WHO WANTS TO PLAY "FOLLOW THE LEADER?" A THEORY OF CHARISMATIC RELATIONSHIPS BASED ON ROUTINIZED CHARISMA AND FOLLOWER CHARACTERISTICS

Stuart J.M. Weierter*

The University of Queensland

This paper outlines a theory of charismatic relationships based on the individual orientation of the follower and extent of charismatic message routinization. A model is proposed that addresses three different types of charismatic relationships—socialized, personalized, and social contagion—and describes the role of follower's self-monitoring, self-concept clarity, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Seven propositions based on these perspectives are presented, and the paper concludes with an outline of the model in an organizational context and possible research strategies to test the validity of the theory.

Editor's Note: This article is the 1996 Kenneth E. Clark Research Award Winner sponsored by the Center for Creative Leadership and also successfully completed the normal *Leadership Quarterly* editorial review process. Congratulations to the author.

There is essentially nothing to leadership but to carefully observe people's conditions and know them all, in both upper and lower echelons. When people's inner conditions are thoroughly understood, then inside and outside are in harmony. If the leader cannot minutely discern people's psychological conditions, and the feeling of those below is not communicated above, then above and below oppose each other and matters are disordered. This is how leadership goes to ruin. (Master Caotang Qing, quoted in Cleary, 1993, p. 155).

* Direct all correspondence to: Stuart J. M. Weierter, Graduate School of Management, The University of Queensland, St. Lucia, Queensland 4072 Australia; *e-mail*: s.weierter@gsm.uq.edu.au.

The diversity of situations and research orientations associated with the study of charismatic leaders is broad and far reaching. Sociologists, political scientists, psychoanalysts, and psychologists—across a broad spectrum of social and cultural conditions, from socially deviant cults to large political organizations—have searched for those traits and characteristics that define the charismatic leader (Bass, 1990). The single recurring outcome is inconsistent and disappointing results (see Ellis, 1991). On this basis, many researchers have put forward the notion that no charismatic temperament or personality exists and that the concept of charisma results from a social relationship between leaders and followers (e.g., Bass, 1985; Klein & House, 1995; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993).

Shamir (1991), in a review of the theory that addresses the charismatic relationship, highlighted the different and often conflicting outcomes proposed by these theorists. In particular, Shamir (1991) proposed that more research is needed to examine: "[1] the nature of followers' psychological attachment to the leader—personal identification, social identification, or value internalization, [2] the limits of followers' acceptance of the leader and their willingness to obey the leader, and [3] follower's specific attributions to the leader" (p. 101). Similarly, Klein and House (1995) point to an absence in the literature on the empirical examination of followers and draw attention to the contentious issue of whether followers enter the charismatic relationship for direction or expression. The present paper addresses these issues by examining the processes that underlie the charismatic relationship with respect to follower orientation and generative social conditions.

In this paper, followers are defined in terms of the personality variables of self-monitoring and self-concept clarity. In addition, social conditions are outlined that promote or inhibit routinization of the charismatic message. In so doing, the objective social forces that define and set the potential for charismatic relationships provide the framework within which subjective relationships are possible. Thus, within this framework, different characteristics of followers (self-monitoring and self-concept clarity) determine the type of charismatic relationship and establish the role of personal charisma (emotional and behavioral expression associated with the leader) and the charismatic message (underlying values and beliefs associated with the leader) in the charismatic relationship. Further, increased follower self-esteem and self-efficacy determine the extent to which the charismatic relationship is maintained or re-created. Finally, contexts that impact self-awareness, it is argued, affect the degree to which congruency between follower values and the message expressed by the leader moderates the potential relationship. The model resolves, in part, the issues raised by Shamir (1991) and Klein and House (1995) and satisfies the concerns put forward by Jermier (1993) that "qualities of the leader, follower characteristics, and other situational factors must be considered simultaneously with mission content [or charismatic message] in order to ascertain its role in fostering charismatic processes" (p. 223).

The model proposed here is congruent with House and Howell's (1992) argument that researchers of leadership need to identify different types of charismatic leaders using criteria free of moral evaluation, such as personality traits of the leaders. This argument is taken further, however, by focusing on both observable aspects of charismatic leaders and the characteristics of followers, thus maintaining charisma within the realm of relationships. Wasielewski (1985) supports this claim in her argument that charisma and