

The Application of Regulatory Focus in Leadership: A Paradox Perspective

Authors: Zhang Hongyu, Li Wen, Lang Yi, Lang Yi

Date: 2018-11-04T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

According to regulatory focus theory, individuals exhibit two regulatory foci in the process of goal pursuit and action strategy selection: individuals with a promotion regulatory focus aim to maximize gains and tend to adopt an approach-oriented strategy to achieve goals, whereas individuals with a prevention regulatory focus aim to minimize losses and tend to adopt an avoidance-oriented strategy. In recent years, regulatory focus theory has been extensively applied in leadership research; however, studies investigating the relationship between the two regulatory foci and their combined effects remain scarce. Building upon a review of the current state of regulatory focus research in the leadership domain, this article identifies the necessity and feasibility of a paradox perspective and outlines future research directions grounded in paradox theory.

Full Text

Regulatory Focus in Leadership Research: A Paradox Perspective

Hongyu Zhang¹, Wen Li¹, Yi Lang²

¹Business School, Central University of Finance and Economics, Beijing 100081, China

²International Business School, Beijing Foreign Studies University, Beijing 100089, China

Abstract

Regulatory focus theory posits that individuals possess two distinct motivational orientations when pursuing goals and selecting action strategies: promotion focus and prevention focus. Individuals with a promotion focus aim to maximize gains and tend to adopt an “approach” strategy, whereas those with a prevention focus aim to minimize losses and prefer an “avoidance” strategy. While regulatory focus theory has been widely applied in leadership research, studies examining

the relationship between these two foci and their joint effects remain scarce. This paper reviews the current state of regulatory focus research in leadership, highlights the necessity and feasibility of adopting a paradox perspective, and proposes future research directions grounded in paradox theory.

Keywords: regulatory focus; leadership; paradox theory

1. Introduction

Individuals regulate and manage their emotions, cognitions, and behaviors when pursuing goals (Johnson, Chang, & Lord, 2006). Regulatory focus theory distinguishes between two orientations: promotion focus and prevention focus (Higgins, 1997). Promotion focus reflects the need to pursue one's ideal self, growth, and self-actualization. Individuals high in promotion focus are sensitive to "gains" versus "non-gains," willing to take risks to approach ideal states (Higgins & Spiegel, 2004). Prevention focus reflects the need to pursue one's ought self, security, and stability (Higgins, 1997). Individuals high in prevention focus are sensitive to "losses" versus "non-losses" (Higgins, Roney, Crowe, & Hymes, 1994), often achieving security by adhering to rules and conventions (Higgins & Spiegel, 2004).

Regulatory focus is considered a motivation-based individual trait that, compared to other traits, more directly emphasizes action strategies and their impact on goal attainment, thus exerting more direct influence on behavior (Gamache, McNamara, Mannor, & Johnson, 2015). Consequently, it has become a hot topic in organizational management research. Management scholars have borrowed this psychological concept to explain phenomena such as individual information processing, risk-taking propensity, creativity, helping behavior (Mao, 2017), and employee followership (Xu, 2018). In leadership research particularly, regulatory focus has been shown to influence leadership styles (Hamstra, Sassenberg, & Van Yperen, 2014; Kark & Van Dijk, 2007), strategic decision-making (Adomako, Opoku, & Frimpong, 2017; Gamache et al., 2015), leader-follower relationships (Johnson, Lin et al., 2017), and team climate and performance (Li & Shang, 2011).

However, most studies examine promotion or prevention focus in isolation, rarely investigating their joint effects. In reality, these two tendencies are not mutually exclusive. Individuals can pursue higher goals and greater achievements while simultaneously attending to risk avoidance and error prevention—what might be termed "prudent exploration." When originally proposing regulatory focus theory, Higgins (1997, 1998) noted that the two foci are independent constructs, not opposite ends of a single continuum. A recent meta-analysis by Gorman et al. (2012) also found a weak correlation between the two foci, supporting their independence. Indeed, organizational employees can optimize the combination of promotion and prevention foci, and possessing both may enable more effective responses to varying environmental or task demands (Wallace & Chen, 2006). Future research should identify coexistence patterns or "profiles" of the two

regulatory foci rather than merging them into a single trait (Wallace & Chen, 2006). This paper adopts paradox theory and uses leadership research as an example to lay groundwork for studying the joint effects of the two foci. Though promotion and prevention foci appear to be opposing individual orientations, they are interrelated and mutually influential (Gorman et al., 2012). Examining their joint effects through a paradox framework holds significant theoretical and practical value for advancing regulatory focus theory.

The competing demands of different stakeholders lead to conflicting strategies and objectives (Smith & Lewis, 2011). These seemingly contradictory elements are interrelated and interactive (Smith, 2014), constituting paradoxes. Managers and employees face the challenge of coping with paradox, which has become the “new normal” in most organizations (Smith, 2014). Successful organizations exhibit ambidexterity, balancing contradictory demands and attending to seemingly conflicting needs (Lewis, 2000). Accordingly, leaders and employees in these organizations need the capacity to manage tension, handle contradictory requirements (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004), and achieve dynamic equilibrium (Smith, 2014). Current research on managing paradox has adopted multiple perspectives, such as organizational structure (Duncan, 1976; Gaim & Wåhlin, 2016) and leader values, cognitive and behavioral complexity (Boal & Hooijberg, 2000; Johnson, 2016), but almost none from the perspective of leader or team motivation. Thus, this paper also extends paradox theory.

This paper explores how to conduct regulatory focus research in leadership from a paradox perspective by examining: (1) the opposition between the two regulatory foci—identifying “opposition” as the first key characteristic of paradox from conceptual, mechanistic, and contextual perspectives; (2) the possibility of coexistence—identifying “coexistence” as the second key characteristic and outlining strategies and forms of coexistence; (3) antecedents of coexistence—examining how leaders develop paradoxical regulatory focus from individual cognition, organizational structure, environment, and culture; and (4) consequences of coexistence—proposing that paradoxical regulatory focus can enhance managerial flexibility, crisis management capability, and innovation. Overall, this paper demonstrates the importance and feasibility of studying regulatory focus from a paradox perspective and proposes novel and viable directions for future research.

2.1 The Conceptualization of Regulatory Focus

Regulatory focus theory originated from hedonic principle, proposing that individuals have two distinct self-regulatory systems when approaching pleasure and avoiding pain: promotion focus and prevention focus (Higgins, 1997). Promotion focus reflects the need for growth and self-actualization, emphasizing “what will I gain if the goal is achieved,” whereas prevention focus reflects the need for security and stability, emphasizing “what will I lose if the goal is not achieved.” Regulatory focus exists in two states: chronic regulatory focus and situational regulatory focus. Chronic regulatory focus represents a relatively

stable individual difference primarily shaped by early life experiences (Keller & Bless, 2006) and is typically measured using self-report scales, including general regulatory focus scales (Higgins et al., 2001; Lockwood, Jordan, & Kunda, 2002) and work-specific scales (Neubert, Kacmar, Carlson, Chonko, & Roberts, 2008). Situational regulatory focus represents a relatively temporary state activated by contextual cues that can change with the environment (Higgins, 2001; Fransen & ter Hoeven, 2013) and is typically manipulated experimentally through autobiographical memory tasks, task framing, and self-instruction types (e.g., Jin, Wang, & Dong, 2016; Wang, Wang, Liu, & Dong, 2017; Zheng, Wang, Fang, & Li, 2015).

2.2 Applications of Regulatory Focus in Leadership: Review of Existing Theoretical Perspectives

The dual characteristics of chronic stability and situational malleability have made regulatory focus a popular topic in organizational management research (Cao & Xu, 2017; Mao, 2017). In leadership research, studies have found that leaders with different regulatory foci exhibit distinct leadership styles and behaviors, and that regulatory focus interacts with context to influence leadership effectiveness.

First, based on regulatory focus theory, leaders with different foci display different leadership styles and behaviors. Leaders high in promotion focus tend to encourage subordinates to seek development, advancement, and change, manifesting as charismatic or transformational leadership. Leaders high in prevention focus tend to remind subordinates to attend to standards and requirements, seeking certainty and stability, thus displaying transactional leadership (Hamstra, Sassenberg et al., 2014; Kark & Van Dijk, 2007). Regarding leadership behavior, because high promotion-focus individuals engage in higher-level abstract information processing and are more sensitive to future success and gains, promotion-focused leaders tend to engage in exploration activities (Ahmadi, Khanagha, Berchicci & Jansen, 2017; Tuncdogan, Van Den Bosch, & Volberda, 2015), are more likely to undertake acquisitions, and conduct larger-scale acquisitions (Das & Kumar, 2011; Gamache et al., 2015). High prevention-focus individuals, being more sensitive to future failures and losses, tend to engage in exploitation activities using existing capabilities (Ahmadi et al., 2017; Tuncdogan et al., 2015) and evaluate potential acquisitions more cautiously, which improves decision quality and results in fewer and smaller acquisitions (Gada, Goyal, & Popli, 2018; Gamache et al., 2015).

Second, based on regulatory fit theory, context interacts with leaders' regulatory focus to influence effectiveness. Regulatory fit theory suggests that when situational cues match an individual's regulatory focus, it creates a sense of rightness and importance about one's behavior, generating "value from fit," which further enhances motivation, work attitudes, and performance (Simmons, Carr, Hsu, & Shu, 2016). For instance, Ahmadi et al. (2017) found that in organizational contexts emphasizing advancement and growth opportunities, promotion-focused

leaders experience fit and engage in more exploration activities, whereas in contexts emphasizing responsibility and potential losses, prevention-focused leaders experience fit and engage in less exploration. Moreover, leaders' language and behavior can serve as contextual cues that interact with followers' regulatory focus to influence effectiveness. Li and Shang (2011) noted that leaders' linguistic framing can create regulatory fit with followers' different foci, eliciting different employee attitudes. Lei and colleagues (Lei, Shan, Su, & Yang, 2015) found that humble leadership behaviors that appreciate others activate approach strategies matching followers' promotion focus, while humble leaders' willingness to admit mistakes creates tolerance for errors, facilitating avoidance strategies that match followers' prevention focus. They discovered that followers' prevention focus strengthens the effect of humble leadership on psychological safety, while followers' promotion focus strengthens its effect on self-efficacy. Stam, Van Knippenberg, and Wisse (2010) found that when visionary leaders describe future visions using positive, idealistic promotion-focused appeals, followers high in promotion focus show higher performance; conversely, when using prevention-focused appeals emphasizing avoidance of negative outcomes, followers high in prevention focus perform better.

2.3 Applications of Regulatory Focus in Leadership: Proposing a Paradox Perspective

Our review reveals that scholars have extensively explored the mechanisms and contexts of leaders' regulatory focus. Although some contingency research has examined how the two foci operate differently across contexts—emphasizing the positive effects of regulatory fit, i.e., which focus yields more positive outcomes under what circumstances (e.g., Ahmadi et al., 2017; Stam et al., 2010)—most studies treat the two foci separately, rarely investigating their coexistence.

In reality, however, leaders must fulfill different managerial roles and face complex situations. For example, leaders simultaneously serve as change agents and behavior monitors (Bass, 1985). The “change agent” role requires leaders to establish and communicate organizational vision, inspire employee motivation, guide them toward higher expectations, and encourage novel perspectives and methods (Kark, Dijk, & Vashdi, 2018; Saeidipour, Kazemi, & Mohamadabadi, 2016). The “behavior monitor” role requires leaders to clarify roles, set goals, supervise behavior through rewards and punishments, and prevent violations of existing requirements and norms (Kark et al., 2018; Tung, 2016). Promotion-focused leaders encourage experimentation and growth, facilitating the change agent role but potentially sacrificing consistency. Prevention-focused leaders emphasize rule compliance and stability, facilitating the behavior monitor role and ensuring consistency but potentially inhibiting innovation and creating organizational inertia. Moreover, increasing environmental complexity and dynamism expose leaders to competing demands. For instance, leaders of start-ups must articulate vision with passion and tolerate organizational chaos (Freeman & Siegfried, 2015), whereas in mature organizations, questioning the status quo

may be seen as threatening stability (Freeman & Siegfried, 2015). Promotion-focused leaders engage in more exploration and acquisitions (Ahmadi et al., 2017; Gamache et al., 2015), benefiting start-up growth but potentially undermining stability. Prevention-focused leaders favor exploitation and cautious risk assessment (Ahmadi et al., 2017; Gamache et al., 2015), maintaining stability but potentially inhibiting progress.

Thus, focusing exclusively on either regulatory focus cannot achieve managerial effectiveness. Although promotion and prevention foci appear to be opposing motivations, examining their coexistence from a paradox perspective can better help leaders improve effectiveness. Recent research indirectly supports this view. For example, based on complementary strengths theory, Memmert et al. (2015) found that teams with both high promotion-focus and high prevention-focus members performed better on divisible tasks. Building on this, we explore regulatory focus applications in leadership through a paradox lens.

3.1 Paradox Perspective

“Paradox” refers to simultaneously and persistently existing contradictory yet interdependent elements (Smith & Lewis, 2011), primarily derived from tension (Lewis, 2000). Tension is inherent and ubiquitous in organizations, especially in increasingly interconnected and dynamic environments (Lewis & Smith, 2014). Organizational management research identifies four main types of paradoxes: learning paradoxes, organizing paradoxes, belonging paradoxes, and performing paradoxes (Smith & Lewis, 2011). Learning paradoxes arise from tensions between old and new knowledge; organizing paradoxes stem from control-flexibility tensions; belonging paradoxes emerge from self-other tensions; and performing paradoxes result from competing demands of multiple stakeholders.

Humans have a strong preference for cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral consistency, experiencing anxiety when confronted with inconsistency or opposition (Schneider, 1990). Consequently, traditional tension research has adopted a contingency theory perspective, emphasizing the interaction between management variables and context (Qiu, Donaldson, & Luo, 2012). This approach treats tension as a problem to be solved, using “if-then” logic to select the most contextually appropriate alternative (Lewis & Smith, 2014). While reducing frustration and anxiety in the short term and improving performance, this consistency-seeking approach that emphasizes one side of a contradiction creates organizational inertia, pressures the opposing side, and expands underlying tensions, ultimately forming a downward spiral (Smith & Lewis, 2011) that undermines long-term performance. Scholars have therefore called for a paradox perspective based on “both/and” thinking to actively coordinate persistent tensions and encourage learning and discovery of new possibilities (Lewis, 2000; Smith, Lewis, & Tushman, 2016). The two core elements of the paradox perspective are “opposition” and “coexistence.” This paper examines how promotion and prevention foci can be both opposing and coexisting.

3.2.1 Conceptual Opposition

Promotion and prevention foci are two distinct self-regulatory systems in the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain (Higgins, 1997). Promotion focus sensitizes individuals to achieving positive outcomes, while prevention focus sensitizes them to avoiding negative outcomes. Specifically, they exhibit opposition across multiple dimensions including need hierarchy, core concerns, desired goal states, self-guides, outcome sensitivity, goal orientation, worry focus, and emotional responses .

** Comparison of Promotion Focus and Prevention Focus**

Dimension	Promotion Focus	Prevention Focus
Core Concern	Growth and self-actualization needs	Security and stability needs
Desired Goal State	“What will I gain?”	“What will I lose?”
Self-Guide	Ideal self	Ought self
Outcome Sensitivity	“Gains” vs. “non-gains”	“Losses” vs. “non-losses”
Goal Orientation	Maximize gains	Maximize non-losses
Worry Focus	From elation to dejection	From agitation to quiescence

3.2.2 Opposing Mechanisms

The distinct characteristics of promotion and prevention foci create opposing mechanisms and effects. Promotion focus motivates individuals to adopt an “approach” strategy, emphasizing growth and advancement (Higgins, 1997), pursuing ideal states through exploration, experimentation, and innovation (Freytas, Liberman, Salovey, & Higgins, 2002) to increase success likelihood (Tuan Pham & Chang, 2010). In leadership, promotion-focused leaders tend to engage in exploration activities (Ahmadi et al., 2017), emphasize decision efficiency (Gemache et al., 2015), and undertake more and larger acquisitions (Das & Kumar, 2011; Gamache et al., 2015). They also inspire subordinates to change, break through, and pursue new visions, generating transformational leadership behaviors (Hamstra, Sassenberg et al., 2014; Kark & Van Dijk, 2007). This correspondingly activates followers’ promotion focus, enhancing affective commitment (Delegach, Kark, Katz-Navon, & Van Dijk, 2017), creativity (Shang & Li, 2015), reducing deviance (Xu, Du, & Wang, 2014), increasing knowledge sharing (Li, Liu, Shang, & Xi, 2014), and earning more positive leadership evaluations from high promotion-focus followers (Hamstra, Van Yperen, Wisse, & Sassenberg, 2014).

Prevention focus motivates individuals to adopt an “avoidance” strategy, emphasizing rules and responsibilities (Higgins, 1997), achieving “ought” states by emphasizing duties and risk avoidance (Kark & Van Dijk, 2007). In leadership,

prevention-focused leaders tend to engage in exploitation activities (Ahmadi et al., 2017), emphasize decision quality (Gamache et al., 2015), and make fewer and smaller acquisitions (Gamache et al., 2015). They also impose strict requirements on subordinates, use negative feedback and punishment to enforce rule compliance, set clear behavioral standards, and monitor and correct subordinate behavior and performance, exhibiting transactional leadership's management-by-exception and contingent punishment (Johnson, King et al., 2017). This correspondingly activates followers' prevention focus, enhancing normative commitment (Delegach et al., 2017), reducing creativity (Shang & Li, 2015), deviance (Xu et al., 2014), and knowledge sharing (Li et al., 2014). Thus, while both foci serve individual needs, they represent different goal and behavioral tendencies that produce opposing effects on leadership behavior, decision-making, and influence on followers.

3.2.3 Opposing Activation Contexts

The opposition between promotion and prevention foci also manifests in the contexts that activate them. For leaders, open and dynamic organizational contexts activate promotion focus (e.g., dynamic, organic organizational features), while conservative and stable contexts activate prevention focus (e.g., bureaucratic structures emphasizing rules, responsibilities, and stability) (Kark & Van Dijk, 2007). For followers, leaders constitute an important contextual factor. Li et al. (2014) found that when leaders provide positive feedback or use promotion-focused language emphasizing aspirations, achievements, and development, they activate followers' promotion focus. When leaders provide negative feedback emphasizing responsibilities, obligations, and duties, they activate followers' prevention focus. Generally, when leaders display cues emphasizing cultivation, ideal state achievement, and potential gains, they activate followers' promotion focus (Higgins, 1997, 1998), prompting pursuit of "ideal" states and sensitivity to gains versus non-gains, leading to increased innovative and helping behaviors (Neubert et al., 2008). When leaders display cues emphasizing security needs, duty fulfillment, and potential losses, they activate followers' prevention focus (Higgins, 1997, 1998), prompting pursuit of "ought" states and sensitivity to losses versus non-losses, resulting in increased safety behaviors and reduced deviance (Neubert et al., 2008) [Figure 1: see original paper].

[Figure 1: see original paper] Mechanisms and Activation Contexts of Leader Regulatory Focus

3.3.1 Possibility of Coexistence

Although most empirical research examines promotion and prevention foci separately, scholars acknowledged their coexistence when originally proposing the concept (Higgins, 1997, 1998). They viewed the two foci as orthogonal self-regulatory systems that always coexist, with one becoming dominant depending on contextual activation (Crowe & Higgins, 1997; Higgins et al., 1994).

The primary challenge to applying a paradox perspective at the individual level is the traditional psychological view that individuals strongly prefer consistency (Heine & Buchtel, 2009). In Western societies particularly, tension can cause cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), leading individuals to resolve dissonance by retaining only one side of the tension. However, indirect evidence supporting a paradox perspective has emerged. For instance, negotiators using win-win strategies simultaneously exhibit self-interested and other-interested motivations (Nauta, De Dreu, & Van Der Vaart, 2002). By this logic, promotion and prevention foci, though opposite in content, should also be able to coexist. Recent cognitive dissonance research provides further evidence: inconsistency does not always cause dissonance or discomfort. Individuals may not perceive inconsistency, or may not experience dissonance even when aware of it, especially when a positive self-image is less important or inconsistency offers potential benefits (Cooper, 2007). Empirical research also shows that the same leadership behavior can simultaneously elevate both promotion and prevention moral regulatory foci (Xu et al., 2014).

Most empirical results show promotion and prevention foci are statistically unrelated (e.g., Neubert et al., 2008) or weakly positively correlated (e.g., Ahmadi et al., 2017). Gorman et al.'s (2012) meta-analysis of 11,765 samples found a correlation of only 0.09 between the two foci. Theoretically and empirically, therefore, promotion and prevention foci are independent and orthogonal, making it both possible and necessary to examine their joint effects from a paradox perspective (Lanaj, Chang, & Johnson, 2012).

** Summary of Empirical Results on Promotion-Prevention Focus Correlations**

Scale	Study	Correlation
Regulatory Focus at Work Scale (Wallace & Chen, 2006)	Wallace & Chen, 2006	0.53**
	Li et al., 2014	0.25*
Work Regulatory Focus Scale (Neubert et al., 2008)	Shin, Kim, Choi, & Lee, 2016	0.37**
	Ahmadi et al., 2017	0.35**
	Chen, Wen & Ye, 2017	-
	Park, Kim, & Sung, 2017	-

Scale	Study	Correlation
Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (Higgins et al., 2001)	Hamstra, Van Yperen et al., 2014	-
General Regulatory Focus Scale (Lockwood et al., 2002)	Kammerlander, Burger, Fust, & Fueglistaller, 2015	-
	De Jong & De Goede, 2015	-
	Gamache et al., 2015	-
	Sacramento, Fay & West, 2013	-
	Schuh et al., 2016	-

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

3.3.2 Strategies for Coexistence

The core challenge in applying a paradox perspective to regulatory focus research is understanding how promotion and prevention foci can coexist—foundational for examining their joint antecedents and consequences. Early paradox research proposed four strategies for managing opposing forces: (1) acceptance—maintaining relative independence and accepting differences; (2) spatial separation—physically separating opposing forces (e.g., in different departments); (3) temporal separation—separating forces over time, with one dominating at any given moment; and (4) synthesis—integrating opposing forces (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989). Later scholars proposed additional strategies, such as contextual ambidexterity—building systems that allow individuals to autonomously allocate time to meet different needs (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004)—and domain separation—separating forces by areas of expertise (Lavie & Rosenkopf, 2006).

Overall, organizations can use two broad strategies for coexistence of opposing forces: separation and connecting (Smith et al., 2016), also termed differentiation and integration (Smith, 2014). Differentiation/separation emphasizes distinguishing between contradictory elements, recognizing their unique strengths and weaknesses, assigning domain-specific roles, and seeking information independently. Integration/connecting emphasizes identifying linkages between opposing forces to create synergy (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Smith & Tushman, 2005), through measures such as assigning integrative roles, emphasizing shared goals, and collaborative problem-solving.

Applying these strategies to regulatory focus coexistence in leadership yields two

approaches. The first is separation, applicable to situational regulatory focus: only one focus is activated in a single time-space, but both coexist across multiple time-spaces (Lewis & Smith, 2014). Separation-based coexistence includes: (1) cognitive separation—similar to acceptance, where leaders can clearly distinguish the two foci, recognize their necessity for effectiveness, and self-explain to mitigate potential cognitive dissonance; (2) temporal separation—leaders emphasize different foci at different stages; and (3) contextual separation—leaders adopt different foci with different subordinates or in different situations. Like contingency approaches, separation allows the two systems to operate independently according to context, but over time enables coexistence and creates new value by enhancing adaptive capacity.

The second strategy is connecting, applicable to chronic regulatory focus: both foci exist simultaneously within a single time-space through innovative integration. Unlike separation, connecting does not cognitively isolate the foci but links them into a new motivational type. For example, integrating “charging ahead” (promotion) and “being cautious” (prevention) creates a “prudent advancement” motivation. At any point, the individual or team possesses both foci regardless of context—unlike separation strategies of “safe-in-safety” or “danger-in-danger,” connecting emphasizes “safe-in-safety-and-danger” and “danger-in-danger-and-safety.” Connecting-based coexistence is more difficult to achieve but has significant practical implications, as leaders often must simultaneously fulfill multiple roles, such as balancing stakeholder demands during decision-making.

3.3.3 Forms of Coexistence

Coexistence of promotion and prevention foci can occur at the individual level (within a single leader) or team level (within a leadership team). At the individual level through separation, leaders need high flexibility to switch between foci. During rapid growth, leaders emphasize promotion focus to explore opportunities and resources, adjusting strategies and pursuing reforms to seize opportunities. During crises, leaders emphasize prevention focus to attend to losses and risks, emphasizing responsibilities and rules to enhance safety consciousness (Freitas et al., 2002; Wallace & Chen, 2006). Leaders also need flexibility to adapt to different subordinates’ needs and goal orientations.

At the individual level through connecting, leaders can be categorized into four types [Figure 2: see original paper]: (1) “Seeking achievement without fearing failure” —strong promotion only, with weak risk and responsibility awareness, focusing on positive outcomes while ignoring negative consequences; (2) “Avoiding failure without seeking achievement” —strong prevention only, characterized by “the less trouble the better,” highly sensitive to potential failures, preferring inaction to avoid mistakes; (3) “Prudent explorer” —strong in both foci, pursuing success while maintaining risk and responsibility awareness, sensitive to error prevention but not paralyzed by it; and (4) “Passive laissez-faire” —weak in both foci, exerting minimal influence, similar to laissez-faire leadership.

[Figure 2: see original paper] Forms of Leader Regulatory Focus from a Paradox Perspective

Leadership can be enacted not only by individuals but also by teams. With the rise of shared leadership (Chiu, Owens, & Tesluk, 2016) and practices like Lenovo's "leadership teams," team-based leadership has become important for scholars and practitioners. At the team level, coexistence can occur naturally through separation, as teams comprise members with different foci. Based on division of labor and motivational diversity, leaders can achieve complementarity through other team members or subordinates, creating team-level coexistence. For example, a high promotion-focus leader and high prevention-focus colleagues together achieve both foci at the management team level. However, connecting-based coexistence at the team level is more challenging. Research on organizational ambidexterity suggests that achieving ambidexterity in diverse structures requires behavioral integration (Halevi, Carmeli, & Brueller, 2015), mutual trust (García-Granero, Fernández-Mesa, Jansen, & Vega-Jurado, 2015), and transactive memory systems (Heavey & Simsek, 2017).

4.1 Future Research on Antecedents: A Leadership Perspective

Not all individuals can integrate tensions to form paradoxes in all situations. Drawing from paradox literature, we propose four levels of factors that may enable leaders to integrate promotion-prevention tension: individual cognition, organizational structure, external environment, and culture.

As discussed, situational regulatory focus integration relies on separation strategies and thus depends primarily on structural, environmental, and cultural factors. However, separation assumes individuals do not experience strong dissonance from coexisting opposing motivations, so individual cognition also matters. Chronic regulatory focus integration relies on connecting strategies and thus depends primarily on individual cognitive characteristics, though contextual factors can push individuals toward particular cognitive approaches.

At the individual level, paradox relates to cognition. Individuals skilled in paradoxical thinking (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008), holistic thinking (Zhang, Waldman, Han, & Li, 2015), multilevel thinking (Khazanchi, Lewis, & Boyer, 2007), and integrative complexity (Suedfeld, Tetlock, & Streufert, 1992) are less aware of inconsistency and experience less dissonance. They excel at identifying unique advantages from inconsistency and tolerating motivational conflicts. Leaders with these cognitive traits are more likely to develop promotion-prevention paradox. Additionally, leaders adept at ironic humor may also more easily develop this paradox (Hatch, 1997).

At the contextual level, paradox relates to structure, environment, and culture. Team diversity increases leaders' likelihood of thinking and acting from an integrative paradox perspective (Beckman, 2006), making coexistence more probable. When structures connect opposing forces, paradox is more likely to

form (Schad, Lewis, Raisch, & Smith, 2016). Leaders can create integration through role and procedural designs, such as appointing a manager to bridge “promotion-focus” (e.g., R&D) and “prevention-focus” (e.g., quality control) domains.

External environments characterized by plurality, change, and scarcity increase leaders’ adoption of paradox perspectives (Smith & Lewis, 2011): plurality highlights competing demands; change requires balancing old and new; scarcity necessitates achieving multiple goals with limited resources. Research also shows that significant performance decline (Tushman, O’ Reilly, Fenollosa, Kleinbaum, & McGrath, 2007) and highly competitive, dynamic environments (Teece, 2006) facilitate paradoxical thinking. These contextual antecedents of general paradox likely apply to promotion-prevention paradox.

Paradox formation also relates to culture. Cross-cultural research shows Eastern leaders are more likely to adopt paradox perspectives than Western leaders because they have less need for stable self-concepts, higher tolerance for opposites, and dialectical self-worldviews (Spencer-Rodgers, Peng, Wang, & Hou, 2004)—believing that phenomena are contradictory yet interconnected and constantly changing (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). Accordingly, Eastern leaders should more easily develop promotion-prevention paradox.

Most paradox antecedent research remains theoretical, with limited empirical work, partly due to methodological constraints. Current paradox measurement typically involves measuring both opposing factors and using their interaction term (Schad et al., 2016). While useful for examining outcomes—showing how one focus operates at high versus low levels of the other—this multiplicative approach is meaningless for studying antecedents. Recently, person-centered approaches like Latent Profile Analysis (Vermunt & Magidson, 2002)—a statistical tool for building typologies from observed variables—offer new possibilities. This method can identify the four leader types shown in [Figure 2: see original paper], enabling examination of their distinct antecedents.

4.2 Future Research on Consequences: A Leadership Perspective

Research on paradox consequences is more developed than antecedent research. While some studies identify potential harms—such as anxiety and uncertainty (Schneider, 1990), particularly for those high in need for cognitive closure, and post-dissonance discomfort that may intensify intergroup conflict (Ashforth & Reingen, 2014)—most findings emphasize positive effects. Individuals who balance paradoxical demands achieve greater career success, demonstrate superior leadership, and correlate with excellent team and organizational performance (Smith, 2014). Building on this, we propose three levels of benefits for leaders possessing promotion-prevention paradox.

First, this paradox provides leaders with a larger behavioral repertoire, enhancing their capacity to respond to different situations and achieve varied objectives.

Both foci are important for leadership effectiveness: promotion focus drives exploration for long-term performance (Auh & Menguc, 2005), while prevention focus drives low-risk exploitation for short-term performance (Ahmadi et al., 2017). Effective management requires balancing exploration-exploitation and long-term-short-term performance (Auh & Menguc, 2005). Leaders with only one focus may fail to respond effectively in some situations, harming long-term survival (Schmitt & Raisch, 2013). Employee-level research shows that promotion and prevention represent complementary motivational systems whose coexistence creates “pull-and-push forces” producing stronger affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses than either motivation alone (Johnson, Lin et al., 2017). Individuals motivated by both success and failure avoidance achieve higher performance (Johnson, Chang, Meyer, Lanaj, & Way, 2013). We propose this effect applies to leaders, enhancing managerial effectiveness.

Second, the paradox enables motivational switching, enhancing crisis management capability. Cross-cultural research shows that individuals with multiple cultural identities (e.g., returnees, immigrants) can switch identities when one is threatened, reducing identity threat—called a buffering effect. Similarly, possessing both regulatory foci provides leaders switching opportunities. Each focus has weaknesses: high promotion-focus leaders, emphasizing achievement quantity and speed (Higgins & Spiegel, 2004), may lack systematic thinking or cautious decision-making, exposing teams to risk. Research shows that while CEO promotion focus drives acquisitions and expansion (Gamache et al., 2015), hasty decisions may harm performance (Wallace, Little, Hill, & Ridge, 2010). Promotion-focused leaders’ insensitivity to “losses” may lead to neglect of safety and risk (Wallace & Chen, 2006). High prevention-focus leaders are conservative, risk-averse, and change-avoidant, inhibiting innovation and harming organizational development in turbulent environments (Xia & Ji, 2017). Their excessive information search and slow decision-making cause missed opportunities. Crowe and Higgins (1997) found high prevention-focus individuals perform poorly and are more likely to quit after difficult tasks or failure. Given these opposite strengths and limitations, each focus compensates for the other’s weaknesses, maximizing benefits and enhancing crisis management.

Third, the paradox provides a foundation for innovative problem-solving, enhancing creative management capabilities. Extensive paradox research demonstrates positive effects on creativity (Jay, 2013; Lempiälä, Vanharanta, Lempiälä, & Vanharanta, 2017) and innovation performance (Gebert, Boerner, & Kearney, 2010; Wadhwa, Freitas, & Sarkar, 2017). The mechanism involves “integration” —when individuals view tensions as opportunities for innovation (Beech, Burns, de Caestecker, MacIntosh, & MacLean, 2004), they accept and actively leverage opposing forces to achieve dynamic balance. For example, leaders trained in paradoxical thinking find “workable certainty” to balance stability and change (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008), and integrate contradictory behavioral tendencies in people management to show more proactive and adaptive behaviors (Zhang et al., 2015).

4.3 Other Future Research Directions: A Leadership Perspective

First, while many studies examine paradox consequences, most focus on separation-based paradox. Less research addresses connecting-based paradox. Although separation is important, separation without integration may cause harm: structural separation reduces conflict but may create power imbalances; temporal separation without smooth transitions may have negative effects (Klarner & Raisch, 2013). Future research should examine the connecting form of promotion-prevention paradox and its benefits.

Second, future research should identify boundary conditions for paradox theory. For example, from a paradox perspective, promotion-focused leaders matched with prevention-focused followers may produce positive outcomes (complementary fit), but from a supplementary fit perspective, promotion-focused leaders matched with promotion-focused followers may be more effective. Future research should identify theoretical boundaries to integrate paradox theory with other perspectives.

References

- Cao, Y., & Xu, H. (2017). Review of regulatory focus theory applications in organizational management. *Chinese Journal of Management*, 14(8), 1254-1262.
- Lei, X., Shan, Z., Su, T., & Yang, Y. (2015). The effect of humble leadership on employee creativity. *Journal of Management Science*, 28(2), 李磊, 尚玉钊. (2011). Research on the influence mechanism of leadership on subordinate creativity based on regulatory focus theory. *Nankai Business Review*, 14(5), 4-11.
- Mao, C. (2017). Regulatory focus theory: Applications in organizational management. *Advances in Psychological Science*, 25(4), 682-690.
- Shang, Y., & Li, L. (2015). Leadership behavioral demonstration, job complexity, work regulatory focus, and creativity. *Science of Science and Management of S.&T.*, 36(6), 夏绪梅, 纪晓阳. (2017). The impact of abusive supervision on employee innovative behavior: The mediating role of psychological empowerment. *Journal of Xi'an University of Finance and Economics*, 30(2), 62-67.
- Xu, H., Du, C., & Wang, Z. (2014). The effect of ethical leadership on employee deviance: The role of moral regulatory focus and moral identity. *Human Resources Development of China*, (11), 38-45.
- Xu, S. (2018). Employee followership choice differentiation from a regulatory focus perspective: Antecedents and consequences. *Advances in Psychological Science*, 26(3), 400-410.
- Zheng, W., Wang, L., Fang, P., & Li, D. (2015). How to apologize more effectively: The role of regulatory focus and message framing. *Journal of Psychological Science*, 38(1), 166-

- Adler, P. S., Goldoftas, B., & Levine, D. I. (1999). Flexibility versus efficiency? A case study of model changeovers in the Toyota production system. *Organization Science*, 10(1), 43-68.
- Adomako, S., Opoku, R. A., & Frimpong, K. (2017). The moderating influence of competitive intensity on the relationship between CEOs' regulatory foci and SME internationalization. *Journal of International Management*, 23(3), 268-278.
- Ahmadi, S., Khanagha, S., Berchicci, L., & Jansen, J. J. (2017). Are managers motivated to explore in the face of a new technological change? The role of regulatory focus, fit, and complexity of decision-making. *Journal of Management Studies*, 54(2), 209-237.
- Andriopoulos, C., & Lewis, M. W. (2009). Exploitation-exploration tensions and organizational ambidexterity: Managing paradoxes of innovation. *Organization Science*, 20(4), 696-717.
- Aryee, S., & Hsiung, H. H. (2016). Regulatory focus and safety outcomes: An examination of the mediating influence of safety behavior. *Safety Science*, 86, 27-35.
- Ashforth, B. E., & Reingen, P. H. (2014). Functions of dysfunction: Managing the dynamics of an organizational duality in a natural food cooperative. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 59(3), 474-516.
- Auh, S., & Menguc, B. (2005). Balancing exploration and exploitation: The moderating role of competitive intensity. *Journal of Business Research*, 58(12), 1652-1661.
- Bass, B. M. (1985). Leadership: Good, better, best. *Organizational Dynamics*, 13(3), 26-40.
- Beckman, C. M. (2006). The influence of founding team company affiliations on firm behavior. *Academy of Management Journal*, 49(4), 741-758.
- Beech, N., Burns, H., de Caestecker, L., MacIntosh, R., & MacLean, D. (2004). Paradox as invitation to act in problematic change situations. *Human Relations*, 57(10), 1313-1332.
- Boal, K. B., & Hooijberg, R. (2000). Strategic leadership research: Moving on. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 11(4), 471-483.
- Chen, Y., Wen, Z., & Ye, M. (2017). Exploring profiles of work regulatory focus: A person-centered approach. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 116(1), 16-21.
- Chiu, C. C., Owens, B. P., & Tesluk, P. E. (2016). Initiating and utilizing shared leadership in teams: The role of leader humility, team proactive personality, and team performance capability. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 101(12), 1705-1720.
- Cooper, J. (2007). *Cognitive dissonance: Fifty years of a classic theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Crowe, E., & Higgins, E. T. (1997). Regulatory focus and strategic inclinations: Promotion and prevention in decision-making. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 69(2), 117-132.
- Das, T. K., & Kumar, R. (2011). Regulatory focus and opportunism in the alliance development process. *Journal of Management*, 37(3), 682-708.
- De Jong, K., & De Goede, M. (2015). Why do some therapists not deal with outcome monitoring feedback? A feasibility study on the effect of regulatory focus and person-organization fit on attitude and outcome. *Psychotherapy Research*, 25(6), 661-668.
- Delegach, M., Kark, R., Katz-Navon, T., & Van Dijk, D. (2017). A focus on commitment: The roles of transformational and transactional leadership and self-regulatory focus in fostering organizational and safety commitment. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 26(5), 724-740.
- Duncan, R. B. (1976). The ambidextrous organization: Designing dual structures for innovation. *The Management of Organization*, 1, 167-188.
- Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson.
- Fransen, M. L., & ter Hoeven, C. L. (2013). Matching the message: The role of regulatory fit in negative managerial communication. *Communication Research*, 40(6), 818-837.
- Freeman, D., & Siegfried, R. L. (2015). Entrepreneurial leadership in the context of company start-up and growth. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 8(4), 35-39.
- Freitas, A. L., Liberman, N., Salovey, P., & Higgins, E. T. (2002). When to begin? Regulatory focus and initiating goal pursuit. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28(1), 121-130.
- Gada, V. P., Goyal, L., & Popli, M. (2018). Earnouts in acquisitions: The impact of CEO regulatory focus. *Social Science Electronic Publishing*.
- Gaim, M., & Wåhlin, N. (2016). In search of a creative space: A conceptual framework of synthesizing paradoxical tensions. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 32(1), 33-44.
- Gamache, D. L., McNamara, G., Mannor, M. J., & Johnson, R. E. (2015). Motivated to acquire? The impact of CEO regulatory focus on firm acquisitions. *Academy of Management Journal*, 58(4), 1261-1282.
- García-Granero, A., Fernández-Mesa, A., Jansen, J. J. P., & Vega-Jurado, J. (in press). Top management team diversity and ambidexterity: The contingent role of shared responsibility and CEO cognitive trust. *Long Range Planning*.
- Gebert, D., Boerner, S., & Kearney, E. (2010). Fostering team innovation: Why is it important to combine opposing action strategies? *Organization Science*, 21(3), 593-608.

- Gibson, C. B., & Birkinshaw, J. (2004). The antecedents, consequences, and mediating role of organizational ambidexterity. *Academy of Management Journal*, 47(2), 209-226.
- Gorman, C. A., Meriac, J. P., Overstreet, B. L., Apodaca, S., McIntyre, A. L., Park, P., & Godbey, J. N. (2012). A meta-analysis of the regulatory focus nomological network: Work-related antecedents and consequences. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 80(1), 160-172.
- Halevi, M. Y., Carmeli, A., & Brueller, N. N. (2015). Ambidexterity in SBUs: TMT behavioral integration and environmental dynamism. *Human Resource Management*, 54(S1), 223-238.
- Hamstra, M. R., Sassenberg, K., Van Yperen, N. W., & Wisse, B. (2014). Followers feel valued—When leaders' regulatory focus makes leaders exhibit behavior that fits followers' regulatory focus. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 51, 34-40.
- Hamstra, M. R., Van Yperen, N. W., Wisse, B., & Sassenberg, K. (2014). On the perceived effectiveness of transformational-transactional leadership: The role of encouraged strategies and followers' regulatory focus. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 44(6), 643-656.
- Hatch, M. J. (1997). Irony and the social construction of contradiction in the humor of a management team. *Organization Science*, 8(3), 275-288.
- Heavey, C., & Simsek, Z. (2017). Distributed cognition in top management teams and organizational ambidexterity: The influence of transactive memory systems. *Journal of Management*, 43(3), 919-945.
- Heine, S. J., & Buchtel, E. E. (2009). Personality: The universal and the culturally specific. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 60(1), 369-394.
- Higgins, E. T. (1997). Beyond pleasure and pain. *American Psychologist*, 52(12), 1280-1300.
- Higgins, E. T. (1998). Promotion and prevention: Regulatory focus as a motivational principle. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol. 30, pp. 1-46). New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Higgins, E. T. (2001). Promotion and prevention experiences: Relating emotions to nonemotional motivational states. In J. P. Forgas (Ed.), *Handbook of affect and social cognition* (pp. 186-211). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Higgins, E. T., & Spiegel, S. (2004). Promotion and prevention strategies for self-regulation: A motivated cognition perspective. In R. F. Baumeister & K. D. Vohs (Eds.), *Handbook of self-regulation: Research, theory, and applications* (pp. 171-187). New York: Guilford Press.
- Higgins, E. T., Friedman, R. S., Harlow, R. E., Idson, L. C., Ayduk, O. N., & Taylor, A. (2001). Achievement orientations from subjective histories of success:

Promotion pride versus prevention pride. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 31(1), 3-23.

Higgins, E. T., Roney, C. J., Crowe, E., & Hymes, C. (1994). Ideal versus ought predilections for approach and avoidance distinct self-regulatory systems. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 66(2), 276-286.

Jay, J. (2013). Navigating paradox as a mechanism of change and innovation in hybrid organizations. *Academy of Management Journal*, 56(1), 137-159.

Jin, X., Wang, L., & Dong, H. (2016). The relationship between self-construal and creativity—regulatory focus as moderator. *Personality & Individual Differences*, 97, 282-288.

Johnson, J. D. (2016). Tensions between teams and their leaders. *Journal of Technology Management & Innovation*, 11(3), 117-126.

Johnson, R. E., Chang, C. H., & Lord, R. G. (2006). Moving from cognition to behavior: What the research says. *Psychological Bulletin*, 132(3), 381-415.

Johnson, R. E., Chang, C. H., Meyer, T., Lanaj, K., & Way, J. (2013). Approaching success or avoiding failure? Approach and avoidance motives in the work domain. *European Journal of Personality*, 27(5), 424-441.

Johnson, R. E., King, D. D., Lin, S. H. J., Scott, B. A., Walker, E. M. J., & Wang, M. (2017). Regulatory focus trickle-down: How leader regulatory focus and behavior shape follower regulatory focus. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 140, 29-45.

Johnson, R. E., Lin, S. H. J., Kark, R., Van Dijk, D., King, D. D., & Esformes, E. (2017). Consequences of regulatory fit for leader-follower relationship quality and commitment. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 90(3), 379-406.

Kammerlander, N., Burger, D., Fust, A., & Fueglistaller, U. (2015). Exploration and exploitation in established small and medium-sized enterprises: The effect of CEOs' regulatory focus. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 30(4), Kark, R., & Van Dijk, D. (2007). Motivation to lead, motivation to follow: The role of the self-regulatory focus in leadership processes. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(2), 500-528.

Kark, R., Dijk, D. V., & Vashdi, D. R. (2018). Motivated or demotivated to be creative: The role of self-regulatory focus in transformational and transactional leadership processes. *Applied Psychology*, 67(1), 186-224.

Keller, J., & Bless, H. (2006). Regulatory fit and cognitive performance: The interactive effect of chronic and situationally induced self-regulatory mechanisms on test performance. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 36(3), 393-405.

Khazanchi, S., Lewis, M. W., & Boyer, K. K. (2007). Innovation-supportive culture: The impact of organizational values on process innovation. *Journal of Operations Management*, 25(4), 871-884.

- Klarner, P., & Raisch, S. (2013). Move to the beat—Rhythms of change and firm performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 56(1), 160-184.
- Lanaj, K., Chang, C.H., & Johnson, R. E. (2012). Regulatory focus and work-related outcomes: A review and meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 138(5), 998-1034.
- Lavie, D., & Rosenkopf, L. (2006). Balancing exploration and exploitation in alliance formation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 49(4), 797-818.
- Lempiälä, T., Vanharanta, O., Lempiälä, T., & Vanharanta, O. (2017). Rethinking the control-freedom paradox in innovation: Toward a multifaceted understanding of creative freedom. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 54, 54.
- Lewis, M. W. (2000). Exploring paradox: Toward a more comprehensive guide. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(4), 760-776.
- Lewis, M. W., & Smith, W. K. (2014). Paradox as a metatheoretical perspective: Sharpening the focus and widening the scope. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 50(2), 127-149.
- Li, G., Liu, H., Shang, Y., & Xi, Y. (2014). Leader feedback and knowledge sharing: A regulatory focus theory perspective. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 20(6), 749-763.
- Lockwood, P., Jordan, C. H., & Kunda, Z. (2002). Motivation by positive or negative role models: Regulatory focus determines who will best inspire us. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83(4), 854-864.
- Lüscher, L. S., & Lewis, M. W. (2008). Organizational change and managerial sensemaking: Working through paradox. *Academy of Management Journal*, 51(2), 221-240.
- Memmert, D., Plessner, H., Hüttermann, S., Froese, G., Peterhänsel, C., & Unkelbach, C. (2015). Collective fit increases team performances: Extending regulatory fit from individuals to dyadic teams. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 45(5), 274-281.
- Nauta, A., De Dreu, C. K., & Van Der Vaart, T. (2002). Social value orientation, organizational goal concerns and interdepartmental problem-solving behavior. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23(2), 199-213.
- Neubert, M. J., Kacmar, K. M., Carlson, D. S., Chonko, L. B., & Roberts, J. A. (2008). Regulatory focus as a mediator of the influence of initiating structure and servant leadership on employee behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(6), 1220-1233.
- Park, T. Y., Kim, S., & Sung, L. K. (2017). Fair pay dispersion: A regulatory focus theory view. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 142(1), 1-11.
- Peng, K., & Nisbett, R. E. (1999). Culture, dialectics, and reasoning about contradiction. *American Psychologist*, 54(9), 741-754.

- Poole, M. S., & Van de Ven, A. H. (1989). Using paradox to build management and organization theories. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 562-578.
- Qiu, J., Donaldson, L., & Luo, B. N. (2012). The benefits of persisting with paradigms in organizational research. *The Academy of Management Perspectives*, 26(1), 93-104.
- Sacramento, C. A., Fay, D., & West, M. A. (2013). Workplace duties or opportunities? Challenge stressors, regulatory focus, and creativity. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 121(2), 141-157.
- Saeidipour, B., Kazemi, S. M. M., Mohamadabadi, A. J., & Azizi, M. (2016). The study of the relationship between transformative leadership and individual creativity of staff in organizations. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 7(4S1), 234-241.
- Schad, J., Lewis, M. W., Raisch, S., & Smith, W. K. (2016). Paradox research in management science: Looking back to move forward. *Academy of Management Annals*, 10(1), 5-64.
- Schmitt, A., & Raisch, S. (2013). Corporate turnarounds: The duality of retrenchment and recovery. *Journal of Management Studies*, 50(7), 1216-1244.
- Schneider, K. J. (1990). *The paradoxical self: Toward an understanding of our contradictory nature*. New York: Insight Books.
- Schuh, S. C., Van Quaquebeke, N., Göritz, A. S., Xin, K. R., De Cremer, D., & van Dick, R. (2016). Mixed feelings, mixed blessing? How ambivalence in organizational identification relates to employees' regulatory focus and citizenship behaviors. *Human Relations*, 69(12), 2224-2249.
- Shin, Y., Kim, M., Choi, J. N., & Lee, S. H. (2016). Does team culture matter? Roles of team culture and collective regulatory focus in team task and creative performance. *Group & Organization Management*, 41(2), Simmons, S. A., Carr, J. C., Hsu, D. K., & Shu, C. (2016). The regulatory fit of serial entrepreneurship intentions. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 65(3), 603-627.
- Smith, W. K. (2014). Dynamic decision making: A model of senior leaders managing strategic paradoxes. *Academy of Management Journal*, 57(6), 1592-1623.
- Smith, W. K., & Lewis, M. W. (2011). Toward a theory of paradox: A dynamic equilibrium model of organizing. *Academy of Management Review*, 36(2), 381-403.
- Smith, W. K., & Tushman, M. L. (2005). Managing strategic contradictions: A top management model for managing innovation streams. *Organization Science*, 16(5), 522-536.
- Smith, W. K., Lewis, M. W., & Tushman, M. L. (2016). "Both/and" leadership. *Harvard Business Review*, 94(5), Spencer-Rodgers, J., Peng, K., Wang,

- L., & Hou, Y. (2004). Dialectical self-esteem and East-West differences in psychological well-being. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30(11), 1416-1432.
- Stam, D. A., Van Knippenberg, D., & Wisse, B. (2010). The role of regulatory fit in visionary leadership. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 31(4), 499-518.
- Suedfeld, P., Tetlock, P. E., & Streufert, S. (1992). Conceptual/integrative complexity. In C. P. Smith (Ed.), *Motivation and personality: Handbook of thematic content analyses* (pp. 393-400). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Teece, D. J. (2006). Reflections on “profiting from innovation”. *Research Policy*, 35(8), 1131-1146.
- Tuan Pham, M., & Chang, H. H. (2010). Regulatory focus, regulatory fit, and the search and consideration of choice alternatives. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37(4), 626-640.
- Tuncdogan, A., Bosch, F. V. D., & Volberda, H. (2015). Regulatory focus as a psychological micro-foundation of leaders' exploration and exploitation activities. *Leadership Quarterly*, 26(5), 838-850.
- Tung, F. C. (2016). Does transformational, ambidextrous, transactional leadership promote employee creativity? Mediating effects of empowerment and promotion focus. *International Journal of Manpower*, 37(8), 1250-
- Tushman, M. L., O' Reilly, C., Fenollosa, A., Kleinbaum, A. M., & McGrath, D. (2007). Relevance and rigor: Executive education as a lever in shaping practice and research. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 6(3), 345-362.
- Vermunt, J. K., & Magidson, J. (2002). Latent class cluster analysis. In J. A. Hagenaars & A. L. McCutcheon (Eds.), *Applied latent class analysis* (pp. 89-106). Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Wadhwa, A., Freitas, I. M. B., & Sarkar, M. B. (2017). The paradox of openness and value protection strategies: Effect of extramural R&D on innovative performance. *Organization Science*, 28(5), 873-893.
- Wallace, C., & Chen, G. (2006). A multilevel integration of personality, climate, self-regulation, and performance. *Personnel Psychology*, 59(3), 529-557.
- Wallace, J. C., Little, L. M., Hill, A. D., & Ridge, J. W. (2010). CEO regulatory foci, environmental dynamism, and small firm performance. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 48(4), 580-604.
- Wang, J., Wang, L., Liu, R. D., & Dong, H. Z. (2017). How expected evaluation influences creativity: Regulatory focus as moderator. *Motivation and Emotion*, 41(2), 147-157.
- Zhang, Y., Waldman, D. A., Han, Y. L., & Li, X. B. (2015). Paradoxical leader behaviors in people management: Antecedents and consequences. *Academy of*

Management Journal, 58(2), 538-566.

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

Source: ChinaXiv – Machine translation. Verify with original.