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Social identity framing communication strategies for mobilizing social change ☆,☆☆

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ABSTRACT

Social identity framing delineates a set of communication tactics that leaders may use to harness follower support for a vision of social change. An experimental design tested the effectiveness of three social identity framing communication tactics (inclusive language, similarity language, positive social identity language) on follower outcomes. Students ($N = 246$) completed dependent measures after reading one of eight possible leader speeches promoting renewable energy on campus. Results showed that participants exposed to inclusive language were more likely to: indicate that renewable energy was ingroup normative; intend to engage in collective action to bring renewable energy to campus; experience positive emotions and confidence about change; and to view the leader more positively. The combination of inclusive language and positive social identity increased ratings of leader charisma. Perceived leader prototypicality was related to followers' social identification, environmental values, ingroup injunctive norms, and self-stereotypes. Positive social identity language increased collective self-esteem. These results underline the important role of implicating social identity in leader communication that strives to mobilize follower support for social change.

1. Introduction

History is replete with numerous examples of leaders – military, political, religious, spiritual, organizational – who have influenced their followers to effect enormous feats of social change. In the leadership literature, these types of leaders are usually described as transformational (e.g., Bass, 1990) or charismatic (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). These leaders possess an almost "magical ability (Weber, 1946) to influence their followers and motivate them to engage in collective actions to bring the leaders' vision of change into fruition (Yukl, 2006). Moreover, their followers willingly self-sacrifice on behalf of the collective, experience emotional involvement in vision attainment, and place strong trust in the leader (Shamir et al., 1993). How are these change-oriented leaders able to exert such a profound influence on their followers?

Communication may be a key mechanism of influence for change-oriented leaders. Considerable research and theory suggests that social change leaders (i.e., charismatic) use different communication strategies compared to non-social change (i.e., non-charismatic) leaders (e.g., Baum, Locke, & Kirkpatrick, 1998; Bligh, Kohles, & Meindl, 2004; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Den Hartog & Verburg, 1997;

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Emrich, Brower, Feldman, & Garland, 2001; Fiol, Harris, & House, 1999; Holladay & Coombs, 1994; Mio, Riggio, Levin, & Reese, 2005; Seyranian and Bligh's, 2008; Shamir, Arthur, & House, 1994). Charismatic leaders are also particularly adept at linking their visions of social change with social identity via specific communication tactics (Seyranian and Bligh's, 2008; Shamir et al., 1993). Yet relatively little empirical work has tested whether leadership communication tactics that implicate the group's social identity en route to social change directly influence follower outcomes. The current research seeks to fill this gap by testing leadership communication strategies derived from *Social Identity Framing Theory* (Seyranian, 2013; Seyranian and Bligh's, 2008). Social identity framing theory outlines a set of communication tactics that may be used by change-oriented leaders to influence followers and mobilize their support for social change. Social identity framing and the postulates tested in the current study are outlined below. Prior to this, social identity theory and the literature on leadership communication are briefly reviewed.

1.1. Social identity theory and leadership communication

Social identity framing extends social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and social categorization (Turner, 1985) theory to outline the communication process through which leaders can institute social change. Social identity refers to "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his group membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1974, p. 69). That is, a social identity is an individual's view of the self in terms of a particular group membership (e.g., American). The more individuals identify with a particular group, the more they define who they are in terms of their group membership (e.g., I am American) and seek to fit in with the group. Therefore, group members strive to conform to what it means to be a group member by adopting ingroup prototypes. *Ingroup prototype content* comprises of the predominant norms, attitudes, values, behaviors, and attributes that defines a group and distinguishes it from other groups (Hogg & Abrams, 2001). High identifiers are particularly attuned to information regarding how much the self and others embody the group's prototypes. Research suggests that the person in the group who most typically personifies the group's prototypes is more likely to emerge as a leader (e.g., Hogg, Hains, & Mason, 1998), to be viewed as effective in the leadership role (e.g., Fielding & Hogg, 1997; Hains, Hogg, & Duck, 1997), and to possess substantial power and influence over followers (Hogg, 2001). These studies are in line with the social identity theory of leadership (Hogg, 2001; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003), which suggests that leader prototypicality is a key factor in leader-follower influence and how followers perceive the leader; highly prototypical leaders are more likely to be liked, trusted, and seen as effective and charismatic by followers, particularly if followers highly identify with the group. From this perspective, prototypicality is a key aspect of leadership and leaders are in the business of managing prototypes within the group to maintain their leadership position. Hogg and Reid (2006) contend that this is done through "norm talk". That is, leaders rely on communication to construct and change group prototypes to ensure their prototypically central leadership position.

Reicher and Hopkins (2001) work complements this analysis by suggesting that leaders are "entrepreneurs of identity" who strategically and actively shape ingroup prototypes to mobilize followers to bring about social change. They do this through "social identity constructions", which involve redefining who is included in the group (e.g., who is "American") and describing prototype content (e.g., what it means to be "American"). Through discourse analysis, their work has shown that social identity constructions are evident in Margaret Thatcher and Neil Kinnock's speeches (S.D. Reicher & Hopkins, 1996), in speeches about the political mobilization attempts of British Muslims during British elections (Hopkins, Reicher, & Hopkins, 2003), and in anti-abortion speeches (Hopkins & Reicher, 1997; Reicher & Hopkins, 1996). This body of research makes a contribution to the leadership literature by underlining the idea that leaders may use rhetoric to construct and change social identities en route to mobilizing the group towards collective action (Reicher, Hopkins, Levine, & Rath, 2005; see also Fiol, 2002). However, "norm talk" and "social identity construction" do not delineate the communication processes necessary for leaders to redefine who the group is and what it stands for. As Scott (2007) notes, "we still know relatively little about specific communication strategies and practices that may matter most here. Which communicative devices are most likely to increase identity salience? How much interaction, and with which individuals specifically, might best foster a sense of identification with an organization or some other target?" (p. 127). Social identity framing (Seyranian, 2013; Seyranian and Bligh's, 2008) extends social identity theory by outlining the *process* of social identity construction and delineating specific communications tactics that leaders may employ en route to social change.

1.2. Social identity framing

Social identity framing suggests that social change begins with the articulation of a vision of change that is compelling for a group. The very act of communicating a vision entails framing (Hartog & Verburg, 1997). For a vision of change to resonate with followers, social identity framing postulates that the vision must be framed in a way that highlights its compatibility with ingroup prototypes. If a vision of social change deviates substantially from ingroup prototypes, group members may resist social change because it does not fit into their ideas of who the group is. In this case, the group's social identity may need to be reframed so that it is compatible with the vision of social change. To illustrate this process, consider the following situation: A Mayor of a small Midwest town has a vision of implementing an environmentally sustainable initiative in her town (e.g., renewable energy). If city constituents do not generally view environmental sustainability as a part of "who we are", the Mayor may be met with considerable resistance if she forges ahead with green initiatives. However, if the Mayor implicates social identity and connects the idea of environmental sustainability to specific prototype content – norms (e.g., "most of us recycle"), values (e.g., "we believe in living in harmony with the environment"), and attitudes (e.g., "we are favorably predisposed to getting off fossil fuels") – she may be able to garner support for her initiative. Although social change is often slow and drawn out, over time, her consistent efforts to redefine "who we are" and connect it with a vision of environmental sustainability may translate into follower support.

Thus, communicating with followers about the meaning of group membership may be a critical vehicle of social influence for achieving this end. What communication tactics might help to elicit follower support?

Drawing on field theory (Lewin, 1951), social identity framing delineates a communication process through which leaders may actively construct a vision compatible social identity for their groups. Field theory postulates that successful group-based change entails three steps: unfreezing the group from the present level, changing or moving the group to a new level, and refreezing group life on that level. Social identity framing extends this idea by theorizing that leaders can use a specific set of communication tactics in this three-phase sequence to frame an alternate identity for the group that is in line with the leader's vision of change. The three-phase sequence of social identity framing are termed *social identity unfreezing*, *social identity moving*, and *social identity freezing*. It should be noted that the three phases may be operationalized in a variety of ways including in a temporal sequence or in a direct sequence (as in one speech), depending on the social context and the extent and degree of social identity alteration that is necessary.

During each phase of this change process, social identity framing proposes various leadership framing goals (see Table 1) and a set of communication strategies (see Table 2). Many of the communication strategies are drawn from Seyranian and Bligh's (2008) research, which compared the rhetoric of American presidents who sought social change (charismatic) with those who aimed to sustain the status quo (non-charismatic). Results from this study showed that charismatic presidents used significantly different communication tactics than non-charismatic presidents, and these tactics followed the three-phase sequence outlined above. Overall, social identity framing tactics involve highlighting the group's current problems, portraying the leader as prototypical of the group, redefining who the group is and what the group should stand for (reframing social identity), where it is going (future vision), and how it will get there (leader and follower behaviors). Below, an overview of social identity framing is provided, along with a discussion of the communication tactics and hypotheses that are tested in the current study. For a more detailed account of social identity framing and follower outcomes, the reader is referred to Seyranian (2013).

1.3. Social identity framing phases

1.3.1. Social identity unfreezing

In the first phase, leader may wish to engage in s*ocial identity unfreezing* to decrease followers' resistance to social change and unfreeze the group's attachment with its current conception of who it is and what it stands for. To achieve this end, the leader's goal is to create an emotional stir-up (Lewin, 1951) in followers by emphasizing the group's problems and the uncertainties it faces (Seyranian, 2012). Additionally, the leader should link these problems with the group's current social identity and cultivate a perceived need for change by outlining the negative consequences that await the group if no changes are made. To be able to persuasively accentuate group problems, the leader should first seek to build a sense of legitimacy and credibility in followers' eyes. Drawing on the social identity theory of leadership (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003), it is suggested that this can be done in two ways. First, the leader should be *an ingroup member* because individuals are more likely to favor and be influenced by their fellow ingroup members than outgroup members (Crano & Seyranian, 2009; Hogg, 2010; Mackie, Worth, & Asuncion, 1990; Turner, 1991). While ingroup membership alone will help leaders to gain some sense of legitimacy, it is not sufficient to convince a group to engage in social change. The second critical factor in gaining legitimacy and credibility requires the leader to promote follower identification with the group and to project a sense of group prototypicality (Hogg, 2001). This can be accomplished, in part, by using *inclusive language* and *similarity language*. Let us consider each communication tactic in turn.

Inclusive language directly pertains to group members and characterizing social identity. It is a rhetorical tool for ingroup members to help construct a sense of "who we are" and "how we differ from them". It involves language alluding to *social identity* (we, us, them), *people* (e.g., society, nation) and *collectives* (e.g., civilization, community). Inclusive language is theorized to be a

Table 1
Social identity framing leader goals.

Phase 1: Social identity unfreezing
a) Render group membership salient
b) Increase identification with leader, thereby building trust and credibility
c) Create perceptions of leader prototypicality
d) Underline uncertainty and dissatisfaction with status quo
e) Highlight main group problems that need to be addressed
Phase 2: Social identity moving
a) Present new vision of social change that addresses group problems
b) Negate components of previous framing of social identity
c) Relay new social identity content including norms, values, attitudes, and behavior
d) Positively affirm new framing of social identity content
Phase 3: Social identity freezing
a) Positively affirm new framing of social identity content
b) Reaffirm vision and tie it to utopian outcomes
b) Encourage vision commitment and follower action

Table 2
Ingroup social identity framing communication strategies.

Social identity unfreezing	Social identity moving	Social identity freezing
Inclusive	**Inclusive**	**Inclusive**
	Vision	Vision
	Imagery	Imagery
	Less conceptual	Less conceptual
Past and present	Present and future	Present and future
Tangibility (low)	Tangibility (moderate)	Tangibility (high)
Action (low)	Action (moderate)	Action (high)
Similarity to followers	Negation	
	Positive group identity	**Positive group identity**
Self-reference	Identity-relevant values	Follower cooperation
Negative emotions		Positive emotions
Crises		Motion
Uncertainty		Utopian outcomes
Liberation		

Note. Communication tactics in bold are tested in the current study.

core communication construct in social identity framing that should be heavily employed by leaders throughout all phases of social identity framing (see Seyranian and Bligh's, 2008). Without collective pronouns that are used in reference to a group and the people who form the collective, it is impossible for a leader to speak about group membership — which is one purpose of social identity framing.

During social identity unfreezing, inclusive language helps to highlight the leader's common group membership with followers and promote follower identification with the group. This suggestion is in line with the work of communication scholars such as Burke (1950) and Cheney (1983) who suggested that the "assumed we" helps to overcome a sense of separation between the communicator and the audience and subtly promotes similarity and commonality. More recent research suggests that "we" primes representations of the self that are more group oriented (Brewer & Gardner, 1996) and tends to resonate with individuals who highly identify with their group (Hornsey, Blackwood, & O'Brien, 2005). This type of language also tends to increase familiarity (Housley, Claypool, Garcia-Marques, & Mackie, 2010). However, research has not tested whether the broader construct of inclusive language used by a leader can help to promote identification with a group.

Hypothesis 1. Inclusive language in leader communication will promote more identification with social identity than non-inclusive language.

Prototypical leaders embody the central attributes of group membership that define who the group is and distinguish the ingroup from other groups. Speaking with inclusive language may also increase prototypicality by creating the perception that the leader is centrally invested in the group (Abrams, Randsley de Moura, Marques, & Hutchison, 2008; Hornsey et al., 2005). Speaking about group membership can signal a collective group serving orientation where the leader engages in high levels of group-oriented behavior (van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, De Cremer, & Hogg, 2004) and acts in a way that promotes the ingroup (Hogg, 2010). In this way, inclusive language can foster the perception that the leader can be trusted to represent "us" and promote "our interests" instead of attempting to actualize an agenda for his or her personal interests and gains. This is a key point as social psychological research suggests that sources that appear to forgo their personal interests are more likely to be perceived as trustworthy (Petty, Fleming, Priester, & Feinstein, 2001). Since inclusive language may create the perception that the leader is more group oriented and may be willing to make personal sacrifices for the good of the collective, it also possible that leaders who use inclusive language may be perceived in other positive ways by followers including being more liked, persuasive, effective, and charismatic (as per the social identity theory of leadership, see Hogg, 2001). It is particularly likely that inclusive language will lead to higher charismatic leadership ratings. Charismatic leadership theory emphasizes a relationship between inclusive language use and charisma (Shamir et al., 1993) and previous research has substantiated this claim (Bligh et al., 2004; Fiol et al., 1999; Seyranian and Bligh's, 2008), albeit not in causal terms via experimental methods.

Hypothesis 2. Inclusive language in leader communication will lead to higher follower ratings of leader prototypicality, charisma, liking, trustworthiness, persuasiveness, and effectiveness than non-inclusive language.

Another way for leaders to build their credibility is to increase their perceived prototypicality and charisma by stressing their similarity to followers (Bligh et al., 2004; Seyranian and Bligh's, 2008) and to the group. Language that stresses the leader's similarity to followers highlights a sense of shared experience and mutual understanding between the leader and follower. It accentuates joint adherence to group prototypes. Previous research suggests that perceived similarity increases liking (Berscheid & Reis, 1998), augments influence (Oldmeadow, Platow, Foddy, & Anderson, 2003), and agreement with the leader's message (Silvia, 2005). Leadership communication that emphasizes similarity to followers has been found to be used by charismatic leaders (Seyranian and Bligh's, 2008) and to increase perceptions of charisma (Bligh et al., 2004).

In the current study, similarity to followers was operationalized through language referring to *leveling* (e.g., anyone, everyone) and *self-references* (e.g., I, I'm). Leveling language ignores individual differences and strives to build a sense of completeness and

assurance (Bligh et al., 2004; Seyranian and Bligh's, 2008). Self-references may provide the leader with the opportunity to build on leader–follower similarity by highlighting how the leader has embodied prototypes and served as an exemplary group member and role model. For example, the leader could point out personal stories of success to advance the group's agenda, highlight sacrifices made to achieve this success, or showcase anecdotal instances where he or she clearly demonstrated prototypical attitudes, values, and behaviors. In this way, leaders may portray themselves as prototypical and charismatic leaders that followers can trust, like, and seek to emulate to become "good group members".

Hypothesis 3. Leaders who employ similarity language will be given higher ratings of prototypicality, charisma, liking, trustworthiness, persuasiveness, and effectiveness than leaders who do not employ similarity language.

In summary, inclusive language is predicted to promote social identification during social identity unfreezing. Both inclusive language and similarity language can help the leader to gain legitimacy and credibility by creating positive leadership perceptions, which includes leader prototypicality. Prototypical leaders will have earned enough credibility during social identity unfreezing to paradoxically deviate from the group prototype (Hogg, 2010) during the next stage and introduce innovation and social change to the group.

1.3.2. Social identity moving

During *social identity moving*, leaders should directly speak about their vision of change. If the leader's vision of social change seems incompatible with group prototypes, the leader will need to reframe the group's prototypes so that they are in line with their vision of social change. Reframing group prototypes will require the leader to continue to speak about group membership through *inclusive language* to render social identity salient in followers' mind and increase social identification (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Seyranian and Bligh's, 2008; Shamir et al., 1993). According to social categorization theory, when a particular social identity is made salient, people tend to see themselves in group-based terms (Hogg & Turner, 1987) and their perception of themselves becomes depersonalized. That is, they see themselves less in terms of their personal self ("who I am") and more in terms of the prototypical attributes, attitudes, stereotypes, norms, and values that helps to define "who we are" (Hogg & Reid, 2006; Turner, 1991). As group prototypes become salient in followers' mind, the leader has the opportunity to redefine and realign group prototypes in line with his or her vision of social change. Since the prototypical leader is perceived to most closely embody the central features of the group, he or she is given substantial leeway in bringing about change in social identity definitions and in reframing the group's predominant values, norms, stereotypes, and attitudes (prototype content). The more followers perceive that the leader is prototypical of the group, the more likely they will be to accept the leader's framing of prototype content. Hence, perceptions of leader prototypicality may be related to increased social identification and changes in prototype content.

Hypothesis 4. Followers who perceive the leader as highly prototypical will be more likely to identify with the group and evidence changes in prototypes (values, norms, attitudes, stereotypes) than followers who perceive the leader as low in prototypicality.

To frame alternate prototype content for the group, the leader may need to negate pre-existing group prototypes – policies, stereotypes, norms, attitudes, values, group attributes, behavioral intentions – that are incompatible with their vision (see negation, Fiol et al., 1999; Seyranian, 2013; Seyranian and Bligh's, 2008). Next, the leader may engage in rhetoric that reframes the group's sense of "who we are" in line with his or her vision of the future. The communication process that may help realign prototypes with the leader's vision of change builds on the rhetorical component of Shamir and colleagues' (1993) self-concept theory of charismatic leadership. Specifically, social identity reframing may be accomplished through a leadership communication process that describes a positive vision of the future, raises the salience of specific group-level values that are in line with the vision, relates group values to social identity, connects specific attitudes, norms, policies, and behaviors that are relevant to the values with the social identity, and stresses the positivity of this altered social identity. Inclusive language is an indispensable tool to achieve vision articulation and prototype redefinitions. When leaders speak about their vision of change, they will depend on inclusive language to align prototype content to their vision of social change. During this process, it is particularly important for leaders to concurrently represent themselves as embodying the new group prototypes in order to sustain their influence potential during social change and to avoid jeopardizing their leadership position. Inclusive language may also help towards this end (as per Hypothesis 2). Overall, inclusive language may facilitate alterations in prototype content and help to maintain perceptions that the leader is prototypical of the reframed social identity.

Hypothesis 5. Followers who are exposed to inclusive language will show more changes in prototype content (self-stereotypes, attitudes, values, norms) in line with those espoused by the leader compared to followers who are exposed to non-inclusive language.

In summary, social identity moving strives to present the group with a vision of social change and to reframe prototype content so that it is in line with the leader's vision. Perceptions of prototypicality and inclusive language are predicted to increase social identification and change prototype content in line with leader communication. However, moving followers towards a reframed social identity based on the leader's vision is insufficient to secure long-term change. In the next phase, leaders must ensure the permanency of the changes set during the social identity moving phase.

1.3.3. Social identity freezing

Social identity freezing communication requires the leader to solidify the reframed prototype content and channel motivations set up in social identity moving into follower commitment and action to bring the vision into fruition. To solidify the reframed prototype content, leaders may seek to affirm the group's newly framed social identity with *positive social identity* language. Positive social identity language stresses the positive aspects of social identity and group membership. Positive social identity language expresses *praise* (e.g., greatest) and *satisfaction* (e.g., like) with the group. It also emphasizes positive group *values* (e.g., "wisdom") and *ingroup attributes* (e.g., "intelligent"). According to social identity theory, one reason that individuals identify with groups is to satisfy their need for self-esteem (Tajfel, 1974). Being a member of a high status group with valued attributes may be especially likely to boost group members' self-esteem. As such, leaders may want to ensure that the newly framed social identity and the leader's vision of social change are associated with positivity and high status to satisfy followers' need for self-esteem. If followers' collective self-esteem needs are not met through the reframed social identity, they may exit the group and attempt to gain membership in a higher status group (Tajfel, 1981) in lieu of engaging in collective action. As such, cultivating collective self-esteem (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) through positive social identity language may be critical in ensuring long-term commitment to the reframed social identity and social change.

Hypothesis 6. Followers who are exposed to positive social identity language will report higher collective self-esteem compared to followers who are not exposed to positive social identity language.

Inclusive language employed during social identity freezing may help to arouse positive emotional reactions in followers and confidence associated with social change. This effect is theorized to emerge because inclusive language directly refers to the group and may make group membership salient in followers' minds. According to Smith, Seger, and Mackie (2007), a salient social identity can activate group-based emotions. Group-based emotions are: (a) distinct from individual emotions; (b) socially shared within the group; (c) more likely to emerge for high identifiers; and (d) able to motivate attitudes and behavior. Research suggests that individuals can experience group emotions through mere contemplation of group membership (Smith et al., 2007). Building on this finding, it is purported here that leaders may encourage group-based emotions in followers by getting them to think about group membership, that is, by using inclusive language. The valence of the group-based emotion, however, will depend on the context that inclusive language is used. Social identity moving and social identity freezing involve delineation of the leader's vision of the future with optimism and confidence and a positive conceptualization of the reframed group identity. As such, inclusive language used in the context of social identity framing will most likely spur a sense of follower confidence and positive group emotion related to social change. Therefore, inclusive language (particularly during social identity moving and freezing phases) may be characterized by progressively more positive follower emotions associated with social change and more confidence associated with achieving the vision.

Hypothesis 7. Followers who are exposed to inclusive language will evidence more positive emotion compared to followers exposed to non-inclusive language.

Hypothesis 8. Followers who are exposed to inclusive language will express more confidence in social change compared to followers who are exposed to non-inclusive language.

Another goal of social identity freezing is to encourage follower commitment and collective action. Group prototypes not only provide normative information concerning the stereotypes, values, norms and attitudes of typical group members, but they also provide information about the prototypical behaviors and actions of group members. As such, communication that alters prototype content may also provide the necessary impetus to prompt followers towards collective action to bring the leader's vision into fruition. Therefore, inclusive language may also spur behavioral intentions to engage in collective action.

Hypothesis 9. Followers who are exposed to inclusive language will be more willing to engage in collective action than followers who are exposed to non-inclusive language.

In summary, social identity freezing strives to solidify the reframed social identity by using positive social identity language to ensure that followers feel a sense of collective self-esteem associated with their group membership. Using inclusive language may also help to mobilize followers to engage in collective action and to solidify the reframed social identity by promoting positive group-based emotions and confidence in social change. Thus, the leader's vision of social change becomes a part of "who the group is" and "what it means to be a group member". Through communication, the reframed social identity that is in line with the leader's vision permanently replaces the former conceptualization of social identity and becomes the status quo.

1.4. Overview of study

To test the hypotheses above, which were generated from social identity framing theory, students from a college in Southern California participated in an experiment where they read a speech by a student leader and then completed a dependent measures survey. The speech advocated for a student-led social movement to power an entire college campus with 100% renewable energy. Students were randomly assigned to read of one of eight versions of the speech. Each version of the leader communication followed social identity framing's three phases of social change in sequence and was identical except that each one varied three social identity framing tactics – inclusive language, similarity language, and positive social identity language – to independently

test their effect on follower outcomes. Overall, it was hypothesized that each of these three communication tactics would influence the dependent measures in line with the hypotheses above.

2. Method

To test hypotheses 1–9, students were randomly assigned to one condition of a 2 (inclusive, no inclusive) × 2 (similarity, no similarity) × 2 (positivity of social identity, no positivity of social identity) between-subjects factorial design. The conditions were varied to include or exclude the three social identity framing communication tactics.

2.1. Participants

2.1.1. Participant characteristics

Selection criterion for the study was based on student standing at a liberal arts college (Whittier College) in Southern California. The sample consisted of a total of 246 students; 36% were male, 62% female, and 2% did not indicate their sex. There was a good representation of students from different ethnic/racial backgrounds including 40% White/Caucasian, 26% Hispanic/Latino, 10% Asian, 12% mixed ethnic groups, 5% African Americans, 3% other ethnicity, 2% Pacific Islander, and 2% who did not indicate their ethnicity/race. Students were between the ages of 18–25 ($M = 19.81$, $SD = 1.41$), with an even distribution of 26% freshmen, 26% sophomore, 26% juniors, 19% seniors, and 2% that did not indicate their year in school. Most of the sample identified themselves as Democrats (47%), Republicans (19%), or had no party affiliation (17%). The remaining participants identified with the Green party (1%), the Libertarian party (1%), other (8%), or did not provide their political party affiliation (7%).

2.1.2. Recruitment

Participants were recruited to participate in the study via student research assistants who visited classes, dorms, club meetings, sport team meets, and the dining hall. Eight undergraduate research assistants distributed the consent forms and paper-based study materials and collected them. The response rate was 87%.

2.2. Procedure

Participants who agreed to participate in the experiment were told that the study was about “Leadership Communication”. Each participant was randomly assigned to read one of eight versions of a speech on renewable energy ostensibly by a student leader. The current study used minor deception in attributing the source of the speech to either a Whittier College Student Leader (inclusive language conditions) or a Student Leader (no inclusive language conditions). In reality, the different speeches were all devised by the author and not by a student leader. After reading the speech, participants completed a dependent measures survey that asked specific questions regarding the participants' reaction to the speech. After the survey was completed, participants were debriefed about the true nature of the study through a written debriefing statement.

2.3. Materials: Experimental manipulation

Participants read a speech that advocated for a 100% renewable energy campus to curb green house gases that contribute to global climate change. The speech followed the goals of the three phases of social identity framing (see Table 1). The speech began with the goal to engage in social identity unfreezing, progressed to social identity moving, and finally, ended with social identity freezing. The content of the speech was drawn from various politicians' speeches on global climate change including President Barrack Obama, Former Vice President Al Gore, and Senator Diane Feinstein. There were eight different versions of the same speech, formed by the 2 × 2 × 2 factorial combination of the three communication variables. The eight speeches were identical except that each employed a different combination of social identity framing communication tactics (inclusive language, similarity language, positivity of social identity language). Each speech was edited to reflect the presence or absence of specific social identity framing strategies (see Appendices A and B).

Inclusive language emphasized the Whittier College student identity. Inclusive language was manipulated for both the speech source and communication content. In the speeches that utilized inclusive language, students were presented with a speech ostensibly from a “Whittier College Student Leader”. In the speech, the student leader used words such as “we”, “us”, “Whittier College”, “Poets” (Whittier College Mascot), and “Whittier students” to emphasize the group's identity and to stress that the vision of a renewable energy campus is an important component of being a Whittier student. Using inclusive language also involved making people references (e.g., “society”) and using words that alluded to the collective (e.g., “community”). There were 225 inclusive terms used in the four conditions that utilized inclusive language. In the four conditions without inclusive language, all inclusive terms were deleted and replaced with social identity neutral ones that alluded to personal identity rather than social identity. For example, all “we” terms were replaced with “you” and there was no mention of a Whittier College student identity. As such, students were told that the speech was by a “Student Leader” and not a “Whittier College Student Leader”.

Similarity to followers comprised of leveling language (e.g., “everyone”, “each”, “fully”) that ignored individual differences so that the student leader could position him or herself as a prototypical group member. It also included leader self-references (e.g., “I”, “I'm”) as leaders often have to refer to themselves personally to stress their similarity with their followers. There were a total of 45 similarity

language terms in the four conditions that utilized this type of language. In the four conditions without similarity to followers, these words were deleted and replaced with more neutral ones (e.g., "I" was replaced with "you").

Positive social identity language involved using praise (e.g., "greatest) and expressing satisfaction (e.g., "like") with the group to emphasize a positive collective esteem that is associated with the vision of change. It also included stressing positive group values (e.g., "wisdom") and depicting group members through positive group traits and stereotypes (e.g., "intelligent"). In the four speeches with positive social identity, the student leader stressed a positive social identity with words such as "victorious", "integrity", and "succeed" in reference to Whittier College students. There were a total of 78 positive social identity words used in the four conditions that utilized positive social identity language. In the four speeches without positive social identity, all 78 of these words were deleted.

2.4. Materials: Dependent measures and demographic data

After students read the leader's speech, they filled out a dependent measures questionnaire. The questionnaire contained the scales and demographic questions listed below. Unless otherwise noted, all items employed a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree).

2.4.1. Social identification

An eleven-item scale developed by Hains et al. (1997) was adapted to measure student social identification ($\alpha = .94$).

2.4.2. Self-stereotypes

Following a similar procedure as Platow and van Knippenberg (2001), student self-stereotypes were gleaned through a brief pilot test on a separate sample of students from Whittier College ($n = 28$). These students outlined a series of nine traits (e.g., "wise", "caring") that they believed most accurately reflected the stereotypes of Whittier College students compared to other colleges. These nine traits had adequate reliability ($\alpha = .74$). All students who participated in the experiment were asked to rate the extent to which these nine traits applied to themselves on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 9 (very much).

2.4.3. Values

Values were measured with a four-item biosphere scale ($\alpha = .94$; Stern, Dietz, Abel, Guagnano, & Kalof, 1999), which was adapted from Schwartz's (1994) personal value orientation. Biosphere values specifically tap into values that concern the environment.

2.4.4. Environmental norms

A modified Personal Normative Beliefs scale (Stern et al., 1999) employed three items ($\alpha = .85$) to measure perceptions of injunctive group norms concerning the environment. All three of these items tap into perceptions of what Whittier College *should* do to help the environment. That is, they measured how much students viewed the idea of adopting renewable energy and helping the environment as ingroup normative.

2.4.5. Attitudes towards renewable energy

Seven items ($\alpha = .93$) measured attitudes towards powering Whittier College with renewable energy on nine-point semantic differential scales: bad–good, unfavorable–favorable, foolish–wise, harmful–beneficial, ineffective–effective, wrong–right, and unconvincing–convincing (Martin, Hewstone, & Martin, 2003).

2.4.6. Leadership

Perceptions of the leaders' prototypicality were measured through a six-item scale ($\alpha = .86$) employed by Platow and van Knippenberg (2001). A three-item scale ($\alpha = .90$) developed by Fielding and Hogg (1997) was adapted and used to measure group-based social attraction to the leader. A seven-item ($\alpha = .92$) vision and articulation subscale from Conger and Kanungo's (1998) Charismatic Leadership Scale measured leader charisma. To measure students' trust in the leader, a four-item scale ($\alpha = .72$) was adapted from Kirkpatrick and Locke (1996). A nine-item scale ($\alpha = .91$) employed by Platow, van Knippenberg, Haslam, van Knippenberg, and Spears (2006) measured the extent to which the student leader was persuasive. Three-items ($\alpha = .95$) were taken from a longer leadership effectiveness scale used by Hogg et al. (2006) to measure leadership effectiveness. These three items asked for ratings of the extent that the student leader "is a good leader", "is an effective leader", and "is an influential leader".

2.4.7. Behavioral intentions

Six items ($\alpha = .88$) were developed to assess whether participants intended to engage in behaviors to promote renewable energy usage on campus. Participants rated their agreement with each of the following statements: "To promote renewable energy at Whittier College, I would: (a) join the Environmental Crusaders; (b) exert efforts for this cause; (c) engage in fundraising activities; (d) sign a petition; (e) write a letter to Whittier College Administration in support of renewable energy; and (f) participate in a protest".

2.4.8. Emotional reactions

The positive emotion subscale (5 items, $\alpha = .91$) from the International Short PANAS scale (Thompson, 2007) was used to measure positive emotions reactions to the leader's speech. On a scale from 1 (not at all) to 9 (very much), participants rated how much they experienced the following emotions while reading the leader's speech: determined, inspired, alert, active, attentive.

2.4.9. Confidence in social change

Three items ($\alpha = .91$) were developed to measure students' confidence in the possibility of changing Whittier College into a renewable energy campus. The items asked each student to rate whether: (a) "I am confident that we will change Whittier College into a renewable energy campus"; (b) "I believe Whittier College will be 100% powered by renewable energy in the future"; and (c) "I am convinced that Whittier students will be successful in changing Whittier into a renewable energy campus".

2.4.10. Collective self-esteem

Four items ($\alpha = .87$) were adapted from Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) Collective Self Esteem scale to measure collective self-esteem associated with being a Whittier College Student.

2.5. Communication tactics check

A series of manipulation check items asked students to rate the extent to which they perceived the three different communication tactics in the speech. To measure *inclusive language perceptions*, one item asked students to rate whether the speech they read "used language that emphasized the collective (e.g., "we", "us", "our")". To measure non-inclusive language, another item asked students whether the speech they read "used language that emphasized the individual (e.g., "you", "your"). A three item scale ($\alpha = .75$) measured *similarity language perceptions* by asking participants to rate whether the speech: (a) "suggested that the student leader is similar to me as a Whittier College student"; (b) "suggested that the student leader is similar to Whittier College students in general"; and (c) "used language that referred to the student leader's own experiences (e.g., "I", "me")". *Positive social identity* language *perceptions* were measured with one item that asked participants whether the speech "articulated that being a Whittier College student is a positive thing".

2.6. Speech comprehension check

To ensure that participants had read and understood the leader's message, three true or false questions were asked regarding the speeches. For example, "Southern California Edison provides the option of purchasing energy from renewable sources like solar, wind, biomass, and hydrothermal".

2.7. Leader manipulation check

As mentioned earlier, in the inclusive language conditions, participants were informed that a "Whittier College Student Leader" had made the speech. In the no inclusive language conditions, participants were informed that a "Student Leader" made the speech. To ensure that this manipulation was effective, all participants were asked to indicate who made the speech: "Whittier College Student Leader", "Student Leader", or "Other".

2.8. Demographic variables

Demographic measures assessed year in school, major, sex, political affiliation, ratings of political views, race/ethnicity, and age.

3. Results

3.1. Manipulation checks

3.1.1. Communication tactics

Communication scholars have argued that manipulation checks are not necessary in persuasive communication studies that manipulate the presence or absence of a communication construct. For example, O'Keefe (2003) contends that in studies where "the research question concerns the effect of message variation on a persuasive outcome, no message manipulation check is required. The investigator will naturally want to be careful in creating the experimental messages, but the adequacy of the manipulation of the message property is not appropriately assessed by inquiring about participant perceptions of the message" (p. 257). In other words, it is not necessary to assess whether the language construct manipulations worked because the manipulation is not attempting to create a psychological state that may have an effect on an outcome (e.g., perception of expert source), but it is rather manipulating a message property that is either present or absent. Its *perception* or lack thereof by the participant is not theorized to affect the outcome variables. While manipulation checks for the communication constructs may not be necessary in the current study, they are conducted here for theoretical reasons. That is, it is theoretically relevant to social identity framing to discern which communication constructs are perceived by followers and whether any of the language

constructs tested in the current study (e.g., similarity language) are also captured by another language construct (e.g., inclusive language).

To check whether participants perceived each communication tactic manipulation, a set of four analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests was conducted with the three communication tactics as the independent variables and each communication tactic manipulation check measures as the dependent variable. Participants only reported perceiving significantly more inclusive language in the inclusive language conditions ($M = 7.36$, $SD = 1.46$) than in the non-inclusive conditions ($M = 6.42$, $SD = 1.88$), $F(1,236) = -18.48$, $p < .0001$, partial $\eta^2 = .07$. Participants also only reported perceiving more non-inclusive language in the non-inclusive language conditions ($M = 6.85, SD = 1.55$) than in the non-inclusive conditions ($M = 5.88, SD = 2.08$), $F(1,236) = 17.66$, $p < .0001$, partial $\eta^2 = .07$. As such, participants only perceived inclusive and non-inclusive language as a result of being exposed to (respective) language manipulations.

For similarity language perceptions, two significant effects emerged. In line with expectations, a significant main effect showed that participants in the similarity language conditions perceived more similarity language ($M = 6.26$, $SD = 1.52$) than those in the non-similarity language conditions ($M = 5.85$, $SD = 1.52$), $F(1,235) = 6.23$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$. However, a significant main effect also revealed that participants in the inclusive language conditions perceived more similarity language ($M = 6.42$, $SD = 1.37$) than those in the non-similarity language condition ($M = 5.72, SD = 1.60$), $F(1,235) = 14.13$, $p < .0001$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$. These results imply that leaders who employ inclusive language also give their followers the impression that they are using language that focuses on similarity.

For positive social identity language perceptions, participants in the positive social identity language conditions perceived more positive social identity language ($M = 6.67, SD = 1.90$) than those in the non-positive social identity language conditions ($M = 6.22$, $SD = 2.00$), but this effect only approached significance, $F(1, 253) = 2.67$, $p = .10$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$. Results also showed that participants in the inclusive language conditions perceived more positive social identity language ($M = 6.67, SD = 1.90$) than those in the non-inclusive language conditions ($M = 6.22$, $SD = 2.00$), $F(1, 253) = 39.65$, $p < .0001$, partial $\eta^2 = .14$. These results suggest that leaders who employ inclusive language also convey to their followers that they are using language that focuses on positively depicting social identity.

Overall, the manipulation check analyses indicated that the communication manipulations were largely discernable to participants in the different conditions. Participants were particularly aware of inclusive language. To a lesser degree, they also noticed similarity language and positive social identity language. Moreover, inclusive language also seemed to give participants the impression that the leader was using similarity language and depicting a positive social identity for the group through language use.

3.1.2. Speech comprehension

The vast majority (96%) of participants answered at least two of the three speech comprehension questions correctly. This indicates that participants in the study had read and understood the speech.

3.1.3. Leader manipulation

To examine whether students in the inclusive language condition attributed the source of the speech to the Whittier College student leader (versus a student leader), a Chi-square analysis was conducted. Results suggested that 80% of participants in the inclusive language conditions (correctly) attributed the speech to a Whittier College student leader, 15% attributed it to a student leader, and 3% thought that the speech was by another individual. In the non-inclusive condition, 62% (correctly) attributed the speech to a student leader, 26% attributed the speech to a Whittier College Student Leader, and 9% thought the speech was by another individual. This indicated that the majority of participants in the various conditions correctly attributed the source of the speech.

3.2. Dependent measures

3.2.1. Inclusive language and social identification

Hypothesis 1 proposed that inclusive language in leader communication promotes more identification with social identity than non-inclusive language. This hypothesis was tested using an independent samples *t*-test with inclusive language condition as the independent variable and social identification as the dependent variable. Contrary to expectations, results did not evidence significant differences between inclusive and non-inclusive language conditions on social identification, $t(244) = -.79$, $p = .43$.

3.2.2. Inclusive language and leadership perceptions

Hypotheses 2 and 3 predicted that inclusive language (2) and similarity language (3) would elevate positive perceptions of the leader. As an exploratory analysis, positivity of social identity was also examined as another potential communication construct that may affect positive leadership perceptions. To test these hypotheses, a factorial multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with the three communication tactics (inclusive language, similarity language, and positive social identity language) as the independent variables and the six leader perception variables (prototypicality, attraction, charisma, trust, persuasive, and effective) as the dependent variables. In line with Hypothesis 2, MANOVA results revealed a significant main effect for inclusive language on the combined dependent variable of leadership perceptions, Pillai's Trace $= .05$, $F(6, 230) = 2.14$, $p = 0.05$, multivariate $\eta^2 = .05$. Pillai's Trace was used to interpret results due a significant Box's Test ($p = .02$) and unequal group sample sizes (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

As a follow-up test to the MANOVA, univariate ANOVA tests were conducted on each leader perception dependent variable. Descriptive statistics for inclusive language on the leader perception variables are listed in Table 3. Results showed that inclusive language had a statistically significant effect on all six of the leader perception measures (see Table 4). Specifically, participants in the inclusive language conditions versus non-inclusive language conditions were more likely to perceive the leader as prototypical, socially attractive, charismatic, trustworthy, persuasive, and effective. This supports the social identity framing theory's prediction that inclusive language may be employed by leaders to build and manage their credibility and prototypicality within the group. However, no support was obtained for the hypothesis that similarity language leads to more positive leadership perceptions. Additionally, no significant main effects were obtained for positive social identity language on positive leadership perceptions.

As evident in Table 4, an unexpected interaction emerged between inclusive language and positive social identity language on charisma, $F(1, 235) = 7.66$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$. Since this finding was interesting for theoretical reasons, simple effects tests were conducted to further examine the nature of the interaction. Specifically, simple effects tests for inclusive language on charisma were conducted separately for positive social identity and non-positive social identity. To avoid an overinflation of alpha (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001), alpha level was set at $p = .025$ following Pedhazur and Schmelkin (1991). Results from the simple effects tests indicated a significant relationship between inclusive language and charisma only for positive social identity conditions, F (1, 113) = 11.62, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = .09$. Specifically, language alluding to positive social identity increased perceptions of leader charisma significantly more when it was used in combination with inclusive language ($M = 7.08$, $SD = 1.24$) than non-inclusive language ($M = 6.21$, $SD = 1.49$).

3.2.3. Perceived leader prototypicality and prototype content

Hypothesis 4 proposed that followers who perceive the leader as highly prototypical will be more likely to identify with the group and evidence changes in prototype content (values, norms, stereotypes, attitudes) in line with those espoused by the leader than followers who rate the leader as low in prototypicality. This hypothesis was tested using a series of five simple regression analyses with perceived prototypicality as the predictor variable and identification and prototype content variables as criterion variables. Descriptive statistics and correlations for identification and prototype content are listed in Table 5 and simple regression statistics are listed in Table 6.

In line with predictions, results indicated that perceptions of leader prototypicality were significantly associated with higher levels of social identification. Additionally, participants who perceived the leader as highly prototypical were more likely to report prototype content in line with the leader's speech. That is, followers' who perceived the leader as prototypical were more likely to endorse biospheric values to protect the environment, hold favorable attitudes towards renewable energy, see themselves in terms of stereotypic Whittier College traits, and view renewable energy as an injunction norm (e.g., obligation) for Whittier College. These findings support the idea from social identity framing that cultivating perceptions of leader prototypicality will help to promote social identification and reframe prototype content in line with the leader's vision of social change.

3.2.4. Inclusive language and prototypic content

Based on social identity framing, Hypothesis 5 predicted that followers who are exposed to inclusive language will show more changes in prototype content (self-stereotypes, attitudes, values, norms) that is consistent with those espoused by the leader compared to followers who are exposed to non-inclusive language. To test this hypothesis, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with inclusive language as the independent variable and the four prototype content variables (values, norms, stereotypes, attitudes) as the dependent variables. Descriptive statistics for prototype content variables are listed in Table 7. Results revealed a significant main effect for inclusive language on the combined dependent variable of prototype content, Wilks $\Lambda = .92$, $F(4, 236) = 4.74$, $p < 0.001$, multivariate $\eta^2 = .07$ (see Table 8). Follow-up univariate ANOVA results suggested that the source of the effect was attributable to injunctive norms as no other individual dependent measures were statistically significant. Specifically, results indicated that participants in the inclusive language conditions ($M = 7.15$, $SD = 1.59$) were more likely to view renewable energy as a normative component their social identity compared to those in the non-inclusive conditions ($M = 6.34$, $SD = 1.80$), $F(1, 239) = 13.71$, $p < .0001$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$.

Table 3
Descriptive statistics for inclusive language on leader perception variables.

Dependent variables	Inclusive $n = 120$		Non-inclusive $n = 123$	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
1. Prototypicality	5.89	1.37	5.40	1.52
2. Attraction	6.54	1.58	5.96	1.74
3. Charisma	6.80	1.33	6.30	1.42
4. Trust	5.92	1.48	5.31	1.51
5. Persuasive	6.51	1.31	6.03	1.51
6. Effective	6.58	1.43	6.05	1.72

Note. All means are significantly different on each dependent variable between inclusive and non-inclusive conditions, $p < .05$; $N = 243$.

Table 4
Multivariate and univariate analyses of variance for significant leadership models.

Dependent measures	Multivariate F (6,230)	Multivariate Eta^2	Inclusive		Inclusive × positive	
			Univariate F (1,235)	Partial Eta^2	Univariate F (1,235)	Partial Eta^2
Inclusive						
Combined DV	**2.14***	.05				
Inclusive × positive						
Combined DV	1.15	.03				
Univariate DVs						
Prototypicality			**6.83****	.03	.05	.00
Attraction			**7.17****	.03	.21	.01
Charisma			**8.69****	.04	**4.05***	.02
Trust			**10.51****	.04	1.17	.01
Persuasive			**7.52****	.03	1.76	.01
Effectiveness			**7.29****	.03	1.53	.01

Note.
* $p < .05$.
** $p \leq .01$.

3.2.5. Positive social identity and collective self-esteem

Hypothesis 6 posited that positive social identity language would increase collective self-esteem compared to non-positive social identity language. To test this prediction, an independent samples t-test was conducted with positive social identity language as the independent variable and collective self-esteem as the dependent variable. Results suggested that inclusive language ($M = 7.23$, $SD = 1.61$) evoked marginally more collective self-esteem than non-inclusive language ($M = 6.83$, $SD = 1.80$), $t(244) = -1.84$, $p = .07$. This finding affirms the prediction from social identity framing that positive social identity language by a leader can translate into a more positive conception of the group by followers.

3.2.6. Inclusive language, emotional reactions, and confidence in social change

Hypothesis 7 predicted that inclusive language may evoke positive emotions associated with the message of social change. To test this prediction, an independent samples t-test was conducted with inclusive language as the independent variable and positive emotions as the dependent variable. In line with Hypothesis 7, results indicated that inclusive language ($M = 6.09$, $SD = 1.72$) aroused more positive emotion than non-inclusive language ($M = 5.63$, $SD = 1.92$), $t(239) = -1.95$, $p = .05$.

Hypothesis 8 predicted that inclusive language would elicit more confidence in the possibility of social change. To test this possibility, an independent samples t-test was conducted with inclusive language as the independent variable and confidence in social change as the dependent variable. In line with expectations, results indicated that participants exposed to inclusive language ($M = 5.83$, $SD = 1.98$) were more confident about the possibility of social change ($M = 5.26$, $SD = 1.98$) than participants exposed to non-inclusive language, $t(243) = -2.27$, $p < .05$.

3.2.7. Inclusive language and behavioral intentions

Hypotheses 9 indicated that participants exposed to inclusive language would be more willing to engage in collective action than those exposed to non-inclusive language. This hypothesis was tested using an independent samples t-test with inclusive language condition as the independent variable and behavioral intentions as the dependent variable. In line with Hypothesis 9, results showed that participants exposed to inclusive language ($M = 5.92$, $SD = 1.82$) were more willing to engage in collective action than those in the non-inclusive condition ($M = 5.44$, $SD = 1.89$), $t(240) = -2.3$, $p < .05$.

Table 5
Mean scores, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for social identification and prototype content variables.

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Identification	6.64	1.56	–				
2. Stereotypes	6.91	.97	.37***	–			
3. Norms	6.77	1.75	.19**	.08	–		
4. Values	6.75	1.66	.13*	.23***	.59***	–	
5. Attitudes	6.93	1.62	.08	.05	.46***	.49***	–

Note. All correlations are two-tailed; $N = 244$.
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .001$.

Table 6
Summary of simple regression analyses for leader prototypicality predicting social identification and prototype content variables.

Variable	*B*	*SEB*	*β*	R^2	*F*
Identification	.37	.06	.34***	.12	32.42
Stereotypes	.12	.04	.18**	.03	7.88
Norms	.43	.07	.36***	.13	36.81
Values	.31	.07	.28***	.08	19.96
Attitudes	.22	.07	.20**	.04	10.26

$N = 244$.
** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .001$.

4. Discussion

Social identity framing suggests that ingroup leaders can bring about social change by reframing social identity to be in line with the leader's vision of social change through a process of communication. In particular, inclusive language is theorized to be a key communication tactic in social identity framing — it is predicted to render social identity salient, produce positive leadership perceptions, link "who we are" with the leader's vision of social change, and promote collective action for social change. Other communication constructs may also play a role in the process of social identity framing. For instance, similarity language may cultivate positive leader perceptions and positive social identity language can elevate followers' collective self-esteem. To test these predictions, an experiment was conducted to examine followers' reactions to one of eight possible versions of a speech proposing a vision of change for a college campus that varied inclusive language, similarity language, and positive social identity language. The vision of change consisted of reducing the college's carbon footprint by switching from conventional fossil fuels to renewable energy sources (e.g., solar, wind) to meet all of the college's electrical needs. By and large, the experiment showed that inclusive language provided an effective means of creating positive leadership perceptions and influencing followers towards supporting renewable energy. As predicted, positive social identity language helped to raise followers' collective self-esteem. Similarity language was not found to affect leadership perceptions. Several factors may explain why similarity to followers did not yield the predicted effects. These possibilities will be detailed later, but first, let us turn to discussing the significant results revealed by the current study.

4.1. The power of inclusive language and prototypicality in social change

Since inclusive language ("we", "us", "Poets"; "Whittier") taps into social identity and group membership, the results of the experiment support the idea derived from social identity framing that implicating social identity through communication is an important factor in the leader–follower influence process, particularly during times of change. Students exposed to inclusive language were more likely to: (a) view the leader positively, that is, as prototypical, attractive, charismatic, trustworthy, persuasive, and effective (Hypothesis 2); (b) indicate that the leader's vision of renewable energy was ingroup normative (Hypothesis 5); (c) experience positive emotional reactions concerning social change (Hypothesis 7); (d) feel more confident about the possibility of social change (Hypothesis 8); and (d) intend to engage in collective action to make renewable energy a reality on campus (Hypothesis 9). These results imply that inclusive language can help promote transformation by cultivating enough credibility for the leader to link their vision of social change with group norms and behaviors, and arouse positive emotions and confidence in the leader's vision of social change. In particular, it seems that a powerful means for leaders to gain credibility and harness influence potential within the group is to garner follower perceptions of leader prototypicality through inclusive language.

Table 7
Descriptive statistics for inclusive language on prototype content.

Dependent measures	Inclusive $n = 120$		Non-inclusive $n = 121$	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Stereotypes	6.85	.96	6.96	.99
Values	6.81	1.60	6.69	1.74
Norms	7.15	1.59	6.34	1.80
Attitudes	6.99	1.79	6.88	1.44

Table 8
Multivariate and univariate analyses of variance for inclusive language on prototype content.

Dependent measures	Inclusive			
	Multivariate F (4,236)	Multivariate Eta^2	Univariate F (1,233)	Partial Eta^2
Inclusive				
Combined DV	**4.74****	.07		
Univariate DVs				
Stereotypes			.70	.01
Values			.31	.01
Norms			**13.72*****	.05
Attitudes			.32	.01

** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .0001$.

Contrary to expectations, results showed that inclusive language was not related to social identification and transforming followers' prototype content (attitudes, values, stereotypes, and norms; Hypothesis 5). Inclusive language only directly affected perceptions of injunctive norms concerning renewable energy, which comprises of one component of prototype content. There are four possible explanations for this finding, which may provide fruitful avenues of future research. First, one of the reviewers pointed out that identification is the outcome of a long interactive process where individuals are exposed to a particular group or organization and interact with it over time. Over the course of this interaction, individuals learn about the group, are subjected to influence, and develop emotions and attachments to the group. Students may need an extended period of time to become socialized with the institution's culture and to develop identification with their college. Therefore, identification takes a long time to develop and may not be increased as a result of reading a leader speech at one point in time.

A second possible explanation is that inclusive language did not influence identification, but only affected perceptions of injunctive norms because *norms* are the critical component of prototype content that is related to getting followers on board with social change. This possibility is in line with Thomas, McGarty, and Mavor's (2009) Normative Alignment Model, which holds that gaining support for social change is dependent on crafting a social identity that contains clear norms for how group members feel, how efficacious they are, and how they should act. As people identify with the group and are exposed to normative patterns of group efficacy, emotion, and action, they should experience and emulate these beliefs, emotions, and actions. It is possible that *inclusive language is the rhetorical tool of normative alignment that propels group members to engage in social change*. In accordance with this idea, the results of the current study showed that inclusive language not only increased perceptions of renewable energy on campus as an injunctive ingroup norm, but it also affected students' positive emotions (Hypothesis 7), their levels of confidence in social change (i.e., efficacy beliefs; Hypothesis 8), and their behavioral intentions to engage in pro-environmental collective action (Hypothesis 9). Therefore, in implicating social identity, inclusive language may be an

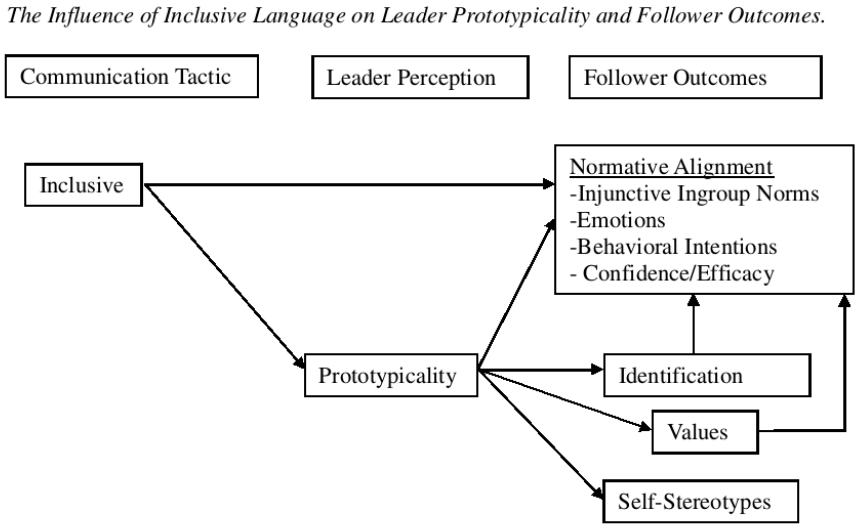

Fig. 1. The influence of inclusive language on leader prototypicality and follower outcomes.

avenue of relaying normative information about group beliefs, emotions, and actions that affect people's willingness to engage in social change.

A third possibility is that all components of prototype content are influenced by inclusive language. Inclusive language directly influences ingroup injunctive norms, while social identification and other prototype content variables such as values, self-stereotypes, and attitudes are indirectly influenced by inclusive language via perceived leader prototypicality. The current study provides some evidence to support this idea. Results showed that leaders who used inclusive language were more likely to be viewed as prototypical of the group. Participants who viewed the leader as more prototypical were more likely to identify with the group, to endorse environmental values, to perceive renewable energy as ingroup normative, and to see themselves in ingroup stereotypic ways. Taken together, this suggests that prototypicality could act as an intervening variable between inclusive language and prototype variables such that inclusive language increases perceptions of leader prototypicality, which in turn, alters prototype content.

The second and third explanations are not necessarily mutually exclusive. A fourth possibility is that inclusive language promotes normative alignment while also having indirect effects on other aspects of prototype content via prototypicality. In this way, inclusive language may serve both as the tool of normative alignment and a device that leader's can rely on to manage their prototypicality within the group (see Fig. 1). Once leader prototypicality is established through inclusive language, it empowers leaders to manage and reframe followers' prototypes of the group to facilitate social change. The relationships depicted in Fig. 1 may be a fruitful avenue of future research on social identity framing.

In addition to leader prototypicality, predictions regarding the effect of inclusive language on other leadership perception variables were also supported in the current research. Although the leadership literature has often stressed the importance of leadership communication (e.g., Bligh et al., 2004; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Emrich et al., 2001; Hartog & Verburg, 1997; S.D. Reicher & Hopkins, 1996; Seyranian and Bligh's, 2008; Shamir et al., 1993), this is the first study that has provided experimental evidence linking the use of these specific communication tactics to a series of positive leadership perceptions. This linkage is important as followers' perceptions of the leader are known to play a significant role in the influence process between leaders and followers (Hogg, 2001), in unit performance (Yukl, 2006), and in leader emergence (Bass, 1990). In conditions where inclusive language was used to communicate with followers, the leader was consistently seen in a more positive light, that is, as more prototypical, persuasive, trustworthy, likeable, effective, and charismatic. These findings support social identity framing by showing that successful leadership is tied to speaking about group membership. Leaders who use inclusive language are communicating about the nature of the group and the meaning of group membership. They are engaging in a process of framing an identity for the group, and in doing so they are seen as better leaders of their groups.

While inclusive language increased positive leadership perceptions, attributions of leader charisma were influenced by a combination of inclusive language and positive social identity language. This unexpected finding adds a novel insight to the literature on charismatic communication. Specifically, it suggests that charisma is not only related to a leader's ability to make references to the collective and to implicate social identity (Bligh et al., 2004; Seyranian and Bligh's, 2008; Shamir et al., 1993), but it is also associated with framing that social identity in a positive light. In this way, the leader constructs social identity in a way that makes followers' feel proud of their group membership and boosts collective-self esteem. Consequently, followers' needs for positive esteem and group status are satisfied through group identification (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

4.2. Similarity language and positive social identity language

Although the current study revealed a number of significant results related to inclusive language, similarity to followers did not yield any significant effects on positive leadership perception variables. Before concluding that similarity language does not exert any influence on followers (which is indeed possible), let us consider several factors that may have influenced the results. First, it is likely that the current study's operationalization of similarity to followers provided a poor test of this communication construct. For example, similarity to followers was operationalized through self-references (e.g., “I”) and leveling language (e.g., “everyone”). Perhaps the combination of leveling and self-references did not adequately capture the similarity to followers construct. In prior research on charismatic communication (e.g., Bligh et al., 2004; Seyranian and Bligh's, 2008), similarity to followers language was operationalized through leveling and familiarity and not self-references. Familiarity comprises of language that reflects the most common words in the English language (e.g., “over”, “the”, “who”, “this”), which is probably an important rhetorical component of creating a sense of similarity with the audience. Due to the high volume of familiar words in the speech used in the current study ($N = 444$), it was not feasible to use familiarity in the operationalization of similarity to followers because it was impossible to create a speech that eliminated or replaced these familiar words. For instance, “the” was used in the speech 91 times. Eliminating all “the” words would render the speech confusing and incomprehensible to the reader. Also, “the” cannot be replaced with an equivalent or alternate word as none exist in the English language. To provide a fair test of the hypothesis, further research may be necessary to unearth a language of similarity to followers that can capture the construct of similarity and be employed in experimental communication research.

A second possible reason why similarity to followers language did not yield significant effects could be connected to the uneven amount of words that accounted for the communication construct in the speech. That is, there were 78 positive social identity words, 45 similarity to followers words, and 225 inclusive terms evident in the speech. In this type of research, it may be

necessary to allot an even amount of words for each communication construct so that each communication construct is similarly represented across different conditions. It may be difficult to ensure an even amount of words for each communication construct if the study employs longer speeches, but this can be easily achieved in experimental studies with short messages (for a good example, see Brewer & Gardner, 1996).

A third explanation as to why similarity to followers language did not yield significant results in the current study is that this construct (and positive social identity language) were captured by inclusive language. That is, using inclusive language may have signaled the presence of leader–follower similarity and increased a sense of positivity associated with the social identity. The manipulation check analyses certainly support this possibility. Results showed that leaders who employed inclusive language also gave students the impression that there were stressing leader–follower similarity in their communication and that they were depicting a positive social identity for the group. As such, similarity language and positive social identity language may not be separate communication tactics at all. Instead, they may be perceptual by-products of inclusive language. Past experimental studies also provide some experimental evidence to support this proposition. Research suggest that the intergroup pronouns "we" and "us" increase feelings of familiarity (Housley et al., 2010), produce positive reactions (Perdue, Dovidio, Gurtman, & Tyler, 1990), and prime representations of the self that are more inclusive and lead to increased levels of perceived similarity (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). Before revising social identity framing theory to suggest that inclusive language also relays information concerning leader–follower similarity and a positive social identity, these results should be replicated in another sample with an alternate speech topic to ensure generalizability.

While similarity language did not yield the predicted effects, the study showed that participants exposed to positive social identity language evidenced higher levels of collective self-esteem. This finding is in line with social identity framing theory. Social identity framing theory predicts that collective self-esteem is an important component of ensuring long-term commitment to the reframed identity because individuals identify with groups to satisfy their need for self-esteem (Tajfel, 1974). In addition, collective self-esteem is also important to evoke in followers as it has been linked with overall well-being and adjustment (Bettencourt, Charlton, Eubanks, Kernahan, & Fuller, 1999). Positive well-being and adjustment may be particularly important for followers during social change. Social change can be arduous, turbulent, and challenging for the group. High collective self-esteem can help to build followers resilience during social change and bolster their drive and sense of efficacy to persevere through trying times. The current research suggests that one way that leaders can help to bolster collective self-esteem is by using positive social identity language.

4.3. Limitations

The current study has various limitations. To ensure that participants had read and understood the leader's speech, the current study asked participants to answer three "true" or "false" questions. These questions were intended to measure speech comprehension. Although the vast majority of participants in the current study answered at least two of these three questions correctly, 11 participants only answered one question correctly and three participants left the answers to these questions blank. Due to the small sample size for each cell, these 14 participants were retained in the analysis, as is common in experimental research of this type. Ideally, all participants would have answered all three questions correctly. A similar situation was evident for the leader manipulation check. The leader manipulation check tested whether participants in the inclusive language and non-inclusive language conditions correctly identified the type of leader ("Whittier College Student Leader" or "Student Leader") who ostensibly prepared the speech. Although the majority of students correctly identified the type of leader who gave the speech, some participants did not. Due to a small sample size per cell, participants who incorrectly identified the source of the speech were still retained in the analysis. Future research should address this limitation by replicating the results obtained in the current study and strengthening the manipulation to ensure that all correctly answer this manipulation check.

Another noteworthy limitation is the length of the eight different speeches employed in the current study. The length of the speeches varied based on which combination of communication tactics were included or excluded from each speech. The speeches ranged from 1809 to 1379 words. Several participants relayed to the experimenters that the speech was too long and burdensome to read. As such, the speech may have caused boredom or fatigue leading to fatigue effects that could have compromised the internal validity of the experiment (Crano & Brewer, 2002). To reduce the possibility of fatigue effects in future research, speech length should be kept to a strict minimum.

The artificiality of the speeches that did not contain inclusive language should also be noted as a limitation. Speeches without inclusive language may seem to some readers as contrived, artificial, and not reflective of real world communication. Real-world speeches necessarily contain at least some level of inclusive language, which may range from very high to very low levels. The non-inclusive conditions were useful because they served as a baseline of comparison for the inclusive conditions and allowed a test of the raw effect of inclusive language. However, this was conducted at the expense of ecological validity (Crano & Brewer, 2002). To address this limitation, future research may attempt to replicate the obtained effects in the current study by manipulating high versus low levels of inclusive language. In theory, a similar pattern of results should emerge. However, the difficulty in this research will be in determining what comprises "high" versus "low" levels of inclusive language.

Another limitation associated with the current study is in the operationalization of inclusive language. Inclusive language is operationalized through both language ("we", "us") and source ("Whittier College Student Leader"). This was done because social

identity framing predicts that inclusive language would only be effective from an ingroup leader source. In the inclusive language condition, the leader was described as an ingroup source with inclusive language ("Whittier College Student Leader"). In the non-inclusive language condition, the leader was described as an ingroup source with non-inclusive language ("Student Leader") in that the specific group membership (i.e., college or university) of the leader was not mentioned. As a reviewer pointed out, it is possible that source effects are confounded with language effects in the current study. That is, that the ingroup "Whittier College" status of the leader in the inclusive language condition was responsible for the effects and not inclusive language itself. While this may be possible, it should be noted that inclusive language might not be effective without an attribution to a source. That is, its effect is most likely only meaningful to followers if the "we" is associated with a particular group and if it comes from a specific source (leader) who is a member that group. Yet, the current research is not able to definitely speak to this issue. The current research shows that implicating social identity for both the source and speech content is more effective than not implicating social identity in source and speech content. Future research should further investigate the effects of manipulating different leader source types (Whittier College Student Leader, Student Leader, Leader) and the inclusive and non-inclusive language construct to tease apart language effects from leader source effects. Overall, research must still be undertaken to provide a better understanding of the important relationship between source and language in reference to inclusive language.

Finally, the current study measured the willingness of participants to engage in collective action after reading the speech, but the participants' actual behavior was not measured as a function of the manipulation. An interesting avenue of future research would be to test whether inclusive language affects the immediate behavioral changes of participants and whether these behavioral changes last over time. If they do, it would further highlight the potentially powerful effects of inclusive language on individuals.

5. Conclusion

The ability of a leader to influence followers and gain support is crucial. In fact, it can be argued that a key function of leaders is to persuade followers to adopt a vision for the future and to encourage them to work together as a collective to bring that vision into fruition. Articulating a vision that attracts followers and translates follower support for the vision into real-time followers' efforts can be a challenge. This is where social identity framing has the potential to make both a theoretical and practical contribution. Social identity framing suggests that implicating a group's identity can be essential in gaining follower support for a vision of social change. It outlines a series of communication tactics that may achieve this end. The current research contributes to the leadership literature by providing experimental evidence that inclusive language provides a powerful communicative tool for leaders to influence followers to work towards social change. Inclusive language enhanced perceptions that change was ingroup normative, amplified positive emotions concerning change, induced behavioral intentions to engage in collective action, boosted confidence in social change, and augmented positive leadership perceptions. Perceptions of leader prototypicality and positive social identity language were also found to be important in the leader–follower influence process.

Overall, the results of the study contribute to the sparse literature on *how* leaders can communicate to bring about social change and how followers respond to social change attempts. At an applied level, the results underline a simple yet potentially powerful communication tactic (inclusive language) that may be employed by a wide variety of leaders who seek follower support for innovation and change. While follower support and willingness to act are important, it should be noted that change and innovation cannot come into fruition without actual follower behavior and collective action. Future research should go one step further than the current study and examine the effect of inclusive language on followers' *actual* behaviors, and seek to determine what, if any, mechanisms may be responsible for the inclusive language–follower behavior link. In this way, we will gain a more complete understanding of how leaders may communicate to inspire their followers to act on behalf of the group to actuate the leader's vision of "who we are" and "where we should be going".

Appendix A. Sample quotations for each communication construct

Construct	Sample quotation
Inclusive	"If *we* confront this challenge without fear; if *we* can summon the enduring spirit of the *Poets*, who do not quit, who forge ahead with wisdom and integrity; then someday, years from now, *our children* can tell *their children* that this was the time when *we* performed, something worthy to be remembered."
Similarity Language	"*Everyone* knows *I'm* just a *regular* Whittier College student"
Positive Social Identity Language	"We will take our *rightful* place as an *innovative* and *forward-thinking* college that stands as a *shining exemplar* of how to live in *harmony* with our planet"

Appendix B. Communication tactics

Tactic	Description	Sample words
Inclusive language		
Social identity	Words denoting a shared social identity	We, us, them, our, they, Whittier College
Collective Focus		
Collectives	Singular nouns connoting plurality that function to decrease specificity, reflecting a dependence on categorical modes of thought. Includes social groupings, task groups, and geographical entities.	Civilization, club, community, generation, humanity, nation, team, world, families, alumni, United States, global, college, university, school, society
People References	Words referring to the citizenry-writ-large, including sociological, political, and generic group designations.	Nation, people, society, American, leader
Similarity to followers		
Leveling	Words used to ignore individual differences and to build a sense of completeness and assurance.	Actual, all, always, any, anything, anyone, clear, completely, consistent, each, every, everyone, most, only, throughout
Self-Reference	All first person references that reflect the locus of action residing in the speaker and not in the world at large.	I, I'd, I'll, I'm, I've, me, mine, my, myself
Positive social identity		
Praise	Positive affirmations of a person, group, or entity including social, physical, moral, intellectual, entrepreneurial and qualities.	Better, bold, good, great, greater, greatest, intelligent, moral, ranking, right, successful, rightful, known, succeed, victorious, worthy
Satisfaction	Positive affective statements including joy, triumph and nurturance.	Caring, cherish, determined, heal, hopeful, like, love, protect, secure, prizing, prosperity
Values	Positive group values	Beauty, freedom, harmony, help, integrity, justice, preserve, prevent, respect, wisdom.
Group attributes	Positive attributes related to the group	Active, involved, social, responsible

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