# Chapter 4

## Mediating the relationship between leader communication styles and leader criteria: perceived expertise and liking.[5]



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## *Abstract*

*We argue that leader communication styles impact leader personal influence bases and that this may explain why leader communication styles are related to leader criteria. In three field studies, we found that perceived expertise and liking partially mediated the relations of leader expressiveness, preciseness, and verbal aggressiveness with leader criteria. As expected based on conceptual linkage, perceived expertise was found to be more strongly related to leader performance than to satisfaction with the leader, whereas for liking the opposite was true. We suggest that a cognitive and an affective pathway of indirect effects may be distinguished. The results of our study underscore that communication styles are highly relevant for leaders, as they predict leader criteria directly as well as indirectly. As such, they provide a basis for further research and may provide direction to leader assessment and development practices.*

Why is the way a leader communicates related to leader outcomes? We suggest that the way a leader communicates may affect his/her core bases of influence. Influencing others to reach some predefined goal is an essential element of leadership (Fairhurst, 2008; Vroom & Jago, 2007; Yukl, 2010; Zaccaro, 2007). In the literature, several influence bases have been identified and investigated (e.g., Krause, 2004; Raven, 1992; Yukl & Falbe, 1991). In the present study we focus on what we consider to be the two most important personal influence bases, i.e., perceived expertise and liking, as potential mediators of the relations between leader communication styles and criteria. Perceived expertise and liking have been found to be important influence bases for leaders (Medina, Munduate, & Guerra, 2008; Rahim, 1989; Rahim & Afza, 1993; Yukl & Falbe, 1991). This study aims to contribute to our understanding of the relations between leader communication styles, leader influence bases, and leader criteria.



### Relations between leader communication styles and criteria

In the literature, leader communication styles or similar constructs have been found to be related to leader criteria. For instance: communication competence or skill was related to leader effectiveness (Flauto, 1999; Gardner, 2003), as were daily discourse (Fairhurst, 2008; Holmes, Schnurr, & Marra, 2007), managerial communication styles (Richmond, McCroskey, & Davis, 1982), delivery style (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999), and speech content and oratory style (Shamir, Arthur, & House, 1994; Den Hartog & Verburg, 1997). However, as an underlying integrative framework for studying someone's communication styles was lacking (Daly & Bippus, 1998), each study used a different operationalization of the construct, making it hard to interpret the combined results and to test potential explanations for the relations found.

In order to identify the underlying structure of interpersonal communication styles, recently a lexical study was undertaken (De Vries, Bakker-Pieper, Alting Siberg, Van

Gameren, & Vlug, 2009). Communication style was defined as "*the characteristic way a person sends verbal, paraverbal, and nonverbal signals in social interactions denoting a) who s/he is or wants to (appear to) be, b) how s/he tends to relate to people with whom s/he interacts, and c) in what way his/her messages should usually be interpreted*" (De Vries et al., 2009, p. 179). This definition is somewhat broader than other frequently used definitions as it includes not only message aspects, but also interaction and personality related aspects. Subsequently, based on the lexical study, De Vries, Bakker-Pieper, Konings, and Schouten (in press) developed an instrument to measure communication styles (the Communication Styles Inventory, CSI). The CSI operationalizes six main communication style dimensions, labeled expressiveness, preciseness, verbal aggressiveness, questioningness, emotionality, and impression manipulativeness. The CSI represents a parsimonious but integrated model of interpersonal communication styles (De Vries et al., in press) that may be used to investigate communication styles in any context.

Bakker-Pieper and De Vries (in press) found that the CSI dimensions expressiveness and preciseness had high predictive validities for – among other – leader performance and satisfaction with the leader. They also found that verbal aggressiveness was an important predictor of satisfaction with the leader. Communication styles can – in line with the definition provided above – be considered narrow personality constructs (Bakker-Pieper & De Vries, in press). In the literature, narrow constructs have proven to be more predictive of a wide variety of criteria than broad constructs, provided they are conceptually related to the criterion involved (Christiansen & Robie, 2011; Ones & Viswesvaran, 1996). In view of the centrality of communication for leadership, Bakker-Pieper and De Vries (in press) assumed that communication styles were conceptually more closely linked with leader outcomes than personality traits and they indeed found the expected incremental predictive validities, thus providing endorsement for the added value of the CSI model for leadership research.

Perceived expertise and liking are attributes that may enhance someone's influence on others. We expect that the relation of leader expressiveness, preciseness, and verbal aggressiveness with leader performance and satisfaction with the leader may be (partially) explained by these two personal influence bases of leaders

### Perceived expertise as mediator

If someone is perceived to be an expert - defined in terms of having knowledge related to the task at hand -, it may be easier to influence others. Indeed, in the literature, (perceived) leader expertise has repeatedly been associated with various leader criteria (e.g., Hunter, Tate, Dzieweczynski, Bedel-Avers, 2011; Hysong, 2006; Lines, 2007; Littlepage, Schmidt, Whisler, & Frost, 1995; Podsakoff, Todor, & Schuler, 1983; Rahim, 1989; Sternberg, 2007). Whether or not a leader is perceived to be an expert will depend on the attributions that his/her interaction partner makes, which in turn will to some

extent be impacted by (perceived) leader behavior (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1994; Rahim, 1989; Raven, 1992, 1999; Yukl, 2010).

Hence, a leader may create the impression that he/she is an expert - whether this is true or not - by using a certain way of communicating. For instance, Bligh and Hess (2007) found that the use of jargon was positively related to perceived expertise and Littlepage et al. (1995) found that talkativeness predicted perceived expertise. We assume that leader expressiveness and preciseness are similarly related to perceived expertise. CSI Expressiveness refers to a tendency to be talkative and to communicate informally, use humor, and easily 'steer' a conversation (De Vries et al., in press). A leader who communicates in an expressive way will come across as being at ease, as feeling comfortable and self-confident. CSI preciseness refers to a tendency to communicate clearly, well structured, to-the-point, and well thought-through (De Vries et al, in press). By communicating in such a way, a leader creates the impression that he/she has a clear picture of what needs to be done. We therefore expect that expressiveness and preciseness will be positively related to perceived expertise. As these communication styles have been related to leader performance and satisfaction with the leader (Bakker-Pieper & De Vries, in press) and (perceived) expertise has been related to similar leader criteria (Hunter et al., 2011; Podsakoff et al., 1983), we hypothesize as follows:

> *Hypothesis 1:* Perceived expertise mediates the relation of leader expressiveness and preciseness with leader performance and satisfaction with the leader.



### Liking as mediator

A leader is also more likely to exert influence over his/her subordinates when he/she is liked by them. In leader-subordinate relations, higher levels of liking have repeatedly been associated with outcomes such as better leader-member exchange relations (Liden, Wayne, & Stilwell, 1993), higher levels of subordinate job satisfaction (Brown & Keeping, 2005), more satisfaction with supervision (Rahim, 1989), and more positive performance evaluations (Strauss, Barrick, & Connerley, 2001).

There is limited information on the antecedents of liking. Previous studies have shown that demographic and perceived so-called 'deep-level' similarity predict liking (Lankau, Riordan, & Thomas, 2005; Strauss et al., 2001), certain ingratiating behaviors have been related to liking (Bolino, Varela, Bande, & Turnley, 2006; Yukl, Kim, & Falbe, 1996), as has a supervisor's use of contingent rewards (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1994). We expect that communication styles are related to liking as well: how someone communicates will impact how much others like him/her. In the leader-subordinate relationship we assume that the highly social behavior of the expressive communication style is positively related to liking. CSI verbal aggressiveness refers to a tendency to overpower a communication partner, i.e., by demonstrating anger and communicating authoritatively, but also in a derogatory and merciless way (De Vries et al., in press). A leader's use of verbal aggressiveness will often make subordinates feel scared or

uncomfortable, leading to lower liking or disliking. As expressiveness and verbal aggressiveness have been related to leader performance and satisfaction with the leader (Bakker-Pieper & De Vries, in press) and liking has been related to similar leader criteria (Brown & Keeping, 2005; Strauss et al., 2001), we propose:

> *Hypothesis 2:* Liking mediates the relation of leader expressiveness and verbal aggressiveness with perceived leader performance and satisfaction with the leader.

Given the importance of influence bases such as perceived expertise and liking for leaders, we furthermore assume that they are important predictors of leader criteria also when controlling for communication styles. Perceived expertise and liking (or comparable constructs) have frequently been related to leader outcomes (e.g., Brown & Keeping, 2005; Liden et al., 1993; Medina et al., 2008; Raven, Schwarzwald, & Koslowsky, 1998; Yukl et al., 1996). However, we expect that they have differential relations with specific leader outcomes. Hiller, DeChurch, Murase, and Doty (2011) distinguish – among other – one domain of leader criteria consisting of effectiveness-related outcomes (including performance ratings) and another of attitude-related outcomes (including satisfaction ratings). Although many leadership studies have found direct or indirect relations of predictors with criteria from both domains, we expect that relations are stronger when constructs are conceptually related to each other (Bergner, Neubauer, and Kreuzthaler. 2010; Hogan & Holland, 2003; Lievens, De Corte & Schollaert, 2008).

We assume that cognitions are more likely to play a role than emotions when expertise is assessed. Similarly, for assessing effectiveness, a relative rational evaluation of cognitions is required. Perceived expertise therefore seems conceptually closely related to the effectiveness criteria domain. Although some findings indicate that expertise may lead someone to make mistakes in situations that are new to him/her, expertise is indeed generally associated with better performance (Hunter et al., 2011; Lines, 2007). Liking, on the other hand, depends on emotions and feelings. It is established through affective information processing (Brown & Keeping, 2005; Hall & Lord, 1995), and therefore seems conceptually closely related to the attitudinal criteria domain. We propose:

> *Hypothesis 3a*: Perceived leader expertise is more strongly related to leader performance than to satisfaction with the leader.
>
> *Hypothesis 3b*: Liking is more strongly related to satisfaction with the leader than to leader performance.

In order to test our hypotheses, we performed three field studies. In the first study we investigated the mediating role of perceived expertise in the relation of expressiveness and preciseness with leader criteria (Hypothesis 1) and the relation of perceived leader expertise with each of the two leader criteria (Hypothesis 3a). In the second study we examined the mediating role of liking in the relation of expressiveness

and verbal aggressiveness with leader criteria (Hypothesis 2) and the relation of liking with each of the two criteria (Hypothesis 3b. The third study aimed to replicate the findings from the first two studies using one sample with both proposed mediators (Hypotheses 1 and 2) and to investigate the difference in direct relations of perceived leader expertise and liking with leader criteria when communication styles, perceived expertise, and liking were all included in the analyses (Hypotheses 3a and 3b).

## Study 1

### Participants and procedure

A community sample was obtained by various means (social contacts, e-mails, and subsequent snowballing). In total 104 employees of various organizations completed the questionnaire. They assessed their direct supervisor's communicative behavior, his/her performance, their satisfaction with him/her, and his/her expertise. We calculated *M's* and *SD's* for each case and visually inspected the answers when the mean was higher than four or lower than two or the standard deviation was higher than 1.60 or lower than .50. When we found rows of 20 or more questions with the same answer or long rows with the same answer pattern, the case was considered an outlier and was deleted. One hundred and three respondents were retained for our analyses. Of these respondents 48 (46.6%) were male, the average age was 42 years (*SD* = 11.79), with the youngest being 20 and the eldest 62. Sixty-two (61%) respondents had a higher professional or university education and the rest a mid-level professional or general secondary education. Seventy-five (73%) of the leaders were men.



### Measurement

Based on a lexical study on the dimensionality of communication styles (De Vries, Bakker-Pieper et al., 2009) a self report measure was developed, the CSI (De Vries et al., in press). The CSI consists of 96 items measuring six communication style dimensions, labeled expressiveness, preciseness, verbal aggressiveness, questioningness, emotionality, and impression manipulativeness. The psychometric properties of the self-report version of the questionnaire were adequate, with reported alpha reliabilities of > .80 and acceptable divergent and convergent validities (De Vries et al., in press). The participants completed the other-version of the CSI (items in Appendix 2). Each CSI scale consists of 16 items; the alpha reliabilities in this study ranged from .76 to .91.

We used two leader criteria. One was a leader performance scale, based on Hooijberg's five item scale (1996). It consisted of five items related to success, meeting performance targets, peer comparison, role model, and overall effectiveness e.g., "Compared to other leaders, my leader is not very efficient" (recoded) and "My leader is successful in the organization". The scale's alpha reliability was .90. The other criterion was a satisfaction with the leader scale used by De Vries et al. (2010) consisting of four items that were slightly adjusted, e.g., "I enjoy working with this leader" and "I sometimes

think: 'if only I had another leader'" (recoded). This scale's alpha reliability was also .90. For measuring perceived expertise, we used the three items scale used by Podsakoff et al. (1983) and added two items, "He/she is an expert" and "Because of his/her expertise, he/she is a source of information for others". The scale's alpha reliability was .90.

## Results

Table 4.1 presents the means, standard deviations, alpha reliabilities, and correlations of the study variables. All communication style dimensions were related to leader performance (all *p*'s < .01) with absolute correlations ranging from .28 for questioningness to .71 for preciseness, and to satisfaction with the leader (all *p*'s < .01), with absolute correlations ranging from .26 for emotionality to .65 for verbal aggressiveness. The directions of all relations were similar to those found in previous studies (Bakker-Pieper & De Vries, in press; De Vries et al., 2010). Communication styles explained 68% of the variance of leader performance (multiple $R = .82$, $p < .01$), with expressiveness, preciseness, and verbal aggressiveness contributing to explained variance. Communication styles explained 64% of the variance of satisfaction with the leader (multiple $R = .80$, $p < .01$), with expressiveness, preciseness, verbal aggressiveness, and questioningness contributing to explained variance (see Table 4.2).

Leader expressiveness and preciseness were positively related to perceived expertise (see Table 4.1) and, as can be seen in Table 4.2, controlling for the other communication styles, expressiveness and preciseness predicted perceived expertise with β's of .32 and .62 (both *p*'s < .01). Perceived expertise correlated with leader performance ($r = .70$, $p < .01$) and satisfaction with the leader ($r = .59$, $p < .01$). When we applied Steiger's (1980) test for comparing dependent correlations we found that the difference was significant ($z = 2.56$, $p < .05$), implying that perceived expertise is more strongly related to leader performance than to satisfaction with the leader, thus providing support for Hypothesis 3a. Perceived expertise predicted the outcomes also when the communication styles were included in a multiple regression, for leader performance $\beta = .29$ ($p < .01$) and for satisfaction with the leader $\beta = .30$ ($p < .01$).

We hypothesized that perceived expertise mediates the relation of expressiveness and preciseness with leader criteria. We employed Preacher and Hayes' (2004) bootstrapping approach. This is a non-parametric re-sampling procedure that focuses on the indirect effect, even if no direct effect between predictor and criterion exists, and it gives estimates and significance tests for the indirect effect size. In this approach, the sampling distribution of the indirect effect does not have to be normal,

Table 4.1 *Means, standard deviations, and correlations of Study 1 variables, alpha reliabilities on the diagonal*

| | | *M* | *Sd* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Expressiveness | 3.37 | .53 | *.86* | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Preciseness | 3.33 | .54 | .26** | *.88* | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Verbal Aggressiveness | 2.64 | .62 | -.17 | -.42** | *.91* | | | | | | |
| 4 | Questioningness | 3.08 | .49 | .32** | .25* | -.05 | *.83* | | | | | |
| 5 | Emotionality | 2.62 | .47 | -.27** | -.49** | .37** | .13 | *.83* | | | | |
| 6 | Impression Manipulativeness | 2.81 | .44 | .07 | -.33** | .45** | .05 | .28** | *.76* | | | |
| 7 | Perceived expertise | 3.30 | .80 | .49** | .68** | -.27** | .29** | -.36** | -.12 | *.90* | | |
| 8 | Leader performance | 3.51 | .80 | .50** | .71** | -.54** | .28** | -.43** | -.33** | .70** | *.90* | |
| 9 | Satisfaction with the leader | 3.45 | .93 | .38** | .59** | -.65** | .38** | -.26** | -.31** | .59** | .83** | *.90* |

*Note.* $N = 103.$;** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

which is a precondition for the Sobel test for inferring mediation. As indirect effect distributions are often not normally distributed, bootstrapping is a suitable procedure for identifying and estimating indirect effects (Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007; Taylor, MacKinnon, & Tein, 2008).

We used Hayes' macro (2011) to carry out the bootstrapping analysis. We standardized the variables and entered expressiveness and preciseness as the independent variables, perceived expertise as the mediator, leader performance or satisfaction with the leader as the dependent variable, and the other four communication style dimensions as covariates. We requested 10,000 bootstrap re-samples and used a 95% confidence interval. If the confidence interval did not include zero, we could assume with 95% certainty that the indirect effect was not equal to zero. We found an indirect relation of expressiveness with leader performance through perceived expertise, β = .09, Confidence Interval (CI) = .03 to .17 and one of preciseness, β = .18, CI = .06 to .31. We found similar indirect relations with satisfaction with the leader, of expressiveness β = .09, CI = .03 to .18 and of preciseness β = .18, CI = .05 to .33. Thus, hypothesis 1 was supported. When perceived expertise and the communication styles were all included as predictors in a multiple regression analysis, of the communication styles expressiveness, preciseness, and verbal aggressiveness still had a direct relation with leader performance, and verbal aggressiveness and questioningness had a direct relation with satisfaction with the leader (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 *Results of the regression of leader performance, satisfaction with the leader and perceived expertise on communication style dimension (Study 1)*

| | Leader performance | Satisfaction with leader | Perceived Expertise | Leader performance | Satisfaction with leader |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Expressiveness | .32** | .18* | .32** | .23** | .09 |
| Preciseness | .48** | .33** | .62** | .30** | .14 |
| Verbal aggressiveness | -.24** | -.50** | .02 | -.25** | -.50** |
| Questioningness | .05 | .20** | .03 | .04 | .20** |
| Emotionality | -.01 | .11 | .00 | -.01 | .11 |
| Impr. manipulativeness | -.08 | -.03 | .05 | -.10 | -.05 |
| Perceived expertise | | | | .29** | .30** |
| Multiple *R* | .82** | .80** | .76** | .84** | .82** |
| $R^2$ | .68** | .64** | .58** | .71** | .67** |

*Note*. *N* = 103; Coefficients are standardized beta's; ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

### Conclusion

The aim of study 1 was to investigate the relationship between leader communication styles, perceived expertise, and leader criteria. As expected, 1) we found indirect effects of a leader's expressiveness and preciseness through perceived expertise on leader criteria and 2) we found perceived expertise to be more strongly related to leader performance than to satisfaction with the leader.

## Study 2

Study 2 was a field study in which we examined the relation between liking and leader criteria and the role of liking in the relation between communication styles and leader criteria.

### Participants and procedure

A training organization introduced us to companies that might be willing to allow employees to participate in our research project. We continued to approach companies until we had gathered 98 completed questionnaires. The questionnaires were completed during work or private time (not as part of a course). Respondents assessed their direct supervisor's communicative behavior, his/her performance, their satisfaction with him/her, and they indicated how much they liked him/her. After checking for outliers (same procedure as in Study 1), 97 respondents were retained for our analyses. Of these respondents 51 (52.6%) were male, the average age was 38 years (*SD* = 10.34), with the youngest being 20 and the oldest 61. Seventy-eight respondents (85%) obtained a higher professional or university education and the rest a mid-level professional or general secondary education. Several respondents assessed the same leader, in total 21 leaders were assessed of which 13 (62%) were men.



### Measurement

The other-version of the CSI was used to assess the communication styles of the leaders. Alpha reliabilities in this study were adequate, ranging from .77 for impression manipulativeness to .86 for preciseness. For the leaders that were rated by more than one subordinate we calculated ICC's to assess inter-rater reliabilities and $r_{wg}$'s to assess inter-rater agreement. The ICC's for the communication style scales were acceptable, comparing favorably to those in Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater, & James (2002), with ICC1 ranging from .19 for impression manipulativeness to .44 for preciseness, the average being .30. The $r_{wg}$ for each of the communication styles was also acceptable, ranging from .89 (for preciseness) to .94 (for expressiveness and verbal aggressiveness). We used the same leader criteria scales as in Study 1. The alpha reliability of the leader performance scale was .78 and of the satisfaction with the leader scale .80. For measuring liking, we used items from liking scales employed by Wayne and Ferris (1990) and Brown and Keeping (2005). Our scale consisted of four items, i.e., "I like my leader", "I get along well

Table 4.3 *Means, standard deviations, and correlations of Study 2 variables, alpha reliabilities on the diagonal*

| | | *M* | *Sd* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Expressiveness | 3.31 | .43 | *.80/.84* | .07 | .39 | .59** | -.28 | -.11 | .43 | .23 | .37 |
| 2 | Preciseness | 3.54 | .49 | -.11 | *.86/.94* | .18 | .16 | -.52* | .32 | .09 | .82** | .75** |
| 3 | Verbal Aggressiveness | 2.59 | .42 | .17 | -.19 | *.83/.84* | .25 | -.37 | .12 | -.24 | .34 | .02 |
| 4 | Questioningness | 3.10 | .49 | .50** | .05 | .08 | *.85/.84* | -.28 | -.04 | .24 | .18 | .16 |
| 5 | Emotionality | 2.49 | .38 | -.05 | -.30** | -.07 | -.02 | *.83/.90* | -.19 | .17 | -.48* | -.39 |
| 6 | Impression Manipulativeness | 2.71 | .40 | .03 | .17 | .27** | -.04 | .13 | *.77/.77* | -.29 | .30 | .07 |
| 7 | Liking | 4.23 | .60 | .29** | .25* | -.38** | .27** | -.07 | -.38** | *.89/.90* | -.04 | .57** |
| 8 | Leader performance | 3.86 | .65 | .25* | .62** | -.19 | .12 | -.24* | -.18 | .42** | *.78/.83* | .60** |
| 9 | Satisfaction with the leader | 3.95 | .71 | .31** | .54** | -.40** | .23* | -.18 | -.29** | .70** | .71** | *.80/.84* |

*Note.* Left and below the diagonal all respondents $N = 97$, right and above the diagonal averaged per leader $N = 21$; ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

with my leader", "Being together with my leader is a pleasure", and "The quality of my relationship with my leader is good". The alpha reliability of the scale was .89.

**Results**

We used the individual scores of each respondent ($N$ = 97) for our analyses. Table 4.3 presents the means, standard deviations, alpha reliabilities, and correlations of the study variables (above the diagonal the correlations for the averaged leader scores ($N$ = 21) are provided). Expressiveness ($r$ = .25, $p$ < .05), preciseness ($r$ = .62, $p$ < .01), and emotionality ($r$ = -.24, $p$ < .05) were related to leader performance, and all styles except for emotionality were related to satisfaction with the leader, with absolute correlations ranging from .23 ($p$ < .05) for questioningness to .54 ($p$ < .01) for preciseness. The directions of all relations were similar to those found in previous studies (Bakker-Pieper & De Vries, in press; De Vries et al., 2010). Communication style dimensions explained 54% of the variance of leader performance (multiple $R$ = .74, $p$ < .01), with expressiveness and preciseness contributing to explained variance) and 58% of the variance of satisfaction with the leader (multiple $R$ = .76, $p$ < .01), with preciseness, expressiveness, and verbal aggressiveness contributing to explained variance (see Table 4.4).

In order to assess whether the relations between communication styles and criteria were comparable with those from Study 1, we compared the beta-profiles of the communication styles for each of the leader criteria. We found no significant difference; for leader performance $F_{(6,186)}$= .52 ($p$ = n.s.) and for satisfaction with the leader $F_{(6,186)}$= 1.69 ($p$ = n.s.), which means that the beta-profiles in the two studies were similar. We also



Table 4.4 *Results of the regression of leader performance, satisfaction with the leader, and liking the leader on communication style dimension (Study 2)*

| | Leader performance | Satisfaction with leader | Liking | Leader performance | Satisfaction with leader |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Expressiveness | .39** | .40** | .30** | .33** | .27** |
| Preciseness | .62** | .48** | .18* | .59** | .40** |
| Verbal aggressiveness | -.12 | -.35** | -.34** | -.06 | -.20** |
| Questioningness | -.09 | .03 | .13 | -.12 | -.03 |
| Emotionality | -.03 | -.03 | .02 | -.04 | -.03 |
| Impr. manipulativeness | -.05 | -.12 | -.26** | .00 | -.01 |
| Liking | | | | .19* | .45** |
| | | | | | |
| Multiple $R$ | .71** | .76** | .63** | .73** | .83** |
| $R^2$ | .51** | .57** | .39** | .53** | .69** |

*Note.* $N$ = 97; Coefficients are standardized beta's; ** $p$ < .01, * $p$ < .05.

compared the communication styles beta-profile of the averaged score per leader ($N$ = 21) for Study 2 with that of Study 1. Again we found no significant difference; for leader performance $F_{(6,110)}$= .64 ($p$ = n.s.) and for satisfaction with the leader $F_{(6,110)}$= .68 ($p$ = n.s.).

Leader expressiveness was positively and verbal aggressiveness was negatively related to liking. The multiple regression analysis showed that, after controlling for the other communication styles, expressiveness and verbal aggressiveness predicted liking with β's of .30 and -.34 respectively (for both $p < .01$, see Table 4.4). Liking was furthermore predicted by impression manipulativeness (β = -.26, $p < .01$) and preciseness (β = .18, $p < .05$). Liking correlated with leader performance ($r$ = .42 $p < .01$) and satisfaction with the leader ($r$ = .70, $p < .01$). The difference was significant ($z$ = -4.58, $p <$ .01), meaning that liking was significantly more strongly related to satisfaction with the leader than to leader performance, thus providing support for Hypothesis 3b. Liking predicted the outcomes also when the communication styles were included in a multiple regression, for leader performance β = .19 ($p < .05$) and for satisfaction with the leader β = .44 ($p < .01$).

We hypothesized that liking mediates the relation of leader expressiveness and verbal aggressiveness with leader criteria. We again employed Preacher and Hayes' (2004) bootstrapping procedure to calculate estimates of indirect effects and to test their significance. The CI of the indirect relations of expressiveness, β = .06, and verbal aggressiveness, β = -.06, with leader performance through liking included zero (CI's were -.00 to .17 and -.15 to -.00 respectively). We found an indirect relation with satisfaction with the leader through liking of expressiveness, β = .14, CI = .03 to .28 and of verbal aggressiveness, β = -.15, CI = -.27 to -.05. Thus our hypothesis 2 was supported for satisfaction with the leader, but not for leader performance. When liking and the communication styles were all included in a multiple regression analysis, the communication styles expressiveness and preciseness still had a direct relation with leader performance and expressiveness, preciseness, and verbal aggressiveness had a direct relation with satisfaction with the leader.

### Conclusion

The aim of study 2 was to examine the relationship between a leader's communication styles, liking the leader, and leader criteria. We found the expected indirect effects of expressiveness and verbal aggressiveness through liking only for satisfaction with the leader and not for leader performance. Also, as expected, we found that liking was more strongly related to satisfaction with the leader than to leader performance.

## Study 3

Study 3 was a field study in which we used one sample to further examine the relations of perceived expertise and liking with leader criteria as well as the mediating role

of perceived expertise and liking in the relation between communication styles and leader criteria.

### Participants and procedure

Through various means (student contacts, social media, e-mails, and subsequent snowballing) a community sample was obtained. In total 151 employees of various organizations completed the questionnaire. They assessed their direct supervisor's communicative behavior, his/her effectiveness, his/her expertise, how much they liked him/her, and some variables that were not used for this study. After outlier analysis, 146 respondents were retained for our analyses. Of these respondents 68 (47%) were male, the average age was 31 years (*SD* = 14.36), with the youngest being 17 and the oldest 77. Seventy-nine (54%) respondents had a higher professional or university education and the rest a mid-level professional or general secondary education. Ninety-nine (68%) of the leaders were men.

### Measurement

The other-version of the CSI was used to assess the communication styles of leaders and the alpha reliabilities in this study were adequate, ranging from .74 for impression manipulativeness to .89 for preciseness and for verbal aggressiveness. We used the same leader criteria scales as in Studies 1 and 2, the same perceived expertise scale as in Study 1, and the same liking scale as in Study 2. The alpha reliability of the leader performance scale was .84, of the satisfaction with the leader scale .89, of the perceived expertise scale .81, and of the liking scale .94.



### Results

We first assessed the comparability of the data of Studies 1, 2, and 3 by comparing the beta-profiles of the communication styles for each of the leader criteria with each other. We found no significant difference; for leader performance $F_{(12, 325)}$= .764 (*p* = n.s.) and for satisfaction with the leader $F_{(12, 325)}$= 1.73 (*p* = n.s.). The pattern of intercorrelations between the communication styles was by and large comparable; only the correlation between preciseness and verbal aggressiveness in Study 2 was much weaker than in the other two studies. However, when we calculated the average of the absolute intercorrelations between the communication styles in each of the three studies, we found no significant differences ($\chi^2$ = .81, *p* = n.s.). In Study 1 the average absolute intercorrelation was .26, in Study 2 it was .15 (.26 for *N* = 21), and in Study 3 it was .25.

The means, standard deviations, alpha reliabilities, and correlations of the Study 3 variables are provided in Table 4.5. All communication styles were related to leader performance with absolute correlations ranging from .30 for impression manipulativeness to .65 for preciseness (all *p*'s < .01) and all styles were related to satisfaction with the leader with absolute correlations ranging from .26 for emotionality to .70 for preciseness (all *p*'s < .01). The directions of all relations were similar to those found in previous

Table 4.5 *Means, standard deviations, and correlations of Study 3 variables, alpha reliabilities on the diagonal*

| | | *M* | *SD* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Expressiveness | 3.36 | .51 | *.84* | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Preciseness | 3.23 | .58 | .11 | *.89* | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Verbal aggressiveness | 2.92 | .63 | -.06 | -.56** | *.89* | | | | | | | |
| 4 | Questioningness | 2.92 | .47 | .49** | .32** | -.26** | *.82* | | | | | | |
| 5 | Emotionality | 2.69 | .42 | -.11 | -.41** | .30** | .02 | *.76* | | | | | |
| 6 | Impression manipulativeness | 2.82 | .43 | -.01 | -.32** | .37** | .01 | .28** | *.74* | | | | |
| 7 | Perceived expertise | 3.43 | .71 | .41** | .51** | -.35** | .33** | -.23** | -.31** | *.81* | | | |
| 8 | Liking | 3.68 | .82 | .53** | .41** | -.58** | .39** | -.17* | -.30** | .54** | *.94* | | |
| 9 | Leader performance | 3.50 | .71 | .40** | .65** | -.56** | .36** | -.35** | -.30** | .63** | .68** | *.84* | |
| 10 | Satisfaction with the leader | 3.41 | .90 | .43** | .58** | -.70** | .40** | -.26** | -.36** | .51** | .88** | .78** | *.89* |

*Note.* $N = 146$; ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

studies. Table 4.6 shows that the communication style dimensions explained 59% of the variance of leader performance (multiple $R$ = .77, $p$ < .01), with preciseness, expressiveness, and verbal aggressiveness contributing to explained variance, and 69% of the variance of satisfaction with the leader (multiple $R$ = .83, $p$ < .01), with verbal aggressiveness, expressiveness, and preciseness contributing to explained variance.

Leader expressiveness and preciseness were positively related to perceived expertise, and expressiveness was positively and verbal aggressiveness was negatively related to liking (see Table 4.5). The multiple regressions showed that, controlling for the other communication styles, expressiveness (β = .35, $p$ < .01), preciseness (β = .40, $p$ < .01), and impression manipulativeness (β = -.17, $p$ < .05) predicted perceived expertise and expressiveness (β = .51, $p$ < .01) and verbal aggressiveness (β = -.50, $p$ < .01) predicted liking (see Table 4.6). Perceived expertise correlated with leader performance ($r$ = .63, $p$ < .01) and satisfaction with the leader, ($r$ = .51, $p$ < .01), see Table 4.5. The difference in correlation was significant ($z$ = 2.72, $p$ < .01), implying that – as in Study 1 – perceived expertise was more strongly related to leader performance than to satisfaction with the leader. Liking also correlated with both criteria ($r$'s .68 and .88 respectively, $p$'s < .01, see Table 4.5) and the difference was also significant ($z$ = -6.77, $p$ < .01), implying that – as in Study 2 – liking was more strongly related to satisfaction with the leader than to leader performance.

Table 4.6 *Results of the regression of leader performance, satisfaction with the leader, perceived expertise of the leader and liking the leader on communication style dimension (Study 3)*



| | Leader perf. | Satisf. with leader | Perc. Exper-tise | Liking | Leader perf. | Satisf. with leader |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Expressiveness | .34** | .37** | .35** | .51** | .10 | .06 |
| Preciseness | .43** | .23** | .40** | .07 | .32** | .21** |
| Verbal aggressiveness | -.26** | -.53** | -.05 | -.50** | -.09 | -.20** |
| Questioningness | -.01 | .01 | .02 | -.01 | -.01 | .01 |
| Emotionality | -.04 | .06 | .03 | .10 | .-.08 | .00 |
| Impr. manipulativeness | -.05 | -.10 | -.17* | -.12 | .02 | -.03 |
| Perceived expertise | | | | | .21** | -.06 |
| Liking | | | | | .32** | .66** |
| Multiple $R$ | .77** | .83** | .64** | .78** | .82** | .93** |
| $R^2$ | .59** | .69** | .41** | .60** | .67** | .86** |

*Note.* $N$ = 146; Coefficients are standardized beta's; ** $p$ < .01, * $p$ < .05.

Table 4.6 shows that perceived expertise predicted leader performance also when the communication styles and liking were included in a multiple regression (β = .21, $p < .01$), but it did not predict satisfaction with the leader (β = -.06, n.s.). Liking predicted leader performance (β = .32, $p < .01$) as well as satisfaction with the leader (β = .66, $p < .01$). In order to determine whether perceived expertise and liking were differentially related to each of the leader criteria, we used a General Linear Model. In this model the difference in the relations of perceived expertise with each of the criteria is contrasted to the difference in the relations of liking with each of them. The estimated difference of .61 was significant ($F_{(1, 137)} = 30.98$, $p < .01$), implying that perceived expertise was more strongly related to leader performance than to satisfaction with the leader and for liking the opposite held true. These findings provide support for Hypotheses 3a and 3b. However, note that the beta of liking in the prediction of leader performance was higher than that of perceived expertise.

We hypothesized that the relations of leader expressiveness and preciseness with leader criteria were mediated by perceived expertise and that the relations of leader expressiveness and verbal aggressiveness with leader criteria were mediated by liking. The bootstrapping macro (Hayes, 2011) allows multiple mediators. To predict each of the leader criteria, we therefore entered expressiveness, preciseness, and verbal aggressiveness as predictors, perceived expertise and liking as mediators, and the other three communication styles as covariates. We requested 10,000 bootstrap re-samples and used a 95% confidence interval. For leader performance we found indirect effects of expressiveness (β = .07, CI = .02 to .14) and preciseness (β = .08, CI = .02 to .17) through perceived expertise and we found indirect effects of expressiveness (β = .16, CI = .08 to .26) and verbal aggressiveness (β = -.16, CI = -.28 to -.06) through liking. For satisfaction with the leader we found no indirect effects through perceived expertise, but through liking we found indirect effects of expressiveness (β = .33, CI = .24 to .43) and verbal aggressiveness (β = -.33, CI = -.48 to -.18). Our mediation hypothesis 1 for perceived expertise was only supported for leader performance and our mediation hypothesis 2 for liking was fully supported. When perceived expertise, liking, and the communication styles were all included in a multiple regression, of the communication styles preciseness still had a direct relation with leader performance and preciseness and verbal aggressiveness had a direct relation with satisfaction with the leader (see Table 4.6).

## Conclusion

The aim of Study 3 was to replicate the results of Studies 1 and 2. The indirect effects through expertise that we found in Study 1 were replicated only for leader performance and we found the expected indirect effects through liking for both leader criteria, whereas in Study 2, we only found them for satisfaction with the leader. We found the expected difference in the relations of perceived expertise and liking with the leader criteria.

## General discussion

The main aim of our study was to investigate why leader communication styles are related to leader criteria. We assumed that leader communication styles have an effect on the personal influence bases perceived expertise and liking, which in turn have an effect on leader criteria. We hypothesized that perceived expertise mediates the relation of leader expressiveness and preciseness with leader criteria and that liking mediates the relation of leader expressiveness and verbal aggressiveness with those criteria. Additionally we aimed to examine the differential relations of perceived expertise and liking with leader criteria. Based on conceptual linkage, we hypothesized that perceived expertise is more strongly related to leader performance than to satisfaction with the leader, whereas liking is more strongly related to satisfaction with the leader than to leader performance. In three field studies we tested our hypotheses.

### Main findings

We have two main findings. First, we found that perceived expertise and liking explained part, but not all, of the relations between leader communication styles and leader criteria. Perceived expertise explained part of the relations of expressiveness and preciseness with leader performance, whereas liking explained part of the relations of expressiveness and verbal aggressiveness with satisfaction with the leader. The relations between expressiveness and the criteria were fully explained as no significant direct relation remained when both mediators were included in our analyses. For preciseness a direct relation with both criteria and for verbal aggressiveness a direct relation with satisfaction with the leader remained. In the terms of Raven (1992, 1999), expressive, precise, and verbally aggressive leader behaviors may be considered preparatory or stage-setting devices: in order for a leader to be able to effectively use an influence-base, its presence has to be (made) clear to the subordinate. This may be achieved by communicating in a specific way.



Our second main finding was that perceived expertise and liking were differentially related to each leader criterion, even though in all three studies the two criteria were strongly correlated. Perceived expertise was more strongly related to leader performance than to satisfaction with the leader, whereas for liking the opposite was true. These findings seem to confirm the existence of two different pathways to leader criteria; a cognitive and an affective one. In the literature, two different ways are distinguished for people to “know” things, i.e., perceive reality, make attributions, and evaluate situations or behavior (Epstein, 1994). Various names have been used to describe these two different processing modes, but basically the distinction is between a rational, deliberate, or systematic way (a cognitive pathway) and an emotional, intuitive, or heuristic way (an affective pathway). Our assumption was that constructs by their nature may be more related to either cognitions or affect. As the information processing modes are assumed to

be interlinked, both may operate simultaneously, however, one of them may be more dominant (Epstein, 1994; Forgas, 2008; Smith & DeCoster, 2000).

Conceptually, both perceived expertise and performance may be considered cognitive constructs. Assessing performance is generally a process of rationally evaluating relatively tangible results (Hiller et al., 2010). Perceived expertise is the assumption that a person has more relevant knowledge than others and that generally his/her advice can be relied on (Feng & MacGeorge, 2010; Hunter et al., 2011; Littlepage et al., 1995). We measured perceived expertise, which explains why we expected mediation in our hypothesized direction. We realize that for 'real' or objective expertise the reverse may be true, i.e., it may impact the way someone communicates. Nevertheless, we believe real expertise is not necessarily related to certain communication styles: nearly everyone knows someone who indisputably is an expert in a certain field and as such has influence, but who is a poor communicator, e.g., the anecdotal computer nerd. However, leader expressiveness and preciseness represent behaviors that may well provide cues that trigger the assumption that the leader is an expert, whether or not this is true (Yukl, 2010). For instance, we can envision that expertise is 'logically' inferred by subordinates when a leader talks a lot (as indeed found by Littlepage et al., 1995) and demonstrates social ease – elements of expressiveness – or discusses a topic clearly, concisely, and well-thought through – elements of preciseness –. Rational processing of the information provided by the leader – and thus cognitions – therefore seem to underlie the pathway from communication styles to leader performance through perceived expertise.

On the other hand, emotions seem to underlie the pathway from communication styles to satisfaction through liking. Liking and satisfaction are affective constructs. Although liking is sometimes treated as a form of rater bias (e.g., Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff , 2003), it is a construct with substantive content and in several studies it is included as a separate, often mediating, variable (e.g., Brown & Keeping, 2005; Engle & Lord, 1997), like in our study. Moreover, Varma & Pichler (2007) found that supervisors were well able to separate liking from performance when evaluating subordinates, which supports our approach to treat liking as a mediating variable. The highly social aspect of expressiveness may make subordinates feel at ease with their leader and enjoy his/her company, thus triggering liking, whereas leader verbal aggressiveness is likely to arouse fear, anger, and other unpleasant feelings in subordinates, thus triggering disliking.

In Study 3, direct relations of preciseness and verbal aggressiveness with (one of the) criteria existed also when all study variables were included in the regression analyses. It is probably impossible to completely disregard communication content when assessing the communicative behavior of someone you work with. If a leader is perceived to communicate very precisely, he/she probably not only communicates in a well-structured, to-the-point, and well-thought-through way, but he/she may also communicate a sensible message, leading to strong performance results and satisfied subordinates. If a leader is

perceived to communicate in a very verbally aggressive way, he/she probably truly attacks subordinates personally, leading to strongly dissatisfied subordinates.

Notwithstanding the differential relations of perceived expertise and liking with the leader criteria that we used, liking was a moderately strong predictor for leader performance in the studies in which it was included (Studies 2 and 3). In Study 3 it was even a stronger predictor than perceived expertise. Recently, Schaubroeck, Lam, and Peng (2011) found two pathways to team performance. One was a cognitive pathway from transformational leadership through cognition-based trust and the other an affective pathway from servant leadership, which was partly indirect through affect-based trust, but mostly direct. In a similar vein, in the health communication literature, Keer, Van den Putte, and Neijens (2010) found an indirect cognitive pathway to behavioral intention, whereas the affective pathway was mainly direct. Our finding that the affective construct liking is not only indirectly, but also directly related to leader criteria from two different domains (effectiveness versus attitude) is in line with the findings of these studies.

**Limitations**

One of the limitations of our study is that we did not measure real expertise. Real expertise may be defined as having specialized knowledge about a certain domain and being able to act upon it (Van Winkelen & McDermott, 2010). More insight in the role of real expertise may help us understand if indeed for some leaders (those with real expertise) communicative behavior is of less importance. However, measuring real expertise is hard. Haerem and Rau (2007) used a combination of self-reported variables and experience-related facts. Self-reports may be biased, either because people are not aware of their specialized knowledge as they take it for granted, or because people overrate their own expertise. Relevant facts may differ depending on the knowledge domain (Van Winkelen & McDermott, 2010). As leaders work in all kinds of environment, adequately operationalizing real expertise may therefore prove problematic.

On theoretical grounds we assumed causal relationships between communication styles, perceived expertise or liking, and leader criteria. However, it is also conceivable that outcomes impact perceived behavior or leader influence bases (Yorges, Weiss, & Strickland, 1999). Moreover, the way a leader communicates with a subordinate may be impacted by that subordinate's actions and reactions (Greene, 1975; Sims & Manz, 1984), particularly over time (Shamir, 2011). Further experimental or longitudinal research is therefore required to investigate the direction of the relationships in our model.

Another limitation may be that the same source is used for rating predictors and criteria. Scholars then often attribute relatively strong relations to common method variance (CMV, Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, we considered it more relevant to assess how important others rate the leader's communicative behavior than how leaders themselves *think* that they communicate (Hogan, 2005). As subordinates form the team that has to reach certain goals with the leader, they seem the most appropriate source. Furthermore, one may argue that subordinate ratings of leader behavior are the most

appropriate source as subordinates actually rate the target in his/her role as leader, whereas superiors rate their subordinate and peers their equal (Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994). As far as the criteria are concerned, clearly subordinates are the unique source for rating their own satisfaction. To correct for CMV, several statistical techniques have been proposed that may generate more 'true' (i.e., weaker) relations. However, Richardson, Simmering, and Sturman (2009) used simulated data to test the most frequently used techniques to detect and correct CMV. In their conclusion they advise against using any of the techniques to correct potential CMV as most were insufficiently reliable in detecting CMV and none were sufficiently reliable in generating better estimates of true relationships.

## Theoretical and practical implications

In the present study we have investigated why leader communication styles are related to leader criteria. We argued that leader expressiveness, preciseness, and verbal aggressiveness have an effect on two important influence bases, which in turn have an effect on leader criteria. Our findings provided support for this argument, however, further theorizing and research is required to better understand the reason why direct relations between communication styles and criteria also existed when perceived expertise and liking were included in the analyses.

For the leadership practice, insight in the relations between leader communication styles and leader criteria may help to determine general and individual leader development programs. Understanding the mediating role of perceived expertise and liking helps to interpret actual outcomes and is thus useful in better guiding leader development. By assessing a (potential) leader's current level of expressiveness, preciseness, and verbal aggressiveness, selection processes may be influenced and development issues may be identified. The results of our study may furthermore provide the basis for leader communication trainings, although we still need to investigate whether communication styles can be 'learned'. In various studies, communication trainings were found to be successful, particularly in health care related environments (e.g., McGilton, Boscart, Fox, Sidani, Rochon, & Sorin-Peters, 2009; Fukui, Ogawa, Ohtsuka, & Fukui, 2008; Sullivan, Ellison, Quantance, Arnold, & Godrey, 2009; Visser & Wysmans, 2010). For leadership, behavioral trainings were found to be successful, e.g., Barling, Weber, and Kelloway (1996) demonstrated that transformational leadership behavior can be learned and DeChurch and Marks (2006) that functional and coordinating leader behavior can be learned. Based on the results of our study, depending on the outcome of interest, leader communication trainings should be developed and tested, focused on expressiveness, preciseness, and/or (low) verbal aggressiveness.

## Conclusion

The results of our study suggest that communication styles are highly relevant for leaders, as they predict leader criteria directly as well as indirectly, through the personal

influence bases perceived expertise and liking. We suggested that a cognitive and an affective pathway of indirect effects may be discerned. Our findings open up new avenues for theoretical expansion and practical use of leader communication research.