



Signaling charisma

Summary

What we found: Charisma can be thought of as a signal that leaders send about their positive abilities and intentions, and leaders can send charismatic signals by using verbal tactics such as rhetorical questions, three-part lists and metaphors, and nonverbal tactics such as strategic pauses, gestures and eye contact.

Why it matters: There is no doubt charisma boosts leader effectiveness, but charisma might seem like a 'black box' to leaders. This research unravels the mysterious concept of charisma and transforms it into actionable steps that leaders can take to be perceived as more charismatic.

What next: Leaders can engage in specific tactics to signal their positive qualities and increase perceived charisma. Since charismatic leaders are more influential, learning these tactics could help business leaders take their leadership abilities to the next level.

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Signaling Charisma

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Abstract:

To explain charisma, I use a signaling perspective regarding how humans transmit knowledge in a state of incomplete information. Applied to leadership, a signaling approach centers on how leaders communicate with and engage followers. A charisma signal concerns a leader's values, emotions, and symbols, and thus transmits information about the leader's intelligence and intentions. Such signals evolved because they enhanced the success of groups and explain followers' attraction to the signal. I will argue that for charisma signals to remain credible indicators of leader qualities and intentions, followers should pay attention to other costly signals of intent such as self-sacrifice.

Keyword:

Leadership, charisma, signaling, costly behavior, self-sacrifice

Imagine that a leader aims to convey certain attributes about herself such as how competent and willing she is to lead a group based on certain values she holds dear; how can she do so effectively? Showing off her previous accomplishments or extant knowledge may work in some situations, but she may risk coming across as arrogant or unabashed. Pledging to do anything for the group may ring hollow. An effective way to achieve her aim may be to communicate the values she stands for and indicate she has understood the group's concerns and shares her followers' emotions, all this wrapped up in symbolic rhetoric. The charisma signal arises out of such communication, as it allows leaders to impart information about their abilities and intentions that cannot be otherwise observed (Antonakis et al., 2016). Building on previous work linking the charismatic literature with a signaling approach, I will define charisma as “values-based, symbolic, and emotion-laden leader signaling” (Antonakis et al., 2016, p. 304).

Using this definition as a backdrop, I will rely on core premises of the signaling literature to provide a fresh perspective on the study of charisma. A signaling approach rests on two main aspects: The underlying information transmitted by the signal and the cost (or honesty) of the signal. First, the signal conveys some information regarding an underlying attribute that one individual wishes to communicate. In the initial example, the imaginary leader aims to convey her abilities and intention to lead; one potent way to do so is to signal charisma using all three aspects of the charisma signal (i.e., values, symbolism, and emotions) in her rhetoric. I will argue in this chapter that the charisma signal indicates one's (a) intelligence – because the production of values-based and symbolic rhetoric requires intelligence (Antonakis et al., 2016) – and (b) intentions to coordinate group actions (Grabo et al., 2017) based on certain group values and emotions which are both antecedents of effective leadership. Indeed, the charisma signal offers crucial knowledge to followers on both the leader intelligence (i.e., abilities) and her willingness to lead based on specific values and

group emotions (i.e., intentions). Second, a signal needs to be costly or honest in that the signal should be hard to imitate for those individuals who do not possess the underlying attribute. This cost requirement suggests that individuals who signal charisma indeed possess the underlying attribute (Antonakis et al., 2016).

I will argue that charisma signals used to be costly signals of ability and intentions as our human species evolved but are not anymore due to changes in the context surrounding leader-follower interactions. Evolutionary psychology theory suggests that charismatic leadership was selected against other leadership styles because it was an effective way for groups to deal with certain evolutionary pressures (Grabo et al., 2017, Bastardo and Van Vugt, 2019). At the time the charisma signal evolved, these signals were permeated with information regarding the leader (e.g., reciprocity, reputation) making them very hard to fake and copy. Because conditions have changed – for instance, followers do not interact closely with their leaders over years or followers simply do not pay attention to a leader’s reputation – individuals who lack intentions to lead based on specific values and group emotions or who are less intelligent (to a lesser extent) may still fake and produce the charisma signal. I will suggest that followers and organizations should rely on other costly signals – such as a leader’s self-sacrificial behaviors or consistency of signals over time – to obtain an accurate idea of a leader’s intentions.

This chapter is structured as follows. I will first discuss basic tenets of the costly signaling literature, and its application to the charisma phenomenon. I will then delve further into the charisma signal, discussing the three major components of framing, substance, and delivery. I will then assert that the charisma signal may not be costly anymore; and then suggest ways for followers to continue benefitting from individuals signal charisma. I will finally conclude with future trends and directions providing research ideas sparked by the application of costly signaling to the study of charisma.

Costly signaling theory applied to charisma

Signals can be words, but also actions, behaviors, or more subtle non-verbal cues (Pentland, 2010). As Spence (2002) noted, signals represent “things one does that are in part designed to communicate” (p. 434), which in an environment of information asymmetry convey meaning about qualities and/or intent of the signaler (Stiglitz, 2000). Very importantly, not every communication attempt or cue is a signal; to be considered as a signal, a communication attempt or cue has to reveal certain hidden attributes that may not be imparted differently (Bliege Bird and Smith, 2005). Also, the signal in itself has per se no (or very little) intrinsic value; its value lies in the credible information about the underlying attribute. Take for example education: College or university degrees have very limited intrinsic value; their worth rely in that they reveal some information about the ability of individuals (Spence, 2002).

To be valuable, a signal needs to be *costly* in that it reveals the true underlying ability or intent of the signaler (Van Schaik, 2016). Signals that can be easily faked are worthless. Continuing the education example, college and university are designed in a way such that only able and motivated students succeed; getting a degree is extremely difficult for individuals who do not possess the right intellectual abilities or who are not motivated. Only individuals who possess the underlying attribute(s) can produce the signal, or they can produce the signal more quickly or efficiently such as investing less time, effort, or resources in its production. A costly signal is honest when for individuals who do not possess the underlying characteristic, faking the signal is very difficult or even impossible (Bliege Bird and Smith, 2005, Gintis et al., 2001, Grafen, 1990). In the animal world, the peacock’s tail or gazelle stotting are costly signals because they reveal some unobservable genetic quality and offer valuable information to potential mates or attackers. Costly signaling thus implies that individuals may bear extra costs to signal one’s ability or intentions if that information could not be communicated honestly in a different manner (Bliege Bird and Smith, 2005). For instance, I may show my commitment

to the organization where I am employed (i.e., the underlying attribute) by engaging in extra-role behaviors or working overtime (i.e., the signal). When the signal is costly, signaling benefits both signalers and receivers. Signalers benefit from receivers valuing the signal and responding in a positive way. Receivers benefit from a signal when it honestly reveals hidden attributes of the signaler which are valuable for the receivers and could otherwise not have been detected.

In a leadership context, a signal represents what leaders communicate to followers regarding their ability or intention as leaders – two underlying attributes that an individual willing to endorse leadership responsibilities may want to signal. This distinction between ability and intention is crucial because, as I will explain later, ability signals are much harder to fake than intention signals. Leaders may impart their personal qualities – knowledge, skills, or competences – and thus signal their abilities. Leaders may also indicate their motivations, interests, or values regarding good followership or what participating in the group means (e.g., “collaborate with others”), and so signal their intentions. Followers gain from knowing the skills of their leader, what the leader stands for or feel, or how the leader is invested in group activities insofar as this knowledge fundamentally affects their own individual welfare. Based on their own perception of the signal and the presence of alternative leaders (Bastardo and Van Vugt, 2019), followers then decide whether they want to follow and invest effort in collective endeavors. Followers embracing the signal can in turn show their deference and submission to the leader, signaling followership (i.e., indicating their intention to forego their individual interest and pursue collective efforts).

Charisma signals: Verbal and non-verbal tactics

Charisma is thus both a signal of a leader ability (i.e., high intelligence) and intentions (i.e., the focus on value and group emotions) that in most circumstances should be challenging

to fake for individuals who do not have these characteristics. How can one thus produce the charisma signal, and what form does it take? Previous research indicates that leaders can signal charisma using a combination of different verbal and non-verbal tactics (Awamleh and Gardner, 1999, Shamir et al., 1994, Frese et al., 2003). The state-of-the-art suggests that *twelve* tactics, grouped together and known as the “Charismatic Leadership Tactics” (CLTs; Antonakis et al., 2011), form the charisma signal. These tactics can be classified in three categories: Framing, substance, and delivery (Jacquart and Antonakis, 2015, Antonakis, 2017).

Framing refers to how the signal is constructed and framed (Antonakis, 2017). This category includes the use of *metaphors* (Den Hartog and Verburg, 1998, Willner, 1984). Metaphors transmit a message through symbols. Rather than communicating an abstract message, metaphors appeal to the imagination and emotions of the followers. By offering a vivid analog of the situation, the message becomes more salient and long-lasting. In a similar vein, *stories* and *anecdotes* convey messages in an animated way because of the mental images they trigger and the personal identification with the characters, which facilitates recall and the processing of information. Stories and anecdotes also generate a common, agreed meaning within groups and larger collectives, creating a sense of shared identity. *Rhetorical questions* represent an invitation to the follower to actively participate in the creation of the vision. The message becomes more valuable because the follower actively co-produces it. Rhetorical questions used at the beginning of a speech help create a suspense that is only resolved through or at the epilog of the speech, arousing followers’ interest. *Contrasts* shape a clear opposition between two ideas and bolster the desired values by opposing two endpoints. Contrasts tend to create a strong effect that appeal to the emotions of listeners. Finally, *three-part lists* trigger a sense of completeness and exhaustion in the argumentation. They also facilitate recall and do not overload with information that could otherwise be perceived as a way to impress at all costs.

Substance refers to the actual content of the charisma signal (Antonakis, 2017). *Expressing moral conviction* refers to demonstrating faith in the moral righteousness of the message. A leader expressing moral conviction will draw followers' attention to the moral imperative of the signal, justifying why the vision should be adopted (House, 1977). *Articulating the sentiments of the collective* creates a connection between the leader's message and followers' needs, increasing followers' commitment in and identification with the signal (Shamir et al., 1993). The leader is thus perceived as "one of their own" because followers believe the leader feels the same way or at least understand their concern. *Setting high and ambitious goals* shows a leader's ambition, commitment to the vision, and willingness to achieve the goals. This signal motivates followers to engage in costly but valuable efforts, increasing their self-esteem and competence. Leaders should also express their *confidence that goals can be achieved*. Doing so increase followers' confidence in the achievability of the leader signal. Because followers believe that their investment is worthy and can succeed, they are more likely to be motivated and exhibit costly efforts.

Delivery refers to how the signal is presented and delivered (Antonakis, 2017). It entails non-verbal behaviors that align with the leader verbal signals. To do so, leaders make *use of their voice* in alignment with framing and substantive CLTs. A variety of voice pitch, change of volume, or pauses are tactics that reinforce the message, stir the emotions of followers, and offer cues about the expected emotions in the group. *Body gestures*, such as pointing, gesturing, or having arms wide open, make the message more vivid and memorable. *Eye contacts* help a leader displays confidence and create a personal bond with the follower. Interestingly, a leader non-verbal CLTs tends to be significantly correlated with verbal CLTs (i.e., framing and substance) probably because the charisma rhetoric lends itself well to non-verbal communication (Antonakis et al., 2011).

I argue here that different verbal CLTs signal different underlying attributes and produce different outcomes. On one hand, *framing* CLTs demonstrate one's rhetorical prowess and mastery of symbolic thinking. The underlying attribute signaled is one's intelligence or ability to successfully lead followers and coordinate group activities (Antonakis et al., 2016, Grabo et al., 2017) which ultimately affect the leader's credibility and eligibility for the role. Using symbolic rhetoric effectively such as interesting and relevant stories or striking contrasts (e.g., think of JFK's famous "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country") requires and reflects a high degree of intelligence, conveying the idea that the leader can understand and influence the group. The production of creative metaphors is also correlated with fluid intelligence (Silvia and Beaty, 2012) and represents a hard to fake signal of a leader's abilities. In general, a charisma signal that contains framing CLTs is easier to produce for intelligent individuals whereas less intelligent individuals may only be able to use plain or literal language. More intelligent leaders also develop rhetorical skills and leadership abilities more quickly or efficiently (Antonakis et al., 2016). On the other hand, *substance* CLTs indicate the essence of the leader's vision, making objectives and motivations salient in the minds of followers, who may rely on these recent, potent signals when they exert effort. The underlying attribute is a leader's willingness to act on specific values and group emotions, which ultimately affects followers' efforts and investments in the task. These signals tend to be costly in environments with repeated exposures because only leaders with honest intent will deliver what they indicated. Leaders who do not act on their communicated intent (i.e., cheaters or dishonest signalers) will not be selected or followed in the future, making it costly for them to signal charisma. There is yet one aspect of substance that may reveal ability: Setting high and ambitious goals, which requires domain relevant expertise. Leader cannot simply state anything because if the goal is not achievable, they lose credibility.

Is the charisma signal still costly?

To have evolved, the charisma signal had to be more costly to produce for those individuals who did not have the right ability and intentions. The charisma signal had to convey honest information about the leader, otherwise followers would have been repeatedly fooled and deceived, ultimately causing followers not to respond to charisma signals anymore (Grabo et al., 2017). The mere fact that charismatic leaders attract so much attention – sometimes irrationally – indeed suggests that following charismatic leaders was probably a beneficial strategy for followers. Because followers benefited from the charisma signal, the human species is likely to have evolved to be receptive to such signal (Bastardo and Van Vugt, 2019, Castelnovo et al., 2017). A critical question today is whether individuals signaling charisma still provides honest information regarding the leader's intelligence and willingness to lead based on specific values and group emotions.

The structure of modern environments may have reduced the charisma “signal fit,” or whether the charisma signal correlates with the leader ability and intentions of the leader (Connelly et al., 2011). First, intelligence may be more loosely correlated with the use of framing CLTs. Technological changes have made the charisma signal cheaper to produce, reducing the level of intelligence required to produce the signal. The advent of the world-wide web and social networks – disseminating knowledge (such as the CLTs) and ideas – have made signaling charisma more affordable and efficient, especially for less intelligent individuals. Dishonest signalers can very easily pretend to have created an original charisma signal albeit having copied it from Internet or using repeatedly the same signal (e.g., think of individuals using repeatedly the same story or joke). Also, the general increase in intelligence (Flynn, 2007) may have increased the number of individuals able to produce symbolic rhetoric. Second, and even more importantly, leaders signaling charisma can very easily usurp followers by faking their true intentions. Substance CLTs are easy to fake for individuals who do not have genuine intentions to lead based on specific values and the group emotions. In an attention

economy, uninformed followers rarely take the time to search for more information to evaluate the real intentions of their leaders (Cronk, 2005). Individuals identified as dishonest signalers tend to be quickly forgotten; just think about the fate of companies that committed wrongdoings or how political candidates are generally not held accountable to their electoral promises. Cheaters may also be given new chances to start anew elsewhere as a result of high geographical mobility (i.e., newcomers in communities were scrutinized and needed time to build their reputation decades ago, which is not the case anymore in a globalized world). Also, if the rewards associated with successfully signaling charisma – such as opportunities granted, resources afforded, or status – exceed the costs associated with dishonesty being uncovered – such as lack of future opportunities, serving time, or reputation costs – the incentives may be misaligned and encourage dishonest signalers. Indeed, Bliege Bird and Smith (2005) argue that “if the fundamental conditions for costly or honest signaling are not met, we should expect to see a great deal of lying, deceit, and misdirection” (p. 244). Overall, this discussion suggests that the charisma signal may not be a costly signal of a leader intentions (and to a lesser extent ability) anymore; yet, under certain circumstances, the charisma signal will remain meaningful and valuable.

Followers can ensure that charisma signals keep their costly feature by gauging the leader’s self-sacrificial behaviors beyond verbal intention signals. To understand why, it is important to understand in which environment our followership psychology evolved. This environment was characterized primarily by small-scale egalitarian tribes, strong pressures to coordinate and cooperate on some crucial tasks, as well as informal, contextual, and revocable leadership (see Bastardo and Van Vugt, 2019 for more details). In such environments, the charisma signal was imbued with relevant information about the leader developed through years of repeated closed interactions (e.g., reputation, past reciprocity). The environment in which humans currently interact has significantly changed. Leadership tends to be formalized, wide-

ranging in scope, and mostly stable. Followers very rarely have information on their leaders' past behaviors until they interact with them. Even though the environment has changed, our followership psychology has not evolved that quickly and still relies on the same signals that were previously successful. Followers should thus find worthy substitutes or proxies for the reputation that is lacking in the current environment, and self-sacrificial behaviors can be one of them.

Self-sacrificial behaviors are a proof of intent and ensure the leader's intent is honest. Some behaviors are simply too costly to be faked (Bliese Bird and Smith, 2005). Very intuitively, actions bear more value than verbal statements, especially actions that cannot be overturned or are which are costly to do in the first place (Moore, 1992). Take Gandhi or Nelson Mandela, who spent years in prison to fight systems they considered unjust and sacrificed their life for a cause. When they signaled intent, they came across as credible because they had invested their life in their vision, and such a signal was too costly to be faked. Of course, had Mandela not been caught and imprisoned, he could not have drawn on his time in prison as a costly signal; though that he did engage in activities to subvert the apartheid regime and thereby expose himself to the risk of prison was a strong signal of his intent. It would thus be in followers and organizations' best interest to select and endorse leaders who have accompanied their verbal intent signals with repeated costly behaviors. For example, organizations should avoid recruiting individuals based on easy-to-fake interviews but rather rely on their reputations, usually formed via costly behaviors over time (Bastardo and Van Vugt, 2019). As Schelling (1960) said: "Talk can be cheap when moves are not" (p. 117).

One may then wonder why signaling intent with words – through substance CLTs – would be of any value to followers. If actions are more valuable than words, followers should only select leaders who have engaged in self-sacrifice to signal their willingness to lead based on specific values and group emotions. In practice, such situation is unrealistic and inefficient. It

is unrealistic because it may be impossible to find one or enough leaders who have engaged in self-sacrifice for each specific task. New situations arise every day, and it would be impractical (and indeed effortful) to find the right individual. Followers should then rely on the second-best information available, and this is a verbal engagement. In the absence of reputation or performance information, signaling charisma to transmit one's intent could to a certain extent carry useful information (Jacquart and Antonakis, 2015). Relying on verbal signals of intentions is thus appropriate when other relevant information is unavailable. From a leader's perspective, focusing only on actions is also inefficient because substance CLTs are valuable beyond their signaling purpose, making values and group emotions salient in followers' minds. These intent signals make the general vision transmitted very potent and helps it to resonate with the group, boosting individual efforts and aligning them with the vision of the leader.

When will followers enact the charisma signal?

Signaling charisma does not ensure that followers will accept the signal. First and foremost, a signal will only be effective if followers believe that it is honest and conveys accurate information (i.e., followers need to believe the signal is costly). Then, assuming an environment without competitive signalers, followers have to buy into the leader's values and be emotionally prone to feel aroused by the emotional content of the signal. Without value congruence, the signal will not attract followers (Jacquart and Bastardo, 2018); indeed, followers may either love or despise leaders signaling charisma contingent on value congruence (Tucker, 1968). Similarly, followers who are emotionally exhausted may not be receptive and susceptible to the charisma signal. Then, in a group context or when collective action is required, each follower must believe other followers have been exposed to the same signal and interpreted it in a similar way (Antonakis et al., 2019). The social context affects followers' reading and enactment of the charisma signal, especially the beliefs regarding what other members of the collective will do. A common interpretation ensures that other followers

share similar emotions, values, and behavioral norms regarding their participation in the collective action and reduces the likelihood that followers will be exploited such as being the only group member to exert efforts. The importance of a charisma-inducing social context explains why political leaders very often fill big political rally rooms with members of their team to influence the reactions so that would-be followers get entrained and adhere to the vision.

Once followers accept the charisma signal and the leader is legitimized, leaders need to walk the talk, reinforce the signal if needed, and enjoy some successes for the signal to keep its effect. First, leaders need to embody and stand for the values and emotions they signal. Those who pledge one thing but do the other will lose their followers' trust and willingness to exert efforts. Leaders who benefit personally, favor one's in-group, or opportunistically endorse other principles will see their aura fade and relinquish their influence. Second, the duration between the signal and its completion can sometimes be long. Repeated exposure to the signal may be required to keep followers' morale up: Some followers may lose sight of the vision or feel different emotions. Of course, leaders who over-signal may also be ineffective (e.g., by contributing to emotional exhaustion), and an appropriate mix of charisma signaling with other behaviors (e.g., consideration, task-orientation) is required. Third, signaling abilities and intentions is one important aspect but acting towards the realization and succeeding in the group task is a different story. Leaders who fail to deliver will very likely lose their aura of charisma (see Awamleh and Gardner, 1999). Hence, I argue here that successfully signaling charisma relies on various conditions, both before and after the leader is legitimized and selected, and that the correlation between signaling and attributions of charisma will rest upon these necessary conditions.

At a conceptual and empirical level, distinguishing charisma signals from charisma attributions is fundamental. Charisma attributions deal with the process of attributing charisma

to leaders, a phenomenon interesting per se but which does not get the gist of charisma. Unfortunately, researchers very often use charisma attributions (measured via perceptual questionnaires) as a measure of a leader's charisma. Such method is problematic because it confounds multiple influences within a general, perceptual assessment of charisma (Antonakis et al., 2016). When asked to rate their leader's charisma, followers anchor their ratings on multiple cues such as whether they like or trust their leader, whether their leader is physically attractive or tall, or whether their leader exudes confidence or is successful. Thus, these followers' perceptions cannot be used as independent variable in statistical models to explain the effect of charisma on some outcomes because omitted variables may engender bias in estimated coefficients (Antonakis et al., 2010).

What characteristics makes individuals good followers of charismatic leaders?

Good followership is critical to ensure a smooth signaling process. Followers need to hold leaders accountable for their signals just like simple animals do (Bachmann et al., 2017). Followers should actively identify dishonest signals and punish leaders who fake the charisma signal or exploit their position. A failure to act against exploitative leaders will encourage more leaders to dishonestly signal charisma. Interestingly, our followership psychology evolved in an environment in which followers had extensive tools at their disposal to keep leaders in check, known as levelling mechanisms (Boehm, 1993). When a leader would fake a signal, the leader could have been demoted, expelled, or sometimes killed. These levelling mechanisms gave followers an extensive arsenal to ensure leaders would honestly deliver what they signaled. Power has since changed hands, and leaders within organizations very often accrue excessive power. Followers should not de facto assume that leaders have their best interests at heart (i.e., they signal their intentions honestly); rather, they should actively inquire about their leader inner motivations, values, and felt emotions to ensure the signal honesty and credibility. Besides self-sacrifice, another cue to ensure the honesty of signals is the consistency of a

leader's actions over time (Connelly et al., 2011). Leaders who repeatedly defend and champion the same values are more likely to signal honestly than leaders who just recently took a stance on an issue or who send conflicting signals.

Good followership is especially needed given charismatic leaders influence on followers. Strongly identified and/or emotionally aroused followers will be exceedingly open to their leader's influence, sparking ideal conditions for individuals with good but also bad intentions to produce massive responses (e.g., Nazi's Germany, Peoples Temple). Also, followers with certain characteristics may be prone to fare badly under the guidance of dishonest charismatic leaders (Howell and Shamir, 2005). For instance, uncritical or unquestioning followers may likely fail to detect or react to dishonest signals. Such followers will incentivize more leaders to signal charisma dishonestly, reducing the value of honest charisma signalers. Organizations should also identify their leaders who are reluctant to hear dissent and negative feedback, because it creates ideal conditions for dependent and perfunctory following with potentially high cost for the organization (Kelley, 1992).

Following can also be approached from a signaling angle. Honest following is a signal of one's intentions (probably less so than ability) to engage in efforts towards the realization of the leader vision. Individuals who signal followership indicate their willingness not to pursue their own interests but rather go along with the leader's plan (Bastardo and Van Vugt, 2019). An implication thus is that different behaviors represent costly (i.e., hard-to-fake) signals of following. Individuals can publicly show deference and commitment to a leader, such as recognizing another individual as a leader or refusing to signal charisma oneself. They can also engage in behaviors that favor their leader. An example of costly followership is individuals who spend their free time to hand out political flyers for a cause or a political election. Theoretically, leadership will be better exercised and reach superior collective outcomes when situations allow both leaders and followers to honestly signal their ability and intent.

Future trends and directions

Approaching the study of charisma through a signaling perspective opens interesting new areas of research. First, as in any cross-disciplinary endeavor, cross-fertilization could spark new ideas and theoretical explanations. There is indeed a vast body of research studying signaling in anthropology (Bliege Bird and Smith, 2005) or behavioral ecology (e.g., Gintis et al., 2001). Certain ideas and constructs have already made their ways in the management literature (see specifically Connelly et al., 2011) but not so much in the leadership literature (for exceptions, see Antonakis et al., 2016, Grabo et al., 2017). Charisma scholars could also benefit from formal model to make concrete predictions regarding leader and follower behaviors (e.g., Hermalin, 2014). More broadly, studying leadership from a signaling viewpoint may prove beneficial, such as studying other costly signals (e.g., acting with generosity) that may reveal meaningful underlying attributes (e.g., benevolent leader).

Second, a signaling perspective offers new avenues to get at the gist of what charisma is (Antonakis et al., 2016). For instance, researchers can code for leader signals in representative archival data (e.g., interviews, biographies) or externally valid settings (e.g., coding unobtrusively for leader-follower interactions). Because a signaling perspective focuses on objective indicators of leader behaviors, researchers can also experimentally manipulate CLTs in leader speeches or texts. New CLTs may also be developed to adjust to new environments, cultures, or working conditions (e.g., in virtual environments). These new CLTs should not only fit the definition of charisma, but also be a costly signal of either the leader's intelligence or her willingness to lead based on specific values and group emotions.

Third, a signaling approach also indicates the important role that followers have in the signaling process. Yet, we know relatively little about how followers influence each other in the interpretation of the charisma signal. Do leaders benefit from a first follower validating the

leader signal? How do emotions and values infuse groups? Are group-level emotional contagion and value activation necessary for an effective charismatic signaling process? Also, researchers may study how followers and organizations ensure that leaders signaling charisma are kept in check and walk the talk, with the aim to offer best practices and policies regarding accountability.

Fourth, we know little about the dynamic and temporal sequence of signaling charisma. Most experimental studies looking at charisma signals focus on one signaling instance. Yet, is more signaling always beneficial? Do effective charismatic leaders show some clear pattern of charisma signals over time? In general, I would argue that the propensity to embrace a charisma signal diminishes the more followers are exposed to such signals. Followers may be emotionally exhausted and not open leader signaling intent through charisma, or may not value more signaling (a too-much-of-a-good thing effect). For example, once the group has selected and recognized their leader, the leader may not benefit from signaling abilities (through framing CLTs) and rather communicate in followers' language. Longitudinal studies looking at signaling over time could uncover interesting connections in dynamic environments with repeated leader signals. Rather than expect a linear relationship, I would anticipate some oscillations and fluctuations (linked to contextual requirements) around an optimal level of charisma signaling.

Finally, researchers could focus on other cues affecting the attribution of charisma. One may investigate how every slice of information transmitted, actively or passively, intentionally or not, affects charismatic attributions. Multiple cues around the human five senses – how the leader looks (e.g., attractiveness) or smells (e.g., fragrance), what followers see (e.g., stunning scenery) or hear (e.g., music in the background) – may affect charisma attributions (Reh et al., 2017, Pentland, 2010). How do these cues combine to affect followers' ratings of their leader's

charisma? Leaders who master the whole signaling process may be those who will truly be effective.

Conclusion

A signaling approach to charisma offers new exciting ideas to study the potent effect of charismatic leaders. Society will continue to benefit from charisma signals as long as followers and organizations carefully select leaders who signal charisma in costly ways. Should the charisma signal lose its cost component, the effects could be tragic given our evolved preference for charisma signals. It remains pivotal that followers select individuals who signal both abilities and intentions. Leaders with ability but without intent are highly intelligent individuals without clear values or emotional appeal that energize followers (i.e., expert leaders). Leaders with specific intentions but without ability represent grandiose individuals with broad and appealing visions but who fail to materialize it because they are not intelligent enough. As a species, we should continue to recognize the value of charisma signals when they are costly; selecting the right individuals can help us to avoid these maladaptive leaders and follow those who truly have something to offer.

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