



Charisma under crisis revisited: Presidential leadership, perceived leader effectiveness, and contextual influences[☆]

Kelly M. Davis^{*}, William L. Gardner

Texas Tech University, Rawls College of Business, 703 Flint Avenue, Lubbock, TX 79409, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 2 August 2011
Received in revised form 23 May 2012
Accepted 1 June 2012
Available online 20 June 2012

Keywords:

Charismatic rhetoric
Charismatic leadership
Crisis
Content analysis

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of crisis on leader use of charismatic rhetoric. We examine leader charismatic rhetoric across two major crises, longitudinally exploring potential long-term influences of charismatic rhetoric on perceptions of leader effectiveness. Using an inductive approach to theory generation, we draw upon findings from the data analysis of eight charismatic rhetoric constructs (collective focus, temporal orientation, followers' worth, similarity to followers, values and moral justifications, tangibility, action, and adversity) to advance propositions regarding potential time and ceiling effects of charismatic rhetorical leadership on followers. Additionally, we discuss the relationships between characteristics of the crisis and the use of charismatic rhetorical leadership. In doing so, we identify potential boundary conditions for the use of charismatic rhetoric (as an element of charismatic leadership) within the context of different crises.

© 2012 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

The presence of a crisis has long been discussed as one of the primary determinants of the emergence of charismatic leadership (Pillai & Meindl, 1998; Trice & Beyer, 1986). Extending back to Weber's introduction of the construct, the necessary conditions for charismatic leadership emergence have been posited to include: 1) a person who possesses extraordinary gifts; 2) a crisis or time of distress; 3) a revolutionary solution to the crisis; 4) followers who believe in the person and who are attracted to the miraculous qualities of the person; and 5) validation of the person's gifts through repeated successes (Trice & Beyer, 1986; Weber, 1947, 1968; Willner, 1984).

More recently, scholarly disagreement about the necessity of a crisis as a prerequisite for charismatic leadership has arisen. Trice and Beyer (1986) maintain a strict adherence to the Weberian concept of charisma, and, as such, hold that a crisis must be present in order for the leader to be attributed charisma. Several studies provide empirical support for the posited linkages between crisis and the emergence of charismatic leadership (e.g., Bligh, Kohles, & Meindl, 2004a,b; House, Spangler, & Woycke, 1991; Pillai, 1996). Other scholars view crisis as a facilitating but unnecessary requirement for charismatic leadership to emerge (Boal & Bryson, 1988; Halverson, Murphy, & Riggio, 2004; Hunt, Boal, & Dodge, 1999). Additional studies support the argument that charismatic leadership can develop outside of crises (Halverson et al., 2004; Pillai & Meindl, 1998). Still others have found a negative relationship between charismatic leadership and crisis situations (Bligh, Kohles, & Pillai, 2005; Pillai & Meindl, 1998; Williams, Pillai, Lowe, Jung, & Herst, 2009).

The findings of the current body of empirical work investigating crisis as a contextual antecedent of charismatic leadership are equivocal, suggesting that the relationship between crisis and charisma is particularly complex (Pillai & Meindl, 1998). In a recent

[☆] Previous versions of this paper were presented at the 2010 Southern Management Association meeting in St. Pete Beach, FL.

^{*} Corresponding author at: Institute for Leadership Research, Rawls College of Business, 703 Flint Avenue, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX 79409, USA. Tel.: +1 806 742 2154; fax: +1 806 742 2308.

E-mail address: km.davis@ttu.edu (K.M. Davis).

review of the charismatic leadership literature, [Walter and Bruch \(2009\)](#) found that contextual influences such as the leaders' positional, social, organizational, and national environment, along with crisis situations, have received insufficient research. Hence, additional work is needed to better understand the role that crisis plays in the emergence of charismatic leadership. Previous research has investigated charismatic rhetorical leadership within the context of a single crisis (e.g., [Bligh & Kohles, 2009](#); [Bligh et al., 2004a,b](#)). We build upon and extend the work of [Bligh and colleagues \(2004a,b\)](#) by answering their call for the study of environmental turbulence as a contextual factor which influences leader use of charismatic rhetoric and subsequent follower reactions. Adopting a longitudinal approach, we examine the use of charismatic rhetorical leadership across two different crises. Specifically, we investigate the extent to which charismatic rhetoric is associated with crisis, whether charismatic rhetoric may differ according to the type of crisis, and the degree to which it is related to follower ratings of leader effectiveness.

Our research makes three primary contributions to the literature. First, we add to the scholarly debate about the degree to which crisis is an antecedent for charismatic leadership by considering the patterns of leader charismatic rhetoric across different crises. Doing so enables us to advance a deeper understanding of the dynamic relationship between crisis and the emergence of charismatic rhetorical leadership. Second, by examining a single leader's charismatic rhetoric across two major crises, we highlight potential follower effects of charismatic rhetoric in the form of perceptions of leader effectiveness. Third, we adopt an inductive approach to theory generation ([Locke, 2007](#)) to advance original propositions that are derived from the data analysis; these propositions extend charismatic leadership theory by delineating potential boundary conditions ([Bacharach, 1989](#)) for the use of charismatic rhetorical leadership within the context of crises.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Charismatic rhetorical leadership

The term *charismatic leadership* stems from [Weber's \(1947, 1968\)](#) notion of charismatic authority. Using the adjectives *exceptional*, *supernatural*, and *magical*, along with nouns like *hero*, *prophet*, and *savior*, Weber described charismatic authority as deriving from the possession and public exhibition of unique and spellbinding qualities ([Willner, 1984](#)). Since Weber, researchers have shown that these qualities appeal to followers and elicit a fervid following, inspiring followers to forsake their own self-interests and go beyond the call of duty, resulting in increased follower effort, satisfaction, and performance ([Fiol, Harris, & House, 1999](#); [House et al., 1991](#); [House, Woycke, & Fodor, 1988](#)). Through such outcomes, charismatic leadership during times of crisis can be used to incite follower social action and promote social change when it is desperately needed ([Seyranian & Bligh, 2008](#)).

Our view of charismatic leadership is based upon conceptualizations of charisma advanced by [Bligh and colleagues \(2004a,b\)](#), [Shamir, House, and Arthur \(1993\)](#), [Trice and Beyer \(1986\)](#), and [Weber \(1947, 1968\)](#). Thus, we hold that charismatic leadership is emergent during times of crisis, is rooted in a relationship between the leader and followers, and as a result, produces desired motivational effects on followers, such that followers will pursue the leader's vision and objectives ([Beyer & Browning, 1999](#); [Shamir, 1995](#); [Shamir, Arthur, & House, 1994](#); [Shamir et al., 1993](#); [Shamir, Zakay, Breinin, & Popper, 1998](#)). Therefore, we adopt [House and Shamir's \(1993: 86\)](#) definition of charismatic leadership as "an interaction between leaders and followers [during or after a crisis situation] that results in 1) making the followers' self-esteem contingent on the vision and mission articulated by the leader, 2) a strong internalization of the leader's values and goals by the followers, 3) a strong personal or moral...commitment to these values and goals, and 4) a willingness on the part of followers to transcend their self-interests for the sake of the collective."

A part of the charismatic relationship between leaders and followers involves the leader's communications to the followers; this includes the delivery and presentation of the leader's speeches as well as the content of those speeches ([Bligh et al., 2004a](#)). Previous empirical work has demonstrated that the strength of the leader's delivery and a charismatic communication style (e.g., verbal elements such as a captivating tone of voice and nonverbal elements including animated facial expressions, a confident interaction style, and direct eye contact) are related to follower perceptions of leader charisma ([Awamleh & Gardner, 1999](#); [Holladay & Coombs, 1993, 1994](#); [Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996](#)). In the present study we focus on the content of the leader's speeches. Such content has been argued to not only communicate the leader's vision but also to be instrumental in fostering follower acceptance and commitment to that vision ([Den Hartog & Verbarg, 1997](#); [Shamir et al., 1994](#)). Charismatic leaders use rhetoric to influence followers by: 1) increasing the intrinsic value of effort expended by followers in the pursuit of goals; 2) increasing their self-efficacy and collective-efficacy perceptions; 3) increasing their intrinsic value of goal accomplishment; 4) instilling faith in a better future; and 5) increasing followers' commitment ([Shamir et al., 1993, 1994](#)). Together these motivational effects exert their influence by appealing to elements of followers' self-concepts including self-expression, self-consistency, and the enhancement of self-esteem and self-worth ([Shamir et al., 1993, 1994](#)).

Charismatic leaders appeal to followers through their rhetoric by incorporating the following elements into their speeches: 1) references to history and tradition; 2) an emphasis on the collective identity; 3) reinforcement of the collective efficacy; 4) a focus on the leader's similarity to the followers; 5) discussion of values and moral justifications; 6) references to hope and faith; and 7) appeals to the followers' self-efficacy ([Bligh & Kohles, 2008](#); [Bligh et al., 2004a,b](#); [Shamir et al., 1993, 1994](#); [Tan & Wee, 2002](#)). To explore the motivational effects of charismatic rhetoric on followers as posited by [Shamir et al. \(1993\)](#), [Bligh and colleagues \(Bligh & Hess, 2007](#); [Bligh & Kohles, 2008](#); [Bligh et al., 2004a,b](#); [Seyranian & Bligh, 2008](#)) used the content analysis software, DICTION ([Hart, 1999](#)), to operationalize the rhetorical elements of charismatic leadership into eight dictionary-based constructs. In this study, we employ the same operationalization of charismatic rhetoric to analyze the content of President George W. Bush's speeches during two different crises. Hence, both the theoretical underpinnings ([Shamir et al., 1993](#)) and the methodological approach (content analysis) of the current study differ markedly from those reflected by questionnaire-based

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات