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303

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## A special gift we bestow on you for being representative of us: Considering leader charisma from a self-categorization perspective

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Two experiments tested hypotheses, derived from social identity and self-categorization theories, regarding the attribution of charisma to leaders. In Experiment 1 ( $N = 203$ ), in-group prototypical leaders were attributed greater levels of charisma and were perceived to be more persuasive than in-group non-prototypical leaders. In Experiment 2 ( $N = 220$ ), leaders described with in-group stereotypical characteristics were attributed relatively high levels of charisma regardless of their group-oriented versus exchange rhetoric. Leaders described with out-group stereotypical characteristics, however, had to employ group-oriented rhetoric to be attributed relatively high levels of charisma. We conclude that leadership emerges from being representative of 'us'; charisma may, indeed, be a special gift, but it is one bestowed on group members by group members for being representative of, rather than distinct from, the group itself.

Current views of charismatic leadership trace their history to the analysis offered by Weber (1947), who differentiated revolutionary from bureaucratic forms of leadership. For Weber, charismatic leadership characterized the former, and obtained from the interplay between special 'powers or qualities' that set leaders apart from 'ordinary men' (p. 358), and potential followers' actual perceptions of the would-be charismatic leaders. Thus, for Weber, as well as many contemporary social psychologists, charismatic leaders have special gifts, potentially learned and 'manufactured' (Glassman, 1975, p. 615), that allow them to invigorate and inspire followers to transcend conventional practices in

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pursuit of new visions of future possibilities (Bass, 1985b, 1988). At the same time, there is clear recognition that, in the absence of followers' attributions of charisma to the leader, the extraordinary influence simply would not occur (Calder, 1977; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Oberg, 1972; Oommen, 1967; Shamir, 1992).

Empirically, social-psychological research has identified several variables contributing to followers' charismatic leadership attributions, including ones confirming both intuitions about charismatic leadership as well as specific aspects of Weber's (1947) analysis. For example, the use of strong (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996), image-based rhetoric (Emrich, Brower, Feldman, & Garland, 2001) enhances charismatic leadership attributions, although interpersonal characteristics, such as pleasantness and caring, do not (Yagil, 1998). And once attributed, charismatic leaders do, indeed, effect enhanced follower satisfaction (Fuller, Patterson, Hester, & Stringer, 1996; Howell & Frost, 1989), performance (Conger, Kanungo, & Menon, 2000; Shea & Howell, 1999), and overall effectiveness (Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996).

In the current paper, we examine charismatic leadership attributions in the absence of strong, image-based rhetoric. In doing so, we adopt as our theoretical framework recent social identity and self-categorization analyses of leadership. First, however, we review research demonstrating the role of group processes in charismatic leadership. We then introduce social identity analyses of leadership, highlighting how they can inform the study of charismatic leadership.

### The role of the group in charismatic leadership

What is clear from the research literature is that charismatic leadership is not simply about personal style and the strength of face-to-face communications (indeed, many studies use scenarios or unseen, supposed leaders). The clear *empirical* direction to which the data point is some form of shared, collective group process, both in the production of charismatic leadership attributions and its consequences. For example, the attribution of charismatic leadership yields enhanced social identification with the group (Conger *et al.*, 2000; Paul, Costley, Howell, Dorfman, & Trafimow, 2001), as well as enhanced cooperation (De Cremer, 2002; De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002), and extra-role behaviours (De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002; Deluga, 1995).

In terms of the initial attribution of charismatic leadership, at least four variables informing group members of the leader's positive orientation to the group have been observed to increase this attribution. Specifically, charismatic leadership attributions are enhanced following a leader's *self-sacrifice* in pursuit of collective outcomes (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1999; De Cremer, 2002; De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002) or a vision for the group (Yorges, Weiss, & Strickland, 1999); the leader's employment of *depersonalized rewards* (non-contingent) instead of *individuating* (contingent) rewards (Atwater, Camobreco, Dionne, Avolio, & Lau, 1997); *successful group performance* (even if it is simply coincidental; Ensari & Murphy, 2003; Haslam *et al.*, 2001; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Meindl, 1993; Shamir, 1992); and the leader's *emphasis on collective identity*, such as the rhetorical use of 'we' instead of 'I' (Fiol, Harris, & House, 1999; Hunt, Boal, & Dodge, 1999; Shamir, Arthur, & House, 1994; Shamir, Zakay, Brainin, & Popper, 2000, 1998).

These empirical findings come as no surprise, as many social-psychological theories of leadership in general, and charismatic leadership in particular, highlight the important role of group processes, at least to some degree. Hollander (1964, 1992), for

example, has long emphasized the importance of adherence to group norms for the development of leadership. Klein and House (1995) introduce a model of 'group-level' charisma, and they, along with Bass (1985b) before them, argue that charismatic leadership leads group members to shift their focus from individual to collective gains. And while Yukl (1999) argues for a place for group processes in charismatic leadership theories, Conger and Kanungo (1998) propose specifically that charismatic leaders enhance 'we-feelings' (p. 67) and group cohesion among group members.

Two approaches are more direct, however, in their integration of analyses of group processes with leadership in general, and charismatic leadership in particular. One is the self-schema-based theory of Lord, Brown, and Freiberg (1999), which emphasizes the importance of a match between group members' individual, interpersonal, or group-level self-schemas and leaders' behaviours. The other adopts more explicitly group-oriented perspectives by expanding upon the principles of social identity theory (SIT) and self-categorization theory (SCT; Haslam, 2004; Haslam & Platow, 2001b; Hogg, 2001; Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003; Platow, Haslam, Foddy, & Grace, 2003; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993; Turner & Haslam, 2001). Currently, we adopt the latter analyses, but note points of convergence with Lord *et al.*'s (1999) where relevant.

### **Social identity analyses of leadership**

Recent years have seen an upsurge in analyses of leadership from SIT and SCT perspectives (e.g. Haslam, 2004; Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003; Platow *et al.*, 2003). The foundation of these analyses rests on the recognition that leadership is fundamentally a process of social influence; with no influence, there are no followers, and would-be leaders remain simply that: would-be. The analysis of social influence within SCT argues that influence obtains from in-group and *not* out-group normative positions (Turner, 1991). As in-group normative positions are most likely to be held by in-group members themselves, the associated hypothesis is that in-group members will be more influential than out-group members. This hypothesis has received strong confirmation in judgments of physical reality (Abrams, Wetherell, Cochrane, Hogg, & Turner, 1990), expressions of attitudes (Mackie, Worth, & Asuncion, 1990; McGarty, Haslam, Hutchinson, & Turner, 1994), and even contagious laughter (Platow *et al.*, 2005).

Within the in-group itself, an influence gradient exists, defined by the meta-contrast ratio (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), in which in-group influence is the strongest among the most in-group prototypical group member, that member who best represents the context-dependent characteristics of the in-group relative to salient out-groups (e.g. McGarty, Turner, Hogg, David, & Wetherell, 1992; van Knippenberg, Lossie, & Wilke, 1994; van Knippenberg & Wilke, 1992). It is the recognition of this influence gradient that led to social identity analyses of leadership in which in-group prototypicality is a key feature of leadership (Haslam, 2004; Hogg, 2001; Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001; Reicher & Hopkins, 2003; Turner & Haslam, 2001).

Several empirical studies now show that in-group prototypical group members receive relatively strong endorsements as leaders. For example, in a field study, Fielding and Hogg (1997) observed significant correlations between perceived in-group prototypicality and ratings of leader effectiveness; this pattern was particularly strong among group members who were highly identified with the group. In a laboratory experiment with attitude-based groups, Hains, Hogg, and Duck (1997) manipulated

leader relative in-group prototypicality along the group-defining attitude dimension. When group membership was salient, in-group prototypical leaders received relatively high ratings of effectiveness. Hogg, Hains, and Mason (1998, Experiment 2) replicated this latter study, this time manipulating relative in-group prototypicality through the visual presentation of in-group and out-group attitude *distributions* (allowing Hogg *et al.* to manipulate directly the meta-contrast ratio). Under high salience conditions, high in-group prototypicality led leaders to be perceived as more appropriate for their leadership position than low in-group prototypicality.

Platow and van Knippenberg (2001) followed the basic procedure of Hogg *et al.* (1998) and manipulated relative in-group prototypicality via distributions supposedly representing in-group and out-group defining characteristics. They also manipulated the nature of the leader's behaviour in terms of group-promoting, group-denigrating, or the even-handed intergroup resource allocations. Platow and van Knippenberg observed that, among highly identifying group members, in-group prototypical leaders received uniformly strong endorsements regardless of their actual behaviour. By contrast, leaders who were in-group non-prototypical, in particular those approaching greater similarity with the out-group, received strong endorsements by high identifiers *only* when the leaders engaged in in-group-promoting behaviours. Thus, continued leadership status was accorded by high identifiers to those who were either in-group prototypical *or* who somehow compensated for their lack of in-group prototypicality by engaging in in-group favourable behaviour (see also Haslam & Platow, 2001a).

### The current research

In the current research, we build on the SCT leadership research by manipulating the relative in-group prototypicality of a leader to examine whether it would, in and of itself, affect the pattern of charismatic leadership attributions. Note that this is a novel direction within the traditional charismatic leadership literature, for we are proposing that charisma may be attributed to a leader based solely upon his or her relative 'in-groupness', and not on other individuating (e.g. Bass, 1985b), rhetorical (e.g. Emrich *et al.*, 2001), or behavioural (e.g. Conger & Kanungo, 1998) factors. Of course, this does not preclude these other factors from effecting such attributions, as we argue below. But we are suggesting that the so-called gift of charisma may be provided to leaders by followers simply for embodying relevant in-group defining characteristics, that is, for being in-group prototypical. Haslam (2004) and Reicher and Hopkins (2003) make a similar point by arguing that charisma is attributed to leaders by followers who view the leader as self-category defining in that context. Leaders may thus be seen to inspire loyalty, have a sense of mission, and a vision that spurs people on (cf. Bass, 1985a) when they, the leaders, are prototypically representative of the group they are to lead.

Having said that, relatively in-group non-prototypical leaders may still be able to gain in charismatic leadership attributions through other rhetorical or behavioural strategies. For example, the rhetorical invocation of the collective identity (Shamir *et al.*, 1993) may be particularly important for those not yet situated in followers' eyes as self-categorically representative (see also Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Thus, much like Platow and van Knippenberg's (2001) research, in-group non-prototypical leaders may be the ones who need to demonstrate to followers some form of collective orientation. We tested this idea currently by crossing our relative in-group prototypicality manipulation with two conditions of leader rhetorical style, one in which the leader

invokes a collective orientation and one in which the leader emphasises reciprocal exchange that is more characteristic of transactional leadership styles (Bass, 1988).

We hypothesized that leaders who are relatively high in in-group prototypicality would receive greater charismatic leadership attributions than leaders who are relatively low in in-group prototypicality. At the same time, we expected this effect to be qualified, such that leaders who are relatively low in in-group prototypicality would gain in charismatic leadership attributions by rhetorically invoking a shared self-category with followers.

In addition to measuring attributions of charismatic leadership, we employed a secondary measure of group members' perceptions of leader persuasiveness to learn whether these would be affected in a manner similar to charismatic attributions. Based upon self-categorization theory (Turner, 1991) and research (e.g. McGarty *et al.*, 1994), we expected they would. Finally, prior to our manipulations, we measured participants' social identification with the salient social category. The research by Fielding and Hogg (1997) and Platow and van Knippenberg (2001) showed that social identification moderated other group-based processes in affecting leadership judgments. Thus, we may currently find that our hypothesized patterns of results will obtain primarily, if not solely among those for whom the relevant social category was particularly important.

## EXPERIMENT I

### Method

#### *Participants and design*

A group of 173 female and 30 male first-year psychology students participated in this experiment. Ages ranged from 18 to 49 years, with a mean age of 20.36 (mode = 18 years). Each participant was randomly assigned to one condition of a 3 (leader relative-in-group-prototypicality) × 2 (leader rhetorical style: group-oriented vs. exchange) between-subjects factorial design. Following previous research (Hogg *et al.*, 1998; Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001), we manipulated leader relative-in-group-prototypicality by displaying the leader's position on a distribution of supposed in-group-defining characteristics. The in-group was participants' university (La Trobe University), and the leader was described as a student leader from this university. The in-group non-prototypical leader was presented as being either on the far right or the far left of the distribution of in-group characteristics, while the in-group prototypical leader was presented as being at centre of the distribution (yielding three levels of this independent variable).

### Materials

#### *Introduction and measurement of social identification*

The experiment was introduced to participants as one on the topic of 'social communication'. In initial instructions, participants were informed that they would read a message from a La Trobe University (in-group) student leader, and that they should form an impression about the leader as well as the message itself. Participants then responded to 10 social identity items, six of which were adopted from Mael and Asforth (1992) and four of which were adopted from Doosje, Ellemers, and



Spears (1995). Responses to these, and all other questions for both experiments (except where noted in Experiment 2) were measured on Likert-type scales, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The social identity items served both as a pre-test measure of social identification with the La Trobe University in-group, and as a means of making salient this in-group category.

#### *Relative in-group prototypicality manipulation*

Participants then read the outcome of a supposed Group Attributes Questionnaire completed by the student leader prior to achieving leadership status. Participants were told that this was background information about the leader, provided to them with the leader's permission. The questionnaire was described as measuring 'similarities and differences between groups' rather than individuals (see Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001), and that:

Researchers have developed this questionnaire to measure similarities and differences between students who attend La Trobe University (like yourself) and students who attend other universities. The Group Attributes Questionnaire can be used to obtain both a group profile, and a person's individual position within that profile.

On the following page was presented a summary profile for a supposed applicant, 'Chris Wilson', who applied the previous year to become a student leader. The profile presented a single, uniform bell-curve with 'La Trobe University' written along the abscissa, and was described as the 'distribution of scores for students attending La Trobe University'. It was on this page that leader relative-in-group-prototypicality was manipulated. High relative-in-group-prototypicality was indicated by placing a star at the mode of the distribution, and by informing participants that this star indicated the leader's score. Low relative-in-group-prototypicality was indicated by placing a star at one or the other tail (to counterbalance) of the distribution. The positioning of the star within the distribution was accompanied by text interpreting the pattern. The high relative-in-group-prototypical leader was described as follows (Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001):

Chris' score fell exactly in the middle of the La Trobe students' group profile. Chris is representative of La Trobe students, in the sense that - where his score on the Group Attributes Questionnaire is concerned - he has a lot in common with other La Trobe students, and fits in better at La Trobe than at other universities.

The text describing the low relative-in-group-prototypical leader read:

Chris' score fell right on the edge of the La Trobe students' group profile. You could say that Chris is different from most La Trobe students, in the sense that - where his score on the Group Attributes Questionnaire is concerned - he has little in common with other La Trobe students, and, in a sense, would fit in better at another university.

#### *Leader rhetorical style manipulation*

Following the presentation of this profile was a supposed letter to students written by the leader. It was via this letter that the leader's rhetorical style was manipulated. Following our earlier research (Haslam & Platow, 2001a), the topic of the letter in all conditions was a proposal to place permanent billboards on campus to display political

and other messages, with the cost of about \$3,000. The leader was seeking students' views about this proposal.

In the group-oriented rhetorical-style condition, the letter, with the banner 'A message to La Trobe students from Chris Wilson: Let's do something together. . .for *all* of us', emphasized group affiliation between the reader and all La Trobe students. Readers' identities as group members were made salient in the communication, as individuating terms (e.g. 'you') were replaced by collective terms (e.g. 'all La Trobe University students'). The letter ended by stating that 'by expressing your opinion as a La Trobe student, you can not only help yourself, but all La Trobe students together'. In the exchange rhetorical-style condition, the letter, with the banner 'A personal message from Chris Wilson: Do something for me, so I can do something for you', emphasized interpersonal exchange between the leader and the student reader. Readers were individuated in the letter, as the communication focused on their personal opinions. The letter ended by stating that 'by expressing your personal opinion, you can not only help me, but also help yourself in return'.

*Measurement of dependent variables*

The final page of the questionnaire packet contained the dependent variables. The first set of questions measured the perceived persuasiveness of the leader's communication (Table 1). Embedded in these were also the rhetorical-style manipulation checks. The group-oriented manipulation check read, 'Chris tried to evoke a sense of La Trobe identity in his message'; the exchange manipulation check read, 'Chris' message had a sense of 'you-scratch-my-back, I'll-scratch-yours'. Two questions served as manipulation

**Table 1.** Items used to measure perceived leader persuasiveness, and attributions of leader charisma in the current two experiments

Perceived leader persuasiveness questions	Chris' message was persuasive Chris' message was well argued Chris' message was a 'strong' one Chris came across as a credible person Chris is rather trustworthy Chris' survey <i>should</i> influence University decisions Chris' survey <i>will</i> influence University decisions The issue Chris put forward is an important one Chris was addressing me in his message and not some other audience
Attributions of leader charisma questions	As a leader, Chris inspires loyalty As a leader, Chris has a sense of mission which he transmits to others As a leader, Chris makes people feel proud to be associated with him As a leader, Chris has a vision that spurs people on As a leader, Chris motivates people to do more than they think they can As a leader, Chris increases others' optimism for the future As a leader, Chris has a special gift for seeing what is worthwhile for others to consider As a leader, Chris gives people a sense of overall purpose

checks for the relative-in-group-prototypicality manipulation; these were, 'Chris is typical of La Trobe students', and 'Chris is a good representative of La Trobe students'. The final eight items measured charisma attributed to the leader (Table 1), and were adopted and modified to suit the current laboratory context from Bass' (1985a) Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). The subset we chose, from the charisma scale and scale of extra effort, was based on the face validity of the items for the current experimental context.

### **Procedure**

Participants were randomly assigned to one condition of the experiment, and completed the questionnaire packet independently. Completion took about 15 minutes. All participants were then led in a discussion of the nature of the design and the theory behind the experiment.

### **Results**

The 10 social identity items were intercorrelated ( $\alpha = .83$ ), and a mean of these items was calculated for each participant. The mean for the entire scale across participants was 4.56 ( $SD = .79$ ). All data below were analysed using a linear model in which the two manipulated variables served as categorical predictors, and centred social identification served as a continuous predictor. Significant effects for our manipulated variables should thus be understood as obtaining at a mean level of social identification (Aiken & West, 1991). Preliminary analyses revealed no differences between the two non-prototypical conditions on our dependent variables. These two were, thus, collapsed across each other to form a single non-prototypical condition for all reported analyses.

#### ***Perceived leader rhetorical style and in-group prototypicality***

An analysis of the group-oriented leader-style manipulation check revealed a significant effect for leader rhetorical style. Leaders with a group-oriented style were perceived to evoke a greater sense of La Trobe identity ( $M = 4.59$ ) than leaders with an exchange style ( $M = 3.97$ ),  $F(1, 195) = 7.41$ ,  $p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .04$ . No other effects were significant. An analysis of the exchange leader-style manipulation check also revealed a significant effect for leader rhetorical style,  $F(1, 195) = 32.42$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .14$ . Leaders with an exchange style were perceived to evoke a greater sense of interpersonal exchange ( $M = 4.47$ ) than leaders with a group-oriented style ( $M = 3.38$ ). Also obtained in this analysis was a significant effect for participants' levels of social identification,  $F(1, 195) = 4.61$ ,  $p < .05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .02$ ; the more participants identified with their in-group, the more they perceived either message to evoke a sense of interpersonal exchange,  $\beta = 0.15$ . No other effects were significant.

The two leader relative-in-group-prototypicality manipulation checks were intercorrelated ( $\alpha = .71$ ), and the mean of the two was calculated for each participant. An analysis on this new dependent variable revealed a significant effect for leader relative-in-group-prototypicality. In-group-prototypical leaders were perceived to be more typical and representative of La Trobe students ( $M = 4.49$ ) than in-group non-prototypical leaders ( $M = 3.69$ ),  $F(1, 195) = 31.26$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .14$ . No other effects were significant.



**Perceived leader persuasiveness**

The nine leader persuasiveness items were intercorrelated ( $\alpha = .82$ ), and a mean for these was calculated for each participant. An analysis of this new leader-persuasiveness dependent variable revealed a significant effect for participants' levels of social identification,  $F(1, 195) = 9.15$ ,  $p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .05$ ; independent of the manipulations, the more participants identified with their in-group, the more persuasive they perceived the leader to be,  $\beta = 0.22$ .

A significant effect also obtained for leader rhetorical style,  $F(1, 195) = 5.21$ ,  $p < .05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .03$ . Unexpectedly, leaders with an exchange style were perceived to be more persuasive ( $M = 4.09$ ) than leaders with a group-oriented style ( $M = 3.84$ ). Finally, consistent with our predictions, a significant effect obtained for leader relative-in-group-prototypicality,  $F(1, 195) = 6.85$ ,  $p < .05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .03$ . In-group-prototypical leaders were perceived to be more persuasive ( $M = 4.18$ ) than in-group non-prototypical leaders ( $M = 3.86$ ). No other effects were significant.

**Attribution of leader charisma**

The eight leader charisma items were intercorrelated ( $\alpha = .91$ ), and a mean for these was calculated for each participant. A significant effect for participants' levels of social identification,  $F(1, 195) = 7.77$ ,  $p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .04$ , indicated that the more participants identified with their in-group, the more charismatic they perceived the leader to be,  $\beta = 0.21$ . A significant effect was also observed for leader relative-in-group-prototypicality,  $F(1, 195) = 10.99$ ,  $p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .05$ . In-group-prototypical leaders were attributed greater charisma ( $M = 4.04$ ) than in-group non-prototypical leaders ( $M = 3.58$ ). No other effects were significant.

**Discussion**

The pattern of data in Experiment 1 is simple and straightforward, yet only partially supports our predictions. As expected, in-group-prototypical leaders *are* attributed greater levels of charisma and perceived persuasiveness by group members than are in-group non-prototypical leaders. However, this pattern was moderated by neither the leaders' group-oriented versus exchange rhetoric, nor by participants' reported levels of social identification. Clearly, then, relative in-group prototypicality does have a strong impact on charismatic leadership attributions and perceptions of persuasiveness, potentially to the exclusion, at least in some social contexts, of other more traditional charismatic leadership attributes, such as rhetorical style. We also observed significant positive correlations between levels of social identification with the relevant social category, and levels of charisma and perceived persuasiveness attributed to the leader. This is consistent with previous research (e.g. Conger *et al.*, 2000), and other accounts of leadership processes (e.g. Lord *et al.*, 1999).

One major unexpected finding was that it was the exchange and not the group-oriented leader rhetorical style that enhanced perceived persuasiveness. We suspect that this reflects the intragroup orientation invoked in the current study. Recall that prototypicality was manipulated by displaying an in-group distribution only, rather than both in-group and out-group distributions. The interpersonal exchange communication is likely to have gained in perceived persuasiveness via this in-group-only frame of reference. In fact, Hogg and Martin (2003) and Lord *et al.* (1999) before them argue that transactional leadership styles are likely to be more effective when the social context is

more interpersonally oriented; this is an effect likely to obtain in contexts with no salient out-group (Turner *et al.*, 1987).

Despite the simplicity and, hence, clarity of the results in Experiment 1, there are two potentially problematic features of the paradigm. First, as we said above, the context of the experiment was purely within the in-group. However, we know both theoretically (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner *et al.*, 1987) and empirically (Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001; Turner & Haslam, 2001), that a clear understanding of intragroup dynamics can only be gained by placing the group in its own broader social context. This means that understanding intragroup dynamics necessitates clarifying intergroup realities. Second, prototypicality in Experiment 1 was both contentless and, yet, possibly subject to demand characteristics. Because the in-group characteristics on which relative in-group prototypicality was based were left unstated, we had little control over what participants were thinking. Moreover, the actual summary interpretation provided with the relative prototypicality manipulation may have acted as too strong of a demand on how participants ought to respond. Experiment 2 was designed to help overcome these potential problems.

## EXPERIMENT 2

In this experiment, rather than manipulating relative in-group-prototypicality by means of a distribution of supposed (unstated) in-group characteristics, we described the leader as being either high or low on specific characteristics observed in pilot testing as stereotypical of either the in-group (La Trobe University) or a relevant out-group (the University of Melbourne). Moreover, in the introduction to the experiment, participants were informed that the communication they would read would be written by either an in-group leader or an out-group leader. Although all participants read a supposed in-group leader's communication, this specific manipulation was intended to enhance the salience of the intergroup context.

## Method

### *Participants and design*

A group of 187 female, 31 male, and 2 students who failed to indicate their gender participated in this experiment; all were first-year psychology students. Ages ranged from 18 to 48 years, with a mean age of 20.32 (mode = 18 years). Each participant was randomly assigned to one condition of a 2 (leader group stereotypicality: in-group/out-group) × 2 (leader rhetorical style: group-oriented vs. exchange) between-subjects factorial design.

### *Materials*

The questionnaire packet for this experiment was nearly identical to that used in Experiment 1. One change, as mentioned above, was that participants were told initially that they would read a communication from either an in-group leader or an out-group leader, although all participants actually read a communication from an in-group leader. The second change pertained to the manner in which the leader was described. Pilot testing ( $N = 40$ ) for an earlier study (Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001) provided us with the content of the stereotypes for La Trobe University and the University of Melbourne. Among other characteristics, the La Trobe University in-group was described as 'friendly', 'easy going' and 'tolerant', while the University of Melbourne

out-group was described as 'high achieving', 'intellectual' and 'serious.' It was with these characteristics that we currently manipulated group stereotypicality.

In a second pilot test ( $N = 15$ ), participants rated each of the six characteristics for its valence (1 = *more negative than positive*; 7 = *more positive than negative*) and leader typicality (1 = *not a characteristic of leaders*; 7 = *a definite characteristic of leaders*). Separate means for the three La Trobe University stereotypical characteristics and the three University of Melbourne stereotypical characteristics were calculated for each scale for each participant. No significant difference obtained in valence between the two sets of characteristics,  $t(14) = 1.02$ ,  $p = ns$  ( $M_{\text{La Trobe}} = 5.53$ ;  $M_{\text{Melbourne University}} = 5.20$ ). However, the University of Melbourne characteristics were seen as more leader-typical ( $M = 5.27$ ) than the La Trobe University characteristics ( $M = 3.96$ ),  $t(14) = 3.35$ ,  $p < .01$ . This latter finding makes our current test even stronger, as we are predicting greater attributions of charisma to the La Trobe University (in-group) stereotypical leader.

To manipulate the group stereotypicality of the leader, we presented each participant with a bar chart for each of the characteristics (in the order high achieving, intellectual, friendly, tolerant, easy going, serious), instead of the bell-curve distribution presented in Experiment 1. No labels or numerical values were placed on the bar charts except for the in-group and out-group traits. In the in-group stereotypical condition, the lengths of the bars for the in-group characteristics were more than twice as long (scale values of 8, 8.25, and 8.5) as those for the out-group characteristics (scale values of 3, 3.5, and 3.75). In the out-group stereotypical condition, the lengths of the bars were reversed, so that the out-group characteristic bars were twice as long as those for the in-group characteristics.

Following the bar chart was written each of the six characteristics, and participants were asked to indicate whether the leader was 'high' or 'low' on each characteristic. This procedure was employed to ensure that participants attended to the pattern presented. Participants were also asked to indicate whether each characteristic was typical for La Trobe University or the University of Melbourne. Unlike Experiment 1, however, there was no summary statement indicating whether the leader would fit into the in-group or other out-groups.

All other aspects of the questionnaire packet, including the communication by the leader and the dependent variables, were identical to those of Experiment 1.

### **Procedure**

Participants were randomly assigned to one condition of the experiment, and completed the questionnaire packet independently. Completion took about 15 minutes. All participants were again led in a discussion of the nature of the design and the theory behind the experiment.

### **Results**

The 10 social identity items were intercorrelated ( $\alpha = .84$ ), and a mean of these items was calculated for each participant. The mean for the entire scale across participants was 4.55 ( $SD = .82$ ). As in Experiment 1, all data below were analysed using a linear model in which the two manipulated variables served as categorical predictors, and centred social identification served as a continuous predictor.

**Manipulation checks**

After displaying the distribution of three in-group stereotypical and out-group stereotypical characteristics, participants were asked whether the leader was high or low on each characteristic. Of the participants, 22 (18 females, 3 males, and 1 gender not stated) failed to answer each of the six items correctly and, hence, were excluded from further analyses. A further six females and one male failed to classify accurately at least two of three characteristics as being typical of the group intended by the manipulation; these participants were also excluded from further analyses.

**Perceived leader rhetorical style and in-group prototypicality**

An analysis of the group-oriented leader-rhetorical-style manipulation check revealed a significant effect for leader rhetorical style,  $F(1, 183) = 25.30$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .12$ . Leaders with a group-oriented style were perceived to evoke a greater sense of La Trobe identity ( $M = 4.87$ ) than leaders with an exchange style ( $M = 3.90$ ). Unexpectedly, there was also a significant interaction between leader group stereotypicality and social identification,  $F(1, 183) = 4.05$ ,  $p < .05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .02$ . When the leader was in-group stereotypical, the more participants identified with their in-group, the less they saw this leader as trying to evoke a sense of in-group identity ( $\beta = -0.16$ ), regardless of what was said; this pattern was reversed when the leader was out-group stereotypical,  $\beta = 0.12$ . No other effects were significant.

An analysis of the exchange leader-rhetorical-style manipulation check revealed a significant effect for leader rhetorical style,  $F(1, 183) = 47.73$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .21$ . Leaders with an exchange style were perceived to evoke a greater sense of interpersonal exchange ( $M = 4.86$ ) than leaders with a group-oriented style ( $M = 3.32$ ). No other effects were significant.

The two leader prototypicality manipulation checks had a low, but acceptable alpha coefficient ( $\alpha = .65$ ), and the mean of the two was calculated for each participant. An analysis conducted on this new perceived leader-prototypicality dependent variable revealed a significant leader group stereotypicality effect,  $F(1, 183) = 11.20$ ,  $p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .06$ . In-group stereotypical leaders were perceived as more typical and representative of La Trobe students ( $M = 4.23$ ) than out-group stereotypical leaders ( $M = 3.78$ ). A significant social identification effect was also found,  $F(1, 183) = 5.97$ ,  $p < .05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .03$ , indicating that the more participants identified with their in-group, the less in-group prototypical they saw any leader,  $\beta = -0.17$ . No other effects were significant.

**Perceived leader persuasiveness**

The nine leader persuasiveness items were intercorrelated ( $\alpha = .81$ ), and a mean for these was calculated for each participant. An analysis was calculated on this new leader persuasiveness dependent variable. Unlike Study 1, there were no significant effects in this analysis. The grand mean was 4.10 ( $SD = .84$ ).

**Perceived leader charisma**

The eight leader charisma items were intercorrelated ( $\alpha = .91$ ), and a mean for these was calculated for each participant. An analysis of this new charisma dependent variable revealed only a significant interaction between leader group stereotypicality and leader rhetorical style,  $F(1, 183) = 3.95$ ,  $p < .05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .02$ . Consistent with predictions, when leaders were in-group stereotypical, attributions of charisma did

not vary as a function of their exchange ( $M = 3.87$ ) or group-oriented ( $M = 3.75$ ) rhetorical style. However, when leaders were out-group stereotypical, they *had* to act in a group-oriented style to be attributed relatively high levels of charisma ( $M = 3.88$ ) compared with leaders who behaved in an exchange manner ( $M = 3.43$ ).

## Discussion

In this second experiment, we attempted to overcome potential methodological problems inherent in our manipulation of leader relative-in-group-prototypicality in Experiment 1. To accomplish this, we described the leader as being relatively in-group stereotypical or out-group stereotypical. With this more contextualized (by providing a clearer intergroup comparison) and normatively meaningful (by adding substance to the actual leader description; see Oakes, 1987) manipulation, we were able to observe a pattern of charismatic attributions more in line with our original predictions. Relative to each of the conditions, in-group stereotypical leaders were attributed high levels of charisma regardless of their actual group-oriented versus exchange rhetoric. As in Experiment 1, being in-group-like is critical to the attribution of charisma. However, out-group stereotypical leaders had to engage in some form of group-oriented rhetoric to be attributed relatively high levels of charisma.

Unlike Experiment 1, we were unable to observe any variability in the leader's perceived persuasiveness as a function of our independent variables. This was certainly unexpected. On the one hand, it may be that the countervailing leader-typical nature of the out-group characteristics negated any effects that in-group stereotypicality may have had. However, at face value, this null finding suggests that relative in-group stereotypicality is not the sole basis for the leader's ability to influence.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

In two experiments, we showed that attributions of charismatic leadership are directly related to the degree to which leaders are representative of the group they are to lead. In this manner, being charismatic is, at least in part, being representative of 'us' (Haslam, 2004; Reicher & Hopkins, 2003). If, as in Experiment 2, leaders are more like 'them' than 'us' (if they have out-group rather than in-group-stereotypical characteristics) then leaders' specific behaviours (e.g. their rhetorical communications) become important, with an increased onus on the leaders to act in an in-group-oriented manner. This latter finding dovetails with our earlier work on leadership endorsement (Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001).

It is important to note that in both of our experiments, leaders were always in-group members, so our argument is not that in-group leaders are attributed greater charisma than out-group leaders (as other research may suggest, e.g. Duck & Fielding, 1999; Gaertner, Mann, Murrell, & Dovidio, 1989). Instead, what we did in our current research was to shift in-group leaders' positions within the in-group along a gradient of in-group typicality (i.e. prototypicality), and showed that these in-group leaders can gain or lose attributions of charisma with shifts along that gradient. So being charismatic is not simply about being one of us, it is about being representative of us. Of course, an interesting future line of research would be to maintain the actual position of the leader in terms of descriptions of group-based characteristics, but to shift the broader social context (e.g. by making salient one or another out-group). Such a manipulation affects



the relative prototypicality (e.g. Haslam, Oakes, McGarty, Turner, & Onorato, 1995), and should, by our predictions, affect relative charismatic leadership attributions. This would be a particularly powerful test of our SCT analysis because the actual description of the leader would remain constant across conditions.

One interesting feature of the current two experiments was the absence of a significant moderating relationship between group members' levels of social identification and their attributions of charisma to the leader.<sup>1</sup> Although, in Experiment 1, social identification was independently related to attributions of charismatic leadership, this effect did not obtain in Experiment 2. Given the important moderating role of social identity in leadership endorsement (Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001), our data suggest that leaders' in-group oriented characteristics and behaviours (e.g. rhetorical style) can lead to attributions of charisma, but for these leaders to be supported (i.e. endorsed) in their endeavours, the group membership must be important to potential followers. Charisma, in and of itself, may thus serve no long-term function for leaders themselves (in terms of maintaining their status) if the group membership remains unimportant to other group members.

In a similar vein, a second interesting, and unexpected finding was that, in Experiment 2, the leader's perceived persuasiveness was unaffected by our manipulations. Thus, the factors that led to enhanced perceptions of a mission, a vision, and, indeed, a special gift among in-group prototypical leaders did not translate into enhanced perceptions of credibility, trustworthiness, and persuasiveness. This is actually a critical point because it suggests that processes, or at least the ones currently examined, that lead to attributions of charismatic leadership may not lead to the desired results of influencing fellow group members. Of course, our current measures were only of *perceived* persuasiveness and not actual influence, and future studies would benefit from including measures of actual influence. Nevertheless, any cautionary views should be understood within the broader context of the literature, some of which has shown the role of social identity processes in charismatic influence (e.g. De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002).

Thus far we have been speaking of high and low levels of attributed charisma. However, the mean charisma ratings did hover around the mid-point of the scale. This does not, however, detract from our basic theoretical argument. Leaders can gain and lose levels of charisma simply by their relative embodiment of the group they are to represent. In addition, we note that the mean level for the charisma scale found in Lowe *et al.*'s (1996) meta-analysis of the MLQ was just above the mid-point of magnitude-estimate scale typically used. Far from a trivial point, Lowe *et al.*'s analysis included only studies in which group members evaluated their *actual* leaders rather than hypothetical ones. The very fact that we obtained charisma ratings as high as we did in a study with a hypothetical leader with whom no participant had any interaction speaks to the power that relative in-group-prototypicality commands in eliciting attributions of charisma.

Of course, even the paper-and-pencil judgments of charismatic leadership made with the MLQ appear quantitatively, if not qualitatively, distant from the revolutionary leadership that Weber (1947) and others (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001, 2003) address. We recognize this as an important limitation of our current laboratory experiments. Gone were the heroic and magical forces of which Weber wrote, gone was the forcefulness of

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<sup>1</sup> Identical analyses in which levels of social identification were converted to a two-level categorical variable based on a median split also failed to reveal significant moderation effects in terms of charisma attributions.



Hitler, and gone was the gentle passion of Ghandi. Indeed, as we noted in our introduction, gone intentionally from our design was strong, image-based rhetoric (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Emrich *et al.*, 2001). To a sceptic, these features may place severe constraints on attributing value to the work. However, our goal currently was not to replicate or even simulate the complexities of Weber's charismatic leaders. Instead, our goal was to extend theory (e.g. Turner, 1981) by postulating novel and untested hypotheses about the nature of attributed characteristics (in this case, charisma) based solely on the knowledge of a person's relative representativeness of the group of which he or she is a member. To that end, we believe we have been successful, but do recognize the value of pursuing a research strategy of methodological pluralism, as evidenced by the vast array of methods presented in our introductory literature review.

Overall, the emerging view from the SIT and SCT analyses of leadership is that leadership emerges from being representative of us. It is those who best embody who we are relative to a contextually salient out-group to whom we will attribute charisma. In this way, charisma may, indeed, be a special gift, but it is one bestowed on group members by group members for being representative of, rather than distinct from, the group itself.

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