

CHARISMA ATTRIBUTION DURING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE: THE IMPORTANCE OF FOLLOWERS' CONCERN FOR WELL-BEING

Abstract

Taking a follower-centric perspective, we examined how charisma attribution to a change leader was influenced by the well-being concerns and emotions of organizational members. We conducted three studies to examine how college business students and executive MBA students responded to a grading policy reform aimed at reducing grade inflation. We found that emotions and well-being concerns such as school year and grade point average influenced charisma attribution by the undergraduate students and that there was a greater divergence of emotional reactions and charisma attribution among undergraduate students than among the executive MBAs. Future directions for follower-centric leadership research on charismatic leadership are discussed.

Keywords: charisma attribution, follower-centric leadership perspective, well-being concern, emotions, organizational change; charismatic leadership; the U.S.A

Charisma attribution during Organizational Change: The Importance of Followers' Concern for Well-Being

Traditional leadership research has been criticized for overly focusing on the traits and behaviors of the leader to the neglect of the role of followers (Fiedler, 1996; House, 1977; Pescosolido, 2002; Sashkin, 1992). There is also a similar leader-centric bias in studying the role of emotions on charismatic leadership. With few exceptions (e.g., Pastor, Mayo, & Shamir, 2007), studies of emotions in leadership typically look at the effect of a leader's emotions or emotional intelligence on followers (Brown & Keeping, 2005; Gaddis, Connelly, & Mumford, 2004; Lewis, 2000; Newcombe & Ashkanasy, 2002) or on how managers can effectively manage or stimulate certain emotions in their followers (Bono & Ilies, 2006; Lord, Brown, & Freiberg, 1999; Pescosolido, 2002).

The leader-centric approach may impede charisma research as it fails to fully explain a two-directional influence process between the leader and the follower and unwittingly perpetuates an overly romantic and heroic view of the capabilities of the leader (Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985; Meindl & Ehrlich, 1988). Seeking to counter this imbalance, more researchers are pursuing a follower-centric research agenda, which views followers and their surrounding contexts as principal forces that influence the construction and attribution of charismatic leadership (Chen, Belkin, & Kurtzberg, 2006; Meindl, 1995; Pastor, Meindl, & Mayo, 2002; Pillai & Meindl, 1998; Howell & Shamir, 2005). Following this emergent literature, we examine how followers' concern for self well-being (i.e., the degree to which organizational members are concerned that an organizational event will benefit or harm their individual well-being, hereafter termed "well-being concern") and followers' emotions influence charisma attribution during organizational change. By exploring how *the same* change leader promulgating

the same change message with *the same* speech delivery style may evoke different levels of attributed charisma due to variations in follower, rather than in leader, characteristics, including followers' emotional states and well-being concern, we contribute to the growing body of follower-centric research that demonstrate the independent effects of follower characteristics on charisma attribution.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

A Follower-Centric Perspective on Charismatic Leadership

Rooted in the theory of romance leadership (Meindl, et al., 1985; Meindl, 1995), the follower-centric leadership perspective departed from the traditional leader-centric perspective in a number of important ways. First, leader-centric research, in focusing on what leaders do to effectively, such as motivating and inspiring followers, assumes a substantive and functional existence of leadership characteristics in terms of leader traits or behavioral manifestations (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). In contrast, the romance leadership theory looks at how organizational members make sense of and evaluate their organizational experiences through various concepts of leadership that they have constructed in their minds individually or through social interactions. Leader behaviors are only rough clues to the construction of leaders and leadership representing “a wider range of constructions, and imbued with a wider range of meanings than are otherwise assumed” (Meindl, 1995: 3).

Second, related to the above point, though a few studies have explored (e.g., Antonakis & Atwater, 2002) the leader-follower interaction at a distance, the leader-centric perspective more often than not requires close and special leader-follower interactions, typically in the context of formal hierarchical relationships. On the contrary, such leader-follower interactions and

relationships are neither required nor assumed in the follower-centric paradigm, which has a research agenda that places equal or more weight on contextual as well as the intra- and inter-follower characteristics.

Third, the primary leader-centric model is one in which the inputs are the leader characteristics and the outcomes are about the effectiveness of leader influence on followers' motivation or performance. On the contrary, the primary follower-centric model is one in which the inputs are the follower characteristics and the outcomes are about the construction and perception of leadership by followers. Finally, while the traditional leader-centric perspective focuses on differences in the mean level of leader activities, follower centric perspective focuses on differences in not only the mean, but also in the variance of leadership construction by different follower groups.

In summary, the follower-centric leadership agenda departs from the leader-centric assumptions and requirements and proposes a research agenda that focuses on follower characteristics as antecedent variables, the construction and attribution of leadership as major outcome variables, and the intra- and inter-follower cognitive and affective mechanisms as mediating variables. Meindl (1995: 11) justified these "radical" departures on grounds that the leader-centric biases have dominated the leadership research for so long that it is necessary to "let alternative traditions develop on their own, unencumbered". Similarly, the leadership perception theory has viewed leadership as a process of perception within the followers (Lord & Maher, 1991; Lord, et al., 1999) and called for systematic exploration of followers' self-concepts as determinants and constraints of leadership. Following these calls, we seek to contribute to the emergent follower-centric tradition by examining how followers attributed charisma to a change

leader and we do so by studying followers' reaction to a proposed organizational change through the lens of their well-being concern and emotions.

Conceptions of Charisma

Charisma has been traditionally conceived of as an exceptional quality of an extraordinary individual (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Weber, 1921/1968) and this understanding has motivated research that identified unique charismatic traits and behaviors of the leader (e.g., Bass, 1985, Burns, 1978, Fiedler, 1996; Northouse, 2004). These charismatic behaviors include expressing lofty values and missions, inspiring and motivating subordinates (Bass, 1985; Avolio & Bass; 1988; Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999), articulating and implementing vision (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996) and demonstrating effective delivery style (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Holladay & Coombs, 1993; 1994). However, while fully recognizing the contribution of the above cited literature, there is an emergent consensus among organizational researchers that charisma, more than any other leadership perspectives, relies on followers' characteristics. House and colleagues for example (1991: 366) stated, "charisma exists only if followers say it does or if followers behave in specific ways" and defined charisma "as a relationship or bond between the leader and subordinates or other followers". In this study, consistent with the follower-centric perspective, we focus on followers' perception and attribution of charisma, known as "attributed charisma" (Avolio et al., 1999) rather than on the various charismatic leadership behaviors, known as "behavioral charisma" (Schriesheim, Wu, & Scandura, 2009). Moreover, building on the Dynamic Interactive Theory of Person Construal (Freeman & Ambady, 2011) we further distinguish attributed charisma into cognitive (higher-order) and perceptual (lower-order) attribution, arguing that the former is a more follower-dependent (or subjective) characteristic,

while the latter is more leader-dependent. In other words, while perceptual attributions are based on visceral reactions to physical stimuli, such as visual, audio or tactile cues, cognitive attributions are based on motivation, task demands, prior knowledge or even stereotypes (Freeman & Ambady, 2011). That is to say there are two elements to a leader's message – the content and the form. We argue that the form is the change leader's delivery style, which can inspire visceral reactions from the audience through gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice and the overall leader's appearance, while the content of the message is more pertinent to individual cognitive processes and is dependent on the alignment between organizational change direction and the followers' well-being concern. As we explain in further detail below, higher-order social cognition processes are predominantly responsible for followers' attribution of charisma to the change leader, while lower-order processes mainly regulate perceptions of a leader's delivery style.

Organizational Change as an Affective Event

Change always carries differential consequences to different constituents. Anderson and Tushman (2004) documented how industry-wide innovations can be competence enhancing to some organizations, while competence destroying (making the current know-how obsolete) for others. Organization-wide change and innovations also tend to bring about winners and losers for departments and individuals (Pfeffer, 1981), significantly affecting the lives and the careers of organizational members. As such, organizational change is described as an emotionally charged experience (Ashkanasy, Hartel, & Daus, 2002) and is best qualified as an affective event. An affective event is a happening (usually remarkable and important) that causes emotional reactions among employees at work (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). According to Affective

Events Theory proposed by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996: 31), people respond to organizational events through an emotion elicitation process, in which an event is initially evaluated “for relevance to well being in simple positive or negative terms”. Relevance to well-being concern (also called “concern relevance”) is “intricately tied to one’s personal set of goals and values” (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996: 32). The more relevant the event is to the individual, the stronger will be the emotional reaction. The direction of the emotional reaction is related to whether the event is judged as harmful or beneficial to the well-being of the person (Frijda, 1993; Lazarus, 1993). A positive emotional reaction will occur if an event is perceived to facilitate the attainment of one’s goals and values and a negative emotional reaction will occur if it is perceived to obstruct one’s goals. Furthermore, this initial emotional reaction will influence subsequent, more specific appraisals and perceptions. It is worth noting that of the various goals and values, the most basic self-concern of security and safety turns out to be the most potent force in determining the direction and the intensity of emotional reactions.

Organizational Change, Leadership, and Follower Concern for Well-Being

Lord and colleagues (Lord & Brown, 2004; Lord et al., 1999) explicated how leaders and situational contexts activate various self-concepts of followers (self-identities, self-views, and goals and values), which influence the latter’s reaction to, as well as perceptions of, the leader. They argued that although people have multiple self-identities, such as personality characteristics and organizational memberships, only one type of self-identity is activated at a given situation, with the other types of self-identities by and large being suppressed. Lord and Brown (2004) called the activation process of various self-identities as “mutually inhibitory” and referred to the activated and most salient self-identity as part of the working self-concept. According to the

Working Self-Concept Theory (Lord & Brown, 2004), it is the activated self-identity that will dominate the individual's perception, affect, and behavior toward an organizational event or a leader. Extending this theory, we argue that the inhibition is partly due to a conflicting relationship between individual and collective identities and interests, which are especially pertinent to organizational change. To the extent these different identities and interests are compatible and well aligned, organizational members' individual self-identity and well-being will be less threatened by a proposed organizational change. For example, using Anderson and Tushman's (2004) terminology, a competence destroying organizational change may pose threat to the job security of many organizational members, thereby activating individual self-identities and raising concerns for individual well-being. In contrast, a competence enhancing organizational change may require organizational members to learn new knowledge, but does not threaten their job security. Both types of changes may activate individual self-identities and trigger concern for well-being. However, the former, due to poor alignment of individual and organizational goals, makes it hard for organizational members to see and support the collective vision of an organization as proposed by the change leader, whereas the latter may facilitate the embrace of the collective vision because individual self-identity and concern for well being are compatible and aligned well with one's organizational identity.

As pointed out by Lord et al. (1999), theorists of the transformational leadership theory proposed constructs related to both individual (e.g., individualized consideration) and organizational (e.g., vision and transcendence) self-identities, but have failed to fully appreciate the inhibitory and conflicting relationship between these different self-concepts and identities. We would add that the leader-centric literature on transformational and charismatic leadership may have underestimated the potency of the individual self-interest concerns and overestimated

the leader's ability to transcend those concerns when individual and organizational concerns are at odds with each other. Consistent with the Affective Events Theory, we contend that to the extent that their basic concern for well being is ignored and threatened by organizational change efforts, organizational members will respond negatively to both the change and the change leader. Integrating the insights from the Affective Events Theory, the Working Self-Concept Theory, the Dynamic Interactive Theory of Person Construal and leadership attribution and perception literatures, our key hypothesis is therefore that charisma attribution and perception by followers will vary to the extent that the proposed organizational change is believed to be positively aligned with the well-being concern of the self, and the variance in attributed charisma within different constituent groups will also be related to the divergence of well-being concerns of different groups of organizational constituents.

Organizational Change and Charisma Attribution

Implications of organizational change vary by stakeholders (Perrow, 1972; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), as has been highlighted in organizational downsizing literature (Emshoff, 1994; Henkoff, 1994; Brockner, Grover, & Blonder, 1988). Differential consequences, expected or actual, have diverse implications on the well-being of different stakeholders and, as posited by the Affective Events Theory and the Working Self-Concept Theory, may influence individuals' attitude toward organizational change and the change leader. For example, research has shown that organizational constituents may resist or support change on the basis of their "calculated self-interest" (Pfeffer, 1981) and actual or anticipated personal loss is the primary reason for resisting organizational change (Kirpatrick, 1985; Chen, DiTomaso, & Farris, 1999).

The Affective Events Theory and the Working Self-Concept Theory clearly establish the link between well-being concern and the appraisal of organizational change. How does such a link translate to leader-follower relationships and attributed charisma of the change leader? The focus of the current study is to answer this question. First, researchers have shown that organizational members attribute outcomes (actual, potential, or perceived) to leaders, often beyond the scope of a leader's actual impact (Meindl et al, 1985; Staw, 1975). Such attribution will likely carry over to charisma attribution to the change leader. Second, we contend that charisma attribution is also greatly influenced by the well-being concern of organizational members, such that those who expect to benefit from the change will attribute more charisma to the change leader than those who expect to be hurt. In other words, the more alignment there is between one's goals and the direction of organizational change the higher the attributed charisma of the change leader should be. We are aware of the argument that the very effect of transformational and charismatic leadership relies on the capacity of the leader to transcend followers' self-interest to that of the organization (Bass, 1985). We nevertheless follow the principal tenet of the Affective Event Theory and argue for the dominant effect of basic concern for well-being on charisma attribution. A case in point is the still-ongoing controversy on whether Jack Welch's leadership in GE (e.g., Abetti, 2006; Collingwood & Coutu, 2002) was charismatic and transformational or whether it was arbitrary and unfair as perceived by people whose lives and careers were differently affected by his management innovations. We therefore propose:

H1. Concern for individual well-being will influence charisma attribution, such that the higher the alignment between individual well-being concern and organizational change, the higher the attributed charisma of the change leader.

Emotion and Charisma Attribution

Emotions are specific affective occurrences that are directed towards particular stimuli, and, compared with mood, are higher in intensity and shorter in duration (Barry, 1999; Brief & Weiss, 2002; Forgas, 1992; Frijda, 1993). Positive emotional states tend to create a positive skew on individual perceptions and negative emotional states tend to create negative ones (e.g. Chen, Saporito, & Belkin, 2011; Isen, 1987; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), whether or not the target of appraisal or perception is the source of the emotions (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005). One central position of the Affective Events Theory is the role of affect in mediating between events and attitudes and behaviors. Similarly, the Working Self-Concept Theory emphasizes followers' affective states as independent and mediating variables of leadership perception. It was found that positive affective expressions and the use of high imagery by leaders influence members' ratings of charismatic leadership through creating positive affective states in the followers (Bono & Ilies, 2006; Naidoo & Lord, 2008). While previous research found evidence in the effect of emotion on attributed charisma, the source of the follower emotion was proposed to be the leader nevertheless (a leader-centric perspective). We contribute to the charisma attribution literature by proposing that the source of emotions lies in followers' assessment of the proposed organizational change in terms of its impact on their own well-being. Accordingly, followers will experience positive emotions when they feel their well-being is enhanced by a proposed organizational change, but negative emotions when they feel their well-being is harmed by the change. In summary, we propose:

H2. Emotions induced by organizational change will influence the charisma attribution, such that positive emotions will increase attributed charisma of the change leader whereas negative emotions will decrease attributed charisma of the change leader.

H3. Well-being concern will influence charisma attribution through emotions such that higher alignment between individual well-being concern and organizational change will increase attributed charisma through the mediation of positive emotions, whereas lower alignment will decrease attributed charisma through the mediation of negative emotions.

Divergence of Charisma Attribution between Different Constituents

Attention to the divergence or convergence of charisma attribution is a key element of the follower centric perspective (Meindl, 1990; Pastor et al., 2002) because, as we argued earlier, divergence in charisma attribution should be influenced by divergence of well-being concern. In the above, we argued that due to the differential consequences of organizational change, emotional responses and charisma attribution differ among individuals within and between interest groups. Here we argue for similar correlations in variance. We expect variance difference between major, core targets of change versus minor, peripheral targets. We also expect greater variance of emotions and of attributed charisma among members of the targeted groups because the change brings differential outcomes associated with redistribution of power, reallocation of resources and rewards, and redeployment of personnel (Amburgey, Kelly, & Barnett, 1993; Halliday, Powell, & Granfors, 1993; Anderson & Tushman, 2004). In other words, to the extent that organizational change increases difference of standing among the members of the targeted groups there should be greater divergence of emotional reactions and subsequently, greater divergence in attributed charismatic leadership. We therefore hypothesize:

H4. There will be greater divergence of emotions among those constituents directly targeted by organizational change than among those that are not.

H5. There will be greater divergence of attributed charisma among those constituents directly targeted by organizational change than among those that are not.

Subjectivity of Charisma Attribution

The follower-centric perspective of leadership is appropriate only to the extent that the target of construction and perception is subjective. Research on perception has demonstrated that the objective-subjective nature of the perception target determines the heterogeneity of perception (Brockner et al., 1988; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Perrow, 1972). Namely, the more subjective the target is, the more likely perception about it will vary, suggesting a greater degree of social construction (Fiske, 1993). Moreover, research in social cognition and person construal that was recently synthesized into the Dynamic Interactive Theory of Person Construal by Freeman and Ambady (2011) argues for differentiating levels of cognitive mechanisms. The so-called “lower-level” perceptual mechanisms get their inputs through visual and auditory cues, whereas the “higher-level” processes are influenced by motivation, goals, or even stereotypes. These two types of cognitive mechanisms differentially and often interactively affect perceptions and attributions.

Accordingly, targets that are salient (e.g., visible), for which existing standards or norms are widely recognized, and for which the sensory input is readily available (e.g., physical appearance), the discrepancy among individual perceptions should be less than for targets that are less visible (e.g., personality), require more subjective judgment and are influenced by

individual concerns for well-being. In other words, there should be less divergence of perception in the audience regarding a speaker's physical features than his or her personality characteristics.

Building on the above, we expect that attributed charisma, representing the idealized effect of the leader and being more subject to followers' motivations, goals and well-being concerns, should evoke more heterogeneous perceptions by diverse constituents than is the charismatic delivery style of a leader (Holladay & Coombs, 1993; 1994), because the latter relies more heavily on perceptual inputs such as the leaders' voice, visual appearance, and facial and bodily movements (Freeman & Ambady, 2011; Naidoo & Lord, 2008). If this effect is confirmed, the subjectivity of leader characteristics will serve as an important boundary condition for charisma attribution.

We therefore hypothesize that:

H6. Well-being concern and emotions will have less impact on the perception of charismatic delivery style than on attributed charisma.

Research Context of Organizational Change

Based on the premises of the above general hypotheses we make more specific hypotheses in reference to a particular organizational change context we used. This is an important aspect of our study design since well-being concern is highly contextualized as it relates to the content of a given organizational intervention. For example, if a change aims at downsizing organizational subunits, then subunit affiliation is a salient well-being concern, but if the change aims at revamping the performance appraisal system, individual standings on the performance rating become a salient well-being concern.

We sought a context in which the organizational change carries serious potential consequences to organizational members, but which effects can vary according to their well-being concerns. Such an opportunity arose in the business school of a university in the northeast of the U.S., where there had been an ongoing concerted effort led by a faculty member to reform the school's grading policy. Despite widespread apathy and disinterest among the faculty in the business school, this faculty member formed and led a school-wide grading policy reform committee, which lobbied the administration to treat grade inflation as a high-priority agenda issue, collected and compiled data of grade inflation across American universities as well as within this business school to demonstrate the existence of grade inflation, and advocated new practices to curb it. The change leader distributed a campaigning videotape (to be described later) to the faculty for reforming the school's grading policy and practices. Under the leadership of this particular faculty member, several faculty meetings were held at which the grading policy reform was heatedly debated. While many elements of a grading policy reform were debated, the key component put forward for faculty vote was to limit the proportion of A grades to 30 percent of the class for any given course. The proposal was passed by the faculty to encourage individual faculty members to voluntarily curb the number of A grades to approximately 30% for undergraduate and MBA courses; the executive MBA (EMBA) courses however were exempted from this proposal. Thus, the undergraduate and EMBA students provided two constituent groups of the same organization who were differentially affected by the proposed change, and their perceptions of charisma for the change leader provide the context for our study.

From our perspective, the faculty member is clearly a change leader in an academic organizational context. However, questions may arise as to whether the student-faculty relationship that we examined represents a leader-follower relationship in a more traditional

business organization. While we will discuss this issue of generalizability later in the Discussion section, we contend here that the scenario of organizational change and the change efforts by the faculty member in this study are highly appropriate for our research purpose. First, though this particular faculty member had no personal contact with any student participant of our study (in fact, he teaches his own classes on a different campus of the university), from the follower-centric perspective and considering the wide spread practice of hiring outside executives to initiate and implement organizational change (Gabarro, 1987, Kotter & Heskett, 1992), being a change leader does not necessarily require personal interactions with followers. Many, if not most, of the rank and file organizational members have never had nor will they have personal interactions with a change leader. Indeed, the targets of charisma attribution research have often been “distant” leaders without the followers having first-hand interaction with or knowledge of the leader (e.g., Bligh, Kohles, & Meindl, 2004; Bligh, Kohles, & Pillai, 2005; Chen & Meindl, 1991). Second, a change leader may emerge to be a formal leader (Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994), but does not assume or require an existing hierarchical leader-follower relationship. In other words, one does not have to be a business school dean or a company CEO to champion change on a particular issue, though in our context, a faculty member does indeed have the face validity of being an authority figure over students, even if the students are not enrolled in that particular faculty’s classes. The point is that a change leader can emerge from lower ranks of an organization or from less powerful units, who seek to advocate change and mobilize support through personal persuasion, alliance building, issue selling and lobbying (Pfeffer, 1981; Dutton & Ashford, 1993). For our study, we contend that the faculty member satisfies two key criteria of a change leader; namely that he is believed to be the change leader by the organizational

members, and the change that he advocates is real, rather than hypothetical, and consequential, rather than trivial, in nature.

Effects of School Year and GPA on Charisma Attribution

We use students' demographic background relevant to the grading policy reform as variables of well-being concern. In particular, through discussion with undergraduate students, we identified two key variables: academic school year, i.e., years in school in terms of freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior, and academic performance, i.e., the accumulative grade point average (GPA). Recognizing that these variables do not directly measure well-being concern we nevertheless contend that our approach is consistent with previous research on related issues of power and self-enhancement. For example, Pfeffer (1981) recommended groupings of political actors by a matrix of demographic and departmental affiliations over relevant issues of proposed change, and interestingly, he used academic background variables to illustrate his methods. Similarly, Lockwood and Kunda (1997) studied how superstars may or may not have the role model effects on graduating students depending on how relevant a superstar is to the students and whether or not the super star poses a threat or serves as an inspiration. The authors used academic major and school year of college students as indicators of relevance and self-enhancement, which are similar to the concept of well-being concern in our study. Though it should be noted that the use of these more objective indicators have the advantage of reducing subjects' social desirability and self-consistency.

In the following section we make a set of sub-hypotheses (labeled as H1a, H1b, and H1c) to correspond with Hypothesis 1 about the effects of well-being concern and two sub-hypotheses (labeled as H3a and H3b) to correspond with Hypotheses 3 about the mediation effect of

emotions. School year is relevant for our purposes because the more advanced in college and the closer to graduation the student is, the more concerned he/she may be with their grades due to approaching employment or graduate school applications. In particular, we reason that senior students should be the most anxious about a reform that aims at curbing high grades, because if immediately implemented, the reform would limit the opportunity to boost their grades within a short time before graduation. In terms of self-concept, the proposed change would be more self-deflating to the more senior than the more junior students (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997).

Accordingly, based on the well-being alignment argument, we hypothesize:

H1a. School year will be negatively related to attributed charisma such that the more senior students will attribute less charisma to the change leader than will the more junior students.

GPA is a relevant indicator of well-being concern because it provides the basis for employment and graduate school admission decisions. There are two possible ways in which GPA may affect charisma attribution. One is a positive linear effect, such that those who currently have a higher GPA may anticipate that the reform will be self-enhancing because it will help protect or even raise their advantaged status, whereas those who currently hold lower GPA may anticipate the reform as being self-deflating because it holds them back at the current disadvantaged positions. On the other hand, the effect of GPA on charisma attribution may instead be curvilinear. In the curvilinear relationship, the prediction about the high GPA students will be the same, but it should change with regards to the relative attitude of students with low, as opposed to medium, GPA. Compared with the medium GPA group, the low GPA group may be less resistant to the change, because the grading policy reform is presumably targeted only at

those who are close to earning A grades. Thus, the reform would be less self-relevant to the low GPA group or in a “misery loves company” type of stance, low GPA students may find the reform somewhat more self-enhancing because more people will get lower grades along with them instead of them being the only ones performing poorly in a sea of grade-inflated peers. All else equal, giving that the reform focuses on limiting the proportion of As, students in the medium grade range may find the reform the most debilitating as they come close to earning As, but could fail to do so due to the reform. Considering that curbing high grades is promoted as the major thrust of the reform, we thus expected a curvilinear relationship between GPA and charisma attribution. We therefore hypothesize:

H1b. Students with high and low GPAs will perceive more charisma to the change leader than will those with medium GPAs.

Combining the respective effects of school year and GPA, there is likely an interaction effect between the two variables. Specifically, in Hypothesis 1a about school year, we proposed that students in more advanced years on average will perceive less charisma in the change leader than those in less advanced years, while from the curvilinear hypothesis we proposed that high GPA students on average will perceive more charisma to the change leader than will the medium GPA students. Joining these two hypotheses, one would expect that the positive effect of GPA (high as opposed to medium) on charisma attribution should be reduced by the negative effect of school year. In other words, students who are in more junior years and who have high GPAs will be even more positive in their reaction toward the change leader while those in senior year with high GPAs will be less positive because of their greater concern for ensuring a high GPA before graduation. As a result we hypothesize:

H1c. There will be an interaction between GPA and school year on attributed charisma such that the positive GPA effect (high versus medium) on perceived charisma will be weaker for more senior students than for more junior students.

Mediating Effect of Emotions

Using the same rationale for Hypothesis 3 about the mediation of emotion between well-being concerns and charisma attribution, the following two sub-hypotheses are formulated to correspond with Hypothesis 3.

H3a. School year will influence attributed charisma through emotions.

H3b. GPA² will influence attributed charisma through emotions.

Divergence of Emotion and Charisma Attribution between Undergraduates and EMBA Constituents

Hypotheses 4 and 5 predict that there will be greater divergence of emotion and charisma attribution for constituents targeted for change than for those that are not. Applying these hypotheses to the grading policy reform, we expect that there will be greater divergence of emotions among the undergraduate students than that among the EMBA students in response to the proposed grading reform policy; additionally there will be greater divergence of attributed charisma among the undergraduate students than among the EMBA students.

Methods Overview

We conducted three studies to test our hypotheses. In Study 1, using undergraduate business students (the main targets of the proposed change), we examined how attributed

charisma and charismatic delivery style of the change leader was affected by students' self well-being concerns and emotions. In Study 2, with a different group of undergraduate business students from the same school we conducted an experiment in which we manipulated emotions to determine its causal effect on charisma attribution. In Study 3, we tested Hypotheses 4 and 5 about the divergence of charisma attribution across different constituents by comparing undergraduate business students with a group of international EMBA students, who were not the target of the proposed change, but were still constituent members of the same organization (university).

Factor Analysis of Common Variables across Samples

The three studies we conducted share the same mediators and dependent variables, namely, positive emotions, negative emotions, attributed charisma, and charismatic delivery style. As some of the hypotheses require comparisons of the mean and the variance of these variables across the studies, we would like to use scales that are composed of the same items across the different samples. We conducted a principal axis exploratory factor analysis with Oblimin rotation (PAF-Oblimin) across the samples of the three studies to create scales with consistent discriminant and convergent validities. In the exploratory factor analyses, we utilize a threshold of .25 to hide items that had lower crossloadings with other factors. This conservative threshold was significantly lower than the remaining item loadings suggesting that cross-loading was not a significant issue in the PAF-Oblimin factor analysis. As can be seen in Table 1, items of positive emotions, negative emotions, and attributed charisma all loaded on their expected single factors. Items of charismatic delivery style, however, formed two separate factors (Factors 1 and 4) distinguishing styles of fluent-impressive and dramatic communication. This two-factor

solution is in line with the multi-scale origin of these items (Norton, 1983; Holladay & Coombs, 1993, 1994). Because we are concerned with an overarching concept of delivery style underlying the factors, we combined these two sets of items into a single scale. We obtained the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of each scale for the combined data set as well as for the individual samples used in each study. All of the Chronbach's alpha coefficients were well above the acceptable level of .70 (Nunnally, 1978).

**** Insert Table 1 about here ****

Study 1

Sample

Five classes totaling 279 undergraduate business students participated in this study as part of a required management course. The students ranged in age from 18 to 45 years old with the majority (over 80%) in their 20s, 55% male, more than one half having full-time work experience, and represented a diverse ethnic composition (see Table 2 for more details).

Procedure

The questionnaire was administered by the instructor and a teaching assistant of the class immediately after the students took an exam. The study was described as an exercise about organizational change, but participation was voluntary and anonymous. The class was later debriefed with a discussion of organizational change, emotion, and transformational leadership. The questionnaire first asked the students to assess their own performance on the exam they had just taken. The students then watched the videotape of a power point presentation by the chair of the grading policy reform committee to be described below. The committee chair teaches on a

different campus, so participants were not familiar with him. After the video, participants proceeded to the next section of the questionnaire, which included a list of the negative consequences of grade inflation as presented in the video and the proposal to limit the proportion of A grades to 25%-30% for all undergraduate business courses. The students were asked to report how they felt after listening to the presentation and to evaluate the presentation by answering questions about attributed charisma and charismatic delivery style. Demographic information was collected at the end of the survey. We conducted the study immediately following the exam in an attempt to capture the situation of stress and anxiety, which was found by previous research to be conducive to the emergence of charismatic leadership (Pillai, 1996). The general atmosphere of an exam, we believe, also helps to create anxiety and uncertainty similar to that found in organizations experiencing pending major changes. Lastly, we reasoned that the exam would help drive home the relevance of the grading policy to the students.

Video Presentation

We give a detailed description of the video presentation that the study participants watched, because in our view it is important that the speaker must come across to the viewers as a change leader and that the proposed change must be consequential. The video clip we showed lasted 16 minutes and was part of an actual video presentation made by the change leader for the faculty of the business school. In the original presentation, the speaker presented the data on grade inflation over the years, sharply criticized current grading practices, argued for the importance and urgency of reform, and finally offered advice on how to implement tough, yet fair grading practices in order to motivate student learning, improve academic standards, and maintain the integrity of the educational profession. The edited clip that we used for the study

focused primarily on the importance and the urgency for reforming the current grading policy and practices.

In the presentation segment, the speaker directly moved to the issue of grade inflation after a formal self-introduction of his name, title, and departmental affiliation. The speaker then presented data that documents the steady trend of increase in grade inflation in the U.S. across public and private universities, and within the business school. The speaker chided his faculty colleagues in the school and around the country for awarding high grades in “an indiscriminate fashion” and even singled out departments of the business school that had been most generous in awarding A grades. The speaker lamented that faculty who hold high academic standards had been inflicted with “slings and arrows of outrageous grading”. Personal anecdotes were also used to illustrate how grade inflation had encouraged students to be aggressive in negotiating a better grade without working hard to earn it; for example, he noted that “showing up is enough to win the battle of good grades.” Point by point the speaker elaborated how grade inflation practices might lead to serious negative effects such as 1) reducing students’ motivation to learn, 2) constituting a form of academic cheating among both students and faculty, and 3) leaving students less prepared to meet future challenges. The speaker strongly advocated change by citing positive examples within the school and from published research to illustrate how tough grading improves academic performance, as well as prepares students for their career success in the real world. The speaker used his own practices as examples of tough grading. He stated: “I don’t grade indiscriminately. I am one of the toughest graders in the school. At any rate, what I do, despite the hard grades, seems to work pretty well. I won a number of teaching awards. I have fine relationship with my students. In fact, I still correspond with students that were in my class some 20 years ago”. Toward the end of the presentation, in an apparent effort to show that

he personally practiced what he preached and to provide an example of ideal grade distribution, he presented the distribution of 1718 grades that he had awarded over the years in 24 sections of the course that he had taught (which is the very course the participating students were taking at the time of the study): 29% in A, 40% B and B+, 25% C, and 6% D and F. In the presentation, the speaker used a variety of means including sound effects, humor, snap shots of his interaction with students in the classroom, personal anecdotes, and research data to support his change message. He spoke passionately about what he believes in, strongly criticized what he considers malpractices of faculty colleagues and students, and firmly advocated change toward tough grading.

Dependent Variables

Attributed charisma. To measure attributed charisma, we adopted all four items of the “idealized attributes of charisma” sub-scale from MLQ-5X (Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire) by Bass and Avolio (1994), which Schriesheim et al., (2009) called attributed charisma as opposed to behavioral charisma (specific idealized behaviors) of the leader. This scale is recognized in the field as one of the most accepted methods for capturing the essential elements of charismatic leadership (Schriesheim et al., 2009). We added one general item of “being charismatic” used in previous research (Bligh et al, 2004, Pastor et al., 2002). These five items are about the overall effects attributed to the leader by the followers (see Table 1). Responses were based on a 7-point Likert scale with answers ranging from 1 (*disagree very strongly*) to 7 (*agree very strongly*). All items in this scale loaded onto one factor (Factor 5) with Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.81$.

Charismatic delivery style. This was a modified 9-item version of the Charismatic Delivery Style questionnaire originally developed by Norton (1983) and adopted by Holladay and Coombs (1993, 1994). Participants were asked to rate their perception of the speaker's style on a 7-point Likert scale with answers ranging from 1 (*disagree very strongly*) to 7 (*agree very strongly*). As Table 1 shows, these items loaded onto two separate factors (Factors 1 and 4) distinguishing styles of fluent-impressive and dramatic communication. As we are concerned with an overarching concept of delivery style underlying the factors, we combined these two sets of items into a single scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .77$). We also explored results with these two subscales individually as well. The results (not reported here) were substantively similar to the results with the combined scale.

Independent Variables

School year. School year denotes freshman, sophomore, junior or senior and was converted into a 1 to 4 scale. Because there were very few freshmen participants (nine subjects out of 279 total) we excluded them from further analyses.

GPA. GPA was based on students' self-reported GPA.

Emotions. We used a modified version of the Positive and Negative Affectivity Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). The PANAS scales are among the most widely used affective measures, and can measure affect at multiple levels, including the emotion, mood, or trait levels and the scales have been shown to be internally consistent, with reliability index ranging in the .80s to .90s, and to be consistent over time (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988; Watson & Walker, 1996). We used the scales to measure emotional states rather than traits or moods as we administered the scales immediately after the participants watched the video and

we instructed them to report how they felt after listening to the presentation. Two 5-item scales were composed: “inspired”, “excited”, “energized”, “optimistic”, and “hopeful” for “Positive Emotions” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.92$) and “angry”, “frustrated”, “scared”, “upset” and “tense” for “Negative Emotions” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.88$) on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*). As shown in Table 1 we found two emotion factors as expected (Factor 2 and 3).

Control variables. We controlled for several background variables: age, gender, course section, ethnicity, years of work experience, and expected exam grade. Course section and ethnicity were dummy coded in order to be included as controls with Course Section 1 and White/Caucasian dummy variables excluded as comparison groups. Expected exam grade was measured by two items on a 7-point scale (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .90$). One item estimated the degree to which students felt that they did well on the exam on a 7-point scale with 1 (*disagree very strongly*) and 7 (*agree very strongly*). The other item estimated expected grade for the exam with answers ranging from “F” to “A”, which was converted to a 7-point scale.

**** Insert Table 2 about here ****

Analyses

Descriptive statistics of the variables are reported in Table 2. To test Hypotheses 1a to 1c, and Hypothesis 2 regarding the effects of self well-being and emotions, we conducted hierarchical regression analyses, with Step 1 controlling for the effects of background variables, Step 2 adding school year, Step 3 adding GPA and GPA², Step 4 adding the interactions of GPA and school year, and Step 5 adding positive and negative emotions. For the regression analyses, to reduce colinearity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001), we included centered values of school year

and GPA and used these centered values to calculate GPA² as well as the interaction term of GPA and school year. To test the mediation effect of emotions, we conducted Structuring Equation Modeling (SEM) with bias-corrected bootstrapping techniques as implemented in AMOS 6.0 to test for simultaneous multiple mediation of positive and negative emotions.

Results

Effects of self well-being concerns on attributed charisma

As can be seen in Table 3, Model 2, school year was negatively related to attributed charisma such that the more advanced a respondent was in school, the less charisma s/he attributed to the change leader. As per Table 3, Model 3 GPA showed no main effect as predicted; however, GPA² was significant suggesting that students with either high or low GPA attributed more charisma in the reform leader than did those with moderate GPAs. To depict the curvilinear relationship we converted GPA to three levels and correlated them with attributed charisma (see Figure 1). The three GPA levels were: (1) more than a standard deviation below the mean, (2) within a standard deviation of the mean, and (3) more than a standard deviation above the mean. These results supported Hypotheses 1, 1a, and 1b. Finally, the interaction term of school year * GPA was also significant as can be seen in Table 3, Model 4.

**** Insert Table 3 about here ****

**** Insert Figures 1 and 2 about here ****

Our interaction hypothesis (H1c) predicted that although students with high, as opposed to medium, GPA will attribute more charisma to the change leader, such a positive effect will be less pronounced for more senior students. The negative sign of the interaction term suggested that this is indeed the case. To further explore the nature of the interaction, we used the GLM

function of SPSS to graph the interaction of GPA and school year. The GLM function offers the benefit of graphing the interaction, while taking into account all the demographic and background variables used in the above regression analyses. While the full range of GPA is included in the GLM analysis, in order to clearly depict the medium-high GPA comparison, we excluded the low GPA. GPA was divided into three levels: low GPA is one standard deviation below the mean, medium GPA is within one standard deviation of the mean, and high GPA is one standard deviation above the mean. We graphed the correlation between GPA and charisma attribution respectively for sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Figure 2 suggested two points. First, attributed charisma for both medium and high GPA levels are the highest for sophomores, but lowest for seniors with juniors in between. This is consistent with the main effect of school year as stated in Hypothesis 1a. Second, and more pertinent to the interaction hypothesis, the positive relationship between GPA and charisma attribution is stronger (i.e., with steeper slopes) for more junior year students. These results provided support for Hypothesis 1c.

Although not hypothesized, we also tested the interaction of GPA² and school year. The effect was not significant and its addition in the equation did not affect the significance levels of the main effect of GPA², school year, or the interaction of GPA and school year.

Main effects of emotions on attributed charisma. As was predicted by Hypothesis 2, emotions showed a significant impact on attributed charisma (Table 3, Model 5). More specifically, positive emotion was associated with higher attributed charisma, while negative emotion was associated with lower attributed charisma. Together, emotions (Model 5) explained an additional 19% of the variance in attributed charisma.

Mediation effect of emotions. We used the SEM procedure to test the mediation effect of emotions, which has the advantages of (1) simultaneously testing two correlated mediators

(positive and negative emotions), and (2) the bootstrapping technique more accurately models the actual distribution of the underlying variables and makes no assumptions of normal sample distribution (Judd & Kenny, 1981; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Alternative methods for testing mediation (e.g., Sobel tests) assume that $a*b$ (where a equals the independent variable to mediator parameter and b equals mediator to dependent variable parameter) are normally distributed over multiple samplings, which they are not (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Since we planned to use bootstrapping, the raw data file was input into AMOS. In order to take into account our control variables we used the GLM function in SPSS to “remove” the effect of controls from both IVs and DVs and consequently used the residuals in our SEM model. The benefits of including controls while allowing continued assessment of model fit have been suggested to outweigh the problems associated with this method (Fletcher, 2006). To further address any concerns we have also presented results with the original variables before removing the effects of controls. These results are described in the notes in Figure 3 and are nearly identical to the results with controls removed.

We initially started with a model correlating independent variables (GPA and School Year) with their interactions (GPA * YIS) as well as with curvilinear effects (GPA with GPA^2) to confirm that centering was sufficient to remove correlations. Results showed that the correlations between GPA and school year and their interaction were not significant and the model fit was not reduced significantly by their removal (χ^2 change: 0.3, *d.f.* change: 2, $p = ns$); thus, these correlations were removed, such that the most parsimoniously nested model was used in further analysis (Steiger, Shapiro & Browne, 1985). In order to test Hypotheses 3a and 3b, we included all direct and indirect effects (i.e., through the mediation of emotions) of the independent variables of school year, GPA, and GPA^2 on charisma attribution. It was found that

GPA and GPA² were not significant on positive or negative emotions, had insignificant indirect effects on charisma attribution, and the model was not adversely affected by their removal (χ^2 change: 7.4, *d.f.* change: 6, $p = ns$). These insignificant effects were therefore removed, so that we would be able to reasonably assess the goodness-of-fit of the final model and confirm the support for the remaining hypotheses.

Our final model (see Figure 3) confirmed hypothesis H1a, H1b, and H1c by validating our regression results and showing that GPA was not significant (GPA was kept in the model as the main effect control for GPA² and for the interaction of school year and GPA), while GPA² and school year were significant on charisma attribution. Furthermore, the results showed that school year had a significant indirect effect ($\beta = -.08$; $p < .05$) through positive and negative emotions as well as a significant direct effect ($\beta = -.13$, $p < .05$) creating a highly significant total effect ($\beta = -.204$, $p < .01$) on charisma attribution. These results suggest that the effect of school year on charisma attribution was partially mediated by positive and negative emotions, which provides support for Hypothesis 3a. Since GPA² had no significant effect on emotions and no indirect effect on charisma attribution, Hypothesis 3b was therefore not supported.

****Insert Figure 3 about here****

Study 1 Discussion

First, we found that in response to a proposal of grading reform limiting the proportion of A grades, students in more advanced years attributed less charisma in a change leader than did those with less advanced years and this difference was mediated partially by more senior students having weaker positive emotion and stronger negative emotion. This finding is consistent with our arguments based on the Affective Events Theory and hypothesis about self

well-being – organizational change alignment. Second, we found a curvilinear relationship between GPA and charisma, such that students with medium GPAs attributed least charisma to the leader because they were most likely to see the reform as detrimental to their efforts to improve GPA. In comparison, those with high GPA attributed more charisma to the change leader possibly because they had confidence in maintaining their high GPA status despite the tough grading and fewer overall A's under the new grading policy. Those with low GPA also perceived higher charisma to the change leader possibly because they did not see as much harm in the reform due to the reform's focus on curbing the granting of high grades, and in fact might thought that they could benefit from more students receiving lower grades. Third, the positive effect of GPA on charisma attribution seems to be significantly reduced for the senior students with high GPA, who formed relatively lower charisma attribution than their counterparts in junior and sophomore years. Together these results suggest that the same organizational change may trigger different emotional reactions from members who have different well-being concerns. Different emotions in turn affect different levels of attributed charisma of the same change leader.

Study 1 has a potential limitation of design in that we cannot know how much of the emotion we measured was due to the exam itself (even though we controlled for expected exam grades) and how much was due to the presentation of the change proposal. Furthermore, to explore the causal relationship between emotion and charisma attribution, it is necessary to manipulate emotion independent of the message. Study 2 was therefore designed to clearly assess the causality of emotional state and charisma attribution. Unlike Study 1, in which we measured emotions after subjects watched the video presentation of the change leader, in Study 2, we created and measured emotional state in reaction to organizational change before subjects

watched the video presentation of a change leader and before they assessed charisma. Using an experimental design and a change situation that did not immediately affect the students themselves also helped us to address the “senioritis” concern.

Study 2

Sample

One hundred and fifty three undergraduate business students from two classes participated in this study. The students ranged in age from 18 to 41 years old with the majority (89%) between 19 and 22, were 50% male, and represented a diverse ethnic composition: 11% African American, 29% Asian, 28% Caucasian, 18% Hispanic, and 14% other. Most of the students (69%) were in their junior year in college, with about one third (31%) having 1 to 7 years of full-time work experience.

Research Design, Procedure, and Measures

The study was presented as “a simulation exercise about experiencing organizational change and evaluating leadership style”. For the first part of the exercise, students were randomly assigned to either a positive or a negative scenario condition. Both scenarios were narrated by “Chris”, a college student working full-time, who reported how the company he/she worked for, recently went through major changes led by a new CEO. Participants were asked to put themselves in Chris’s position as they read the scenario. In the positive scenario, Chris described how the organizational change positively affected his or her work and life, while in the negative scenario Chris described negative consequences. The description of the organizational change was otherwise the same. After reading the scenario, participants reported their emotional

states and answered manipulation questions. For the second part of the study, all participants were shown a videotaped speech of Charlotte Beers, CEO of Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide, speaking to Harvard Business School students about how she led an organizational change in her company. Before the video, all subjects read a brief background description of Beers and the company's organizational change. Following the video, subjects reported their perception of Beers' charisma and delivery style. All relevant variables were measured with the same items and scales used in Study 1. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the scales in Study 2 were .79 for attributed charisma, .80 for charismatic delivery style, .92 for positive emotions, and .91 for negative emotions.

Manipulation checks. Two questions about the perceived positive versus negative outcomes of the scenario were asked as a manipulation check. The first was "In the scenario, the impact of the scenario was ..." and the second was "In the scenario, Chris' work and life were affected by the organizational change in the following way". Responses were given on a 7-point scale with 1 (*Very Strongly Negative*) to 7 (*Very Strongly Positive*). The two questions had a Cronbach's α of 0.92.

Control variables. To confirm our random assignment we included the same background variables from Study 1. In addition we included two 7-point scale items used to assess the realness of the scenarios: "The scenario was quite realistic in describing how organizational change can affect employees' work and life" and "Chris' personal experience described in the scenario can happen in real organizations" (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.76$).

Analysis

To test Hypothesis 2 about the effect of emotions, we first conducted ANOVA to check our manipulation. Following this, we conducted hierarchical linear regression analyses with charisma as the dependent variable: with Step 1 including the control of scenario realness and Step 2 examining the effect of positive and negative emotions.

Results

Random assignment. ANOVA of background variables revealed no significant difference between the positive and negative conditions confirming the effectiveness of the random assignments.

Manipulation checks. ANOVA of the manipulation check showed that the positive scenario was rated as having significantly greater positive outcome than the negative scenario (Means = 5.91 vs. 1.78; $F(1, 150) = 1207.21, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .89$). Furthermore, ANOVA of emotions showed that subjects in the positive scenario reported higher positive emotions (Means = 4.16 vs. 1.71; $F(1, 151) = 179.18, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .56$) and lower negative emotions (Means = 1.68 vs. 4.11; $F(1, 151) = 173.18, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .53$) than those in the negative scenario. These results suggested that our manipulation was highly successful.

Emotions on attributed charisma. The results of our regression analyses showed that after controlling for scenario realness, positive and negative emotions explained an additional 4.8% of the variance in attributed charisma. However, only positive emotions scale was significant ($\beta = .207, t = 2.203, p < .05$). These results gave further support for Hypothesis 2.

Study 2 Discussion

The results provided evidence that the positive emotional state of followers could have a significant causal effect on charisma attribution. It is worth pointing out that this finding is remarkable because unlike Study 1, in which the speaker in the video was also the leader of the change that would affect the viewers, Study 2 presented a speaker who led a successful organizational transformation in a real company, which is different from the one that we used to create emotions. That is to say, although the emotions were related to organizational change, the leader in the video presentation is not the same as in the scenario; yet, the emotion elicited by the scenario nevertheless carried over and affected charisma attribution of the leader in the video. Negative emotion however did not affect charisma attribution, perhaps because the organizational change in the video was presented with a positive angle.

Study 3

The third study was designed to compare the degree of divergence of emotions and charisma attribution between different groups of constituents as stated in Hypotheses 4 and 5. Since Executive MBA (EMBA) classes of the business school were exempted from the grading reform proposal, we surveyed an EMBA class using a similar research procedure as in Study 1, in which the students watched the same videotape of the faculty speech on grade inflation, reported their emotions, and rated the presenting faculty's charisma and his delivery style. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the scales in Study 3 were .74 for attributed charisma, .74 for charismatic delivery style, .90 for positive emotions, and .89 for negative emotions.

Sample of EMBA Students

Thirty-four international EMBA students, mostly expatriates employed by Western companies operating in a country in Asia, participated in this study. Participants ranged in age from under 30 to over 45 years old, 68% were male, 50% were of Asian ethnicity, while the rest were Caucasian. We conducted two comparisons. The first was between EMBA and all undergraduates (as described in Study 1). The second was between EMBA students and the subgroup of 43 senior undergraduates. For this senior subgroup, the mean age was 27.5, nearly 65% had 2 years or more of full-time work experience, and they were 55% male, 23% White, 28% Asians, 12% African American, 12% Hispanic, and 26% other ethnicities. The senior population is a subset of the larger undergraduate population and so it should be highlighted that these are not independent tests, but rather variants of the same test.

The seniors were selected for a few reasons. First, this group has a similar sample size to the EMBA students. Second, they are a more theoretically relevant group than juniors and sophomores, because the optimal condition for testing divergence is to contrast EMBA group with a group that is affected the most. The seniors seemed to perceive the proposed reform as having the greatest impact on their self well-being concerns as suggested by the main effect of school year on charisma attribution and on emotions. Finally, they are also slightly closer in age to the EMBA students.

Analyses

To test for differences in the divergence of emotions and charisma attribution we used Levene's test for equality of variance between groups. Although not part of our direct hypothesis testing, we also used ANOVA to test for differences in mean scores of emotions and charisma attribution between EMBA and undergraduate students.

Results

Comparison with all undergraduates. ANOVA results showed that in comparison with the undergraduate students, the EMBA students reported stronger positive emotion (Means = 4.18 vs. 3.02; $p < .001$), but marginally weaker negative emotion (Means = 2.22 vs. 2.72, $p < 0.1$). No significant difference was found in charisma attribution (Means = 4.71 vs. 4.50, $p = ns$).

Levene's test of equality of variances showed that the variance for EMBA group was significantly different (and upon further examination of standard deviations for both groups EMBA deviations were lower) than the undergraduate students in positive emotion (SD = 1.14 vs. 1.55; Levene F (1, 310) = 8.305, $p < .01$) and in charisma attribution (SD = 0.85 vs. 1.21; Levene F (1, 310) = 4.892; $p < .05$). There is no significant difference in the variance of negative emotions (SD = 1.26 vs. 1.52, Levene F (1, 310) = 1.458; $p = ns$). Accordingly, Hypothesis 4 about the divergence of emotions received partial support, whereas Hypothesis 5 about the divergence of charisma attribution received full support.

Comparison with senior undergraduate students. ANOVA results showed that in comparison with the senior undergraduate students, the EMBA students reported stronger positive emotion (Means = 4.18 vs. 2.54; $p < .001$), weaker negative emotion (Means = 2.22 vs. 3.01, $p < .05$), and more charisma attribution (Means = 4.71 vs. 4.01, $p < .005$). Levene's test of equality of variances showed that the EMBA group had less variance than the undergraduate senior students in positive emotion (SD = 1.14 vs. 1.59; Levene F (1, 75) = 6.072, $p < .01$), in negative emotion (SD = 1.26 vs. 1.91; Levene F (1, 75) = 9.231, $p < .05$) and in charisma attribution (SD = 0.85 vs. 1.16; Levene F (1, 75) = 4.443, $p < .05$). These results supported both Hypothesis 4 about the divergence of emotions and Hypothesis 5 about the divergence of

charisma attribution. These comparisons provided support for the idea that organizational constituents who are the main targets of organizational reform will display greater divergence among members in emotions and charisma construction than those who are not.

Study 3 Discussion

The consistent variance differences of emotions and attributed charisma between the undergrads and the EMBA students provided support for our hypothesis regarding the effects of differential well-being concerns. However, an alternative plausible explanation is that EMBA students and undergraduates are inherently different people whose variances are innately different. There are a few counter points to this alternative explanation. To start with, this kind of differences would not surface if we adopted a leader-centric approach to charisma research. Our basic point is the same leader would be attributed to different levels of charisma by different types of organizational constituents. Second, the direction of the variance inequality was consistently in the expected direction, namely more variance among the undergraduates, but less among the EMBA students. Lastly, as we report in the following sections, consistent with the Dynamic Interactive Theory of Person Construal (Freeman & Ambady, 2011), such variance inequality happens only to attributed charisma, but not to perceived charismatic delivery style. These considerations therefore increase our confidence that the variance differences between the two groups have more to do with the well-being concern than with some random inherent differences. Nevertheless, future research could address this issue more definitively by directly measuring individual well-being concerns.

Effect of Subjectivity of Charisma Attribution

We predicted in Hypothesis 6 that the more subjective charisma is, the more it will be influenced by followers' perceptions. To test this hypothesis we examined whether our independent variables had greater impact on attributed charisma as compared to charismatic delivery style. Based on the Theory of Person Construal we reasoned that charismatic delivery style, which refers to specific communicative behavior such as voice volume, eye contact, hand gestures, as well as overall appearance, is more heavily influenced by lower-level perceptual processes whereas attributed charisma, which reflects follower attachment and bond with the leader, is more a subject to subjective construction. We conducted the same analyses on charismatic delivery style as those conducted on attributed charisma in all three studies. Results are summarized in Table 4.

**** Insert Table 4 about here ****

In Study 1, we found that school year, GPA squared, and the interaction between GPA and school year had significant effects on charisma attribution (see Table 3, Models 2 - 4). In support of Hypothesis 6 we found that these variables had no significant effect on charismatic delivery style (see Table 4, Model 2 - 4). In further support, negative emotion, a significant predictor of attributed charisma (Table 3, Model 3) was not significant on charismatic delivery style (Table 4, Model 3). Positive emotion, however, was positively related to charismatic delivery style, but this effect ($\beta = .17; p < .01$; Table 4, Model 5) was less strong than its effect on attributed charisma ($\beta = .357; p < .001$; Table 3, Model 5). In terms of effect size for attributed charisma, emotions explained 19% of the variance, while the entire model explained 37%. In contrast, for charismatic delivery style, emotions explained only 3% of the variance, while the entire model only 9% of the variance. Study 1 therefore supported Hypothesis 6.

In Study 2, we found that unlike attributed charisma, which was significantly different between positive and negative scenarios ($F(1, 151) = 6.687, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .04$), charismatic delivery style did not differ across scenarios ($F(1, 151) = 1.272, p = ns, \eta_p^2 = .01$). However, like attributed charisma, charismatic delivery style was affected by positive emotion after controlling for scenario realness and negative emotion ($\beta = .25, t = 2.66, p < .01, R^2 \text{ change} = .038$). The results of Study 2 therefore partially supported Hypothesis 6.

In Study 3, while the EMBA students and the undergraduate seniors were different in both the degree and the variance of attributed charisma, no difference was found for charismatic delivery style (Means = 4.21 vs. 4.10, $p = ns$; SD = .64 vs. .85, Levene $F(1, 75) = .367, p = ns$). These results provided more evidence in support of Hypothesis 6. In comparison with the undergraduates as a whole, EMBA students showed neither a higher level of attributed charisma (means = 4.71 vs. 4.50; $p = ns$) nor higher charismatic delivery style (means = 4.21 vs. 4.33, $p = ns$). In addition, results of the Levene's test of variance showed that EMBA students showed lower variance for attributed charisma (SD = .85 vs. 1.21, Levene $F(1, 310) = 4.892, p < .05$), but not charismatic delivery style (SD = .64 vs. .85, $F(1, 311) = 2.306, p = ns$) than did the undergraduate students. The results of Study 3 taken together provided further support for Hypothesis 6.

**** Insert Table 5 about here ****

Table 5 lists a summary of the results contrasting the effects of the individual independent variables on charisma attribution as opposed to charismatic delivery style. One can see that whenever an independent variable had an effect on charismatic delivery style, it also had an effect on attributed charisma, but the opposite is seldom true. Of the nine instances where our predications about charisma attribution are supported, only three instances were also supported

for charismatic delivery style. Put together, these results provided support for Hypothesis 6 that the charismatic perception was more subject to influence by follower well-being concerns and emotions due to the impact of higher-order cognitive and emotional states than was charismatic delivery styles, because the former is more subject to individual construction than the latter, which is heavily based on perceptual input (Freeman & Ambady, 2011).

General Discussion

Taking a follower-centric perspective, we employed three studies to examine how well-being concerns and emotions influence organizational members' charisma attribution in a context simulating key elements of organizational change. We found that well-being concerns not only influenced the strength, but also the divergence of charisma attribution. Furthermore, such effects could be partially accounted for by emotions associated with the organizational change. Finally, we found that these main and mediation effects tended to occur more with the cognitive construction of charisma attribution, than with the more objective perceptual phenomenon of charismatic delivery style.

Before discussing the contributions of this research, we entertain some potential limitations of the study. First, to leadership researchers who hold a strong leader-centric perspective, our study sheds little light on the "objective" charismatic behavior of the leader, because we held constant all leader characteristics. But it is our point that in certain situations, attributed charisma may have little to do with the leader, but much to do with the follower. Second, the well-being measures of this study should not be considered exhaustive and there might be other well-being concerns that we did not fully capture in this study. Future studies can also consider directly measuring well-being in terms of goals, preferences, values and exploring its direct and indirect effects on charisma attribution. Third, due to the fact that we

conducted the study in an educational setting, more research is needed to test the generalizability of our findings in work organizations with real employees. Students are not typical organizational members, because they are also the products and customers of their organization. Similarly, undergraduate students may not have the experience and mentality of real world employees, though the undergraduate population studied here is more advanced in years and work experience than are typical undergraduates in the U.S.. Furthermore, while organizational change tends to be a long process composed of many events that allow the change leader to influence charisma attribution, our study of grading reform captured only a snapshot of the change process in the form of a change proposal delivered in a single speech. The hypothetical scenarios and the videotape used in the second study were limited in self-relevance, which is why the aroused emotions explained rather limited amount of variance in attributed charisma. To address these limitations, future research can be conducted with employees in business organizations undergoing change and explore how employees' charisma attributions change over time.

We now turn to the major contributions of our study to each the leadership and organizational change areas of research. The first contribution of our study is in demonstrating how organizational events are emotionally assessed on the basis of well-being relevance as posited by the Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) and the Working Self-Concepts Theory of leadership (Lord & Brown, 2004). Our research points to the importance of the positive alignment between organizational change and the well-being concern of organization members. We used the rationale of the mutual inhibitory dynamics of self-activation, but added that the degree of inhibition may be associated with the degree of alignment of the well-being of the various selves. The results of our study encourage future research that directly tests these psychological processes of self-activation and self-concerns.

Our second contribution lies in finding support to the Affective Events Theory and further advances it by demonstrating not only the direct, but also the mediation effects of emotions in the context of organizational change. Specifically, our results suggest that charismatic leadership can be constructed and attributed by followers in accordance with their emotional reactions to organizational change. Leader-centric research focuses on leader emotions, often treating follower emotions as a by-product of the leader's emotions, or the target, rather than the source of influence in charisma attribution. However, follower-centric research on charisma has found evidence that the level of emotional stress or arousal can influence charisma attribution (Pastor, Mayo, & Shamir, 2007; Pillai, 1996). The direction (positive or negative) and intensity of emotions are critical in explaining the variation in charisma attribution: greater charisma attribution is associated with stronger positive emotions and weaker negative emotions of the followers. It is noteworthy that whereas negative emotions served as the mediator between years in school in Study 1, it failed to predict charisma attribution in Study 2. This suggests to us that emotional directionality is important for understanding the nature of affective mechanisms of charisma attribution. It seems that when change is being portrayed as beneficial to the organization and forcefully championed by a leader, positive emotion may be more potent than negative emotion in influencing charisma attribution to the change leader. We believe that such emotional effect asymmetry provides interesting insights for future work in the context of charismatic leadership and emotions. Further, our findings seem to suggest a congruence hypothesis, namely, that a congruent emotion (i.e., one in which the hedonic tone, positive or negative, of a person's emotion is considered appropriate for the norm of the situation) will have more impact on individual attributions than an incongruent emotion (i.e., one that does not fit the norm of the situation). These findings further extend propositions of the Affective Events Theory

demonstrating that it is not just the alignment between one's concern for the well-being and organizational goals that influences the direction of one's emotional response, but also that emotional asymmetry and/or congruence with accepted norms can determine individual response to organizational change. Future work can help to address this possibility.

Our third contribution lies in our effort to present a nuanced examination of charisma attribution. Building on the Dynamic Interactive Theory of Person Construal (Freeman & Ambady, 2011), we argued that not all charismatic phenomena are equally subject to follower construction due to innate differences in sensory (bottom-up) as opposed to cognitive (top-down) processes that determine how individuals form perceptions and attributions of other people. We predicted and found support for the idea that the more symbolic and cognitive top-down processes-oriented the charisma frame is, the more it may be affected by the subjective perception of followers. It appears that the leader may have more direct control over the perception of behavioral (such as auditory and visual) inputs related to charisma than over the feelings of the socio-psychological bond of the followers.

Lastly, we observed a divergence of charisma attribution among internal constituents and it opens up charisma research to issues that have so far received little attention. For example, future research may examine how organizational members select and choose charismatic leaders from among multiple contenders, why some organizational members decide not to follow a person considered by others as charismatic, and how internal constituents perceive and evaluate charisma differently than independent and external constituents. Major organizational changes considered necessary by investors, analysts, or the media, but with severe consequences to organizational members, may on average lead to less charisma attribution to the leaders by employees than by investors or external observers. In summary, the current studies provide

impetus for the mainstream charisma research to adopt a follower-centric research perspective and explore charisma attribution during organizational change.

The current study may have important practical implications for leaders in general and change leaders in particular. In view of the extraordinary, historical effect of charismatic leadership on followers, scholars and consultants have been advising managers to employ various strategies to make leaders appear more charismatic, such as conveying lofty visions or communicating values that transcend individual well-being concerns, as well as demonstrating a charismatic delivery style. The findings of our study, however, suggest that managers may have more control over the surface level of perceptual recognition, that is the charismatic delivery style, than over the deeper level of an emotional bond, which is shaped by followers' self-identity and self well-being. A leader who seeks a charismatic following must successfully convince potential followers that the organizational, as well as the individual, well-being will flourish in a changed world envisioned and championed by the leader.

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TABLE 1. Results of Exploratory Factor Analyses: Emotions, Attributed Charisma, and Charismatic delivery style

	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
DS - "... is a friendly communicator"	.70				
DS - "... is relaxed"	.66				
DS - "... is an open communicator"	.51				
DS - "... is articulate"	.46				
DS - "... leaves an impression on people"	.46				
PANAS – Upset		.84			
PANAS – Frustrated		.82			
PANAS – Scared		.77			
PANAS – Angry		.74			
PANAS – Nervous		.74			
PANAS – Energized			.93		
PANAS – Excited			.88		
PANAS – Optimistic			.83		
PANAS – Hopeful			.80		
PANAS – Inspired			.75		
DS - "... is dramatic"				.68	
DS - "... uses a lot of facial expressions"				.60	
DS - "... dramatizes a lot"				.57	
DS - "... uses a lot of hand gestures"				.43	
AC - "... goes beyond his-self interest for the good of the group"					-.75
AC - "... acts in a way that builds your trust"					-.63
AC - "... instills pride in being associated with him"					-.50
ACM - "... is charismatic"					-.44
AC - "... displays a sense of power and confidence"					-.36

Notes:

1. n=411
2. Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. / Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 17 iterations. Listwise deletion utilized.
3. Threshold for parameter display above is .25 (i.e., parameters below .25 are hidden from view)
4. Abbreviations:
 - a. PANAS - Positive and Negative Affectivity Schedule - Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988
 - b. AC - Attributed Charisma Scale MLQ-5X Short Form - Bass & Avolio, 1995
 - c. ACM - Attributed Charisma Modified Scale - Bligh, Kohles, & Pillai, 2005
 - d. DS - Charismatic Delivery Style - Holladay & Coombs, 1993, 1994; Norton, 1983.