OCB. We adapted a six-item scale from Farh et al. (1997) to measure OCB (e.g., “I am willing to help colleagues solve work-related problems”; Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.65$).

4.4 Results and Discussion of Study 1b

Distinctiveness of FOI from Orbiting Constructs. Strauss et al. (2012) demonstrate that a future-focused self-definition is distinct from future time perspective (e.g., future orientation). Study 1b reinforced this distinction, between the forward-looking aspect of OI (i.e., FOI) and future time perspective (i.e., future focus). We also addressed the difference

between FOI and OI, even though the former has its roots in the latter. Thus, we need to determine this distinction empirically. Considering that AOC is closely related to OI ($r = 0.78$; Riketta, 2005), it also might overlap with FOI, though these concepts differ. Whereas AOC is an attitudinal concept (Ashforth et al., 2008), FOI is a future-focused self-definition based on self-categorization through organizational membership. This distinction also requires empirical confirmation. As the correlations in Table 3 reveal, FOI was positively related to all three constructs, supporting its construct validity. Subsequently, we evaluated the distinctiveness of FOI from these orbiting constructs through CFA-based techniques, including “ $\chi^2(\text{merge})$ and $\chi^2(1)$ ” (George et al., 2023; Rönkkö & Cho, 2022), and the disattenuated correlation technique (Rönkkö & Cho, 2022; Shaffer et al., 2016). The results jointly supported the distinctiveness of FOI from AOC, OI, and future focus, as we detailed in the Supplementary Materials including Table S1.

Criterion and Incremental validity of FOI. As a specific form of OI, FOI also may be linked to common OI criteria, such as job satisfaction, OCB, and intent to leave (Ashforth et al., 2008). We predict that, after controlling for AOC and OI, FOI should incrementally contribute to variance in these outcomes, and we conduct hierarchical regression analyses to test this prediction. VIF for AOC, OI, and FOI were 3.34, 2.80, and 2.22, respectively, suggesting that collinearity was not a problem for further analyses. We found that AOC was related to each criterion: job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.52, p < 0.001$), intent to leave ($\beta = -0.21, p < 0.001$), and OCB ($\beta = 0.22, p < 0.001$). OI was only related to OCB ($\beta = 0.21, p < 0.001$). FOI was related to job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.27, p < 0.001$), intent to leave ($\beta = -0.54, p < 0.001$), and OCB ($\beta = 0.36, p < 0.001$), after controlling for AOC and OI. These results substantiated FOI’s criterion and incremental validity.

5. Study 2

5.1 Method of Study 2

5.1.1 Participants

The respondents were recruited for Study 2 by the same online survey company (*Wenjuanxin*). Study 2 featured a three-wave, time-lagged design, which can help reduce common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Wave 1 of the survey included measures to assess vision communication, AOC, OI, and individual demographics. We obtained responses from 874 employees of companies throughout China. One month later, in Wave 2, we gauged vision of continuity, future focus, a marker variable (attitude toward the color blue [ATCB]), and job satisfaction; 641 participants completed this survey. Another month later, the measures in Wave 3 assessed FOI, intent to leave, and OCB. The data from respondents who completed all three waves ($N = 539$; final retention rate = 61.7%) informed our subsequent analyses. The sample contained 256 men and 283 women, with a mean age of 33.1 years ($SD = 6.2$) and a mean organizational tenure of 6.92 years ($SD = 4.6$). Participants' education levels included junior college (9.3%), bachelor level (81.3%), master level or above (6.7%), junior high school or below (0.9%), and senior high school (1.9%). Participants occupied a range of positions, such as sales or marketing (10.4%), manufacturing (6.9%), technical work (29.5%), management (37.5%), administration or human resources (15.4%), and other work types (0.4%).

5.1.2 Measures

These items also used five-point Likert scales (1 = *totally disagree*, 5 = *totally agree*). To reduce common method bias, we designed the questionnaire such that written instructions psychologically separated each variable's measurement (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The questionnaire issued in each wave also started by informing participants that their answers would be anonymous and that confidentiality would be strictly maintained for all data.

The FOI and Future Focus measures were those that we described in and used for Study 1b.

Vision Communication. The vision communication scale consisted of ten items (e.g., “My leader has vision, often brings up ideas about possibilities for the future”; Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.80$). Three of them were adapted from the Vision Communication measure used by Venus et al. (2019a), two came from Conger and Kanungo’s (1994) Vision and Articulation subscale of charismatic leadership, and the five remaining items were adapted from articulations of vision-related items in two transformational leadership scales, namely, three from Podsakoff et al. (1990) and two from Li and Shi (2005).

Vision of Continuity. The vision of continuity scale included seven items (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.74$). Three items were adapted from Venus et al. (2019b). Then, drawing on Venus et al.’s conceptualization, which indicates that vision of continuity refers to a collective continuity, despite the potential for change, we developed another four items: “My supervisor regularly communicates that no matter what change takes place in the future, maintaining employees’ identification with our company/team is of crucial importance”; “My supervisor often communicates in his or her vision that our company/team in the future will continue to stand for its mission”; “My supervisor often communicates in his or her vision that it is important to maintain the continuity and consistency of our organization/team identity”; and “My supervisor regularly communicates that, no matter what change takes place in the future, it is important to preserve stability of organization/team identification.”

Marker Variable. We included ATCB as an “ideal” marker variable that offers good capacity to detect common method variance (CMV) (Miller & Simmering et al., 2023). The seven-item ATCB (e.g., “Blue is a beautiful color”) attained a Cronbach’s α of 0.83.

Control Variables. As control variables, we included participants’ demographics, including their age, gender, education, and tenure. Previous related research has established

that age and education inform employees' future time perspective in the workplace (e.g., Zacher & Rudolph, 2021), and tenure is positively associated with OI (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), which suggests it could influence FOI too. Gender and age are known to correlate with future-focused self-representation in the workplace (Morandin et al., 2021). According to our FOI conceptualization, as individuals are inclined to maintain self-continuity (Hershfield, 2011; Sedikides et al., 2023), they may project their current OI into the future, reflecting their anticipated identification with the organization (i.e., FOI). Therefore, FOI and OI share a common identification focus, which indicates that the two constructs should be positively correlated. We hence treated OI as a control variable for investigating our conceptual model. Finally, AOC, closely related to OI (e.g., Riketta, 2005), may in turn influence FOI that reflects the forward-looking aspect of OI. The measures of OI and AOC are observed in Study 1b.

5.2 Results and Discussion of Study 2

Table 3 listed the means, standard deviations, and correlations for the main, marker, and control variables. The main variables in our conceptual model (Figure 1) correlated with one another, making our further analyses plausible.

-- Tables 3 about here --

CMV. As a preliminary check for CMV, we employed Harman's single-factor test. According to the unrotated factor solution, the first factor accounted for only 27.48% of the variance in the substantive variables. With the CFA marker technique (Williams et al., 2010), we also estimated whether CMV confounded the relationships among the substantive variables. This marker technique spans five models: CFA, Baseline, Method-C, Method-U, and Method-R. The marker construct was ATCB (Miller & Simmering et al., 2023), and the substantive constructs were vision communication, vision of continuity, future focus, and FOI. The difference between the Method-R and Method-U models was not significant, S-

$B\Delta\chi^2(6) = 0.45, p = 0.99$, so CMV did not bias the correlations between the substantive constructs. The evidence from CFA marker technique as a set implied that CMV was not an issue (Williams et al., 2010). We offer a detailed process description and results of the CFA marker technique in the Supplementary Materials including Table S2.

Distinguishing the Variables. As in Study 1b, we used CFA-based techniques, including “ $\chi^2(\text{merge})$ and $\chi^2(1)$ ” (Rönkkö & Cho, 2022), and the disattenuated correlation technique (Rönkkö & Cho, 2022; Shaffer et al., 2016) to examine the distinctiveness of the substantive variables. These techniques confirm that visionary communication, vision of continuity, future focus, and FOI are distinct constructs, as we detail in the Supplementary Materials, including Table S3.

Test of Mediation. We used Model 4 of the PROCESS 4.2 macro for SPSS developed by Hayes to test for mediation, through a bootstrapping approach based on 5,000 samples. In the analyses, we controlled for gender, age, tenure, education, OI, and AOC. As Table 4 showed, vision communication significantly influenced future focus, $b=0.33, t=8.06, p < 0.001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.25, 0.41]$, supporting H1. Vision communication also significantly influenced FOI, $b=0.20, t=3.89, p < 0.001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.10, 0.30]$, as did future focus $b = 0.19, t=3.63, p < 0.01, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.09, 0.29]$; so we also found support for H2. Table 5 outlining the mediation test, showed that the indirect effect of vision communication on FOI through future focus was significant, $b = 0.06, 95\% \text{ BootCI } [0.02, 0.11]$. Therefore, H3 received support.²

-- Tables 4 and 5 about here --

Test of Moderated Mediation. We used Model 7 of the PROCESS 4.2 macro for SPSS developed by Hayes (bootstrapping with 5,000 samples) to test for moderated mediation, after mean-centering the variables (i.e., vision communication and vision of continuity) that constitute the product. We control for gender, age, tenure, education, OI, and

² We also performed the mediation analysis without control variables and obtained similar results.

AOC. Vision communication significantly influenced future focus, $b = 0.29$, $t = 6.34$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.20, 0.37], lending additional support to H1. Vision of continuity significantly moderated vision communication's effect on future focus, $b = 0.19$, $t = 3.76$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.09, 0.29], offering support for H4. When vision of continuity was high (0.56, +1 SD), its influence on future focus was significant and stronger, $b = 0.39$, $t = 6.48$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.27, 0.51], than when vision of continuity was low (-0.56, -1 SD), $b = 0.18$, $t = 4.02$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.09, 0.27]. Figure 2 visualized this interaction. The results in Table 6 indicated that the moderated mediation was significant, $\omega = 0.04$, 95% BootCI [0.01, 0.07], hence supporting H5. When vision of continuity was high (0.56, +1 SD), the indirect effect of vision communication on FOI through future focus was significant and stronger, $b = 0.07$, 95% BootCI [0.02, 0.13], than when it was low (-0.56, -1 SD), $b = 0.03$, 95% BootCI [0.01, 0.06]. This difference was significant, $\Delta b = 0.04$, 95% BootCI [0.01, 0.08]. In summary, Study 2 offers support for our hypotheses.³ Because these hypotheses tests also provide an assessment of FOI's nomological network, they bolster its construct validity too.

-- Table 6 and Figure 2 about here --

6. General Discussion

We extend the concept of OI by adopting a future-oriented perspective, then draw from CLT to investigate how visionary leadership can enhance followers' FOI, through future focus. In addition to confirming our conceptualization of FOI and validating its measurement, we establish that future focus mediates the relationship between vision communication and FOI, and vision of continuity acts as a moderator. The current research thus addresses calls to incorporate time perspective into organizational behavior studies (Levasseur et al., 2020; Shipp & Jansen, 2021) and offers several further contributions too.

³ We performed the moderated mediation analysis without control variables and obtained similar results.

6.1 Theoretical Implications

The introduction of FOI marks a significant advancement in OI research. Despite some mention of “a future-oriented aspect to self-conception” (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004, p. 828) in leadership and social (organizational) identification research, the essential concept of future-oriented OI remains underdeveloped. Given that people can envision their future work experiences (Morandin et al., 2021; Strauss et al., 2012) and strive to maintain self-continuity between their present and future states (Hershfield, 2011; Sedikides et al., 2023), a forward-looking counterpart to OI seems not just plausible but inevitable. By introducing and theorizing about FOI, this study represents an extension to OI, along a future-oriented path.

Our findings show that FOI and OI are correlated, supporting our conceptualization: FOI derives from OI and reflects people’s tendency to preserve self-continuity between their present and future states (Hershfield, 2011; Sedikides et al., 2023). Furthermore, our research establishes that FOI and OI are empirically distinct, so FOI, with its forward-looking feature, differs fundamentally from OI. Importantly, we empirically demonstrate that this *future-oriented* form of OI (i.e., FOI) can contribute unique variance to explanations of outcomes such as job satisfaction, intent to leave, and OCB, beyond the effects of OI and AOC. This aligns with similar research that highlights the unique motivational power of the future-oriented mindset in the workplace (Strauss et al., 2012). Overall, these results support our theorizing that FOI extends the conception of OI by introducing a future-oriented perspective.

Leadership that involves communicating an inspiring vision can foster social (organizational) identification (Epitropaki et al., 2017; Kark et al., 2003; Wu et al., 2010), as well as future-focused self-definitions (Guo et al., 2022; Stam et al., 2010). Building on our FOI conceptualization, we extend this body of research by demonstrating that visionary leadership, in terms of vision communication and vision of continuity, can increase FOI. Specifically, and in line with CLT, we show that vision communication, through its influence

on followers' future focus, can foster FOI (H1–H3). Furthermore, this mediation is positively moderated by vision of continuity (H4 and H5). With these findings, our research expands understanding of visionary leadership, CLT, and temporal focus.

First, we demonstrate that vision communication enhances followers' future focus (H1), an insight that moves beyond existing CLT-based research on visionary leadership (Berson & Halevy, 2014; Venus et al., 2019a; Zhang et al., 2014). To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first to use a CLT perspective to reveal how visionary leadership (vision communication), reflecting a high level of construal (Berson & Halevy, 2014; Venus et al., 2019a), can strengthen followers' future time perspective (future focus). This finding aligns with CLT's argument regarding the association between construal level and temporal distance (Trope & Liberman, 2010) in the leadership domain. Previous CLT studies demonstrate that leaders' construal level (Venus et al., 2019a) and future time perspective (Zhang et al., 2014) facilitate vision-based *leadership*; our research provides the unique insight that leaders' vision communication can shape *followers'* future time perspective.

Second, the findings pertaining to the mediation effect (H1–H3) expand understanding of vision-based leadership and OI. Although leadership visions are inherently future-directed, previous studies tend to address how vision-based leadership influences present-oriented OI (e.g., Kark et al., 2003; Wu et al., 2010). Our conceptualization of FOI addresses this gap and provides relevant evidence that visionary leadership can foster future-oriented identification (i.e., FOI) through its influence on followers' future focus. This finding also consolidates the role of visionary leadership for promoting followers' future-oriented mindsets (Guo et al., 2022; Stam et al., 2010).

Third, our research contributes to temporal focus literature by demonstrating that future focus can be shaped by visionary leadership (H1). Temporal focus is typically presented as a stable trait (for reviews, see Levasseur et al., 2020; Shipp & Jansen, 2021), but

our study reiterates and supports the “situational state perspective” proposed by Levasseur et al. (2020, p. 237). Temporal focus can be molded by workplace cues, including leadership behaviors. In confirming that visionary leadership, as an external cue, can influence followers’ temporal focus (future focus), we validate findings that indicate that future time perspective can change, depending on situational factors (Foo et al., 2009; Zacher & Rudolph, 2021).

Fourth, the discovered relationship between future focus and FOI (H2) extends CLT research on future time perspective and future self-concept (Kivetz & Tyler, 2007; Wakslak et al., 2008). Prior CLT studies suggest that temporal distance facilitates high construal level self-representations (Kivetz & Tyler, 2007; Wakslak et al., 2008); we show specifically that future focus can enhance FOI in organizational settings. This finding aligns with Wiesenfeld et al.’s (2017) assertion that elevated construal levels, manifested as future focus in this research, can strengthen collective identification. Importantly, our study shows that the future focus–FOI relationship persists even after controlling for OI, such that it underscores the incremental impact of future focus on FOI, beyond OI. Establishing such a finding, namely, that FOI is facilitated by future focus, represents a response to recommendations to introduce CLT and future time perspective (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006; Zhang et al., 2016) into studies of future self-definitions.⁴

Fifth, our research expands on findings by Venus et al. (2019b), by revealing the moderating role of vision of continuity in enhancing the effectiveness of vision communication on followers’ future thinking (H4 and H5). Visionary leadership can be

⁴ To further explore the unique contribution of future focus (underpinned by CLT), beyond that of OI (underpinned by future self-continuity), for explaining the influence of visionary leadership on FOI, we built another mediation model in which OI and future focus are parallel mediators, with AOC and demographics (as measured in Study 2) serving as covariates. After controlling for the mediating effect of OI ($b = 0.02$, 95% BootCI [0.00,0.05]), future focus still mediates the relationship between vision communication and FOI ($b = 0.07$, 95% BootCI [0.02,0.11]). These findings underscore the distinct contribution of future focus as a mediator and delineate its role in determining the impact of vision communication on FOI, while controlling for OI as a mediator.

studied in terms of both communication and content (Stam et al., 2014). Vision communication conveys collective images of the future, so it is naturally associated with change (Stam et al., 2014; Venus et al., 2019b), which in turn increases the need for leaders to assure followers of their collective continuity (Venus et al., 2019b). Our findings support this rationale: Vision communication is particularly effective when the vision content guarantees continuity (Venus et al. 2019b). By focusing on both the communication and vision of continuity simultaneously, our findings highlight their interactive effect on followers' future cognition (future focus and FOI). Therefore, research on visionary leadership should continue to examine both communication and content simultaneously. For example, well-aligned vision content, such as organizational policies that influence career development, likely influences followers' perceptions and thus the effectiveness of vision communication. Accounting for such consistency issues could help researchers clarify how different aspects of vision content influence various outcomes, like procedural fairness and employee engagement.

6.2 Practical Implications

Human resource practices should prioritize visionary leadership, due to its positive influence on employees' future-oriented behaviors (Griffin et al., 2010; Kohles et al., 2012) and its role in fostering future-focused thinking and FOI, as suggested by this research. Training programs can coach leaders on how to share their organization's vision effectively with employees, including clearly communicating organizational aspirations and goals and explaining their relevance to employees' roles. Because vision communication exerts a stronger influence on followers' future thinking when the sense of continuity is reinforced by the vision, these training programs also should emphasize the need for leaders to convey collective continuity (Venus et al., 2019b). Managers should highlight the continuity of core organizational attributes, such as values and missions, when communicating the

organization's vision to followers, even during times of change. Other interventions based on the FOI concept can reinforce employees' identification with the organization. For example, employee training programs could encourage them to reflect on the organization's prestige and distinctiveness, elements that can increase OI (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). If these employees then are prompted to consider their long-term connection with the organization and envision their continued organizational membership in the future, their current sense of OI is likely to be projected into the future and foster FOI.

6.3 Limitations and Further Research

Our research has three main limitations. First, we need FOI studies that address multiple social identification issues in organizational settings (Ashforth et al., 2008). Individual members of an organization can identify simultaneously with different collectives along the organization's formal hierarchy (e.g., work unit, department, organization) (Cole & Bruch, 2006). Although our definition of FOI focuses on social identification with the organization as a whole, future research should explore other foci of social identification in relation to FOI. Employees may simultaneously identify with multiple social categories or collectives (e.g., work unit, department, and organization) when envisioning their future in the workplace, while others may only identify with certain categories (e.g., work unit or department). Arguably, multiple forms of FOI could emerge across levels in the organizational hierarchy, and employees' perception of the organizational hierarchy may influence the construal level (Wiesenfeld et al., 2017) of their FOI. For example, FOI directed toward the entire organization might represent a higher construal level than FOI directed toward a specific work unit. In turn, they seemingly could have different effects on future-directed behaviors, including pursuing a vision (Stam et al., 2014). Future research could investigate how these different construal levels in relation to FOIs affect employees' future-focused thoughts and behaviors.

Second, this study focuses on the general mechanisms by which visionary leadership influences FOI, but our reliance on samples of Chinese respondents may limit the generalizability of our findings across cultural contexts. People in Eastern countries, including China, tend to perceive greater power distance than those in Western countries (Farh et al., 2007), leading them to maintain greater social distance from their leaders. Berson and Halevy (2014) referenced the construal level fit of CLT in showing that leader–follower social distance suits the leader’s vision (i.e., both constructs have high construal level); this fit of construal level consequently enhances the effectiveness of vision communication. Following this rationale of construal level fit (Berson & Halevy, 2014), perhaps employees in high power distance cultures like China are more influenced by vision communication than those in low power distance cultures (e.g., Western countries), which might facilitate their FOI. Continued studies should investigate the impact of the cultural context on FOI, perhaps by comparing Eastern and Western countries to understand how cultural factors influence the effectiveness of visionary leadership.

Third, we call for further investigations of the “discrepancy (change) and continuity” issue (Stam et al., 2014) that appears in research on future-focused self. We adopt a “self-continuity” perspective, which emphasizes maintaining a sense of continuity between the present and future self (Hershfield, 2011). However, we do not explicitly assess how future self-continuity might enhance FOI, suggesting the need for research that explores whether future self-continuity moderates the effect of future focus (facilitated by visionary leadership) on FOI. Alternatively, perceived discrepancies between one’s current state and a desired future state may drive people to seek new possibilities (Higgins, 1987; Stam et al., 2014; Strauss et al., 2012), such that FOI might orient toward organizations other than the current employer. Returning to the example of Charlie, the employee currently working at Company A, a perceived discrepancy between their current and anticipated future organizational

memberships could prompt them to aspire to work for and orient his FOI toward Company B. Understanding how such discrepancies motivate employees to envision their future identification with different organizations could shed light on the dynamic processes underlying FOI.

6.4 Conclusion

By introducing the concept of FOI, this research takes a step forward in advancing understanding of OI with a future-oriented lens. We delineate FOI's antecedents by examining it within the framework of visionary leadership. Our study thus reveals new opportunities for visionary leadership, in line with CLT. We identify future focus as a mediator and vision of continuity as a moderator in explaining how vision communication boosts FOI. These findings enrich our understanding of how visionary leadership can shape employees' future-oriented thinking and identification with the organization.

References

- Ashforth, B. E., Harrison, S. H., & Corley, K. G. (2008). Identification in organizations: An examination of four fundamental questions. *Journal of Management*, *34*(3), 325–374. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206308316059>
- Baird, H. M., Webb, T. L., Sirois, F. M., & Gibson-Miller, J. (2021). Understanding the effects of time perspective: A meta-analysis testing a self-regulatory framework. *Psychological Bulletin*, *147*(3), 233–267. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000313>
- Baker, F. (2001). *The basics of item response theory*. College Park, MD: Eric Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation.
- Berson, Y., & Halevy, N. (2014). Hierarchy, leadership, and construal fit. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, *20*(3), 232–246. <https://doi.org/10.1037/xap0000017>
- Berson, Y., Waldman, D. A., & Pearce, C. L. (2016). Enhancing our understanding of vision in organizations: Toward an integration of leader and follower processes. *Organizational Psychology Review*, *6*(2), 171-191. <https://doi.org/10.1177/204138661558373>
- Bowling, N. A., & Hammond, G. D. (2008). A meta-analytic examination of the construct validity of the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire Job Satisfaction Subscale. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *73*(1), 63–77. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2008.01.004>
- Brislin, R. W. (1970). Back-translation for cross-cultural research. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *1*(3), 185–216. <https://doi.org/10.1177/135910457000100301>
- Cammann, C., Fichman, M., Jenkins, D., & Klesh, J. (1979). *The Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

- Cole, M. S., & Bruch, H. (2006). Organizational identity strength, identification, and commitment and their relationships to turnover intention: does organizational hierarchy matter? *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 27(5), 585-605.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/job.378>
- Conger, J. A., & Kanungo, R. N. (1994). Charismatic leadership in organizations: Perceived behavioral attributes and their measurement. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 15(5), 439–452. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.4030150508>
- Cooper, D., & Thatcher, S. M. B. (2010). Identification in organizations: The role of self-concept orientations and identification motives. *Academy of Management Review*, 35(4), 516–538. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.2010.53502693>
- Cross, S. E., Bacon, P. L., & Morris, M. L. (2000). The relational-interdependent self-construal and relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78(4), 791–808. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.78.4.791>
- Doosje, B., Ellemers, N., & Spears, R. (1995). Perceived intragroup variability as a function of group status and identification. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 31(5), 410–436. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jesp.1995.1018>
- Epitropaki, O., Kark, R., Mainemelis, C., & Lord, R. G. (2017). Leadership and followership identity processes: A multilevel review. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 28(1), 104-129.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2016.10.003>
- Farh, J. L., Earley, P. C., & Lin, S. C. (1997). Impetus for action: A cultural analysis of justice and organizational citizenship behavior in Chinese society. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 42(3), 421–444. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2393733>
- Farh, J., Hackett, R., & Liang, J. (2007). Individual-level cultural values as moderators of perceived organizational support-employee outcome relationships in China: Comparing the effects of power distance and traditionality. *Academy of Management*

- Journal*, 50(3), 715–729. <https://doi.org/10.5465/20159880>
- Farh, J., Tsui, A., Xin, K., & Cheng, B. (1998). The influence of relational demography and guanxi: The Chinese case. *Organization Science*, 9(4), 471–488.
<https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.9.4.471>
- Foo, M.-D., Uy, M. A., & Baron, R. A. (2009). How do feelings influence effort? An empirical study of entrepreneurs' affect and venture effort. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 94(4), 1086–1094. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015599>
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39–50.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3151312>
- George, M. M., Strauss, K., Mell, J. N., & Vough, H. C. (2023). When “who I am” is under threat: Measures of threat to identity value, meanings, and enactment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 108(12), 1952–1978. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0001114>
- Griffin, M. A., Parker, S. K., & Mason, C. M. (2010). Leader vision and the development of adaptive and proactive performance: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 95(1), 174–182. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017263>
- Guo, L., Mao, J.-Y., Huang, Q., & Zhang, G. (2022). Polishing followers' future work selves! The critical roles of leader future orientation and vision communication. *Journal Of Vocational Behavior*, 103746. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2022.103746>
- Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., Sarstedt, M., & Thiele, K. O. (2017). Mirror, mirror on the wall: A comparative evaluation of composite-based structural equation modeling methods. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 45(5), 616–632.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-017-0517-x>
- Hershfield, H. E. (2011). Future self-continuity: How conceptions of the future self transform intertemporal choice. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1235(1), 30–43.

<https://nyaspubs-onlinelibrary-wiley-com.libproxy.ncl.ac.uk/doi/10.1111/j.1749-6632.2011.06201.x>

- Higgins, E. T. (1987). Self-discrepancy: A theory relating self and affect. *Psychological Review*, 94(3), 319–340. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.94.3.319>
- Hoyle, R. H., & Sherrill, M. R. (2006). Future orientation in the self-system: Possible selves, self-regulation, and behavior. *Journal of Personality*, 74(6), 1673–1696. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2006.00424.x>
- Kark, R., Shamir, B., & Chen, G. (2003). The two faces of transformational leadership: Empowerment and dependency. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(2), 246–255. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.2.246>.
- Kivetz, Y., & Tyler, T. R. (2007). Tomorrow I'll be me: The effect of time perspective on the activation of idealistic versus pragmatic selves. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 102(2), 193–211. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2006.07.002>
- Kohles, J. C., Bligh, M. C., & Carsten, M. K. (2012). A follower-centric approach to the vision integration process. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 23(3), 476–487. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2011.12.002>
- Kooij, D. T. A. M., Kanfer, R., Betts, M., & Rudolph, C. W. (2018). Future time perspective: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 103(8), 867–893. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000306>
- Lam, L. W. (2012). Impact of competitiveness on salespeople's commitment and performance. *Journal of Business Research*, 65(9), 1328–1334. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.10.026>
- Levasseur, L., Shipp, A. J., Fried, Y., Rousseau, D. M., & Zimbardo, P. G. (2020). New perspectives on time perspective and temporal focus. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 41(3), 235–243. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2435>

- Li, C., & Shi, K. (2005). The structure and measurement of transformational leadership in China. *Acta Psychologica Sinica*, *37*(6), 803–811.
- Mael, F., & Ashforth, B. E. (1992). Alumni and their alma mater: A partial test of the reformulated model of organizational identification. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *13*(2), 103–123. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.4030130202>
- Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American Psychologist*, *41*(9), 954–969. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.41.9.954>
- Meyer, J. P., Allen, N. J., & Smith, C. A. (1993). Commitment to organizations and occupations: Extension and test of a three-component conceptualization. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *78*(4), 538–551. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.78.4.538>
- Miller, B. K., & Simmering, M. J. (2023). Attitude toward the color blue: An ideal marker variable. *Organizational Research Methods*, *26*(3), 409–440. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10944281221075361>
- Morandin, G., Russo, M., & Bergami, M. (2021). Imagining the newcomer-supervisor relationship: Future relational self in the workplace. *Human Resource Management Journal*, *31*(4), 1010–1024. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12340>
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J.-Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *88*(5), 879–903. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879>
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Moorman, R. H., & Fetter, R. (1990). Transformational leader behaviors and their effects on followers' trust in leader, satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behaviors. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *1*(2), 107–142. [https://doi.org/10.1016/1048-9843\(90\)90009-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/1048-9843(90)90009-7)
- Porter, C. O., Outlaw, R., Gale, J. P., & Cho, T. S. (2019). The use of online panel data in

- management research: A review and recommendations. *Journal of Management*, 45(1), 319-344. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206318811569>
- Rawolle, M., Strasser, A., Schultheiss, O. C. & Kehr, H. M. (2017). The motivating power of visionary images: Effects on motivation, affect, and behavior. *Journal of Personality*, 85(6), 769–781. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12285>
- Riketta, M. (2005). Organizational identification: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 66(2), 358–384. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2004.05.005>
- Rönkkö, M., & Cho, E. (2022). An updated guideline for assessing discriminant validity. *Organizational Research Methods*, 25(1), 6-14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428120968614>
- Sedikides, C., Hong, E. K., & Wildschut, T. (2023). Self-continuity. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 74, 333-361. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-032420-032236>
- Shaffer, J. A., DeGeest, D., & Li, A. (2016). Tackling the problem of construct proliferation: A guide to assessing the discriminant validity of conceptually related constructs. *Organizational Research Methods*, 19(1), 80–110. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428115598239>
- Shipp, A. J., Edwards, J. R., & Lambert, L. S. (2009). Conceptualization and measurement of temporal focus: The subjective experience of the past, present, and future. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 110(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2009.05.001>
- Shipp, A. J., & Jansen, K. J. (2021). The “other” time: A review of the subjective experience of time in organizations. *Academy of Management Annals*, 15(1), 299–334. <https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2018.0142>
- Smidts, A., Pruyn, A. T. H., & van Riel, C. B. M. (2001). The impact of employee communication and perceived external prestige on organizational identification.

Academy of Management Journal, 44(5), 1051–1062.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/3069448>

Stam, D., Lord, R. G., van Knippenberg, D., & Wisse, B. (2014). An image of who we might become: Vision communication, possible selves, and vision pursuit. *Organization Science*, 25(4), 1172–1194. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2013.0891>

Stam, D., van Knippenberg, D., & Wisse, B. (2010). Focusing on followers: The role of regulatory focus and possible selves in visionary leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 21(3), 457–468. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2010.03.009>

Strathman, A., Gleicher, F., Boninger, D. S., & Edwards, C. S. (1994). The consideration of future consequences: Weighing immediate and distant outcomes of behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 66(4), 742–752. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.66.4.742>

Strauss, K., Griffin, M. A., & Parker, S. K. (2012). Future work selves: How salient hoped-for identities motivate proactive career behaviors. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 97(3), 580–598. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026423>

Taylor, C. M., Cornelius, C. J., & Colvin, K. (2014). Visionary leadership and its relationship to organizational effectiveness. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 35(6), 566–583. <https://doi.org/10.1108/LODJ-10-2012-0130>

Trope, Y., & Liberman, N. (2010). Construal-level theory of psychological distance. *Psychological Review*, 117(2), 440–463. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018963>

van Knippenberg, D., van Knippenberg, B., De Cremer, D., & Hogg, M. A. (2004). Leadership, self, and identity: A review and research agenda. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 15(6), 825–856. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2004.09.002>

Venus, M., Johnson, R. E., Zhang, S., Wang, X.-H., & Lanaj, K. (2019a). Seeing the big picture: A within-person examination of leader construal level and vision

communication. *Journal of Management*, 45(7), 2666–2684.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206318761576>

Venus, M., Stam, D., & Van Knippenberg, D. (2019b). Visions of change as visions of continuity. *Academy of Management Journal*, 62(3), 667–690.

<https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2015.1196>

Wakslak, C. J., Nussbaum, S., Liberman, N., & Trope, Y. (2008). Representations of the self in the near and distant future. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95(4), 757–773. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012939>

Wiesenfeld, B. M., Reyt, J.-N., Brockner, J., & Trope, Y. (2017). Construal level theory in organizational research. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 4(1), 367–400. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032516-113115>

Williams, L. J., Hartman, N., & Cavazotte, F. (2010). Method variance and marker variables: A review and comprehensive CFA marker technique. *Organizational Research Methods*, 13(3), 477–514. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428110366036>

Wu, J. B., Tsui, A. S., & Kinicki, A. J. (2010). Consequences of differentiated leadership in groups. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53(1), 90-106. <https://journals.aom.org/doi/abs/10.5465/amj.2010.48037079>

Zacher, H., & Rudolph, C. W. (2021). Relationships between psychological contract breach and employee well-being and career-related behavior: The role of occupational future time perspective. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 42(1), 84–99. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2495>

Zhang, M., Ye, M., Peng, J., & Chen, Y. (2016). Future work self: Concept, measurement, and related research. *Advances in Psychological Science*, 24(5), 794-803. <https://journal.psych.ac.cn/xlkxjz/CN/10.3724/SP.J.1042.2016.00794>

Zhang, W., Wang, H., & Pearce, C. L. (2014). Consideration for future consequences as an antecedent of transformational leadership behavior: The moderating effects of perceived dynamic work environment. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 25(2), 329–343.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2013.09.002>

Table 1 Exploratory factor analyses for the FOI measure refinement in Study 1a

Items	Nine-item FOI	Seven-item FOI
1. When thinking about myself in the future, it is very easy for me to tie myself with this company.	0.69	0.72
2. I am very clear that I will identify with this company in the future.	0.72	0.73
3. I am very clear that this company will be an important reflection of whom I am going to be.	0.71	0.73
4. I am very clear that the successes in the future of this company will be the ones of my own.	0.75	0.76
5. When thinking about the future, it is very clear for me that I will feel proud of this company's future.	0.74	0.75
6. I can easily imagine that, when someone in the future praises this company, it will feel like a personal compliment.	0.64	
7. I can easily imagine that, when someone in the future criticizes this company, it will feel like a personal insult.	0.64	
8. It is very clear for me that I will be glad to be a member of this company in the future.	0.74	0.78
9. It is very clear for me that, in the future, I will be very interested in what others think about this company.	0.72	0.70

Note. FOI = future organizational identification

Table 2 The item discrimination (*a*) and difficulty parameters (*b*) of IRT analyses for the refined seven-item FOI in Study 1a

Item	<i>a</i>	<i>b1</i>	<i>b2</i>	<i>b3</i>	<i>b4</i>
1	1.84	-3.31	-2.12	-0.89	0.77
2	1.80	-3.38	-2.05	-0.75	0.52
3	1.81	-3.21	-2.13	-0.80	0.57
4	1.98	-2.73	-1.37	-0.51	0.73
5	2.11	-2.91	-1.91	-0.92	0.47
8	2.35	-3.14	-2.05	-1.03	0.42
9	1.63	-3.17	-2.04	-0.87	0.55

Table 3 Descriptive statistics and correlations of variables

	Mean	SD	Gender	Age	Education	Tenure	OI	AOC	ATCB	VCM	VCN	FF
1. Gender												
2. Age	33.1	6.2	-0.11**									
3. Education			-0.05	-0.26**								
4. Tenure	6.92	4.60	-0.15**	0.66**	-0.08							
5. OI	3.91	0.74	0.03	0.06	-0.01	0.13**						
6. AOC	3.91	0.77	-0.01	0.12**	0.01	0.17**	0.79**					
7. ATCB	4.20	0.59	-0.02	-0.03	0.23**	0.08	0.22**	0.24**				
8. VCM	4.06	0.52	0.05	0.03	0.01	0.05	0.57**	0.64**	0.23**			
9. VCN	4.03	0.56	0.04	-0.04	0.04	0.05	0.50**	0.56**	0.24**	0.61**		
10. FF	2.98	0.45	-0.03	-0.06	0.04	0.06	0.44**	0.42**	0.23**	0.51**	0.51**	
11. FOI	3.94	0.69	-0.02	0.05	-0.01	0.14**	0.66**	0.73**	0.21**	0.59**	0.63**	0.47**

Note. Gender: 1=male, 2=female; EDU=education (1=junior high school or below, 2=senior high school, 3=junior college, 4=bachelor’s degree, 5=master’s degree or above); OI=organizational identification; AOC=affective organizational commitment; ATCB= Attitude Toward the Color Blue; VCM=vision communication; VCN=vision of continuity; FF=future focus; FOI =future organizational identification.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 4 Hierarchical regression analyses of the mediation test

Variables	Future focus			Future organizational identification (FOI)		
	Estimate	SE	95% CI	Estimate	SE	95% CI
Control variables						
Gender	-0.05	0.03	[-0.11, 0.02]	-0.03	0.04	[-0.11, 0.05]
Age	-0.01	0.00	[-0.02, 0.00]	-0.01	0.00	[-0.02, 0.00]
Education	0.01	0.03	[-0.05, 0.07]	-0.04	0.04	[-0.11, 0.03]
Tenure	0.01	0.00	[0.00, 0.02]	0.01	0.01	[0.00, 0.02]
OI	0.12	0.04	[0.05, 0.19]	0.16	0.04	[0.07, 0.24]
AOC	0.01	0.04	[-0.06, 0.08]	0.40	0.04	[0.31, 0.49]
Predictors						
VCM	0.33	0.04	[0.25, 0.41]	0.20	0.05	[0.10, 0.30]
FF				0.19	0.05	[0.09, 0.29]
R^2	0.30			0.59		
F	33.29			94.24		

Note. Note. Gender: 1=male, 2=female; EDU=education (1=junior high school or below, 2=senior high school, 3=junior college, 4=bachelor’s degree, 5=master’s degree or above); OI=organizational identification; AOC= affective organizational commitment; VCM=vision communication.

Table 5 Direct and indirect effects of the mediation test

	Estimate	SE	95% CI
Direct effect of vision communication on FOI	0.20	0.05	[0.10, 0.30]
Indirect effect of vision communication on FOI through FF	0.06	0.02	[0.02, 0.11]

Note. FF=future focus; FOI=future organizational identification.

Table 6 Conditional indirect effects for the hypothesized moderated mediation

Vision of continuity (mean centered)	Future organizational identification (FOI)		
	Estimate	BootSE	95% BootCI
Low (-0.56, -1SD)	0.03	0.01	[0.01, 0.06]
High (0.56, +1SD)	0.07	0.03	[0.02, 0.13]
Index of moderated mediation	0.04	0.02	[0.01, 0.07]

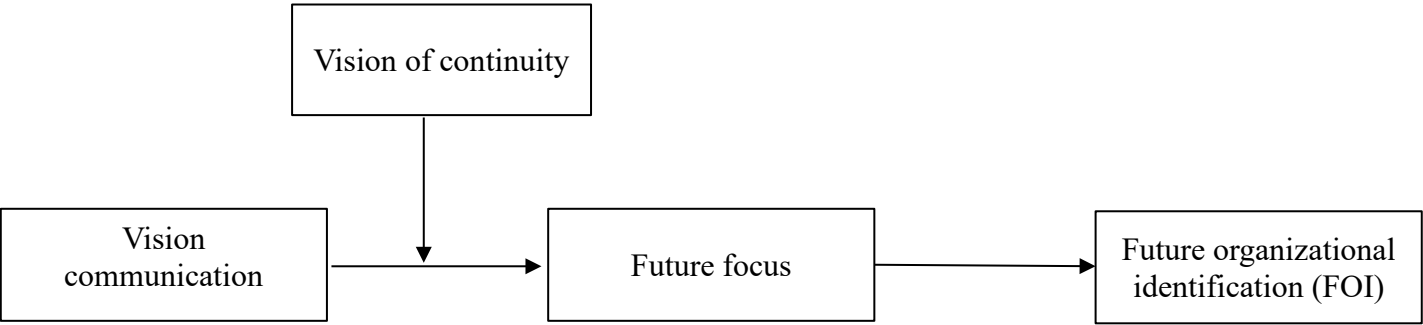


Figure 1 The conceptual model

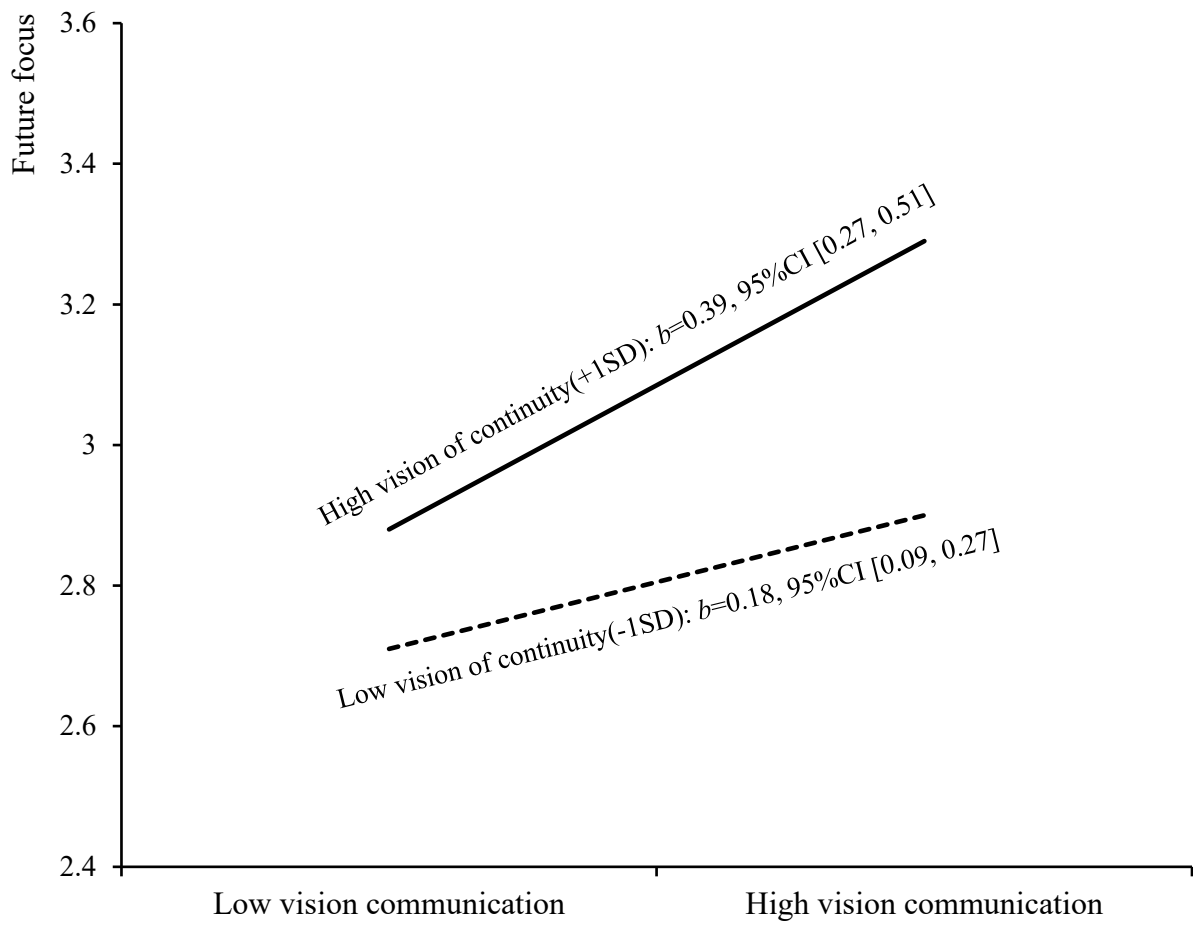


Figure 2 Interaction of vision communication and vision of continuity on future focus