The (In)Credibles:
On Leader Credibility of Public Managers

Mads Pieter van Luttervelt

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PhD Dissertation

Politica

To Arne

(who has taught me a lot about credibility)

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Acknowledgments

Producing a PhD thesis is a lot like climbing a big mountain. It's hard, strenuous, and seemingly endless work. You may occasionally suffer from what feels like altitude sickness, and if you don't take it seriously but keep on pushing for the summit, you might lose your foothold entirely and fall into the abyss. Just like mountaineering, you oftentimes cannot control the environment, and instead you have to accept that the environment has a great deal of control over you and, in this recognition, try to navigate it as best you can. Just like climbing a big mountain, you eventually look up and out and realize how small you are in comparison to the world that is under your feet and how much your deeds fade in comparison to those who came before you a decade or a century ago. You may occasionally stop and ask yourself whether this makes any sense at all and whether it is worth the effort. But then you look around you and take in the feeling of self-determination. It's the feeling that you can decide which paths to take, that you can follow your instincts and give it a go and most often backtrack should you find yourself on what seemed like a promising route but revealed itself as a dead end. Thinking about this, it is not so bad after all. Further, even though you are the climber, you may not have to do it on your own. In fact, you may have an entire expedition behind you. Good people whom you can trust and who are knowledgeable about all aspects of mountaineering and even want to share it with you. Some may have the technical skills required to climb a steep patch of ice, some may have extensive knowledge about the terrain, weather, and risks of avalanches based on decades of experience, and some may be experts in logistics, restitution, or base camp management. Some of these people may even be climbing alongside you fixed to the other end of the very same rope that is tied into your harness. With these people, you can take cover when the storm comes and enjoy the beautiful views and a cup of coffee during pauses. Eventually, if you keep putting one foot in front of the other, you will reach the summit, take a few minutes to take it in and enjoy the view, and, perhaps, while standing there you realize that you might have seen something that no one else has seen before you. It may not be Atlantis or a hidden range of mighty peaks but perhaps a rock or two, and that also counts.

I am eternally grateful to everyone who has been part of my PhD expedition in one way or another and happy that I got to share so much of it with so many of you.

Mads Pieter van Luttervelt
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Chapter 1:
Introduction

Public managers are essential actors in the functioning of the public sector. While it is the job of politicians to make the overall priorities of a given society and adopt policies that reflect such priorities, it is the job of public sector managers and employees to turn policy into reality (de Graaf, 2011; Fowler, 2023; Meier & O'Toole, 2006). In this regard, public managers play a key role because they are responsible for managing public organizations, which involves organizing the work, operationalizing the politically formulated goals into the organizational context, and supporting that employees contribute to the realization of these goals. Public managers thus exercise leadership.

The interest for studying leadership in the public sector has developed substantially over recent decades (Backhaus & Vogel, 2022; Chapman et al., 2016; Ospina et al., 2017; Van Wart, 2013; Vogel & Masal, 2015; Vogel & Werkmeister, 2021). Leadership can be defined as "behaviors aimed at influencing and facilitating efforts to reach shared goals" (Yukl, 2012, p. 66). Several studies indicate that leadership exercised by public managers can have an impact on employee and organizational outcomes (Bakker et al., 2022; Bellé, 2013a; Brewer & Selden, 2000; Fernandez, 2004; Jacobsen et al., 2022; Jacobsen & Andersen, 2015; Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010; Van Wart, 2013). The growing interest in and perceived importance of studying what leadership behaviors are relevant for public managers to utilize in their efforts to accomplish organizational objectives have resulted in a plethora of concepts used to describe different – and sometimes similar – types of leadership behavior (Backhaus & Vogel, 2022, p. 988; Wart, 2013).

While it is important to study both the causes and the consequences of different types of leadership behavior, this dissertation takes a different perspective to the study of leadership by managers in the public sector by focusing not primarily on the *content* of what public managers do but on their followers' expectations about the *consistency* of what they say and what they do. More specifically, the dissertation focuses on *leader credibility*, which the dissertation defines as "the plausibility followers assign to their leader acting in accordance with communicated intentions" (Jakobsen et al., 2022, p. 5; van Luttervelt et al., 2021, 2024). Employing this perspective for the study of leadership in the public sector is motivated based on two observations.

The first observation is that leadership is always exercised in the relationship between human beings (Kouzes & Posner, 1990, p. 29; Yukl, 2013). This means that there will always be a sender (the leader) and a receiver (the

follower) of leadership (Jacobsen & Andersen, 2015; Wright & Nishii, 2007). According to the literature on communication, the receiver's perception of the characteristics of the sender is very important to how the receiver processes and responds to the messages conveyed by the sender (McCroskey & Teven, 1999, p. 90). Thus, from an interpersonal perspective, it is relevant to study leader credibility.

The second observation is that leadership is not only exercised in the relationship between human beings. It is also exercised in a given institutional context where persons inhabit positions (Dixit & Nalebuff, 1991), and for public managers in democratic societies, this institutional context is that of the public sector where politicians are elected to make decisions on behalf of the citizens (de Graaf, 2011; Fowler, 2023; Meier & O'Toole, 2006). According to the public administration literature, public managers may face different incentives and rules due to their different positions, and consequently, institutions shape what public managers both can and want to do (Dixit & Nalebuff, 1991; Jakobsen et al., 2022; Miller, 2005; Waterman & Meier, 1998). Thus, from an institutional perspective, it is also relevant to study leader credibility of public managers.

Focusing on credibility in leadership generally and in public administration and management in particular is not a novel endeavor. In fact, Aristotle highlighted the importance of credibility (ethos) as a powerful means of persuasion some time ago (Cope, 1877). In more recent times, scholars such as James Kouzes and Barry Posner as well as Gary Yukl have also stressed the importance of credibility in leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2011, 1990, 2017; Yukl, 2012). The latter argues that credibility makes it easier to follow leaders (Yukl, 2012, p. 77), while the former simply conclude that "Credibility is the foundation of leadership" (Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. 37).

In the public administration literature, scholars such as Gary Miller and Andrew Whitford (Miller, 2000; Miller, 1992, 2005; Miller & Whitford, 2002, 2007; Miller & Whitford, 2016) have also focused on the credibility of public managers, arguing that public managers may gain credibility based on two sources: 1) having a reputation for being committed to acting consistently based on set of principles, or 2) by being constrained to obey formal rules that prevent the violation of commitments (Dull, 2009, p. 258; Miller, 1992, p. 221; North & Weingast, 1989, p. 804). The latter of these types – which has gained the most attention in this literature – addresses problems of credible commitment, which refer to situations where principals (politicians, public managers, etc.) may be tempted to and capable of altering decisions that they have already made to obtain short-term gains (Miller, 2005). The argument is that the less constrained they are by rules, the more prone public managers will be to disregard the agreements they have made (North & Weingast, 1989). Thus,

this strand of research offers insights into how institutional design can support or challenge the leader credibility of public managers.

1.1 Research Questions and Contributions

The aim of this dissertation is to expand on our existing knowledge about leader credibility in public organizations in a manner that enables the production of cumulative knowledge by integrating different relevant perspectives. This first requires distinguishing between the different perspectives on leadership credibility (i.e. the background concept) in a systematic way (Adcock & Collier, 2001; Perry, 1996) and then reintegrating the perspectives (Jakobsen et al., 2022). This exercise is necessary because credibility is an elusive concept that is perhaps intuitively easy to understand but difficult to define as it can relate to various objects and perceptions of them. Consequently, there are multiple and overlapping definitions and conceptualizations of leader(ship) credibility available in the academic literature, which makes for a murky concept that is often conflated with other concepts (Williams et al., 2022). A murky concept is problematic if we want to be able to build cumulative knowledge, among other things, because it makes it difficult to produce a precise measurement of the concept (Adcock & Collier, 2001). Thus, the first research question that this dissertation seeks to answer is the following:

RQ1: How can leader credibility be conceptualized and measured?

Together, the conceptualization and measurement create the foundation of the dissertation to build a theoretical argument pertaining to the role of leader credibility in the study of leadership in public organizations and makes it possible to test such arguments empirically. As already mentioned, scholars argue that leader credibility is important for the effects of leadership (Dull, 2009; Gabris, 2004; Gabris et al., 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2011; Miller, 1992; Williams et al., 2018; Yukl, 2013). By effect I mean the degree to which leadership behaviors impact the attitudes and behaviors of those exposed to the leadership behavior. Despite claims of the importance of leader credibility, surprisingly few studies have actually examined the role of leader credibility in relation to the effect of leadership on employee outcomes empirically. This is the case in the generic leadership literature (Cooper et al., 2020; Hermalin, 2007; Kouzes & Posner, 1990; Men, 2012; Williams et al., 2022) and even more so in the public sector context (Gabris, 2004; Gabris et al., 2001; Gabris & Ihrke, 1996). In addition, no study prior to this dissertation (at least to the best of my knowledge) integrates both the personal and the positional components of leader credibility. Thus, the second research question that the dissertation aims to provide an answer to is as follows:

RQ2: How and to what extent does leader credibility matter for the effect of leadership behaviors of public managers?

Although the dissertation does not find evidence that leader credibility matters for the effect of leadership in general, the findings suggest that leader credibility matters for the effect of leadership in some relevant situations. More specifically, this concerns situations where public managers exercise transformational leadership in the context of organizational change and when the outcome of interest is related to the individual employee rather than the employees as a collective. Given the importance of leader credibility in these situations, it becomes relevant to theorize about and empirically examine what public managers can do to build and preserve leader credibility. It also becomes relevant to theorize about whether public managers' efforts aimed at increasing their leader credibility in the eyes of their subordinates may be traded off against other important considerations. A central concern in this regard is acting loyally towards the public managers' superiors, who are ultimately the politicians elected by the citizens to represent their interests and therefore have the legitimate mandate to make decisions for society (de Graaf, 2011; Fowler, 2023; Fry & Nigro, 1996; Meier & O'Toole, 2006). Thus, the dissertation also attempts to provide an answer to the third and final research question:

RQ 3: Why can it be difficult to obtain and maintain leader credibility as a public manager?

Considering the dissertation as an entity, it delivers three cumulative contributions that are important to research in public administration and management: one for each research question. The first contribution is to integrate the person-focused perspective on leader credibility from the generic management and leadership literature with the institutional perspective that is primarily dominant in the public administration literature. The dissertation shows both conceptually and empirically that leader credibility consists of a personal and a positional component; that both are relevant to consider when studying leader credibility in a public sector context; and that by integrating these perspectives, we can learn more about leader credibility and its role in public management than by relying only on one of these perspectives.

The second contribution is to show that the role of leader credibility in the relationship between leadership and outcomes is more complex than what is assumed in the literature. Across multiple studies employing different research designs in several research settings, the dissertation shows that leader credibility matters for the effects of transformational leadership in situations of organizational change and in relation to individual rather than collective

employee outcomes. As such, the dissertation contributes to understanding the importance of leader credibility in public management and its scope.

The third contribution is to theorize about the fact that public managers are part of a political-administrative hierarchy in which there are other important considerations than being a credible manager such as displaying loyalty to superiors and that it may not always be possible for public managers to accommodate both considerations simultaneously. The dissertation points out in which situations public managers can be expected to succeed in being both a loyal agent and a credible principal and in which situations they are confronted with a dilemma and must prioritize. The dissertation provides experimental evidence that when a fictional manager prioritizes to accommodate changes in political priorities, thereby deviating from her communicated leadership initiatives, her employees evaluate her as less credible. The extent to which this is the case depends on both the initial investments the manager has made in the leadership initiatives and how she communicates about the decision to deviate from the course to the employees.

1.2 The Content of the Dissertation

Figure 1.1 provides a graphical overview of the dissertation. Leader credibility is the main phenomenon of interest. As stated, the dissertation has the aim to examine how leader credibility influences the relationship between different types of leadership behaviors and different outcomes at the individual and collective level. The dissertation is also concerned with the question of how the institutional context matters for leader credibility.

Figure 1.1: Overview of the Dissertation
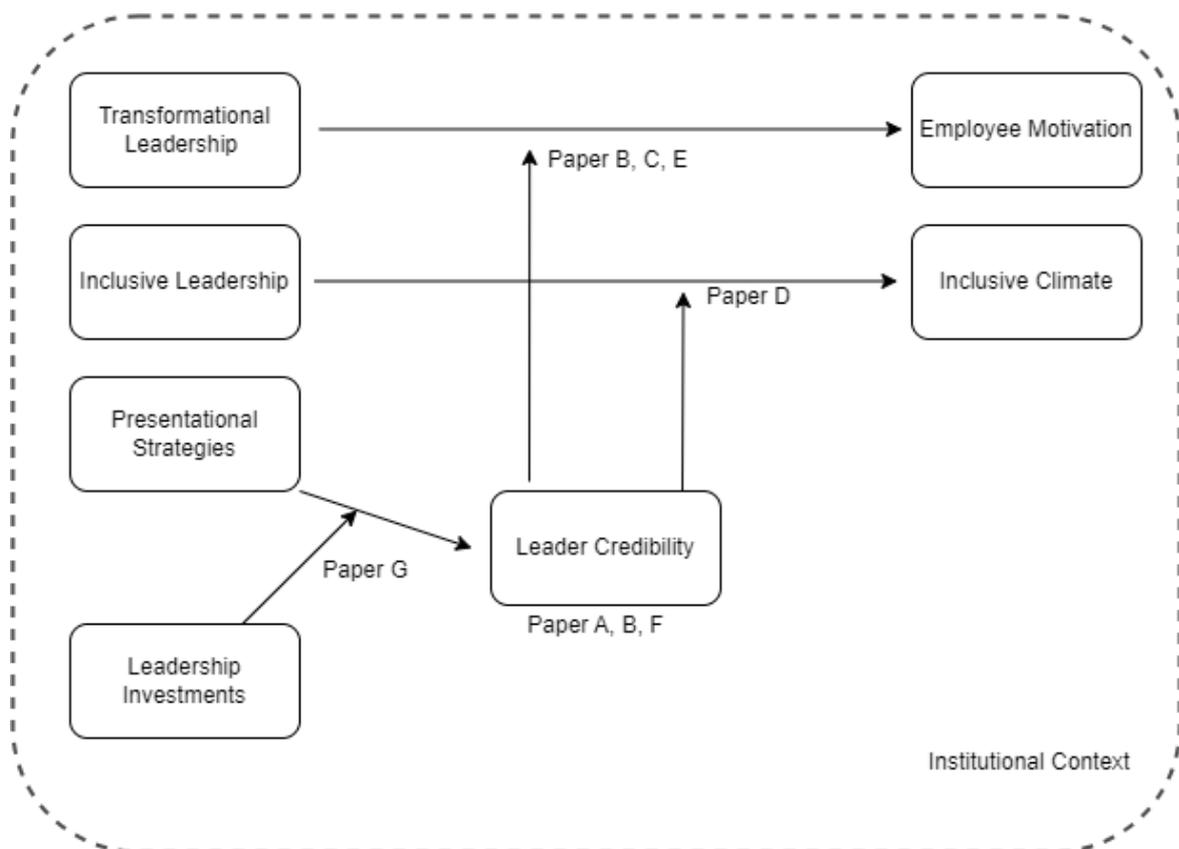
The dissertation is composed of a series of articles and this summary. The summary gives an overview of the content of the dissertation as an entity and attempts to incorporate the different elements into a coherent narrative. It also contains some analyses that are not part of the individual articles. The articles address one or more of the research questions guiding the dissertation as well as one or more of the boxes in the graphical overview shown in Figure 1.1 above. In addition to the summary, the dissertation consists of seven research articles.

A: Jakobsen, Mads L. F., Andersen, Lotte B. & van Luttervelt, Mads Pieter (2022). Theorizing Leadership Credibility: The Concept and Causes of the Perceived Credibility of Leadership Initiatives. Published in *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance*.

B: van Luttervelt, Mads Pieter (2023). Separating and Integrating Personal and Positional Leader Credibility: Concept and Scale Development. Revised and resubmitted to *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance*.

C: van Luttervelt, Mads Pieter, Benthem, Mikkel S., Rasmussen, Johan K., Jacobsen, Christian B., & Andersen, Lotte B (2021). Walking the Talk? The Importance of Personal Leader Credibility for Employee Motivation When Transformational Leadership Is Exerted. Published in *Politica*.

D: van Luttervelt, Mads Pieter (2024). (In)Credible Inclusive? A Panel Study on Inclusive Leadership, Leader Credibility, and Inclusive Climate. Accepted for publication in *Review of Public Personnel Administration*.

E: van Luttervelt, Mads Pieter, Hansen, Ane-Kathrine L., Jacobsen, Christian B. (2024). Hollow Talk? A Panel Study on Leader Credibility, Transformational Leadership and Public Service Motivation. Working Paper.

F: van Luttervelt, Mads Pieter (2024). When the Servant Is Also Master: A Theory on the Dual Role of Public Managers. Invited for a revise and resubmit in *Public Administration Review*.

G: van Luttervelt, Mads Pieter, Grøn, Anders B., & Benthem, Mikkel S. (2024). Deviating from the Course: How Presentational Strategies and Leadership Investments Affect Leader Credibility and Collaborate Engagement. Published in *International Public Management Journal*.

Article A is a conceptual and theoretical paper that serves the purpose of taking the broad concept of leadership credibility and, in a systematic way, specifying the concept into several distinguishable concepts that are then reintegrated into a causal model. The article shows that leadership credibility concepts can be classified based on whether they are internal or external as well as individual or collective phenomena. The function of the article in the dissertation is to demarcate the core concept of the dissertation – leader credibility – from related concepts in the literature.

Article B is a conceptual and empirical study that focuses on conceptualizing and measuring leader credibility. The article distinguishes between and integrates the leadership literature, focusing on leaders as persons, and the public administration literature, focusing on leadership positions in its conceptualization of leader credibility. Based on survey data from approximately 600 occupational therapists employed in Danish municipalities and 1200 high school teachers employed in the Danish upper secondary schools, the article shows by means of factor and regression analysis that it is not only theoretically possible and relevant to distinguish between and integrate a personal and a positional perspective on leader credibility but also empirically possible and relevant.

Article C is a survey-experimental study that examines the effect of leader credibility on follower motivation in a situation where the manager exercises

transformational leadership. The survey experiment utilizes video vignettes to manipulate the behavior of a fictive manager and measures follower motivation by both subjective and objectives means. The survey was completed by 817 American respondents recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk. The results show that leader credibility affects motivation in a context where the leader exercises transformational leadership.

Article D is a panel study that examines whether leader credibility moderates the relationship between inclusive leadership and inclusive climate. The data is based on a balanced panel of Danish high school teachers (N = 705) working in the general upper secondary schools in Denmark. Using fixed-effects regression, the study shows that contrary to the preregistered hypothesis, leader credibility does not moderate the relationship between inclusive leadership and inclusive climate. Explorative analyses indicate that the role of leader credibility in relation to leadership may be dependent on the type of leadership and the type of outcome in relation to which leader credibility is studied.

Article E is a panel study that examines whether leader credibility moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and public service motivation (PSM). It is based on a balanced panel consisting of 673 Danish high school teachers, and we utilize fixed-effects regression to study the preregistered hypotheses. The findings show that contrary to the expectations, there is no statistically significant effect of the changes of transformational leadership on changes in the PSM of the teachers. Such an effect only exists when leader credibility is introduced as a moderator. In a series of robustness analyses, we scrutinize our findings and show that different organizational circumstances between rural and urban schools seem to condition the results.

Article F develops a theory that focuses on how we can understand the dual role that all public managers face due to their position in the political-administrative hierarchy as both principal and agent. The article promotes the argument that because of the dual role, it is relevant for public managers to be concerned about both their loyalty towards their principals and their credibility in the eyes of their agents. To explain how public managers can tackle their dual role, the article develops a typology of four ideal types that differ in their prioritization of loyalty and credibility and argues that depending on the distribution of preferences and information between the public managers and their principals and agents, using a strategy based on each of the four ideal types may be more or less viable in a given situation.

Article G is a survey-experimental study that focuses on the effects of communication on leader credibility when public managers terminate leadership initiatives. This study is also based on the occupational therapist sample (N = 499) and utilizes video vignettes to manipulate the behavior of a fictious public

manager. More specifically, the study examines the effects of different presentational strategies on leader credibility and shows that terminating leadership initiatives is damaging to the manager's credibility, but the way the decision to terminate the leadership initiative is presented by the manager has an effect on the magnitude of the loss of credibility. In addition, the study shows that it is especially damaging to a manager's leader credibility to terminate a leadership initiative if the manager has made an initial high investment in the initiative.

1.3 The Structure of the Dissertation

The summary consists of six chapters including this introductory chapter. Chapter 2 focuses on introducing the core concept: leader credibility, as well as other central concepts. In Chapter 3, I present the central theoretical argument of the dissertation, focusing most prominently on how leader credibility is expected to matter for the effects of leadership on employee outcomes and why it may be difficult for public managers to obtain and maintain leader credibility. In Chapter 4, I turn to the methodological considerations of the dissertation, including a discussion of the research settings, the data, and the designs on which the dissertation relies to investigate leader credibility empirically. Chapter 5 highlights the key findings of the dissertation, and Chapter 6 concludes by answering the research question, presenting the contributions, and discussing the limitations of the dissertation and what the implications are for research and practice.

Chapter 2:
The Concepts of Leader Credibility

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the core concepts of the dissertation. The chapter primarily focuses on leader credibility, but it also presents other concepts that are central to the dissertation. In the following, I will define leader credibility. I will then turn to the conceptualization of leader credibility and how it differs from the related concepts of managerial trust and trustworthiness. Finally, I will briefly introduce the other core concepts of the dissertation.

2.1 Leadership Credibility: The Background Concept

Together with Jakobsen and Andersen (2022), I argue that leadership credibility either directly or indirectly is considered an important phenomenon in public administration and leadership research (Chapman et al., 2016; Dull, 2009; Gabris, 2004; Gabris et al., 2001; Gabris & Ihrke, 1996; Orazi et al., 2013; Ospina et al., 2017; Van Wart, 2013). However, it remains unclear exactly what the leadership credibility concept covers, and therefore, it is an important task to examine this concept and to systematically distinguish between concepts that are captured within the broad concept of leadership credibility yet describe different phenomena. To distinguish between these concepts in a systematic way, we use the quadrant model (Tønnesvang et al., 2015). The quadrant model can be used to categorize phenomena according to two dimensions: whether it is an internal (subjective) or external (objective) phenomenon and whether the phenomenon is individual or collective (Jakobsen et al., 2022, p. 2). Table 2.1 displays the quadrant model.

Table 2.1: The Quadrant Model

	Internal	External
Individual	I. Intention/belief/perception	II. Behaviour/initiative/action
Collective	IV. Shared value/belief/perception	III. System/process/organization

Note: Reprint from Jakobsen et al. (2022: 2).

Table 2.2: Overview of Systematized Concepts of Leadership Credibility

Background concept	Leadership credibility				
Systematized concepts	Perceived credibility of leadership initiative	Perceived leader credibility	Leader's investments stated in leadership initiative	Informal leadership initiative rules	Formal leadership initiative rules
Conceptual definitions	*The plausibility followers assign to a given leadership initiative being realized*	*The plausibility followers assign to the leader acting in accordance with communicated intentions*	*Signalling support of leadership initiatives through claims of ownership*	*Norms about who can make what decisions in the realization of a leadership initiative and benefits and costs connected to the realization of this leadership initiative*	*Formal prescriptions concerning who can make what decisions in the realization of a leadership initiative and benefits and costs connected to the realization of this leadership initiative*
Quadrants	Internal individual (Internal collective if shared)		External individual	Internal collective	External collective

Note: Reprint from Jakobsen et al. (2022: 5).

Using the quadrant model, we distill five systematized concepts based on the background concept (leadership credibility). As is evident from Table 2.2, these five concepts differ in terms of their location in the quadrant model. Importantly, there are systematized concepts of leadership credibility present in all four quadrants of the model, which underlines that leadership credibility indeed can be perceived from different perspectives. It is also important to note that the five concepts that are present in the table are not necessarily an exhaustive list of relevant systematized leadership credibility concepts (Jakobsen et al., 2022, p. 9). For the purpose of this summary, I will not go through each of the concepts in Table 2.2 but instead focus mainly on leader credibility and briefly on investments in stated leadership initiatives.

2.2 Defining Leader Credibility

This dissertation defines leader credibility as "the plausibility followers assign to their leader acting in accordance with communicated intentions" (Jakobsen et al., 2022, p. 5; van Luttervelt et al., 2021). It is named "leader" credibility because using the word "leader" has the advantage of being able to describe both a person who leads and a leadership position. Thus, it becomes possible to encapsulate both a personal and a positional perspective on leader credibility simultaneously with one term. In the following, I will elaborate on three of the core elements of the definition of leader credibility.

First, the definition emphasizes that leader credibility is assessed by the follower, who can be understood as a subordinate of a given public manager in a hierarchy (van Luttervelt, 2023: 7). Defining leader credibility as a follower-perceived phenomenon is important because it is the follower's experiences with and beliefs about the leader that shape their reactions and responses to the leader's behavior (Jacobsen & Andersen, 2015; O'Keefe, 1990). While public managers have an actual degree to which their communicated intentions correspond to their actions, different followers of these managers are not likely to be able to observe every step the manager takes. Even if they were, they may still assess the correspondence between the words and deeds of the manager differently due to differences in how they see and interpret the world (Caldwell et al., 2010, p. 500; Chng et al., 2018; Hernandez et al., 2014).

Second, another core element of the definition is the focus on *alignment* between communicated intentions and the following actions of the manager. Other definitions of leader credibility include the specific *content* of the words and actions of a leader in their understanding of credibility (van Luttervelt, 2023: 7-8). For instance, Kouzes and Posner (2017) and other scholars argue that leader credibility is also about inspiring a shared vision and facilitating collaboration (Gabris et al., 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. 29). By including

the content of specific behaviors in their understanding of leader credibility, these scholars risk conflating leader credibility with specific leadership behaviors; in this case, transformational leadership (Bass, 1990; Jensen, Andersen, Bro, et al., 2019a) or transversal leadership (Grøn et al., 2024). The focus on credibility as only pertaining to the alignment of communicated intentions and actions has an additional advantage in comparison with the abovementioned perspectives because it does not reduce the applicability of leader credibility to certain types of behavior (van Luttervelt, 2023: 8).

Third, the definition implies that leader credibility is a prospective phenomenon (i.e. an expectation about the future) because it concerns the *plausibility* that the follower assigns to the extent to which managers will act in accordance with communicated intentions (van Luttervelt, 2023, 8; van Luttervelt, Grøn & Benthem, 2024). Plausibility refers to beliefs about whether something will occur without evidence it actually will occur (Holmes & Parker, 2017, p. 271). In lack of evidence, the follower will decide whether there is good reason to believe that the manager will act in accordance with stated intentions based on an assessment of certain qualities of and experiences with the manager (Chng et al., 2018; Jan, 2003, p. 271; O'Keefe, 1990; Simons, 2002).

2.3 Conceptualizing Leader Credibility

The dissertation conceptualizes leader credibility as a formative and multifaceted concept. Paper B provides a detailed account of arguments and the decisions related to the conceptualization, and therefore, the purpose of this section is to give an overview of the conceptualization and not to go into detail with every decision leading up to the final conceptualization. In the dissertation, leader credibility is conceptualized as a formative construct because leader credibility is formed by *personal leader credibility* and *positional leader credibility* (Paper B). Figure 2.1 provides a graphical illustration of the conceptualization. Personal leader credibility is defined as "the degree to which the individual follower finds it plausible that the leader *as a person* will act in accordance with stated intentions" (Paper B: 10). Positional leader credibility can be defined as "the degree to which the individual follower finds it plausible that their leader – regardless of the *specific* person in the leadership position – acts in accordance with stated intentions" (Paper B: 10).

Figure 2.1: Graphical Illustration of Leader Credibility Conceptualization

Personal Leader Credibility   Leader Credibility   Positional Leader Credibility
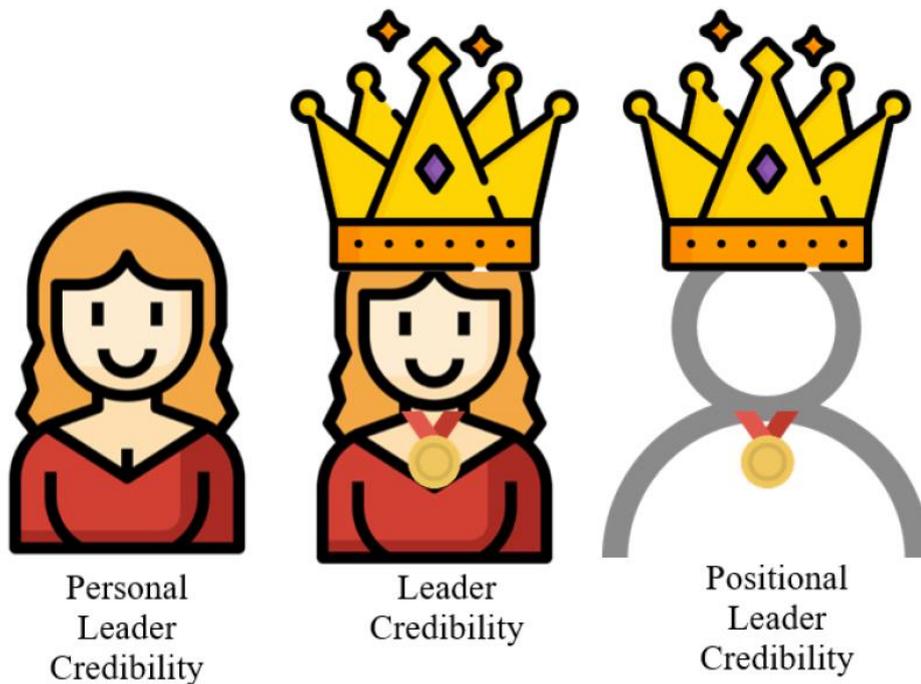
Note: Reprint from van Luttervelt (2024: 10).

Personal Leader Credibility is a formative construct in itself that is based on follower assessments of the sincerity, competence, and behavioral integrity of the *person* being the leader. Sincerity refers to the follower's perception of the degree to which the leader's communicated intentions are a reliable reflection of the leader's actual intentions. Taking into account the sincerity of the person in the leadership position is important in the assessment of personal leader credibility because if the follower does not believe in the leader's words of the person being their leader, then they will not believe the leader to act in accordance with them (Caldwell & Ndalamba, 2017; Campbell, 1993; Kouzes & Posner, 2011, p. 10). Competence refers to the degree to which the follower perceives the leader is capable of acting in accordance with communicated intentions (Chng et al., 2018, p. 65; Kim et al., 2009, p. 1439). If the leader is perceived as incompetent, it may be hard to believe that the leader will follow through on communicated intentions – even though the leader may be perceived as sincere (Paper B: 11). Finally, behavioral integrity refers to the follower's perception of the actual alignment of the leader's past communicated intentions and actions (Moorman et al., 2013; Simons, 2002). The follower's assessment of the leader's personal behavioral integrity matters for their assessment of the leader credibility of the person because it establishes a pattern of behavior that informs the follower about the predictability of the leader (Moorman et al., 2013, p. 427; Norton et al., 2014, p. 519).

Positional leader credibility is also a formative construct in itself that is formed by two overall components. The first components pertain to the reputation of the leadership position (Dull, 2009; Miller, 1992). More specifically, it pertains to the sincerity, competence, and behavioral integrity of former inhabitants (i.e. persons) of the leadership position. Thus, the follower may ask the following: Can I generally count on people in this leadership position to say what they mean, to be capable of following through on their leadership initiatives, and to act consistently in line with their communicated intentions? (Paper B: 12). The second component refers to how followers perceive what the leadership position can and cannot do (Dixit & Nalebuff, 1991; Jakobsen et al., 2022; Miller, 1992, p. 225). The idea behind this component is that any leadership position has a formal competence that is regulated through certain rules (Jakobsen et al., 2022) and that these rules also shape the incentives that persons in the given position face (North & Weingast, 1989, p. 804).

In summary, leader credibility is formed by both personal and positional leader credibility, both of which are formed by other concepts. It is important to note that while it is the argument of the dissertation that both the personal and the positional leader credibility components (and their sub-components) are important to a follower's assessment of their manager's leader credibility, it is sufficient to have information regarding only one sub-component to assess a manager's leader credibility. Additional information will enable the follower to make a more comprehensive assessment, but it is not a necessary condition. This means that leader credibility can be characterized as a "family resemblance" type of concept, which is based on the idea that the presence of any of the sub-level components of the concept is sufficient for the phenomenon to fall into the concept category, while none of the sub-level components are necessary (Goertz, 2006, p. 36).

2.4 Demarcating Credibility from Trust

There are many studies in both the generic management literature and the public management literature that focuses on trust or trustworthiness in relation to managers (Caldwell et al., 2010; Caldwell & Ndalamba, 2017; Cho & Ringquist, 2011; Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006; Kramer, 1999). Oftentimes, trust, trustworthiness, and credibility are used interchangeably in the literature. However, there is a very important difference between credibility and these two other concepts (see Paper B: 16, for an extensive discussion). Where leader credibility is a neutral concept in the sense that it does not address the content of the behavior of the leader but the expected consistency of it, trust and trustworthiness are about the expectations of the content of the behavior by managers. One of the most used definitions of trust is "[a] psychological

state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability [to another] based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another" (Rousseau et al., 1998, p. 395). Thus, trust can be seen as a feeling that will make one accept vulnerability towards someone else (the manager) because of expectations of *positive* outcomes from that person. Managerial trustworthiness is about whether someone (the manager) is *worthy* of being trusted. In that sense, managerial trust is similar to leader credibility because it is a perception based on an assessment of the manager, but they differ in terms of the expectations of the consequences of the manager's behavior. Specifically, trust implies an expectation of positive outcomes while credibility does not.

2.5 Other Central Concepts

In addition to leader credibility, there are several other concepts that play an important role in the different papers of the dissertation. In the following, I will briefly introduce transformational leadership and inclusive leadership. These are the two types of leadership behavior that serve as the leadership cases of the dissertation. Following this, I will briefly define the concepts of leadership investments and presentational strategies that are central to Paper G. Finally, I will define motivation and inclusive climate, which are the central employee outcomes of the dissertation. Motivation is a phenomenon attached to the individual, while inclusive climate is a phenomenon attached to the collective – more specifically, the organizational level in the case of the dissertation. It is beneficial to examine both individual and collective phenomena to investigate whether leader credibility plays a role in relation to both levels.

2.5.1 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership plays a key role in the dissertation because it serves as the leadership case in several of the studies of this dissertation (papers B, C, and E). I have chosen to focus on transformational leadership for four reasons. First, it is among the most – if not the most – studied type of leadership in the generic and public management literature (Backhaus & Vogel, 2022, p. 991; Vogel & Masal, 2015) and also a key component in many leadership training programs (Jacobsen et al., 2022). Therefore, it is highly relevant to examine whether leader credibility matters for the effectiveness of transformational leadership, and if so, how. Second, transformational leadership is a particularly relevant type of leadership behavior in the public sector because there are limited opportunities to base leadership on the use of monetary incentives in the public sector (Miller & Whitford, 2007). Third, there are many studies that have examined the relationship between transformational leadership and employee motivation including PSM (Bellé, 2013b;

Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010; Pandey et al., 2010). This is relevant because one of the arguments of the dissertation is that leader credibility matters by boosting or dampening the effect of leadership on employee motivation. Fourth, transformational leadership is about the manager's effort to inspire members of the organization to act in a way that is beneficial to realize an important vision for the organization (Jensen, Andersen, Bro, et al., 2019a). Thus, by exercising transformational leadership, public managers set a course for the organization and provide reasons for employees to follow that course. This makes it highly relevant to study what employees think of their managers in terms of them being consistent in their efforts themselves (Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010).

How to define and conceptualize the concept of transformational leadership has been heavily debated in the literature. In the original formulation of transformational leadership, Bass (1985) conceptualized it as a multidimensional construct. This conceptualization was later criticized for being theoretically flawed and for conflating behaviors with effects (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Jensen et al. (2019b) argued that transformational leadership can be conceptualized as a unidimensional construct with the formulation and communication of the vision as the core component of transformational leadership (Jensen, Andersen, Bro, et al., 2019b). By doing so it becomes possible to separate attempts to formulate and communicate the vision from the effects of these behaviors. Therefore, this dissertation follows the logic of Jensen et al. (2019b) and defines transformational leadership as "a set of behaviors that seek to develop, share and sustain a vision intended to encourage employees to transcend their self-interest and achieve organizational goals" (Jacobsen & Andersen, 2015, p. 832; Jensen, et al., 2019).

2.5.2 Inclusive Leadership

In the dissertation, inclusive leadership also plays a prominent role as the leadership case in one of the articles (Paper D). Here, inclusive leadership is defined as leadership behaviors that "…focus on supporting the full participation of all employees by stimulating the exchange, discussion and integration of diverse viewpoints and backgrounds of employees, as well as supporting them in balancing needs of individuation and belongingness" (Ashikali & van Luttervelt, 2024: 5). It thus represents a different type of leadership behavior compared to transformational leadership (Randel et al., 2018). While transformational leadership focuses on uniting employees around an organizational vision and fostering belongingness, it does not per se focus on valuing the differences of employees, which is central to inclusive leadership (Shore & Chung, 2022).

The dissertation focuses on inclusive leadership for two reasons. First, we see an increasing focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion in society at large as well as in public organizations (Ashikali, 2023; Veli Korkmaz et al., 2022). This is also the case in Denmark, and as such, inclusive leadership is a type of leadership behavior that is becoming increasingly relevant for public managers to use (Ashikali et al., 2021). Second, the dissertation focuses on the general upper secondary schools in Denmark as one of the research settings. In this sector, there has been a highly salient public debate about diversity, equity, and inclusion because of an increasing tendency for young adults with Danish and non-Danish backgrounds to select into different schools, potentially threatening the social cohesion amongst the Danish youth. In the debate, there has been a focus on what can be done from both a policy perspective and a managerial perspective to strengthen the cohesion between a diverse youth and an increasingly diverse workforce.

2.5.3 Leadership Investments

Leadership investments is another central concept in the dissertation (papers A and G). The dissertation defines leadership investments as "actions taken by the manager to increase the cost of deviating from communicated leadership initiatives" (Jakobsen et al., 2022, p. 5). Leadership investments is based on the literature on credible commitment that presents the argument that public managers can take actions to minimize their incentives and/or opportunities to alter their previous decisions (Miller, 2000; Miller & Whitford, 2007; Miller & Whitford, 2016). The idea is that public managers can increase the credibility of their leadership initiatives and the employees' perceptions of their credibility as manager by showing their commitment to and signaling ownership of their leadership initiatives (Dull, 2009; Jakobsen et al., 2022; Miller, 1992).

2.5.4 Presentational Strategies

Presentational strategies is a communication-based strategy that politicians and public managers alike can utilize in their efforts to dismantle or mitigate blame that could arise from a so-called blame event (Hood, 2007, 2010). The idea is that by presenting a situation in a certain way, the manager can alter the employees' perceptions of the situation in a way that results in the manager no longer being "blamable" for the situation (McGraw, 1990; Wenzelburger & Hörisch, 2016, p. 161). In Paper G, we argue that avoiding blame may be a relevant concern for public managers as being blamed for bad decisions or inconsistent and even misleading behavior may have a negative effect on, for instance, resource allocation to their organization, prospects of promotion,

and follower acceptance of the manager's leadership (Cooper et al., 2020; Dull, 2009; Grant & Sumanth, 2009; Hermalin, 2007; Nielsen & Baekgaard, 2015). In the paper, we develop, and present specific strategies based on the blame avoidance and leader credibility literature.

2.5.5 Motivation

Motivation is the primary outcome of interest in the dissertation because it is one of the key mechanisms through which leadership affects the behaviors of individuals and, ultimately, organizational performance (Den Hartog et al., 2004, p. 562). In the next chapter, I will present the theoretical argument pertaining to why leader credibility can be expected to moderate the effect of leadership on motivation. The purpose of this section is to clarify how the dissertation understands motivation in general and PSM in particular.

Motivation can be understood as the energy that someone is willing to put into performing a certain activity (Perry et al., 2010). Metaphorically speaking, motivation can be seen as the fuel that provides a person with energy to sustain a certain behavior (Jensen, Andersen, & Jacobsen, 2019, p. 13). There are several sources of motivation, including intrinsic motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005), extrinsic motivation (Porter & Lawler, 1968), and pro-social motivation, which can be defined as "the desire to have a positive impact on other people, groups, organizations, and society" (Andersen & Kjeldsen, 2013, p. 253; Le Grand, 2003, pp. 27–28). Thus, pro-social motivation can be oriented at both specific individuals and a collective entity. PSM is a type of pro-social motivation that focuses on making a difference not for an individual but for a collective entity including society (Andersen & Kjeldsen, 2013; Andersen & Pedersen, 2012). It can be defined as "an individual's orientation to delivering service to people with the purpose of doing good for others and society" (Hondeghem & Perry, 2009, p. 6).

There is a vast literature on PSM within the field of public administration and management (Perry et al., 2010; Perry & Wise, 1990; Ritz et al., 2016; Vandenabeele, 2007). A commonly adopted conceptualization of PSM is that it is reflected in four dimensions: commitment to public interest, compassion, attraction to policy-making, and self-sacrifice (Perry, 1996). Commitment to public interest captures a normative foundation of PSM; that is, the perceived obligation or sense of duty to serving the public interest (Wright et al., 2013). Attraction to policy making captures a motive to be able to contribute to the formation of public policy (Perry, 1996; Wright et al., 2013). Compassion and self-sacrifice capture affective motives that are based on a genuine belief in the importance of others (Perry & Wise, 1990; Wright et al., 2013). The disser-

tation follows this established understanding and adopts a perspective of PSM as a four-dimensional construct.

2.5.6 Inclusive Climate

Inclusive climate can be defined as "a collective and perceived phenomenon amongst members of a social group where diverse individuals have the opportunity to be themselves and are treated as insiders as well as being encouraged to and supported in learning from and utilizing the differences among members of the organization" (Paper D: p. 4; Ashikali et al., 2021, p. 500; Boekhorst, 2015; Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2011). In addition to inclusive climate being a relevant phenomenon to study in relation to leader credibility because it is a collective phenomenon, I point to three more reasons in Paper D. First, it is relevant to study because an inclusive climate can support members of an organization in being themselves, which is inherently important (Brewer, 1991). Second, an inclusive climate can be important for organizational learning by fostering sharing and elaboration of relevant information from diverse individuals (Nishii, 2013; van Knippenberg & van Ginkel, 2010). Third, it is relevant because an inclusive climate can help retain employees with minority backgrounds, which is essential to the legitimacy of public organizations according to the literature on representative bureaucracy (Feeney & Camarena, 2021; Groeneveld et al., 2015; Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2010; Riccucci, 2009).

Chapter 3:
The Theoretical Argument

This chapter presents the theoretical argument of the dissertation. First, I will outline why and how leader credibility can be expected to influence the effects of leadership on employee outcomes focusing on motivation and an inclusive climate. Based on this, I will argue that public managers have good reason to focus on obtaining and maintaining leader credibility, but they also have other considerations to attend because of their dual role in the political-administrative hierarchy as both principal (in relation to subordinates) and agent (in relation to superiors). Specifically, my theoretical argument addresses in which situations we can expect public managers to prioritize the consideration of being perceived as a credible manager in relation to their subordinates by acting in line with communicated intentions and as a loyal agent in relation to their principals by being responsive to their demands. In situations where public managers do not prioritize acting in line with their stated intentions, it becomes relevant to theorize what actions public managers can take in these situations to preserve leader credibility. This is the final endeavor of this chapter.

3.1 Why Leader Credibility Matters for the Effects of Leadership on Employee Motivation

To present this argument pertaining to why leader credibility matters for the effect of leadership on motivation, I draw on several of the dissertation's papers including papers B, C, D, and E.

The argument builds on the understanding of leadership as "behaviors aimed at influencing and facilitating efforts to reach shared goals" (Yukl, 2012, p. 66). In essence, leadership is about communication (Holmes & Parker, 2017). Leaders communicate to followers what they want the followers to do. In order for leaders to be able to affect the followers' effort to achieve organizational goals, it is necessary that the follower receives the message the leader communicates (Jacobsen & Andersen, 2015; Wright & Nishii, 2007). This, however, is not sufficient.

In addition to communication, the leader must provide the follower with a *good reason* to follow the leader's directions (Jakobsen et al., 2022; Jan, 2003). A good reason is something that makes it meaningful – that connects performing an activity with something valuable (Baumeister & Landau, 2018, p. 2) – for the follower to adhere to the directions conveyed in the messages of the leader. Sometimes the good reason is explicitly communicated, and sometimes it is not. For instance, through transformational leadership behaviors, a

public manager may articulate a very clear purpose for performing a certain activity by reference to the organizational vision (Jensen, Andersen, Bro, et al., 2019b). In other situations, the fact that the employee is financially compensated for their time spent at work and that they can be dismissed if they do not live up to the obligations specified in their contract may be a good reason to act in line with the manager's directions. A good reason can be many things including but not limited to the prospect of receiving a material reward (Dee & Wyckoff, 2015; Jacobsen et al., 2022; Lavy, 2009), the prospect of being verbally recognized for one's efforts (Andersen et al., 2018), the prospect of performing an activity one finds inherently satisfactory (Cho & Perry, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2000), or the prospect of having a positive impact on the lives of others (Bro & Jensen, 2020; Grant & Sumanth, 2009; Le Grand, 1997; Wright et al., 2012). These different examples can all be good reasons that may *motivate* the follower to act in line with the leader's communicated message.

However, it is also not enough that the leader provides the follower with reasons that seem appealing. The argument of this dissertation is that followers must also have *good reason to believe in the good reasons* provided by the leader in order to act in accordance with the leader's wishes. If the follower finds it plausible that the leader will act in accordance with the stated intentions – that is, if the follower deems the leader credible – then the follower will also have good reason to believe that they will receive the material reward, be verbally recognized, find satisfaction, or actually make a difference in the lives of others if they act in line with the directions of the leader. If this is not the case, then the reasons provided by the leader may be perceived as hollow talk and thus have no or very limited positive motivational effects on the follower.

Followers will have good reason to believe in the reasons given by the leader if they perceive that the leader as a person and as a position is sincere, competent, and has demonstrated behavioral integrity. Sincerity matters because if followers perceive the leader as sincere then they will believe that the leader's communicated intentions are equal to their actual intentions. If they perceive the leader as competent, they will be certain that the leader is capable of, for instance, recognizing them for their efforts. If the leader is perceived as having behavioral integrity, then the employee has evidence of consistent behavior of the particular leader and the leadership position, which will reassure them that the leader will also be consistent in the future (see papers B, D, and E for a comprehensive elaboration of these arguments).

While this line of argumentation implies that leader credibility can boost or dampen the positive effect of leadership behavior by providing good reason to believe in the good reasons to follow the leader's directions, it can also be expected to provide followers with good reason to believe in *bad reasons*.

Reasons can be bad if they *demotivate* the follower. Several studies, for instance, show that transactional leadership relying on the use of contingent material rewards or sanctions can damage employee motivation because if these extrinsic motivational factors are seen as controlling, they will crowd out intrinsic motivation (Frey & Jegen, 2001; Jacobsen et al., 2014; Jacobsen & Andersen, 2014). In a similar vein, transformational leadership may also have a demotivating effect on the employees if the employee's values are different from the organizational values (Jensen, Andersen, & Jacobsen, 2019; Krogsgaard et al., 2014). Thus, if a leader is exercising leadership that is perceived as demotivating by the follower and the follower also assesses the leader as highly credible, then the followers can be reassured that the bad prospects associated with performing the desired activity for the leader will indeed also occur. Consequently, leader credibility may also boost or dampen a negative motivational effect of leadership.

3.1.1 Applying the Argument to Specific Leadership Behaviors and Outcomes

In papers B, C, and E, the argument presented above is formulated specifically in relation to the effect of transformational leadership on motivation. In this context, the reason given by the manager to motivate the follower to act in a certain way is the opportunity to contribute to a (desirable) vision.

In Paper D, the argument is different because it focuses on how leader credibility may moderate the effect of inclusive leadership on the perceived inclusive climate. The reason that is central to this argument is the manager's promotion of diversity as something positive and valuable to the organization. As presented in the paper, the argument is that it becomes important for the followers to perceive the manager as someone who sincerely believes in diversity being a positive thing, that the manager has competencies to support members of the organization in bringing to the table diverse ideas and perspectives on the work, and the general consistency of the manager in terms of following through on leadership initiatives (Paper D, 12). If this is the case, then the followers are expected to become more positive towards diversity and collectively become more inclusive; that is, to value members of the organization for who they are and to see differences as a source of learning rather than something that divides.

This implies that leader credibility is a double-edged sword that can be both beneficial and detrimental to relevant outcomes. If the follower finds the reasons to follow the directions of the leader to be good reasons, then leader credibility will boost a positive effect. If, on the other hand, the follower finds the reasons to be bad reasons, then leader credibility will boost a negative

effect. This underscores the neutrality of leader credibility in relation to leadership behavior.

3.2. The Dual Role of Public Managers: A Trade-off between Credibility and Loyalty?

The arguments presented above explain why we would expect leader credibility to matter for public managers in relation to their employees. However, the dissertation is also aware that public managers not only engage in a relationship with their subordinates but also have their own superiors. Therefore, the dissertation develops a general theory on the dual role of public managers. In Paper F, I argue that public managers take on the role as agent in relation to their superiors (managers at higher hierarchical levels or political leaders) and the role of principal in relation to their subordinates (the public sector employees or subordinate managers). Because public managers engage in these relations within the political-administrative hierarchy simultaneously, they play a dual role (Brehm & Gates, 2015, p. 37; Dixit, 2002, p. 708). The dual role is illustrated in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Illustration of the Dual Role of Public Managers
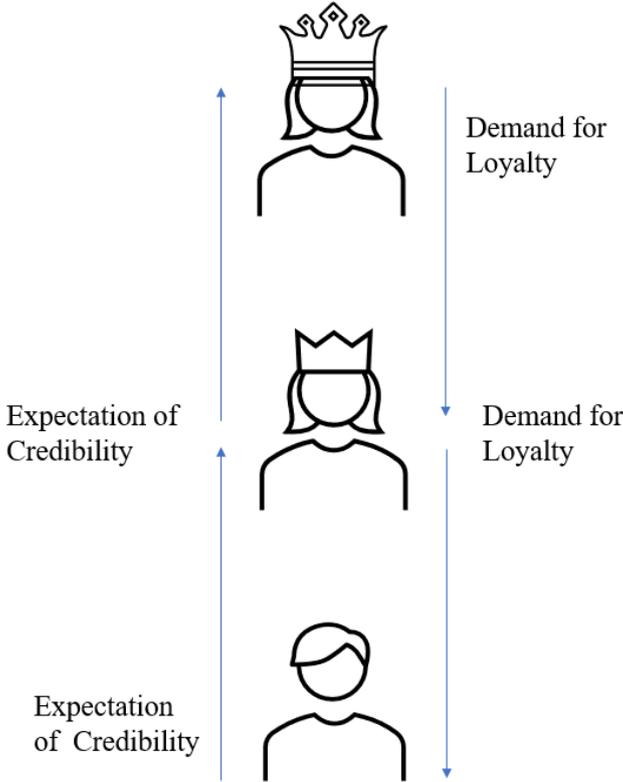
Note: Reprint from Paper F.

As agents, a central concern for public managers is displaying loyalty to their principals (Boyne, 2002; Christensen & Opstrup, 2018; Miller, 2000; Moynihan, 2008; Pandey & Wright, 2006; Rainey, 2014; van der Voet et al., 2015). It follows from both the idea of representative democracy, where the bureaucracy effectuates decisions made by the elected politicians on behalf of the citizens (de Graaf, 2011; Fowler, 2023; Meier & O'Toole, 2006), and the idea of Weberian bureaucracy, where the bureaucrats are seen as administrators who neutrally and obediently carry out tasks delegated to them by their principals (Fry & Nigro, 1996; Weber, 2009).

As principals, a central concern for public managers is being perceived as credible because, as I have argued in the previous section, credibility is important for public managers to motivate their followers to act in certain ways through leadership. The literature also promotes the argument that if the principal is not deemed credible, it may compromise the efficiency of the principal-agent relationship because uncertainty is imposed on the agent (Miller, 2005; North & Weingast, 1989; Simons, 2002).

Accommodating the consideration of being both a loyal agent and a credible principal may be difficult for public managers because they are in an interdependent relationship with both their principals and agents, meaning that the actions of one actor impacts the others (Dixit, 2002; Miller, 2005). Further, their own principals and agents may not – for various reasons – have aligned preferences (see Paper F for a thorough discussion).

According to my theory, public managers may choose to approach their dual role in a given situation with a strategy based on one of four ideal types: the Squire, the Chieftain, the Renegade, or the Diplomat. The Squire is only concerned with acting loyally in relation to its principal and does not care about how its behaviors affect its subordinates. The Chieftain has the exact opposite prioritizations with a strong focus on being perceived as credible by its followers and denying adhering to any authority. The Renegade does not prioritize any of the two considerations, whereas the Diplomat puts a high priority on accommodating both considerations. Table 3.1 gives an overview of the typology of the situational strategies.

Table 3.1: Typology of Situational Strategies to Deal with Public Managers' Dual Role

Priority on Being a Loyal Agent

		Low	High
Priority on Being a Credible Principal	**High**	Chieftain	Diplomat
	Low	Renegade	Squire

Note: Reprint from Paper F.

The viability of utilizing each of the four strategies depends on the alignment of preferences and the relative distribution of information between the public manager and their principals and agents. In explaining the viability of each strategy, the distribution of preferences takes precedence over information asymmetry, meaning that if public managers have overlapping preferences with both their principals and agents, then the relative distribution of information will be irrelevant in explaining the choice of strategy. In Paper F, I elaborate on the situations in which the different strategies are most viable.

While the theory is a theory of particular situations, I discuss the implications of introducing time and thereby repeated interactions between public managers and their principals and agents. It is indeed plausible that public managers engage in repeated games with their principals and agents (Carpenter & Krause, 2015; Cooper et al., 2020; Oberfield, 2014b). Introducing repeated interactions implies that the outcomes of the (in)actions of public managers will eventually become visible to the public managers' principals and agents (Miller, 2005). It seems plausible that the actors will update their preferences in light of them acquiring new information about the actions of the other actors, and this may influence the viability of utilizing each of the four different strategies in the long run.

3.3. Retaining Leader Credibility by Means of Presentational Strategies

Building on idea of the dual role of public managers, Paper G focuses on what public managers can do to retain leader credibility among their employees when they deviate from their communicated leadership initiatives. My co-authors and I argue that public managers may occasionally find themselves in situations where they choose to deviate from their communicated leadership, for instance, because it is required of them to remain loyal to their own principals.

Our argument in the paper is built on the premise that, all else being equal, actual misalignment between the communicated intentions and actions of a manager will negatively affect the leader credibility ascribed to the manager by the employees. If the manager does not behave in correspondence with their own stated intentions, it is likely to be perceived as a low level of behavioral integrity, which then will feed into a lower assessment of leader credibility going forward.

We contend, however, by drawing on the blame avoidance literature (Charbonneau & Bellavance, 2012; Hood, 2007, 2010; Weaver, 1986) that public managers may be able to retain (some) leader credibility if they can make followers not blame them for the decision of deviating from their communicated leadership initiatives. As described in Chapter 2, we develop a typology of presentational strategies and argue that by either (1) blaming the manager's own principal for the necessity of the decision to deviate from the leadership initiative, (2) borrowing an argument that the manager's principal has used to justify a deviation from the initiative, (3) taking responsibility for the decision to deviate, or (4) taking responsibility for the decision to deviate and providing an argument to justify the decision, public managers may be able to retain credibility compared to a situation where they do not address the issue directly in front of their followers. Table 3.2 shows the typology.

Table 3.2: Typology of Presentational Strategies

	No argument	Argument
Inwards	*Taking responsibility*	*Responsibility and argument*
Outwards	*Blaming the principal*	*Borrowing the principal's reasoning*

Note: Reprint from Paper G.

We argue that the relative effectiveness of the strategies in terms of retaining leader credibility may depend on the initial investments that the manager has

put into the leadership initiative. If the manager has made investments in the leadership initiative and then tries to direct the responsibility away by means of the outward strategies – either by blaming the principal or by borrowing the principal's argument – we would expect these strategies to be less effective in terms of preserving leader credibility because it may come across as insincere if the manager first shows commitment to the initiative and then tries to direct blame away when ditching the initiative. In relation to the inwards strategies, we propose that if the manager first shows commitment to the initiative by investing in it and then takes responsibility for its cancellation, it will also have a negative impact on the effectiveness of these strategies. This is the case because the manager may be perceived as incompetent and someone who has not considered the realizability of the leadership initiative before commencing with it.

Chapter 4:
Research Settings, Data, and Designs

In this chapter, I will discuss the methodological choices that I have made in the dissertation. The discussion will pertain to the research settings, the data, and the research designs of the five empirical articles of the dissertation. The ambition here is not to go into detail with the individual articles but instead to try to approach the central methodological choices from the level of the dissertation as a whole.

The dissertation contains five empirical articles that are all based on the use of quantitative research methods, although interviews have played an important role in qualifying the content of especially the development of the measurement of leader credibility. The reliance on quantitative designs reflects that the dissertation tests interaction effects which cannot be tested by relying on qualitative data because it necessitates calculating probabilities for outcomes. Moreover, given the ambition to draw causal inference about the role of leader credibility in public management and leadership, it is also beneficial to use quantitative data. By combining survey experiments with observational data, the dissertation can approximate providing causal evidence that can be generalized to relevant populations of public sector employees. This is further supported by examining research questions 1 and 2 with similar research designs in both the health care sector and the educational sector because these contexts vary on important characteristics on which I will elaborate below. Table 4 gives an overview of the design, data, and main variables of the five empirical articles.

Table 4.1: Overview of Empirical Papers

	Design	Data	Main Variables
Paper B	Measurement scale development	1,200 upper secondary school teachers and 600 occupational therapists	Leader credibility, transformational leadership, motivation
Paper C	Survey experiment	800 MTurkers	Leader credibility, transformational leadership, motivation
Paper D	Quantitative longitudinal study	700 upper secondary school teachers	Leader credibility, inclusive leadership, inclusive climate
Paper E	Quantitative longitudinal study	700 upper secondary school teachers	Leader credibility, transformational leadership
Paper G	Survey experiment	500 occupational therapists	Leader credibility, presentational strategies, leadership investments

Note: Approximate numbers.

4.1 Research Settings

The dissertation builds on three sources of survey data stemming from three different settings. The data is used as the basis of several studies to develop and validate a measurement scale of leader credibility (Paper B), to examine the role of leader credibility in the relationship between leadership and employee outcomes (papers B, C, D, and E), and to test how leadership investments and the use of presentational strategies affect leader credibility in a situation where the manager has terminated a leadership initiative (Paper G). Paper B addresses the first research question of the dissertation pertaining to how leader credibility can be conceptualized and measured. Papers B, C, D, and E address the second research question focusing on how and to what extent leader credibility matters for the effect of public managers' leadership behaviors. Paper G addresses the third research question that focuses on why it can be difficult to obtain and maintain leader credibility as a public manager.

To investigate the three research questions, I – together with my co-authors – chose to conduct the empirical studies in the following three research settings: among American respondents recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), among Danish upper secondary school teachers, and among occupational therapists employed by the Danish municipalities. Each of the three research settings has its advantages in relation to examining one

or more of the research questions and contributes to the comprehensiveness of the dissertation as an entity.

4.1.1 MTurk

For Paper C, we chose to field a survey experiment via MTurk, a recruitment platform where the researcher and the MTurkers (participants offering their services through the platform) can exchange money for services such as survey participation (Baekgaard et al., 2015, p. 336). There are at least three arguments that underline why this is an ideal research setting to conduct a survey experiment that focuses on examining the effects of leader credibility on motivation when the leader exercises transformational leadership. First, MTurk offers researchers an ideal opportunity to perform initial experiments on the relationship of concepts they are interested in – of course, within the boundaries of what is ethically justifiable. Because MTurk is based on informed consent and a transaction between the researcher and the respondent, it allows researchers to conduct such initial experiments in an efficient and ethically justifiable way. Second, studies show that the behavior of respondents recruited via MTurk – including how they react to experimental treatments – are comparable to respondents recruited through more traditional means (Stritch et al., 2017, p. 491). This contributes to the general validity of MTurk as a means to conduct experimental research on human behavior (Berinsky et al., 2012, p. 351; Mullinix et al., 2015; Stritch et al., 2017, p. 491), but this does not allow us to necessarily generalize the results to public sector employees, which is one of the reasons why the other two research settings are also relevant. Third, MTurk is a convenient means of recruitment because a large pool of diverse respondents can be reached within a short period of time (Baekgaard et al., 2015).

4.1.2 Danish Upper Secondary School Teachers and Occupational Therapists

The remaining two research settings of the dissertation are upper secondary schools and the occupational therapists working in Danish municipalities. Papers B, D, E, and G are conducted in either or both of these research settings. In contrast to the MTurk platform, both the upper secondary schools and the Danish municipalities constitute real public organizations that employ professionals and are responsible for delivering public services to citizens. The upper secondary school teachers deliver tuition-free education to a majority of any Danish youth cohort in the form of teaching, while the occupational therapists perform a variety of health care-related activities, typically related to rehabilitation.

Both research settings are ideal to examine how leader credibility can be measured and the extent to which leader credibility matters for the effects of different leadership behaviors on employee outcomes. In terms of developing a measure of leader credibility, I needed to study a context where public sector employees had a formal manager. This was an essential criterion because of the conceptualization of leader credibility as a phenomenon constituted by both a personal and a positional component. This criterion was met by both the upper secondary schools and the municipally employed occupational therapists. As for examining the role of leader credibility in relation to the effects of leadership on employee outcomes, I needed research settings where public managers had some autonomy to decide how and to what extent they could exercise leadership in relation to their employees. This was needed to increase the likelihood of some variation in the perception of leadership and leader credibility among the employees. Additionally, in order to support the ability to generalize the findings of the dissertation, the research settings should ideally be typical yet different types of public organizations performing public service of a character that is not unique to the Danish public sector.

The two Danish research settings differ on various characteristics that could be relevant in explaining differences that might influence leader credibility. First, they represent two different sectors within the public sector that both deliver important services to the public but of a different character. Second, both the upper secondary school teachers and the occupational therapists can be characterized as professionals because they possess theoretical and specialized knowledge in combination with strong norms stemming from their education (Andersen & Serritzlew, 2012, p. 22): Upper secondary school teachers are highly professionalized employees who have undergone six years of education (five years of university + one year of pedagogical education), whereas occupational therapists are medium professionalized with 3.5 years of education (Paper B: 23). Third, the gender balance is quite different between the two research settings. As is visible in Table 4.2, only about 5% of the occupational therapists who participated in the survey are men, which is similar to the population where the proportion is 6.3% (VIVE, 2016: 155). In contrast, the upper secondary school teachers represent a rare case of an almost equal distribution of men and women, with 45% of the participants in the surveys for this dissertation being men (Paper B). This proportion is similar to the latest population assessment from 2021 conducted by the upper secondary teachers' union where 46.7% are men.

Table 4.2: Central Differences between Observational Research Settings

	Upper Secondary School Teachers	Municipal Occupational Therapists
Degree of Professionalism	Very high	Medium high
Gender Balance (% Men)	45%	5%
Average Tenure	13 years	8 years
Sector	Education	Health care
Type of Organization	Self-governing	Public
Managerial Autonomy	High	Moderate

Fourth, the average tenure of occupational therapists is eight years compared to 13 years amongst high school teachers. Fifth, the upper secondary schools are self-governing institutions, meaning that they have their own board and are largely responsible for managing their own finances, which are acquired through activity-based funding from the state (Jacobsen & Andersen, 2015, p. 833). The occupational therapists participating in the survey utilized by the dissertation are all employed by the Danish municipalities. These are classic public organizations that are publicly owned, funded, and regulated (Boye et al., 2022; Boyne, 2002). Fifth and in relation to the fourth, a consequence of being self-governing institutions is that the upper secondary school principals are granted a high level of managerial autonomy due to them not being exposed to direct political authority, whereas public managers in the municipalities are more constrained due to direct exposure to interference from not only political leaders but also managers at higher hierarchical levels (Boye, 2021, p. 66; Bozeman, 1987; Meier & O'Toole, 2011; Rainey, 2014).

In sum, both research settings live up to my criteria to be relevant for studying leader credibility in public organizations. In addition, the two settings vary in terms of the type of public service that they are delivering to citizens as well as on relevant individual, collective, and institutional-level parameters that can provide important insights into the conditions under which leader credibility may be a more or less important phenomenon.

4.2 Data Collections

The data for the dissertation was gathered in three distinct data collections that I will describe briefly below. The first data collection – which the study in Paper C is based on – was collected through the MTurk platform on May 20–

21, 2020. MTurk allows the researcher to specify conditions that an interested respondent must meet in order to be qualified to participate in the survey. We specified three criteria a priori. First, we chose to limit our sample to American citizens to keep the national context fixed. Second, we only allowed respondents who had previously completed at least one survey on the platform to participate. Third, participants must have had 95% of their previous responses approved in order to qualify for participation in our survey (van Luttervelt et al., 2021, p. 370). Respondents were compensated with USD 1.2 for a completed and satisfactory response (see van Luttevelt et al., 2021: 370). In total, our budget allowed us to pay for 800 responses, but since 17 respondents completed the survey without demanding their payment, we ended up with 817 valid responses.

The second data collection – which is used for papers B and G – was conducted as a part of a research project led by my good colleague and co-author of Paper G, Anders Grøn (See Grøn, 2023). The data collection was effectuated in collaboration with the Danish association for occupational therapists (Ergoterapeutforeningen) who gave input on parts of the research design (see Grøn, 2023: 49). The association was also responsible for distributing the survey to those of its members who were employed in Danish municipalities. Before commencing with the data collection, we applied for and received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee at Aarhus University. In total, the survey was distributed to 5,012 municipally employed occupational therapists, and of those, approximately 600 answered the questions relating to leader credibility (for Paper B), while approximately 500 completed the elements of the survey which were necessary to be part of the data for Paper G. This equals a response rate of 12% and 10%, respectively.

The third data collection – which is used for papers B, D, and E – was conducted as part my research project entitled "DILEAD" (Diversity, Inclusiveness, and Leadership), which had two aims. The first aim was to provide an empirical basis to investigate the first and second research question and test some of the theoretical expectations of this dissertation. The second aim was to contribute to knowledge about diversity, inclusiveness, and leadership in the context of the Danish public sector to relevant societal actors. Even though diversity and inclusiveness and recently also inclusive leadership are popular research topics among many scholars doing research on public administration and leadership (Ashikali et al., 2021; Ding & Riccucci, 2022), it has not received much attention in Denmark (see Andersen & Moynihan, 2016 for an exception). This is the case despite an increasingly diverse population and societal challenges of well-being associated with social identity.

The upper secondary school is a good case to examine the research questions of this dissertation – as I have provided some arguments for in the

previous section – as well as a relevant case because it has been the object of a highly salient debate about diversity and inclusion in Danish society. In fact, the Danish parliament passed a law that would effectuate a redistribution of pupils in the upper secondary schools located in the most urban districts in Denmark based on their sociodemographic characteristics. This was done to combat a tendency of increased segregation between students of ethnic minorities and Danish origin as well as students coming from low- or high-socioeconomic families in the larger cities. However, when the new government was formed on December 15, 2022, after the parliamentary election in November 2022, a majority decided to reverse the law, resulting in the allocation of students continuing as hitherto.

Turning to the actual data collection, I first applied for and received ethical approval of the research project from the Research Ethics Committee at Aarhus University in 2022. After having done so, I contacted the principals of all 144 general upper secondary schools in Denmark and explained the scope and content of the research project to them and that I was going to distribute two surveys with a year in between. I also allowed them the opportunity to view the survey and opt their school out of the research project in case they did not wish to participate. Because the contact information of the upper secondary school teachers is publicly available on the websites of almost all upper secondary schools (which was how I acquired the information from all but one school; the secretary sent me a list with contact information), I was not obliged to consult with the principal of each school before inviting the employees to participate in the research project. However, I chose to do so in recognition of the high workload of the teachers and the potential obligations to other research projects. In the end, 40 schools opted out of the project, which resulted in the participation of 104 schools.

On November 30, 2022, I distributed the first survey, and exactly a year later on November 30, 2023, I distributed the second survey. Both surveys were distributed to 7,533 individuals including 7,180 teachers, 104 principals, and 249 middle managers. I sent two reminders within a two-week period after distributing each of the two surveys, and when I closed the second survey, a total of 3,993 individuals had given a response to either the first or the second survey or both surveys. Amongst the employees whose responses this dissertation utilizes, 1,267 and 1,532 teachers had answered the questions pertaining to inclusive leadership, leader credibility, and inclusive climate (the number varies between the different studies depending on what variables are relevant) in the first and second round, respectively. This equals a response rate of 17.65% for the first survey and 21.33% for the second. As pointed to in Paper D (p. 15), the higher response rate in the second round is plausibly explained by the second survey being relatively shorter.

4.3 Research Designs and Analytical Approaches

In the following, I will outline the research designs of the dissertation. All the research designs approach the study of leader credibility based on quantitative data. To address the first research question pertaining to how leader credibility can be conceptualized and measured, I performed factor analysis. To address the second and third research questions, I utilized a combination of experimental and large-N observational research designs.

4.3.1 Developing a Measure for Leader Credibility

In Paper B, I develop a measurement scale of leader credibility and evaluate it in terms of its reliability and validity. To do so, I conducted both exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis to investigate the dimensionality of the construct and its psychometric properties in line with the recommendations of the literature (DeVellis, 2017; Jensen, Andersen, Bro, et al., 2019b; Tangsgaard, 2022; Tummers & Knies, 2016). I also paid close attention to an important but sometimes overlooked aspect of scale development, namely basing the decisions regarding which items to retain on not only statistical criteria but also critical theoretical reflections (Wieland et al., 2017). To test the relevance of the measurement of leader credibility, I performed multivariate analysis using OLS regression and examined whether it was indeed related to other constructs it should be expected to be related to from a theoretical perspective (Paper B: 34-37). These analyses were performed on the sample of upper secondary school teachers from the first round of data collection. To further investigate the reliability, validity, and relevance of the measurement scale, I replicated the confirmatory factor analysis as well as the regression analysis on the sample of occupational therapists that have answered the exact same questions. The process of developing the measurement scale is described in all its details in Paper B and briefly in the next chapter.

4.3.2 An Experimental Approach to Studying Leader Credibility

Both papers C and G are survey experiments. Survey experiments have recently become popular in empirical studies within the field of public administration and management that relies heavily on the use of surveys (Baekgaard et al., 2015; Blom-Hansen et al., 2015; Groeneveld et al., 2015; Hvidman & Andersen, 2016; Jilke & Ryzin, 2017; van den Bekerom et al., 2020; Van Der Voet, 2019). Due to its low implementation cost and versatility, the survey experiment allow researchers to investigate many relevant questions (Blom-Hansen et al., 2015, p. 161). The benefit of the survey experiment compared to

observational studies is that the survey experiment can be characterized as "pure experimental design" (Blom-Hansen et al., 2015, p. 161) because the researcher controls both the assignment of an exogenous intervention to a treatment group and a random assignment of the subjects to either a treatment or a control group. This makes the survey experiment well suited to examine causal relationships.

The literature pronounces two central challenges of the typical survey experiment relative to other experimental research designs (Blom-Hansen et al., 2015). First the intensity of the treatment in a survey experiment is often times modest because "compared to lab and field experiments, where subjects can be affected economically, socially, or materially by the treatment, subtle changes in the wording of survey questions are quite week" (Blom-Hansen et al., 2015, pp. 161–162). Second, results from survey experiments typically have low ecological validity, stemming from the survey being conducted in an environment different from the one in which the situations the researcher is interested in examining actually happens.

Both the challenge of low treatment intensity and low ecological validity are highly central to the studies in papers C and G (van Luttervelt et al., 2021, p. 365). While Paper C focuses on examining the effects of leader credibility on motivation when transformational leadership is exercised and Paper G focuses on the effects of presentational strategies on leader credibility when a manager has deviated from her initial leadership initiative, both studies focus on manipulating human behavior and capturing attitudinal responses to these behaviors. To combat challenges relating to low treatment intensity, we chose to design our interventions not as text vignettes but instead as video vignettes. This decision was inspired by a laboratory experimental study of Antonakis and colleagues that used an actor to give a speech of varying charisma to participants before giving them the task of folding envelopes (Antonakis et al., 2019). This study shows that charismatic leadership had a substantial effect on the performance of the participants. By nesting videos into our surveys, we were able to simulate interaction between a manager and an employee (the respondent) in a more relevant way than would have been the case utilizing text vignettes. The pictures below illustrate the appearance of the managers for the two studies who were portrayed by actors.

Note: Left picture is from Paper C, and right picture is from Paper G.

To further support the strength of the intervention, we utilized scenarios with a compelling narrative in both studies. In Paper C, this was attempted by constructing a narrative around the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected the population of the entire world and was of very high salience in May 2020 when we collected our data. More specifically, the respondents were asked to imagine themselves being participants in a research project that was working to develop a vaccine (see Paper C, p. 364-366). The task of the respondents was to count blood cells. In Paper G, this was attempted by co-designing the scenario with the association of occupational therapists (see Paper G, p. 15-17). This ensured that our scenario captured a collaborative situation that would resemble something that municipally employed occupational therapists could encounter in their job. These efforts are likely to have increased the experimental realism of the study – that is, the degree to which the experimental situation engages the subject in an authentic way (McDermott, 2002, p. 40) – compared to traditional survey experiments. However, experimental realism does not equal ecological validity – or mundane realism (McDermott, 2002) – which is the second major concern of the survey experiment. This is the case because even though respondents may be truly engaged in the experiment, this does not necessarily mean that it reflects a real-world situation.

   Does this mean that attempting to study leadership situations by manipulating behaviors of fictional leaders in an artificial setting is not a worthwhile thing to do? One answer to this question could be "no." If our aim is to generalize findings to real leader-follower situations, then we do not learn much from exposing public sector employees or respondents in general to fictious persons in a simple environment that is fundamentally different from what

public sector employees will encounter in their work (Wulff & Villadsen, 2020, p. 352). This is a legitimate concern.

The answer to the question could, however, be "yes" if one is interested in exploring mechanisms through which the behaviors of managers may influence their employees' responses. This is also the case if one is interested in testing the effects of changes in words or behavior in given situations that may be highly relevant but extremely difficult or costly to assess in the field. Thus, although manipulating the behavior of a fictious manager in a survey experiment may not be a *realistic* representation of situations that public sector employees will actually find themselves in, it may still be a *relevant* way to study important research questions within the field of public administration and management.

Both survey experiments of this dissertation rely on a manipulation of the consistency of the fictional manager's behavior (i.e. the behavioral integrity of the manager). This was done to affect the respondents' perceptions of the leader credibility of the manager. While it would also be relevant to design an intervention focusing on variations in the capabilities of the leadership position, the reputation of former managers, or on manipulating the sincerity or competence of the given manager, we chose to focus on the behavioral integrity component as this addresses the actual consistency of the manager's behavior in terms of following through on communicated intentions. The choice also reflects the ambition to take into account that leadership is not exercised in a single moment; rather, it consists of repeated interactions between the manager and the employee(s) (Oberfield, 2014b).

In Paper C, the manager (the research director) first introduced the respondents to the research program pertaining to developing the vaccine, and then the respondents would perform an activity. The respondents are presented with either a visionary version of their manager emphasizing the vision of the research program or a neutral version of the manager that emphasizes the importance of developing a vaccine but without referring to an organizational vision. After having done so, the manager reappears and explains that the research program is likely to be cancelled, and then the respondents are asked to perform the activity once more (see supplementary material in Paper C for the manuscripts). In the "low-credibility" intervention, the manager explains that it is plausible that the program will be terminated and that it will not be a high priority for the manager anymore. In the "high-credibility" intervention, the manager tells the respondents that he remains committed to the project and reassures the respondents that the project will be completed. After performing the final tasks, the respondents are asked to answer the outcome questions pertaining to motivation (van Luttervelt et al., 2021). Figure 4.1a illustrates the experimental design and the flow of the survey.

Figure 4.1a: Survey Flow and Experimental Design
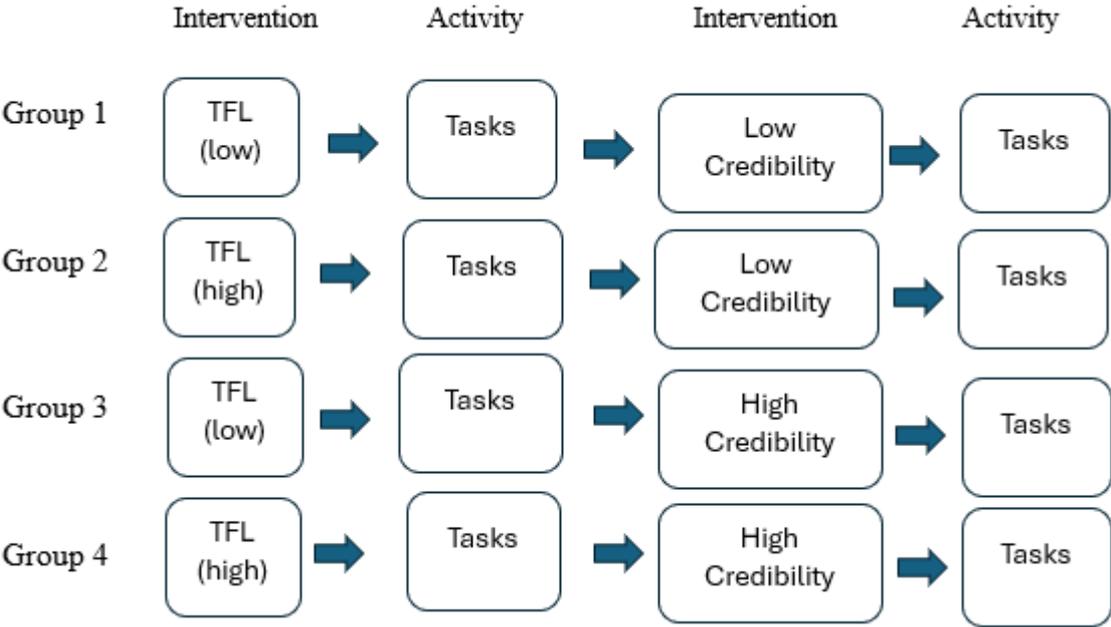
Note: Translated version – remake from Paper C. TFL = transformational leadership.

Figure 4.1b: Survey Flow and Experimental Design
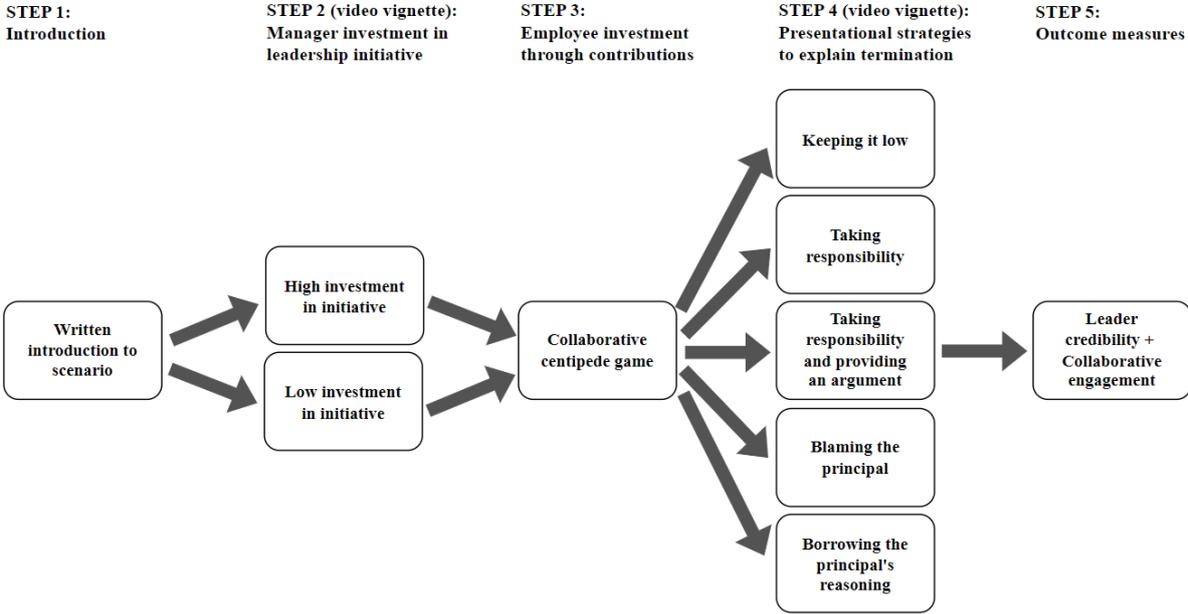
Note: Reprint from Paper G.

In Paper G, the manager first introduces the respondents to the fictive collaboration in which they are going to take part. In this scenario, they must collaborate with a nurse (also fictional) to help patients recover from late effects of COVID-19. After the respondents have performed the activities that they

are asked to carry out by their manager (they are asked to prepare material for meetings with the nurse), the manager reappears and explains to the respondents that the collaboration is terminated and makes use of one of five presentational strategies (described in detail in Paper G). After this, we measure leader credibility. Figure 4.1b illustrates the experimental design and the flow of the survey.

4.3.4 Observational Studies as an Alternative Approach to Studying Leader Credibility

In the remaining empirical studies (papers B, D, and E), the dissertation relies on observational data. In contrast to the survey experiments described above, these studies rely on natural variation in the independent, moderating, and dependent variables. While the reliance on observational data has its limitations due to risks of, for instance, omitted variable bias, social desirability bias, and reversed causality (Stock & Watson, 2020, p. 50), it also has its strengths. A central benefit of using observational data is that because it is by definition collected outside of an experimental setting, it represents actual observations of objects such as human beings and their behavior, attitudes, and so on and so forth – in this instance, the attitudes of public sector employees in relation to their actual work and their actual managers. As such, while observational data has challenges associated with internal validity, it has advantages over the experimental data, especially with regard to ecological validity. In addition, by examining the role of leader credibility in the relationship between leadership and employee outcomes in several contexts (i.e. by using replication), the dissertation also prioritizes the consideration of external validity pertaining to the generalizability of the results. Thus, by combining both types of data, the dissertation achieves a more comprehensive understanding of the role of leader credibility in public organizations.

The dissertation utilizes two types of observational data. The sample of occupational therapists is based on cross-sectional data, while the sample of upper secondary school teachers is based on panel data. The study based on panel data focuses on studying how changes in transformational leadership (Paper E) and inclusive leadership (Paper D) affect changes in PSM (Paper E) and inclusive climate (Paper D) depending on the initial level of leader credibility. These studies based on panel data have an advantage over the studies based on cross-sectional data that focus on the associations between transformational leadership and PSM at different levels of leader credibility (Paper B). First, because panel data allows the use of fixed-effects to control all time-invariant factors between the individuals in the sample, problems associated with internal validity are less severe in these studies. Second, because panel

data captures measures of variables of interest over time, it is better suited to study leadership, which is an ongoing process (Oberfield, 2014a).

4.3.5 Assessing the Dissertation's Research Design

In order for the dissertation to deliver solid empirical evidence on leader credibility in public organizations, it must ensure that it operationalizes leader credibility in a reliable and valid way. In addition, to examine the effect of leader credibility in relation to leadership and employee outcomes, the dissertation must prioritize not only internal, ecological, or external validity but all of them. The dissertation approximates this – at least for the investigation of the role of leader credibility in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee motivation – by combining different research designs and replications based on several sources of data. The use of experiments prioritizes internal validity at the cost of ecological validity. The use of different large-N observational studies prioritizes ecological validity at the cost of internal validity. The replication of the studies in different research settings based on different and relevant data sources supports the external validity of the studies (McDermott, 2002, p. 40).

Chapter 5:
Main Findings

In this chapter, I will summarize the main findings of the empirical studies of the dissertation. First, I will present the results pertaining to how leader credibility can be measured. Second, I will present the results on the proposed moderating role of leader credibility in relation to the effects of leadership on employee outcomes. Third and finally, I will present the results on what public managers can do to obtain and maintain leader credibility and why it may be difficult.

5.1 Measuring Leader Credibility

The dissertation defines leader credibility as the plausibility followers assign to the leader acting in accordance with communicated intentions (Jakobsen et al., 2022) and conceptualizes it as a phenomenon that it is constituted by both personal and positional leader credibility (Paper B). Personal leader credibility is constituted by follower perceptions of the sincerity, competence, and behavioral integrity of the leader. The positional component is constituted by follower perceptions of the formal authority of the leadership position and the reputation of other persons in the leadership position in terms of sincerity, competence, and behavioral integrity.

The dissertation operationalizes leader credibility as a first-order reflective and a second- and third-order formative latent construct. This means that at the first-order level, the theoretical constructs of personal sincerity, personal competence, personal behavioral integrity, positional sincerity, positional competence, and positional behavioral integrity are reflected by a series of items. These constructs then form personal and positional leader credibility, respectively, and together these two constructs form leader credibility. The structure is illustrated in Figure 5.1.

The process of moving from the systematic concept of leader credibility to specific items (Adcock & Collier, 2001) is described in detail in Paper B. In short, the process involved generating an initial list of items based on the existing literature (Brown et al., 2005; Campbell, 1993; Cho & Ringquist, 2011; Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006; Gabris & Ihrke, 1996; Grant & Sumanth, 2009; Holmes & Parker, 2017; Moorman et al., 2012). These items were chosen based on their face validity in terms of how well they reflected the theoretical components of leader credibility. After making small adjustments to the items (see Paper B: 20-21), the items were discussed in interviews with survey experts, public managers, and employees and tested in multiple variations from

April 2020 to July 2022. Based on the feedback, the items were revised, and I ended up with 24 items that were included in the surveys to the occupational therapists and high school teachers as described in Chapter 4.

Figure 5.1: Structure of Leader Credibility Construct
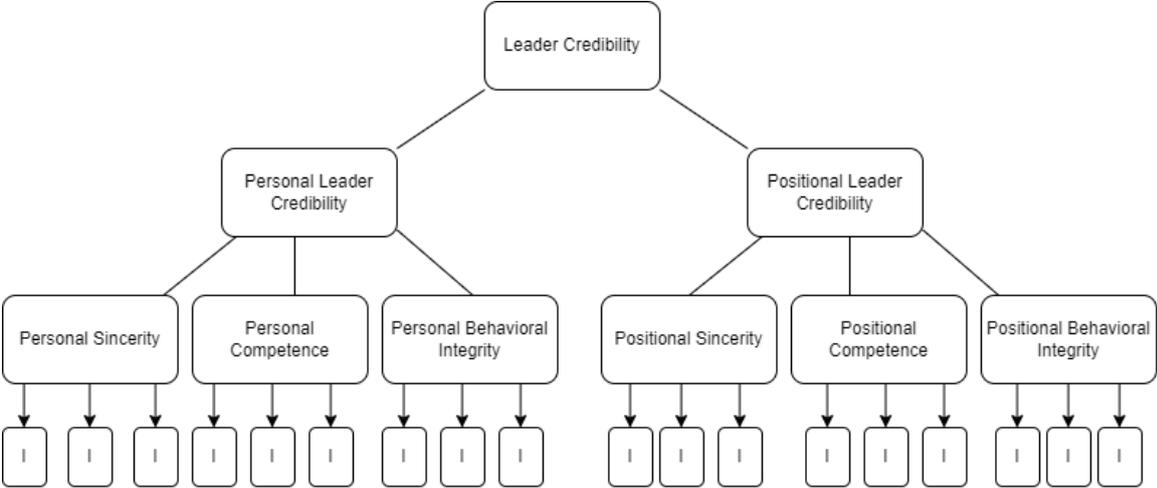
Note: Based on Paper B (p. 20). "I" refers to a given indicator or item.

The exploratory factor analysis was performed on a split sample of high school teachers. This was done to avoid estimating confirmatory factor analysis on the same data as the exploratory factor analysis, which can bias the results (DeVellis, Robert F, 2017; Podsakoff et al., 2012) The results from multiple exploratory factor analyses with and without a priori specification of the amount of factors suggest that a six-factor specification best fits the data (Paper B: 24-25). This corresponds well to the conceptualization of leader credibility with six subcomponents. After performing scale purification based on both theoretical and statistical judgement (Wieland et al., 2017), the final scale consisted of a total of 16 items (eight for personal leader credibility and eight for positional leader credibility) (Paper B: 25).

I then performed confirmatory factor analysis on the other half of the sample of upper secondary school teachers and among the occupational therapists to evaluate the fit of the measurement scale. As shown in Tables 5.1 and 5.2, all items display strong factor loading coefficients on the expected dimensions. In addition, the fit statistics as shown in Table 5.3 indicate a good fit; also relative to other specification (see Paper B). The assessment of the measurement scale indeed indicates that the measurement scale is both reliable and valid. It also discriminates from transformational leadership, underscoring that these are not only theoretically different phenomena but also empirically distinguishable (see Appendix from Paper B for all reliability and validity tests).

Taken together, the results show that leader credibility can be measured utilizing a multidimensional measurement scale. Importantly, the results also show that personal and positional leader credibility are separable not only theoretically but also empirically as they discriminate from one another. In addition to the measurement scale, the dissertation proposes a single-item measure of leader credibility, which has the benefit of being much more feasible to implement in surveys (Wanous et al., 1997, p. 250). The single-item measure simply states, "My leader is credible." As Paper B shows, the single-item measure is highly correlated with the measurement scale of leader credibility and especially the measures for personal leader credibility (Paper B Appendix: 16-18). Thus, the single-item measure can also be a valid measure of leader credibility.

Aside from the considerations of keeping surveys short, researchers who are interested in measuring leader credibility may also consider whether they are interested in disentangling the (relative importance of) different components of leader credibility or whether they are interested in the respondent's immediate evaluation of the leader's credibility. If the former is the case, then this is an argument for using the measurement scale. If the latter is the case, this is an argument in favor of using the single-item measure because by using the measurement scale, the relative weight of the different components of leader credibility are predetermined (or can be weighted by the researcher), whereas the single-item measure allows the respondent to, for instance, let his or her perception of their manager's behavioral integrity weight more than sincerity in their assessment of their manager's leader credibility. In sum, there are benefits and drawbacks to using both the measurement scale and the single-item measure to examine leader credibility empirically. However, the findings of the dissertation show that both measures can be valid operationalizations of leader credibility in survey research.

Table 5.1: Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Upper Secondary School Teachers

Item no.	Item wording	Mean	SD	N	Loadings					
					Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
1	My immediate leader always gives me a sincere explanation of his/her decisions.	3.48	1.16	623		0.84				
2	My immediate leader expresses his/her intentions in a clear way.	3.57	1.15	625		0.92				
3	My immediate leader's words reflect his/her intentions.	3.74	1.07	624		0.87				
5	My immediate leader has the abilities to carry out his/her leadership tasks.	4.00	1.05	614	0.84					
7	My immediate leader makes decisions on an informed basis.	3.80	1.07	614	0.90					
8	My immediate leader shows good judgement when making decisions.	3.71	1.08	615	0.94					
11	My immediate leader always turns words into actions.	3.38	0.94	609			0.97			
12	My immediate leader always carries out his/her plans.	3.48	0.91	610			0.88			

#		Mean	SD	N			
13	*I expect my future immediate leader to always give me a sincere explanation of his/her decisions.*	4.45	0.66	588	0.79		
14	*I expect my future immediate leader to express his/her intentions in a clear way.*	4.57	0.59	588	0.89		
15	*I expect my future immediate leader's words to reflect his/her intentions.*	4.59	0.62	587	0.84		
17	*I expect my future immediate leader to have the abilities to carry out his/her leadership tasks.*	4.76	0.54	578		0.83	
19	*I expect my future immediate leader to make decisions on an informed basis.*	4.71	0.57	580		0.92	
20	*I expect my future immediate leader to show good judgement when making decisions.*	4.73	0.56	578		0.94	
23	*I expect my future immediate leader to always turn words into actions.*	3.92	0.85	575			0.97
24	*I expect my future immediate leader to always carry out his/her plans.*	3.88	0.85	577			0.89

Note: Reprint from Paper B.

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Table 5.2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Occupational Therapists

Item no.	Item wording	Mean	SD	N	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
					Loadings					
1	My immediate leader always gives me a sincere explanation of his/her decisions.	3.83	1.06	578		0.83				
2	My immediate leader expresses his/her intentions in a clear way.	3.77	1.07	573		0.87				
3	My immediate leader's words reflect his/her intentions.	3.81	0.95	578		0.91				
5	My immediate leader has the abilities to carry out his/her leadership tasks.	3.84	1.03	571	0.93					
7	My immediate leader makes decisions on an informed basis.	3.80	0.92	566	0.86					
8	My immediate leader shows good judgement when making decisions.	3.79	1.03	566	0.91					
11	My immediate leader always turns words into actions.	3.42	0.92	571			0.88			
12	My immediate leader always carries out his/her plans.	3.43	0.88	576			0.89			

Item	Statement	M	SD	n			
13	I expect my future immediate leader to always give me a sincere explanation of his/her decisions.	4.44	0.73	572	0.67		
14	I expect my future immediate leader to express his/her intentions in a clear way.	4.51	0.74	569	0.91		
15	I expect my future immediate leader's words to reflect his/her intentions.	4.57	0.72	574	0.93		
17	I expect my future immediate leader to have the abilities to carry out his/her leadership tasks.	4.59	0.70	574		0.84	
19	I expect my future immediate leader to make decisions on an informed basis.	4.61	0.66	574		0.94	
20	I expect my future immediate leader to show good judgement when making decisions.	4.65	0.61	574		0.88	
23	I expect my future immediate leader to always turn words into actions.	4.00	0.77	570			0.97
24	I expect my future immediate leader to always carry out his/her plans.	3.95	0.80	565			0.78

Note: Reprint from Paper B.

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Table 5.3: Fit Statistics from Confirmatory Factor Analysis

	Upper Secondary School Teachers	Occupational Therapists
RMSEA	0.03	0.09
CFI	0.99	0.92
TLI	0.99	0.89
SRMR	0.02	0.05
N	575	565

Note: Sartorri-Bentler adjusted standard errors.

5.2 Does Leader Credibility Moderate the Effects of Leadership on Employee Outcomes?

Turning to the question of whether leader credibility moderates the effects of leadership behavior on employee outcomes, I will summarize the main findings from papers B, C, D, and E.

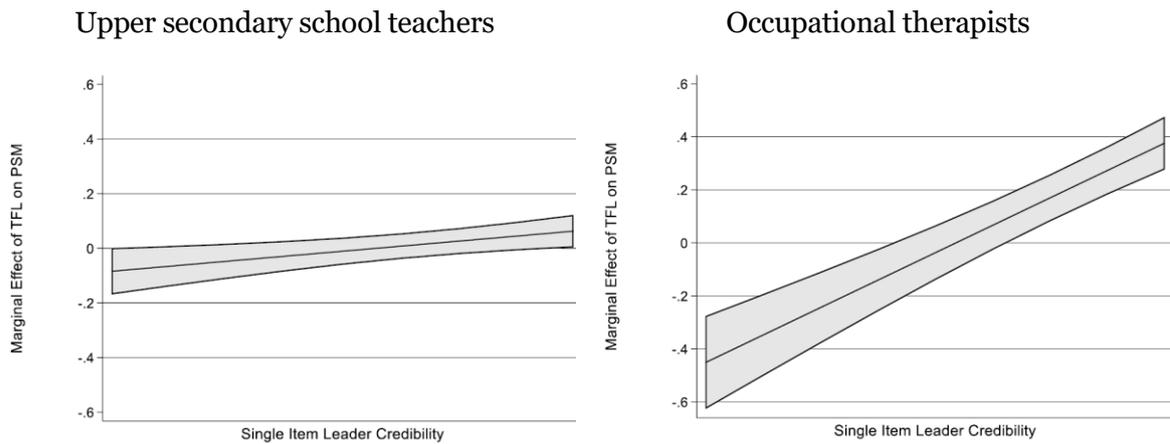### 5.2.1 Studies on Transformational Leadership

Paper B examines the role of leader credibility in the relationship between transformational leadership and PSM using cross-sectional data from the education sector and health care sector, respectively. The responses come from upper secondary school teachers and occupational therapists (see Chapter 4.1.2 for a discussion of these data sources). The findings, using OLS regression analysis and the measurement scale of leader credibility, show that leader credibility moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and PSM. This is the case among both the upper secondary school teachers and the occupational therapists. As shown in figures 5.2 and 5.3, the effect size is about three times larger among the occupational therapists (β = .22) compared to the upper secondary school teachers (β = .07). The findings are almost identical if the single-item measure is used (figures 5.4 and 5.5). When separating personal and positional leader credibility, figures 5.6–5.9 show that personal leader credibility seems to be most important as the results are significant in both samples. There is only a significant moderation effect of positional leader credibility among the occupational therapists (p = .002) and not the upper secondary school teachers (p = .19). In addition, the confidence intervals indicate that the results are less certain.

Figures 5.2–5.3: Marginal Effects of Transformational Leadership on PSM: Leader Credibility Measurement Scale

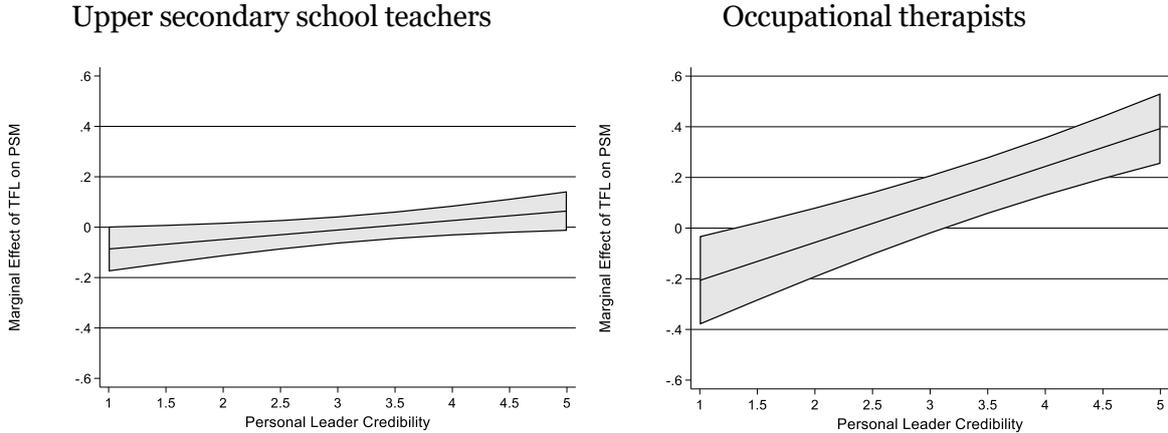

Upper secondary school teachers   Occupational therapists
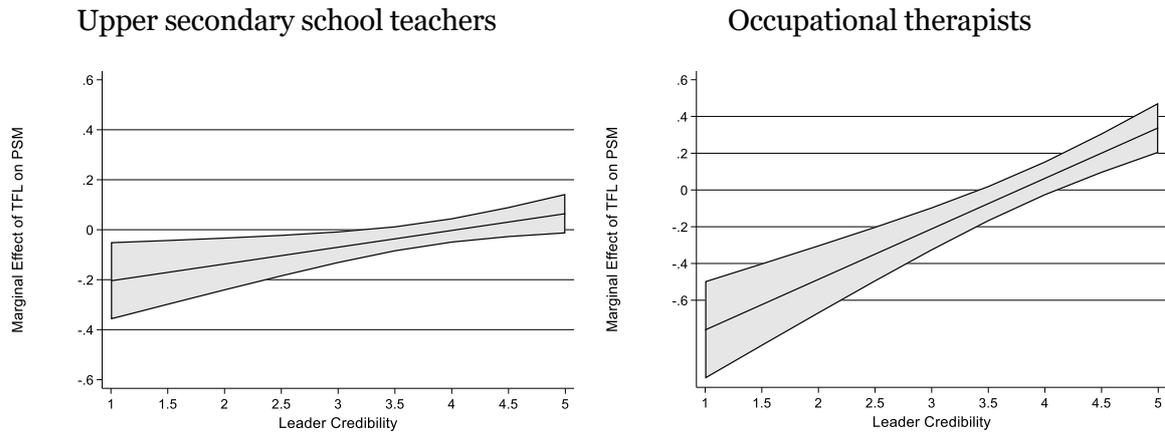
Note: Reprint from Paper B.

Figures 5.4–5.5: Marginal Effects of Transformational Leadership on PSM: Leader Credibility Single Item

Upper secondary school teachers   Occupational therapists

Note: Reprint from Paper B.

Figures 5.6−5.7: Marginal Effects of Transformational Leadership on PSM: Personal Leader Credibility

Upper secondary school teachers Occupational therapists

Note: Reprint from Paper B.

Figures 5.8−5.9: Marginal Effects of Transformational Leadership on PSM: Positional Leader Credibility

Upper secondary school teachers Occupational therapists
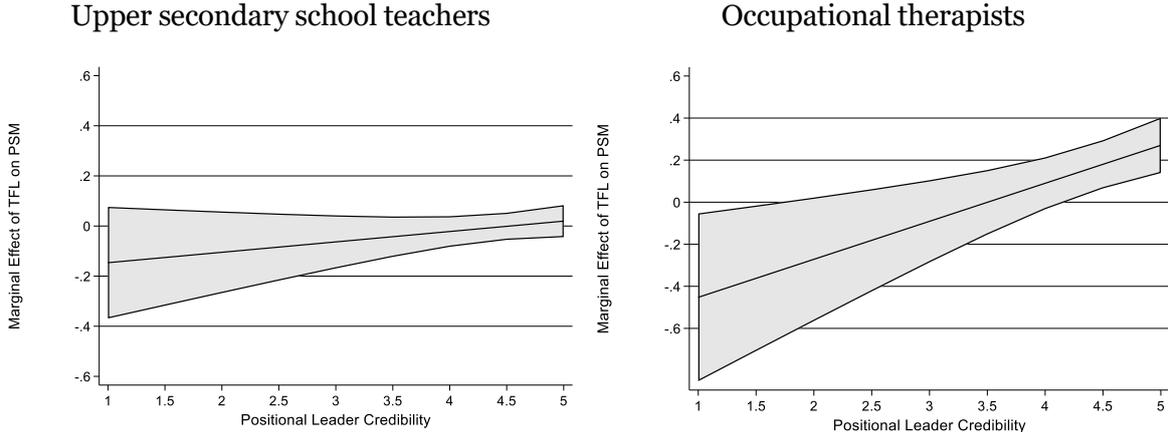
Note: Reprint from Paper B.

In Paper E, my co-authors and I utilize panel data among the upper secondary school teachers that was obtained through two waves of surveys. By being able to account for time-invariant effects of time-invariant factors between units and time-varying factors that are constant across units, we are able to alleviate – although not completely solve – concerns of omitted variable bias and social desirability bias (Stock & Watson, 2020, p. 371). Considering omitted variables, our preregistered expectation proved to be too simple as we did not anticipate changes in the formal regulation of the sector during the data collection. Therefore, we show the analysis conducted separately for two groups of upper secondary schools to take into account that the upper secondary schools were affected differently by changes in the formal regulation between the first

and second round of data collection (see Paper E). Table 5.4 shows the analysis for teachers working in schools within the so-called *distribution zone,* while Table 5.5 shows the results of identical analyses performed on the teachers working in schools within the *distance zone*. As the tables display, there is a statistically significant (or borderline significant) interaction effect using the full leader credibility scale (β = .166, p = .049), the single-item measure (β = .082, p = .097), and the personal leader credibility component (beta = .109, p = .046) among teachers in the distribution zone (Table 5.4). There is no evidence of an interaction effect of positional leader credibility (β = .013, p = .919). In the distance zone, the coefficients are in the expected direction; however, none of the results are statistically significant.

Table 5.4: Fixed-Effects Panel Regression of Transformational Leadership on PSM: Distribution Zone

	Model I Full scale	Model II Single item	Model III Personal	Model IV Positional
Transformational leadership	-0.6018† (0.3202)	-0.2595 (0.2270)	-0.3254 (0.2018)	0.0054 (0.5390)
Leader credibility – full scale	Constant			
Transformational leadership # leader credibility – full scale	0.1656* (0.0808)			
Leader credibility – single item		Constant		
Transformational leadership # leader credibility – single item		0.0821† (0.0480)		
Personal leader credibility			Constant	
Transformational leadership # personal leader credibility			0.1090* (0.0524)	
Positional leader credibility				Constant
Transformational leadership # positional leader credibility				0.0134 (0.1309)
Time dummy	-0.0002 (0.0441)	0.0010 (0.0442)	0.0034 (0.0454)	-0.0197 (0.0392)
Constant	3.4870*** (0.2798)	3.4809*** (0.2428)	3.4445*** (0.2590)	3.6110*** (0.2869)

Number of observations	568	560	568	546
Number of teachers	284	280	284	273
R-squared within	0.0167	0.0171	0.0186	0.0079
R-squared between	0.0379	0.0226	0.0302	0.0312
R-squared overall	0.0286	0.0179	0.0234	0.0241
Sigma_u	0.5418	0.5225	0.5357	0.4684
Sigma_e	0.4377	0.4400	0.4372	0.4338
Rho	0.6052	0.5851	0.6002	0.5383

Note: † p<0.1; * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001. Two-way fixed-effects models. Cluster robust standard errors at school level in parentheses. All models are based on initial leader credibility (measured in t_1).

Table 5.5: Fixed Effects Panel Regression of Transformational Leadership on PSM – Distance Zone

	Model I Full scale	Model II Single item	Model III Personal	Model IV Positional
Transformational leadership	-0.0861 (0.2093)	-0.0022 (0.0946)	-0.0180 (0.1147)	-0.1608 (0.2365)
Leader credibility – full scale	Constant			
Transformational leadership # leader credibility – full scale	0.0327 (0.0513)			
Leader credibility – single item		Constant		
Transformational leadership # leader credibility – single item		0.0098 (0.0232)		
Personal leader credibility			Constant	
Transformational leadership # personal leader credibility			0.0172 (0.0311)	
Positional leader credibility				Constant
Transformational leadership # positional leader credibility				0.0442 (0.0520)
Time dummy	-0.0955** (0.0284)	-0.0973** (0.0284)	-0.0956** (0.0288)	-0.0969*** (0.0268)
Constant	3.7268*** (0.1059)	3.7666*** (0.1130)	3.7291*** (0.1130)	3.7740*** (0.1195)

Number of observations	774.0000	758.0000	774.0000	740.0000
Number of teachers	389.0000	381.0000	389.0000	372.0000
R-squared within	0.0403	0.0389	0.0400	0.0393
R-squared between	0.0127	0.0103	0.0068	0.0190
R-squared overall	0.0180	0.0174	0.0131	0.0232
Sigma_u	0.4473	0.4476	0.4486	0.4498
Sigma_e	0.3571	0.3578	0.3572	0.3592
Rho	0.6107	0.6101	0.6120	0.6106

Note: † $p<0.1$; * $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$; *** $p<0.001$. Two-way fixed-effects models. Cluster robust standard errors at school level in parentheses. All models are based on initial leader credibility (measured in t_1).

In Paper C, we conduct an experimental study on the effects of personal leader credibility on motivation when transformational leadership is exercised. As explained in detail in Paper C and in section 4.3.2., we have four experimental groups where Group 1 receives a low-transformational leadership intervention combined with a low-credibility intervention. Group 2 receives a high-transformational leadership intervention and a low-credibility intervention. Group 3 receives a low-transformational leadership intervention and a high-leader credibility intervention. Group 4 receives a high-transformational leadership intervention and a low-leader credibility intervention.

We find that our transformational leadership intervention does not affect the perceived transformational leadership behavior of the manager as the respondents, on average and across the experimental groups, perceive the manager as highly transformational. This finding is discussed in Paper C. We find that our credibility intervention affects the respondents' perceptions of personal leader credibility and their motivation. Specifically, we can observe a significant and positive effect of leader credibility on self-reported motivation (groups 3 and 4 in Figure 5.10). The same tendency appears when it comes to our objective measure (Figure 5.11), but these results are not significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Figures 5.10−5.11: Effects of Leadership
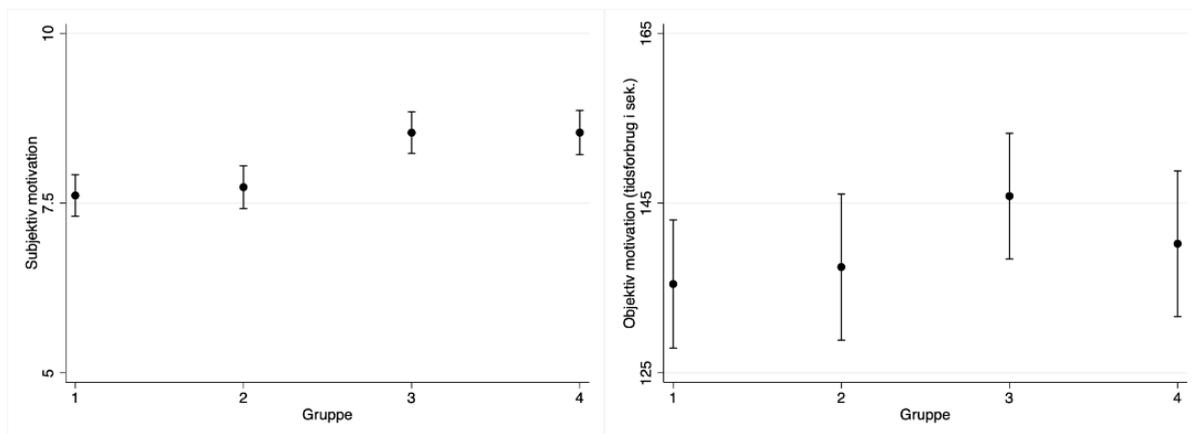
Note: Reprint from Paper C. Therefore, the wordings are in Danish. "Gruppe" refers to "Group" and "Subjektiv motivation" refers to "subjective motivation".

If we use the variation in personal leader credibility that is caused by the intervention to estimate the effect of personal leader credibility on motivation by means of instrumental variable analysis, we find a positive effect on both self-reported and our objective measure of motivation that is based on the amount of time the respondent spends solving tasks for the manager (van Luttervelt et al., 2021, p. 376).

Taken together, the results of the empirical studies from papers B, C, and E show that leader credibility moderates the effect of transformational leadership on relevant types of employee motivation, namely PSM and task motivation, *when the surrounding context leads to change in the organization* (e.g. institutional changes, societal turbulence, or new political prioritizations). In Paper E, the change in the organization is caused by institutional changes in the form of the sudden rollback of the student allocation reform. In Paper C, the change in the (fictive) organization is caused by societal turbulence in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings also indicate that the effect seems to be driven primarily by personal leader credibility.

5.2.2 Study on Inclusive Leadership

Paper D focuses on answering the question of whether leader credibility moderates the effects of inclusive leadership on an inclusive climate. The study is also based on panel data from the upper secondary school teachers and regression with fixed effects. In contrast to the study in Paper E, the analysis is shown for the entire sample of upper secondary schools as the institutional changes regarding the student allocation reform does not seem to affect the results regarding inclusive leadership (analysis not shown).

Table 5.6 displays the findings of the analysis. Model I shows the effects of changes in inclusive leadership on changes in inclusive climate. Model II includes a time dummy. Model III includes leader credibility in the estimation, and Model IV includes the interaction term between inclusive leadership and leader credibility. The findings show that there is a direct and positive effect of changes to inclusive leadership on inclusive climate (p=.000) in line with the expectations in the literature. In addition, the effect size (β = 0.254) is almost identical to a recent study conducted among teams within the central government and municipalities in the Netherlands (Ashikali et al., 2021). Contrary to the expectations of the dissertation, there is no support for the proposed moderation effect of leader credibility (p=.891). Separating leader credibility into personal and positional leader credibility does not change the results, and neither does the use of the single-item measure (these analyses are not shown). Thus, the dissertation does not find any evidence that there is a moderation effect of leader credibility in the relationship between inclusive leadership and inclusive climate.

Table 5.6: Fixed-Effects Panel Regression of Inclusive Leadership on Inclusive Climate

	Model I	Model II	Model III	Model IV
Inclusive leadership	0.2542***	0.2477***	0.2477***	0.2184
	(0.0399)	(0.0383)	(0.0383)	(0.2119)
Time dummy	-	-0.0884***	-0.0884***	-0.0878***
		(0.0217)	(0.0217)	(0.0215)
Leader credibility full scale	-	-	Constant	Constant
Inclusive leadership # Leader credibility full scale				0.0074
				(0.0539)
Constant	2.9718***	3.0391***	3.0391***	3.0346***
	(0.1419)	(0.1360)	(0.1360)	(0.1433)
Number of observations	1344	1344	1344	1344
Number of teachers	673	673	673	673
R-squared within	0.0856	0.1103	0.1103	0.1103
R-squared between	0.2915	0.2908	0.2908	0.2940
R-squared overall	0.2462	0.2480	0.2480	0.2523
Sigma_u	0.5074	0.5087	0.5087	0.5055
Sigma_e	0.3797	0.3748	0.3748	0.3751
Rho	0.6410	0.6481	0.6481	0.6449

Note: † $p<0.1$; * $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$; ***$p<0.001$. Fixed-effects models with two-way fixed effects in models II, III, and IV. Cluster robust standard errors at school level in parentheses.

These results can be interpreted in at least two ways. First, it could be that leader credibility is not a relevant moderator in relation to inclusive leadership. Second, it could be that leader credibility is not a relevant moderator in relation to the relationship between leadership and collective outcomes such as an inclusive climate. An argument to support the first proposition is that while transformational leadership is a type of leadership behavior that is very focused on setting a direction, inclusive leadership is a type of leadership that focuses on recognizing and incorporating diversity in the workplace and in relation to the work itself. Thus, the inclusive nature of inclusive leadership may imply that it is less important for employees to consider the credibility of their manager because the consistency of the manager is not as important when the exerted leadership focuses less on setting a specific direction and more on including differences. These differences between transformational leadership and inclusive leadership could also provide an explanation as to why the institutional context matters in relation to the study on transformational leader-

ship and not on inclusive leadership. Inclusive leadership may be important regardless of organizational changes.

An argument to support the latter interpretation is that because an inclusive climate (although measured as the individual's perception here; see Paper D for a replication with an aggregated measure) is a collective phenomenon, what the individual employee perceives about the plausibility of the manager to act in accordance with stated intentions may be less important to the effects of leadership on collective perceptions about the inclusiveness of the climate (Paper D).

To be able to qualify a discussion about the scope conditions of leader credibility, I conducted an exploratory analysis where I examine whether changes in transformational leadership relate to changes in inclusive climate moderated by leader credibility. The literature suggests that transformational leadership may also be relevant in fostering an inclusive climate in public organizations (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). This is the case because public managers exercising transformational leadership can foster collective team identification (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015, p. 152; Kearney & Gebert, 2009) by means of sharing and sustaining a uniting vision. However, I expect transformational leadership to be less positively associated with inclusive climate than inclusive leadership because transformational leadership focuses on promoting a vision based on certain values, and rather than recognizing differences in values, transformational leadership seeks to align these.

The exploratory analyses (not shown) indicate that changes in transformational leadership are associated with changes in inclusive climate (β = .0138, p=0.000; not shown) and that this relationship is moderated by leader credibility. However, the findings are not robust across the leader credibility measures as only the full-scale measure is borderline significant (beta = .094, p = .84; others not shown). In line with the study on transformational leadership in Paper E, the findings indicate that the results are conditional upon institutional changes (split analysis not shown). Thus, based on this exploratory analysis, it remains indeterminable whether there is a relationship between transformational leadership and inclusive climate that is moderated by leader credibility.

Turning to the question of whether there is a relationship between inclusive leadership and PSM that is moderated by leader credibility, there is no expectation in the literature about the relationship between these two phenomena. However, it seems plausible that there could be a positive relationship between them if, for instance, individual and organizational values for public service delivery focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion and insofar that there is a value congruence between the employee and the organization. The exploratory analysis for this proposed association (not shown) indicates

that changes in inclusive leadership do not affect changes in PSM (β = .027, p = .580). The analyses hint at a moderating effect of leader credibility in the relationship between inclusive leadership and PSM as the coefficients for the different leader credibility measures all point in the same direction, but the findings are not overall statistically significant (p values vary from .014 to .112).

Summing up, does leader credibility moderate the effects of leadership on employee outcomes? The simple answer to this question is that it depends. First, it depends on whether the leadership behavior of interest is transformational leadership or inclusive leadership as the dissertation only finds evidence of a moderation effect of the former. Second, it depends on whether the outcome of interest is task motivation, PSM, or an inclusive climate. The dissertation only finds (partial) support for the individual-level outcomes being motivation. Third and conditionally on the leadership concept of interest, it seems to depend on whether there are organizational changes caused by external factors. The dissertation only finds support for a moderation effect in situations where the organization is experiencing change either (as shown in Paper E) caused by the institutional context or (as shown in Paper C) when change is caused by societal turbulence such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Fourth, when there is an effect of leader credibility in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee (public service) motivation, then the effect seems to be driven primarily by the personal leader credibility component and less so by the positional leader credibility component. Table 5.7 summarizes the findings and the extent to which the theoretical expectations are supported by the findings of the empirical investigation.

Table 5.7: Overview of Findings

	Dependent variables		
Independent variables	Task motivation	PSM	Inclusive climate
Transformational leadership ## leader credibility	**Supported**	**Partially supported**	Indeterminate
Inclusive leadership ## leader credibility	Not tested	Indeterminate	**Not supported**

Note: Bold words indicate main theoretical expectations.

5.3 Obtaining and Maintaining Leader Credibility as Public Managers

The question regarding what public managers can do to obtain and maintain credibility remains. In this section, I will present the results of the dissertation that addresses this question by breaking it down into two questions. First, I will focus on what public managers can do to obtain credibility. Second, I will focus on what public managers can do to maintain leader credibility when they deviate from their communicated intentions.

In Paper C, we provide experimental evidence that when a (fictive) public manager acts in accordance with his stated intentions (i.e. displays behavioral integrity), he is perceived as having a higher level of personal leader credibility in t_1 compared to a situation where the public managers do not in t_2 (van Luttervelt et al., 2021, pp. 374–375). Table 5.8. shows that the MTurkers exposed to the manager who acts in line with his communicated intentions are evaluated as .42 scale points (on a scale 0–10) more credible than those exposed to the condition where the manager shows misalignment between words and deeds.

Table 5.8: The Effect of Behavioral Integrity in t_1 on Personal Leader Credibility in t_2

	Model I
Experimental treatment	
Low behavioral integrity	Ref.
High behavioral integrity	0.42**
	(0.14)
Constant	6.94***
	(1.48)
N	817
R^2	0.03

Note: Based on the translation of Table 2 from Paper C (p. 375). † $p<0.1$; * $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$; *** $p<0.001$. Model I includes controls for gender, age, and educational background.

In addition, I utilize my longitudinal data from the upper secondary schools to assess whether the leader credibility measure is stable over time. While I cannot examine whether the three components of personal leader credibility (sincerity, competence, and behavioral integrity) in t_1 explain leader credibility in t_2, I can investigate whether they predict leader credibility in t_2. I use the full measurement scale of leader credibility for the analysis, simply regress leader credibility in t_2 on the three components in t_1 and apply clustered

standard errors at the school level. Table 5.9 shows the results, and all three components predict leader credibility. Model IV shows that personal competence seems to be the strongest predictor of the three followed by behavioral integrity and sincerity. Thus, while the results do not provide causal evidence, they indicate that all the three components are important to leader credibility.

Table 5.9: Predictive Power of Leader Credibility Components in t_1 on Leader Credibility t_2

	Model I Sincerity	Model II Competence	Model III Behavioral integrity	Model IV All components
Personal sincerity t_1	0.3355***			0.1119***
	(0.0194)			(0.0262)
Personal competence t_1		0.3885***		0.2054***
		(0.0237)		(0.0294)
Personal behavioral integrity t_1			0.3697***	0.1415***
			(0.0202)	(0.0263)
Constant	2.7594***	2.4779***	2.6970***	2.2858***
	(0.0772)	0.0979	0.0759	0.1107
N	607	602	600	596
R²	.3633	.4125	.3231	.4666

Note: Upper secondary school teachers. † p<0.1; * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001.

Managerial investments – that is, actions that signal support of a leadership initiative according to Jakobsen et al., (2022) (Paper A) – might have the potential to increase the extent to which public managers are perceived as credible by their followers. In Paper G, our experiment shows that those of the occupational therapists that are exposed to a manager who makes a substantial investment in the collaborative initiative in the scenario – by verbally signaling commitment to the initiative through underscoring its importance as well as promising necessary resources to see the initiative come to its fruition – compared to those who are exposed to a manager that does not make a substantial investment to the initiative evaluate the manager as significantly more credible. In particular, and as shown in Figure 5.12, the respondents in the high-investment group, on average, rate the manager's credibility to be 3.66 on a scale from 1 to 5, whereas those in the low-investment group, on average, rate the manager's credibility to be 3.24. This is a highly significant difference (p = .000).

Figure 5.12: The Effect of Managerial Investment on Leader Credibility
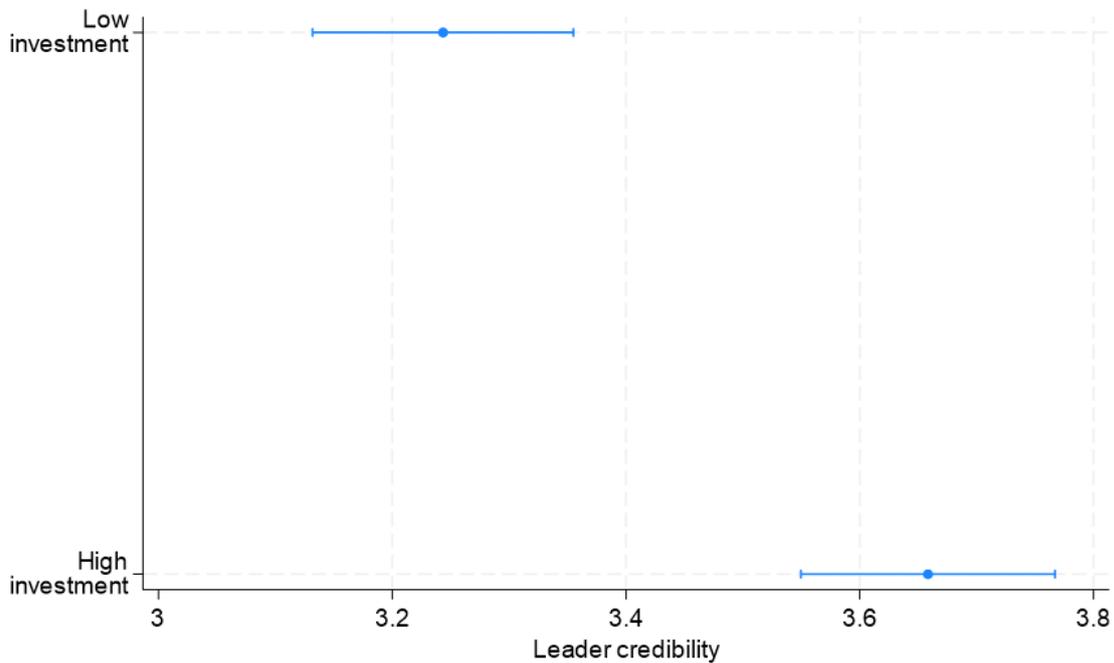
In Paper G, we also examine what our fictitious public manager can do to preserve leader credibility in situations where she deviates from her communicated leadership intentions. We argue that such situations are relevant to examine because public managers are subject to political leadership. This implies that public managers sometimes may have to adapt to changes in political priorities, potentially causing damage to the credibility they are ascribed by their followers. In Paper G, we observe that when the manager in our experiment terminates the fictive collaboration (which is also described in detail in Chapter 4), she is ascribed significantly lower leader credibility (p = 0.000) than before the termination (see "Average" in Table 5.10 below). Specifically, we see a drop from 3.475 to 2.733 on a scale ranging from 1 to 5.

**Table 5.10: Descriptive Outcomes across Experimental Groups**

	Keeping a low profile	Taking responsibility	Responsibility and argumentation	Blaming the principal	Borrowing the principal's reasoning	Average
Pre-manipulation leader credibility	3.489 (.087)	3.516 (.099)	3.494 (0.114)	3.404 (.115)	3.469 (.085)	3.475 (.045)
Post-manipulation leader credibility	2.815 (.111)	2.694 (.127)	2.294 (.117)	3.247 (.091)	2.604 (.118)	2.733 (.053)
Difference in leader credibility	-.6739 (.1038)	-.8211 (.1159)	-1.2 (.1205)	-.1573 (.1597)	-.8646 (.152)	-.7308 (.061)
Collaborative engagement	43.15 (2.60)	52.97 (3.12)	40.24 (3.49)	54.38 (2.68)	48.56 (3.07)	47.95 (1.36)

Note: Reprint from Paper G. n = 499. Standard errors in parentheses. Single-item measure of leader credibility.

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We then examine the effectiveness – in terms of the manager's ability to maintain leader credibility – of the presentational strategies that vary across the experimental groups. In all the interventions, the manager explains that the initiative is being terminated, but the explanation differs across the groups. In the control group compared to the other four groups, the manager does not explain why the initiative was cancelled. In the other four groups, the manager either directs the responsibility away from herself (towards her political principals) or takes the responsibility herself in combination with either providing an argument for the decision (the collaboration is too resource demanding) or providing no argument. The manuscripts and videos are available in the supplementary material of Paper G.

Figure 5.13 depicts the direct effects of each presentational strategy on leader credibility. From the figure, it is evident that the same strategies are more effective than others in terms of retaining leader credibility when the fictitious manager terminates the leadership initiative. Blaming the principal comes out as the most effective strategy by far and is the only strategy more effective than the control condition of keeping a low profile and not explaining the reasons for terminating the leadership initiative. In contrast to our expectations, all the other presentational strategies are less effective compared to the control group, although "taking responsibility" is not statistically significantly different (p = .333).
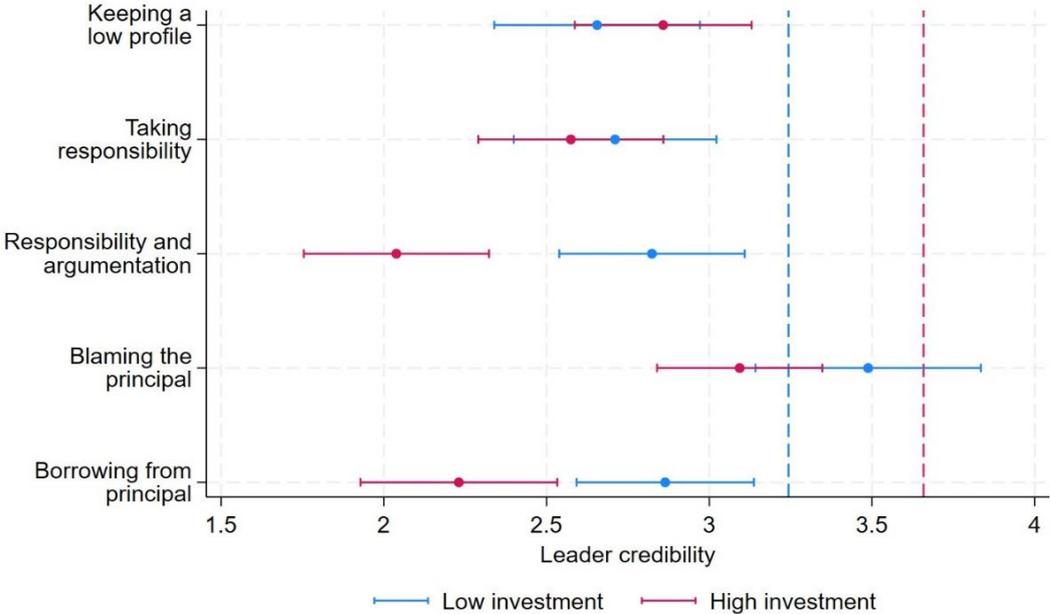
Figure 5.13: Direct Effects of Presentational Strategies on Leader Credibility
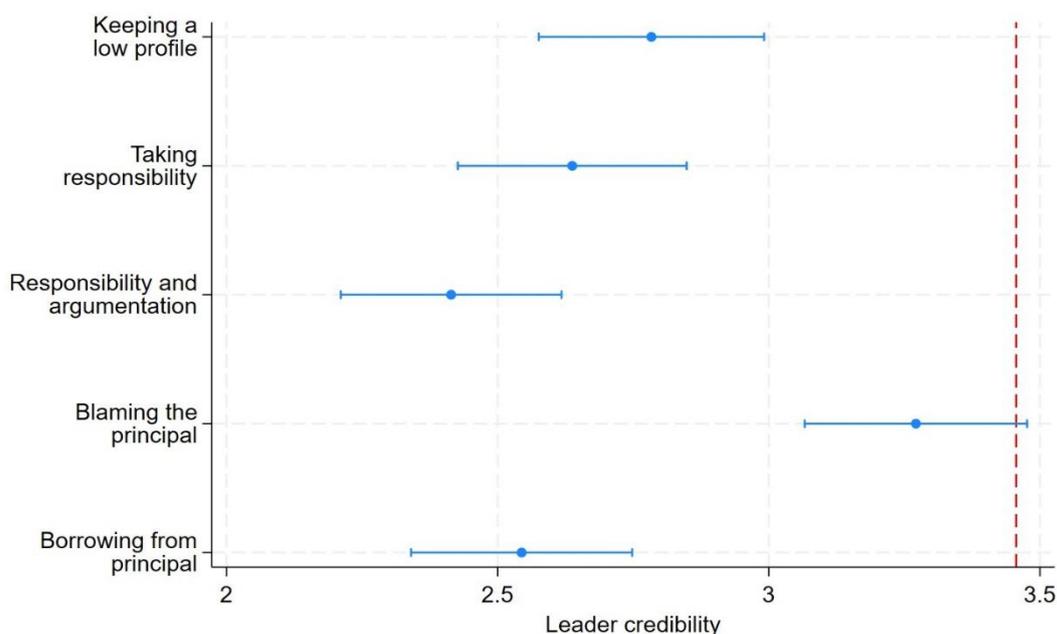
Note: Reprint from Paper G. Dots represent means. Brackets indicate 95% confidence intervals. Dotted red line indicates average baseline leader credibility.

We then consider whether the manager made a substantial investment in the collaborative leadership initiative by displaying either a low or high level of commitment to the initiative when presenting it to the respondents. Figure 5.14 reveals a rather different picture if we take the leadership investments by the manager into account. The blue color indicates that the manager has made a low investment in the initiative, whereas the red color indicates that the manager has made a substantial investment in the initiative. We can see that in the situation of high investment, the blame-avoiding presentational strategies are much less effective in terms of retaining leader credibility, and the same goes for the strategies that utilize an argument to explain the decision. However, the "taking responsibility" and "keeping a low profile" strategies are not significantly different in these situations.

Figure 5.14: Interaction Effects of Presentational Strategies on Leader Credibility

Note: Reprint from Paper G. Dots represent means. Brackets indicate 95% confidence intervals. Dotted red line indicates average baseline leader credibility for high-investment group. Dotted blue line indicates average baseline leader credibility for low-investment group.

In sum, the findings of papers C and G suggest that displaying misalignment between communicated intentions and corresponding actions can damage the extent to which managers are ascribed as credible by their employees. Put differently, the studies show that by acting in line with the communicated intentions in t_1, the managers are perceived as more credible in t_2. The exploratory analysis of the predictive power of the components of personal leader credibility suggests that sincerity and competence in t_1 are also important predictors of leader credibility in t_2. In addition, the findings from Paper G provide

evidence that how the manager communicates about cancelling leadership initiatives has an effect on the level of leader credibility they are ascribed by their employees subsequently. Finally, the findings suggest that it is generally more damaging to a manager's credibility to deviate from the course when the manager has made investments in the leadership initiative. Making investments also matters for the effect of the presentational strategies that managers could consider attempting to preserve leader credibility. Thus, while the dissertation argues that making investments can be a good idea to increase not only the credibility of the initiatives that public managers promote but also their own leader credibility, the two experimental studies show that it has a potential drawback if the manager decides (or is forced) to terminate a leadership initiative.

Chapter 6:
Concluding Discussion,Contributions, and Further Perspectives

The last chapter of this summary is dedicated to wrapping up and discussing what we can learn from this dissertation. I do so by first providing an answer to each of the research questions. Second, I present the main contributions of the dissertation. Third, I discuss the limitations of the dissertation and how future research could address some of these limitations. Fourth, I present the implications of the dissertation for practice.

6.1 Answering the Research Questions

6.1.1 What Is Leader Credibility, and How Can It Be Measured?

The dissertation's answer to the first research question is that leader credibility is "the plausibility followers assign to the leader acting in accordance with communicated intentions" (Jakobsen et al., 2022). Thus, leader credibility is an expectation about the behavioral consistency ascribed to public managers by others. Those "others" are delimited to being the followers of the given manager in this dissertation. I conceptualize leader credibility as a phenomenon that is formed by both a personal and a positional leader credibility component. The personal component captures the followers' assessment of the extent to which they perceive the leader as a person who is sincere, competent, and showing behavioral integrity. The positional component is formed by the perceptions of followers regarding the reputation of the leadership position as being sincere, competent, and showing behavioral integrity – regardless of the specific person holding the position – and the formal capabilities of the leadership position. The dissertation shows that leader credibility can be measured across different sectors by means of both a comprehensive measurement scale and a single-item measure.

6.1.2 How and to What Extent Does Leader Credibility Matter for the Effect of Leadership Behaviors of Public Managers?

The short answer to this question is that the general argument that leader credibility moderates the effect of leadership on employee outcomes is not supported. The findings of the dissertation indicate that leader credibility moderates the effect of *some* types of leadership behaviors in *some* situations

and in relation to *some* types of employee outcomes. The slightly longer and more specific answer to the research question is that the dissertation finds evidence suggesting that leader credibility moderates the effect of transformational leadership on task and PSM when there are changes in the institutional context. The dissertation arrives at this conclusion for the following reasons.

First, the dissertation only finds support for a moderation effect of leader credibility in relation to the effect of transformational leadership on employee motivation and not in relation to inclusive leadership on inclusive climate. Second, the findings related to transformational leadership across the experimental and observational studies suggest that leader credibility may be an important moderator in the context of organizational change caused by external factors such as formal regulation due to changing political priorities and societal events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Third, the findings show that in the contexts studied in this dissertation, personal leader credibility seems to be the most important driver of the influence of leader credibility when such an effect is present. In sum, the findings indicate that leader credibility may not be a universal booster of the effects of leadership but instead play an important role in particular situations. Thus, the findings point towards a need for a revision of the theoretical argument that addresses relevant contextual factors.

6.1.3 Why Can It Be Difficult for Public Managers to Obtain and Maintain Leader Credibility?

The dissertation's answer to the third and final research question is based on both empirical investigation and theoretical inquiry. Starting with obtaining leader credibility, the dissertation finds evidence that public managers can obtain leader credibility by making investments in their leadership initiatives. They can do so by signaling ownership of the initiative and supporting its implementation. In addition, the dissertation shows in two experiments that if public managers act consistently and in line with their communicated intentions (i.e. show behavioral integrity) in t_1, their employees evaluate them as more credible in t_2. In support of this and utilizing longitudinal observational data, the dissertation also finds that not only the behavioral integrity but also the sincerity and competence ascribed to public managers at a given time predict the level of leader credibility they are ascribed a year later. This suggests that by being perceived as sincere, competent, and consistent in one's behaviors, public managers may obtain leader credibility.

Why then may it be difficult to maintain leader credibility as a public manager? The dissertation theorizes that because all public managers are part of the political-administrative hierarchy, they are agents of their principals

(politicians or managers at higher hierarchical levels) and principals in relation to their agents (the public sector employees or subordinate managers). To be able to serve as a loyal agent (which is a legitimate expectation in a democratic society) and at the same time be perceived as a credible principal may not always be easily accommodated as preferences and information between actors in the political-administrative hierarchy are not always aligned. It may be particularly difficult if the political preferences change in a way that requires the public managers to change the direction that they have set for their organizations to remain loyal to the politicians *after* the public managers have communicated and invested in leadership initiatives based on an expectation about a different political reality. This leaves public managers with a decision that – depending on the distribution of preferences and relevant information between the public managers and their principals and agents – may involve a trade-off between prioritizing being a loyal agent and a credible principal.

While the dissertation cannot provide definite empirical answers to this question, it does show that in a scenario-based experiment, public managers are able to retain the highest level of credibility in the eyes of their followers – after terminating a leadership initiative to remain loyal to their political principals – by blaming the politicians for the change of direction. While this could be a dominant strategy in a single-game setup for a public manager, it is – according to the dissertation – a dangerous strategy in a setup of repeated games as the (political) principals will eventually be able to observe the outcomes of the behavior of the public managers and sanction them.

6.2 Contributions

As a whole, the dissertation delivers some important theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions to the literature on leader(ship) credibility in particular and public administration and management in general. Table 6.1 provides an overview of the main contributions of the dissertation based on the character of the contribution (theoretical, empirical, or methodological) and which research question the contribution is tied to.

Table 6.1: Overview of the Main Contributions

	Theoretical contributions	Empirical contributions	Methodological contributions
RQ1	Conceptualizing leader credibility and demarcating it from related concepts	Showing that leader credibility consists of a personal and a positional component	Development of valid, reliable, and relevant measures of leader credibility
RQ2	Developing a theoretical argument pertaining to the role of leader credibility in relation to the effects of leadership behaviors of public managers	Showing under what conditions leader credibility matters for the effects of leadership on employee outcomes in public organizations	Demonstrating the potential of using video vignettes in survey experiments to study difficult questions in public management
RQ3	Developing a theory that explains the tension between public managers' considerations of being a loyal agent and a credible principal and how it can be tackled	Showing the importance of the behavior of public managers in obtaining and maintaining leader credibility	Showing how survey experiments can be designed to take time into account in public management studies

In relation to the first research question, the dissertation makes a conceptual contribution to the literature. By conceptualizing leader credibility as a construct that is anchored in the generic leadership and management literature as well as the public administration literature, the dissertation contributes to the integration of these literatures and highlights that both offer relevant insights to understanding (the importance of) the credibility of public managers. In addition, by conceptualizing leader credibility and distinguishing it from other concepts in a systematic way based on the quadrant model (Jakobsen et al., 2022), the dissertation contributes to offering clarity to a murky concept (Williams et al., 2022). Second, the dissertation shows that it is not only analytically but also empirically possible and relevant to separate and integrate the personal and positional components of leader credibility. This is important for future research that may be interested in examining the relative importance of the two components in different settings. Third, the dissertation delivers an important methodological contribution by developing measures of leader credibility. Scholars can use these measures to conduct further research on the topic, and public managers who are interested in working system-

atically with leader credibility can use the measures to assess their own leader credibility as well as that of other managers within the organization.

In relation to the second research question, the dissertation makes a theoretical contribution by developing a parsimonious argument that explains why leader credibility should be expected to moderate the effects of leadership behavior on employee outcomes. While the dissertation moves beyond existing research in developing a specific argument, it seems clear from the findings of the dissertation that further theorizing about the scope conditions of the argument is needed. I will return to this in the discussion on the limitations of the dissertation.

Second, the dissertation contributes to the literature by empirically examining the role of leader credibility in relation to public managers' leadership. While many researchers assume a moderating effect of leader credibility (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Kouzes & Posner, 1990; Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010; Yukl, 2012a), very few empirical studies have been conducted to support this assumption in a public sector context, and when such work has been conducted, it has often conflated credibility with trustworthiness or transformational leadership (Gabris et al., 2001; Gabris & Ihrke, 1996). The findings of the dissertation show that while leader credibility may be important in some relevant situations, claims such as "credibility is the foundation of leadership" (Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. 37) may over-extrapolate the importance of leader credibility slightly.

Third, the remaining two methodological contributions of the dissertation crosscut the second and third research questions. Both relate to the dissertation, demonstrating that the survey experiment holds potential beyond its usual application (text vignettes) to study interesting and difficult questions in public administration and management. In particular, the dissertation shows that by combining the utilization of video vignettes to manipulate leadership behavior and a compelling fictive narrative that requires respondents to participate actively, it is possible to get relevant insights about dynamics and mechanisms pertaining to the effects of leadership behavior on follower attitudes. In particular, the configuration of the experiments used in this dissertation allows for consideration of the temporal aspect of the interaction between managers and employees, which is essential yet also difficult to study (Oberfield, 2014a, 2014b). This contribution is especially important given the heavy reliance on surveys in public administration and management research (Groeneveld et al., 2015; Jilke & Ryzin, 2017).

The final theoretical contribution consists of the formulation of a theory on the dual role of public managers. The theory explains that public managers are both principals and agents simultaneously and that prioritizing being a credible principal may be aligned with acting as a loyal agent in some

situations but not always. By carving out some of the dilemmas public managers face due to their position in the political-administrative hierarchy and identifying strategies they may utilize to tackle their dual role in given situations, the theory offers several testable implications for future research.

The final empirical contribution is to show that managers can affect their followers' perception of their credibility through their behaviors. Specifically, the dissertation provides evidence that the consistency of the behavior of a manager in t_1 affects the leader credibility the manager is ascribed in t_2 – at least in the experimental settings investigated. Furthermore, the manager's communication about behavioral inconsistencies is important in retaining leader credibility in such situations, and investments in leadership initiatives can boost the manager's credibility but also result in a more serious blow to the manager's credibility if the manager decides to deviate from the course. These findings are important to research in public administration and management because they provide insights into what public managers may do to build credibility in addition to or in the absence of regulative commitments (Dull, 2009; North & Weingast, 1989).

6.3 Limitations and Perspectives for Future Research

6.3.1 Refining the Argument

The findings of the dissertation suggest that we need to theorize more about under which conditions leader credibility can be expected to matter for the effects of leadership in public organizations. A way forward in this regard could be to build on the concepts presented in Paper A of the dissertation (Jakobsen et al., 2022). While the dissertation has mainly examined the concepts of leader credibility as well as investments in leadership initiatives to some extent, thinking more specifically about how formal and informal rules may shape the scope conditions for a moderating role of leader credibility would be a fruitful task. The findings of the dissertation suggest that informal rules – which are tied to the collective norms of the members of the organization – may be important to consider when theorizing about the role of leader credibility in relation to the effects of leadership exerted by public managers. This is the case because I show that there is a stronger correlation between transformational leadership and PSM moderated by leader credibility in situations among employees with lower levels of professionalism compared to employees with higher levels of professionalism.

Explicating exactly how informal rules such as professional norms may be woven into a coherent theoretical argument is not straightforward. One could imagine that highly professionalized employees just respond less to leadership

behaviors of public managers because they believe that they do not need an external actor to direct them as they can find guidance in the knowledge and norms they have been socialized into and that are upheld by their professional collective (Andersen & Pedersen, 2012, p. 48). As such, it is not necessarily the case that the highly professionalized employees ascribe less leader credibility to their manager or that leader credibility is less important in the decision regarding how to respond to the leadership behavior. In fact, one could imagine – although seemingly contrary to the findings – that the stronger the professional norms in the organization, the more leader credibility would be an important moderator of leadership behaviors on employee outcomes because highly professionalized employees would respond more powerfully to leadership behavior if it was exercised by one that they deem a member of their own kind (Ouchi, 1980); someone who they perceive to live up to the norms of their profession (Jakobsen et al., 2022; Schott et al., 2018).

In relation to formal rules, the dissertation finds indications that leader credibility may be more important in situations when there is a stir in the organization due to changes in policy. A potential implication for the theoretical argument pertaining to the moderating role of leader credibility in relation to leadership and employee outcomes could be that when there is need for active leadership because of organizational changes, leader credibility may be relevant. In cases of stability, on the other hand, there would be no need for active leadership and thus no reason for leader credibility to play a role.

6.3.2 Generalizing the Findings

The discussion about the refinement of the argument in light of the findings of the dissertation also has ties to a discussion about the extent to which these findings can be generalized. In the following, I will outline some of the limitations of the dissertation that are important to be aware of as they impede generalizing the findings beyond the studied context.

The first limitation in this regard is that the studied context – with the exception of the study on MTurkers (Paper C) – is that of the Danish public sector. There is no guarantee that the findings of the dissertation would be a valid source to infer knowledge on leader credibility from beyond the borders of Denmark, and there are at least two arguments to support this. First, because Denmark is an extreme case of a culture with low power distance (Hofstede, 2023), we would expect that public managers have to earn their leader credibility through their behavior rather than acquiring it through the leadership position per se. Thus, in assessing a manager's leader credibility, the personal component relative to the positional component may have more weight in a society of low power distance compared to one of high power distance.

Second, because the institutional design varies from country to country, what public managers can do and want to do may not be the same (Dixit & Nalebuff, 1991). For instance, Meier and colleagues (2015) show that principals in Danish schools have less managerial autonomy compared to their Texan equivalents due to the corporatist system imposing constraints on the decision-making authority of the Danish principals (Meier et al., 2015). Ideally, future research could replicate the studies of the dissertation in similar organizations in other countries.

The second limitation is that the dissertation only focuses on the so-called frontline of the public sector – that is, among the public sector managers and employees who deliver public services directly to the citizens (Andersen & Jakobsen, 2017; Lipsky, 1980). While there is good reason to focus on this particular part of the public sector, it also means that the dissertation cannot provide any evidence of the importance of leader credibility higher up in the political-administrative hierarchy. Examining such a context would be a fruitful endeavor as it could help assess the impact of the institutional context and the type of public service delivery in relation to the importance of leader credibility.

The third limitation in terms of generalizability is that the dissertation focuses primarily on relatively highly professionalized employees. As discussed above, it may be that the level of professionalism matters for the importance of leader credibility in relation to the effects of leadership on employee outcomes. Yet, while the dissertation does investigate settings of varying degrees of professionalism among the employees, both the occupational therapists and the high school teachers represent relatively highly professionalized groups of public sector employees with 3.5 and 6 years of professional education, respectively. It is plausible – given the findings of the stronger association between transformational leadership, leader credibility, and PSM among the occupational therapists – that the association between these phenomena will play out differently among employees with lower levels of professionalism. However, since the dissertation's findings may not be generalized to public sector employees with low levels of professionalism, I encourage future research to examine whether this is the case.

A fourth limitation is that the dissertation focuses mainly on investigating the argument pertaining to leader credibility moderating the effect of leadership on employee attitudes and, to a very limited extent, employee behavior (Paper C is an exception) and performance. The reason for this focus is that I expect motivation to be a precondition for performance (Andersen et al., 2014; Belle, 2015; Cerasoli et al., 2014) and therefore a logically first step to examining the importance of leader credibility in relation to the effects of leadership. However, it implies that we cannot infer from this dissertation whether

and to what extent leader credibility matters for the effects of leadership on individual or organizational performance.

6.3.3 Additional Perspectives

Finally, I provide a few additional suggestions for studies that would be relevant for future research to investigate. First, the dissertation shows that in the experimental setup of Paper G, it seems that blaming one's principals may be the most effective way of retaining credibility in a situation where a manager has deviated from the stated course of action. If we imagine that this is also the case in real public organizations, then it would be highly relevant for future studies to investigate how the (political) principals of the public manager reacts to learning that they are being blamed for the decision of changing the course of the organization by their subordinate manager. This would be particularly interesting given that (political) principals may accept the responsibility that they made priorities that influenced or forced the manager to deviate from the course, or they may deny their responsibility or even sanction their subordinate manager for disloyal behavior. Either of these reactions could have important implications for the viability of utilizing a blaming strategy for public managers. Such a study could be conducted by, for instance, exposing politicians to different vignettes with varying information about how their subordinate managers have communicated about terminating a leadership initiative and then letting them choose among different reactions in a similar vein to studies on performance information (Nielsen & Baekgaard, 2015; Nielsen & Moynihan, 2017).

Second, it would be highly relevant for future research to add to the experimental studies of the dissertation regarding how changes in (political) priorities further up the hierarchy may affect the leader credibility that public managers are ascribed by their employees in real public organizations. Because it would be unethical to design a field experiment that assesses such research questions, scholars would probably have to keep an eye out for naturally occurring opportunities to exploit.

6.4 Implications for Practice

This final section is dedicated to reflecting upon how this dissertation is relevant for practitioners. Practical implications can be categorized into at least three categories based on whether they focus on raising awareness, stimulating learning, or suggesting specific actions (Aguinis et al., 2022). The implications that I will highlight here are concerned primarily with raising awareness and, to some extent, suggesting specific actions. It is important to keep in mind that my suggestions of relevant implications should be considered in

light of the limitations of the dissertation as discussed above as well as in consideration of the given context within which those who read this and identify as a practitioner operate.

The first implication is that public managers should be aware that their leader credibility consists both of a personal and a positional component. This means that while they have some and often substantial influence on what they say and do, they are also taking on a position that comes with a reputation and is bound by formal and informal rules. In this regard, public managers should be aware of their position in the political-administrative hierarchy and that they may have to prioritize what considerations they deem the most important to accommodate. The dissertation provides a theoretical framework consisting of four ideal types that public managers may find useful in their reflections about their role in the political-administrative hierarchy and how they approach it.

While the dissertation does not consider leader credibility a specific type of behavior that can be learned and developed through training, it may, nonetheless, be the case that public organizations may be interested in working systematically to improve it. Moreover, the dissertation suggests that public managers can take certain actions to increase their leader credibility such as making investments in their leadership initiatives. A relevant question in this regard is the following: What do public managers gain by being perceived as credible by their employees? Public managers may be able to affect the motivation of their employees through their leadership behavior to a higher extent if they are perceived as more credible. However, and importantly, whether this is the case depends on both the specific context and what leadership behavior the public managers exercises. If public organizations want to assess the leader credibility of their managers, they may benefit from utilizing the measurement scale that this dissertation has developed.

A final important implication is that politicians and public managers who are themselves leaders of other public managers should be aware that the decisions they make may have consequences for the leader credibility that their subordinate managers are ascribed by their subordinates. This is important to be aware of because while it is a task and indeed a responsibility of those at the top of the political-administrative hierarchy to consider different interests and to negotiate and make decisions that prioritize between such interests, it is the managers and employees at lower levels of the hierarchy that are ultimately responsible for implementing such decisions. Thus, if politicians and managers at higher levels often make changes to their priorities, it may hamper the implementation of such changes in the long run if it results in lower credibility evaluations of managers further down the hierarchy, potentially causing lower responsiveness from employees.

English Summary

Public managers are central actors in the functioning of the public sector. While the politicians are responsible for making decisions for and on behalf of the citizens, the managers and employees in the public sector are essential to turn policy into reality. In this regard, the efforts of public managers to set direction and facilitate the accomplishment of organizational goals makes a difference. Given that leadership is important to succeed in achieving politically formulated goals, it is highly relevant to consider the extent to which public sector employees perceive their managers as someone who acts consistently in line with their words. Someone who is credible. However, it may not always be straightforward to act consistently as a public manager due to changes in prioritizations at the political level.

This dissertation investigates leader credibility of public managers. The dissertation attempts to provide answers to three research questions: How can leader credibility be conceptualized and measured? How and to what extent does leader credibility matter for the effect of leadership behaviors of public managers? Why can it be difficult to obtain and maintain leader credibility as a public manager?

The dissertation proposes that leader credibility can be defined as the plausibility that followers assign to their leader acting in accordance with their stated intentions. It is conceptualized as a phenomenon that consists of both a component tied to the *person* being the manager and a component tied to the leadership *position* which the given person holds. The dissertation demonstrates that leader credibility can be operationalized in multiple ways in the form of survey measurements ant that the credibility of fictious managers can be manipulated by showing video-vignettes with varying behavioral consistency.

The dissertation investigates the role of leader credibility in the relationship between leadership and employee outcomes by conducting several empirical studies in various research settings within the Danish public sector and using both observational and experimental research designs. The findings indicate that leader credibility matters for the effects of leadership depending on the organizational context, the type of leadership that is exercised and the character of the employee outcome. In addition, the findings suggest that public managers can gain credibility by acting consistently over time and by making investments in their leadership initiatives.

As public managers are part of the political-administrative chain, they take on the role as both principal and agent simultaneously. It may be difficult for public managers to serve both as a loyal agent in relation to their (political)

principals and as a credible leader in relation to their subordinate managers or employees at the same time. The dissertation develops a theory that explains under what conditions public managers can be expected to put a low or a high priority on being a loyal agent and a credible principal and what public managers can do to retain credibility in situations where they confront their employees with a decision to deviate from their stated course of action. Survey-experimental evidence suggests that blaming the manager's own political principals seems to be a relatively effective way to preserve credibility among followers; at least in a single-game setup. However, this may be a dangerous strategy for public managers in repeated games as the manager's principals are capable of punishing their subordinates for disloyal behavior.

The dissertation makes three cumulative contributions to the field of public administration and management. First, the dissertation conceptualizes leader credibility by combining insights from generic management and public administration and shows that it can be measured in a reliable and valid way. Second, the dissertation provides evidence that the role of leader credibility in the relationship between leadership and employee outcomes depends on several contextual factors. Third, the dissertation provides a theory that allows us to better understand the dual role of public managers.

Dansk resumé

Offentlige ledere er vigtige for den offentlige sektors funktionsevne. Mens politikerne er ansvarlige for at træffe beslutninger for og på vegne af borgerne, er lederne og deres medarbejdere i de offentlige organisationer afgørende for at omsætte politik til virkelighed. I den forbindelse gør de offentlige lederes bestræbelser på at sætte retning og facilitere at de organisatoriske målsætninger realiseres en forskel. I lyset af at ledelse er vigtig for at opnå politisk formulerede mål, er det yderst relevant at overveje, i hvilket omfang ansatte i den offentlige sektor opfatter deres ledere som nogen, der konsistent handler i overensstemmelse med deres ord. Om de er troværdige. Det er dog ikke altid ligetil at handle konsistent som offentlig leder, fordi der kan ske omprioriteringer på det politiske niveau.

Denne afhandling undersøger offentlige lederes troværdighed. Afhandlingen forsøger at give svar på tre forskningsspørgsmål: Hvordan kan ledertroværdighed konceptualiseres og måles? Hvordan og i hvilket omfang betyder ledertroværdighed noget for effekten af offentlige lederes adfærd? Hvorfor kan det være svært at opnå og opretholde ledertroværdighed som offentlig leder?

Afhandlingen definerer ledertroværdighed som hvor plausibelt følgerne mener det er, at lederen handler i overensstemmelse med sine udtrykte intentioner. Ledertroværdighed konceptualiseres som et fænomen, der består af både en komponent, der er knyttet til den person, der er leder, og en komponent, der er knyttet til den formelle lederposition, som den givne person indtager. Afhandlingen viser, at ledertroværdighed kan operationaliseres med forskellige målemodeller i spørgeskemaundersøgelser, og at fiktive lederes troværdighed kan manipuleres ved at vise videovignetter med varierende adfærdsmæssig konsistens.

Da offentlige ledere er en del af det politisk-administrative hierarki indtager de både rollen som principal og agent på samme tid. Det kan være svært for offentlige ledere både at agere loyalt over for deres (politiske) overordnede og samtidigt agere troværdigt i relation til deres underordnede ledere eller medarbejdere. Afhandlingen udvikler en teori, der forklarer, under hvilke betingelser offentlige ledere kan forventes at prioritere hhv. hensynet til at være en loyal agent og en troværdighed principal i lav eller høj grad, og hvad offentlige ledere kan gøre for at bevare troværdigheden i situationer, hvor de konfronterer deres medarbejdere med en beslutning om at afvige fra deres erklærede kurs. Afhandlings survey-eksperimentelle undersøgelse tyder på, at det at rette skylden mod lederens egne politiske principaler synes at være en relativt effektiv måde at bevare troværdigheden blandt følgerne på; i hvert fald i

enkeltstående situation. Det kan dog være en farlig strategi for offentlige ledere i gentagne spil, da deres overordnede er i stand til straffe dem for illoyal adfærd.

Afhandlingen leverer tre kumulative bidrag til forskningen i offentlig forvaltning og ledelse. For det første konceptualiserer afhandlingen ledertroværdighed ved at kombinere indsigter fra den generiske ledelsesforskning samt forskningen inden for offentlig forvaltning og viser at ledertroværdighed kan måles validt. For det andet viser afhandlingen, at betydningen af ledertroværdighed i forholdet mellem ledelse og medarbejder-motivation og adfærd afhænger af flere kontekstuelle faktorer. For det tredje bidrager afhandlingen med en teori, der kan hjælpe os til bedre at forstår de offentlige lederes dobbeltrolle.

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