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IS CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP MORE INFLUENTIAL IN SOCIETAL OR ORGANIZATIONAL SETTINGS

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1. Introduction

It is important to contrast charismatic leadership in the political-societal context with that in organizational settings to gain knowledge about the relative strengths and weaknesses of each of them. After all, Sarah Anderson and John Cavanagh argued in 2000 that "of the world's 100 largest economic entities, 51 are now corporations and 49 are countries" (2002); a statement which triggered various heated debates. Regardless of the feasibility and validity of this comparison, it can be stated that the influence of today's large corporations is continually growing, also substantially affecting international politics and society as a whole. Hence, taking the increasing interconnectivity of nations and corporations into account, it is important to examine the similarities and differences of visionary leadership in both contexts in order to draw conclusions about their most successful application, which will eventually be useful in increasing their effectiveness from which everyone could benefit.

The proposed evaluation model seeks to compare the impact of both charismatic leaders and their related leadership contexts on their followers' everyday life. On the basis of former leadership research both in political as well as organizational settings, the dimensions "Goals and Motivations," "Scope of Decision Making," "Visibility" and "Approachability" were identified. Political-societal leaders are expected to have broader and more ambitious long-term goals and a wider scope of decision-making, including larger task variety, responsibility and accountability, than organizational leaders. Furthermore, due to higher media coverage and other related factors, their decisions and actions are said to be more visible for their followers, which however impairs their approachability. That is, the
distance between the leader and his subordinates is increased significantly.

2. What Is Charismatic Leadership?

In order to understand the true meaning, underlying assumptions and impact of charismatic leadership, it is helpful to first examine the definition and origin of the word charisma: it comes from the Greek word charisma, meaning "gift," "divine favor" or "grace" and refers to the "ability to inspire enthusiasm, interest, or affection in others by means of personal charm or influence" (Encarta, 2009) and to personal characteristics such as extroversion, communicability and persuasiveness. The German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) however, was the first to use it in the context of leadership. In his work "Essays in Sociology" from 1946, he suggested that "charisma" can be a source of power, leading to either traditional, legal, or rational authority. Furthermore, he distinguished between two forms of charisma, being "pure charisma," which is solely influenced by the leader's personal traits, underlying values and resulting behavior, and "routinized charisma," which is developed by occupying a formal position in a social network. Hence, it can be stated that Max Weber laid the foundations for the development of a new genre of leadership studies: the charismatic leadership theory, which is a widely used research area in modern society.

Charismatic leadership has many synonyms in the modern organizational and behavioral literature, which can be used interchangeably, such as "transformational," "visionary," "inspirational," "symbolic" and "exceptional leadership." It goes beyond the scope of this paper to discuss all theories related to charismatic leadership, which have emerged since Max Weber first introduced the definition of "charismatic authority" in 1946. Nevertheless, a brief overview of the most influential research studies and
Theories on this topic are given, commencing with Robert J. House’s "Theory of Charismatic Leadership," dating back to 1977 and James M. Burns’ transformational leadership theory from 1978. Whereas the earlier leadership theories focus more on "leader behavior in terms of leader-follower exchange relationships" (Shamir et al. 1993 referring to Hollander 1964, Graen and Cashman 1975) and reinforcement behavior. House and Burns were among the first researchers whose focus was on symbolic leader behavior, including the articulation and implementation of an inspiring vision, the intellectual stimulation of followers and the expectations of transformational leaders on their followers. In this context, leaders stimulate mutual dependence, commitment, respect and a high sense of justice or morality instead of focusing only on the task environment. Moreover, these theories claimed that transformational leaders could convert individual needs, preferences and aspirations from self-directed to collective interest, thus promoting everyone’s welfare. Based on their research, Bernard M. Bass developed his theory of pseudo-transformational leadership (1985), shifting the focus from the behavioral dimensions of charismatic leaders to their effect on followers. He argued that, as opposed to House and Burns, transformational leadership is not necessarily connected to moral and just behavior but can also have a destructive impact on followers, if misused. However, Bass also hypothesized that the effective use of charismatic leadership can lead to performance enhancement among followers. The increase in performance can be related to higher levels of personal commitment, satisfaction and follower motivation among followers as the leader provides references to history and ideologies, fosters a strong sense of cohesion and willingness for self-sacrifices to the collective benefit, and raises self-confidence and self-esteem (Shamir et al., 1993 and Konger & Canungo, 2000).
The aforementioned theories on charismatic or transformational leadership have been applied both to organizational and political-societal settings. Whereas Shamir, House, and Arthur (1993) for example focused on transformational leadership influences at the group and organizational level and Waldman and Yammarino (1999) at the top level of corporations (chief executive officers, CEOs), a research study on the performance of US presidents by House, Spangler and Woycke (1991) examined charismatic leadership at the national level in a political-societal context.

3. Problem Definition and Research Assumptions
Charismatic leadership was examined in the political-societal context as well as in organizational settings, from which researchers were also able to deduce several environmental requisites for its development. Unfortunately, what is still missing is an investigation, which creates a link between these two areas of interest in order to identify in which context this particular leadership style appears to be more influential. Only a direct comparison between charismatic leadership in society and organizations can reveal the relative strengths and, even more important, the relative weaknesses of each of them. This knowledge then hopefully serves as good starting-point for further analysis, which could potentially even lead to an increase in the effectiveness of charismatic leadership in both settings, from which everyone could benefit. After all, it is charismatic leadership which seeks to understand those who lead influential organizations or even entire nations and has a profound effect on their followers (House, 1991).

Charismatic leaders differ from other leaders by their ability to formulate and articulate an inspirational vision and by behaviors and actions that foster an impression that they and their mission are extraordinary.
Hence, this paper creates not only the first linkage between these two areas but can also be regarded as an attempt to stimulate further thought on the comparison of leadership styles in the organizational and political-societal context. However, prior to opposing both concepts, the set of assumptions, which underlie the following analysis have to be clarified. Due to the limited scope of this research paper, the developed theory will only hold if three central conditions are fulfilled: First of all, of all existing leadership styles, charismatic leadership must be the most suitable one for the organizational and accordingly social context under investigation. Secondly, "pseudo-transformational leadership" as defined by Bass (1985) is excluded, meaning that the leader does not abuse the power he holds but only uses it to the benefit of his followers and society as a whole. Thirdly, the charismatic leader to whom the model refers already holds a position at the top level (CEO in organizational - and President in political-societal context).

4. The Evaluation Model

The specified assumptions about the nature of the leader and conditions of the leadership context under investigation, allow the proposition of a theory which is aimed at determining whether charismatic leaders in societal settings or organizational settings can be regarded as more influential. In this context, the classification as "influential" relies on 1) the number of people affected and 2) the scope of this effect, referring, for example, to the leaders' impact on their followers' everyday life. Naturally, the first element is more apparent in its nature and can thus be determined more easily than the second factor. However, one has to consider that the decisions and actions of a political-societal leader undoubtedly affect more people, namely entire nations, than those of organizational leaders. Hence,
examining this dimension of the impact of charismatic leadership would render the analysis obsolete. Taking this as well the greater interest in the behavioral-psychological effect into account, only the second aspect will be included in the final evaluation scale, signalizing its higher importance in the evaluation of charismatic leadership.

The actual evaluation model which identifies the main differences of charismatic leadership in both settings consists of four dimensions, being 1) Goals and Motivations 2) Scope of Decision Making, 3) Visibility and 4) Approachability. However, to fully understand this model and the drawn hypotheses, it is essential to comprehend how each of the four dimensions is defined.

**Definitions:**

1) **Goals and Motivations**
   This element refers to the leader’s drive to change his followers, the environment, organizations and
society to the better. He does this by articulating and implementing an inspiring vision, which is contingent on his inner value system, idealism and high sense of justice (House, 1997 and Burns, 1978).

2) **Scope of Decision Making**
   The dimension “Scope of Decision making” embraces the broadness, variety, and urgency of the charismatic leader’s decisions and tasks.

3) **Visibility**
   This refers to the frequent demonstration of leadership skills, thus influencing how many of the leader’s followers are aware of his personality and actions. Furthermore, the fact whether or not they are able to describe these deeds in more detail also plays an important role in that matter.

4) **Approachability**
   The dimension “Approachability” measures if the leader can be approached easily, for example, for seeking guidance in personal matters or for discussing. Thus, it relates to the relationship distance of leader and followers.

4.1 **Goals and Motivations**
   The first dimension, being “Goals and Motivations” was inspired by a series of research studies: Robert J. House, William D. Spangler and James Woycke (1991) collectively examined charismatic leadership and its impact on performance and public views, based on a sample of 39 US presidents. The underlying assumption of this historical research study was that personal characteristics and charisma of a world-class leader do make a substantial difference with respect to their achievements in politics and society as a whole, whereby their definition of charismatic leadership incorporated two central aspects: “actual behavior and personal example of the leader” on the one hand,
and "attributions of behavior made to the leader by subordinates" on the other hand (House et al., 1991, p. 366). On the basis of McClelland's dimensions of leadership needs (1976) along with the theory that the "effective leader is more likely to have a high need for power, high activity inhibition, and a lower need for affiliation than the ineffective leader" (House et al., 1991 referring to Weber, 1978), the investigation aimed at providing empirical evidence. It was found that there was sufficient reason to infer that this relationship holds while also proving a significant positive relationship between charisma and performance. Hence, it was demonstrated that effective charismatic leaders had a strong drive to exhibit forceful actions (high need for power), used their societal status, power and resources to achieve institutional or social rather than personal goals (high activity inhibition) and did not feel the necessity to establish or maintain close, personal relationships (low on affiliation). The latter can be explained by the fact that the effective transformational leader seeks to act in the best interest of society at all times, driven by a strong inner sense of justice rather than by their dependence on others (Kuhnert and Lewis, 1987). It follows that the underlying needs and values of visionary leaders have already been researched several times. Hence, it is necessary to include this element in the model in order to examine whether the goals and motivations of political-societal and organizational leaders differ.

4.2 Scope of Decision Making

As mentioned above, in their research on US presidents, House et al. (1991) examined charismatic leadership and its impact on performance and public views. Waldman and Yammarino (1999) also investigated the impact of charismatic leadership but in an organizational context: they looked at the effect on performance across various hi-
erarchical levels, beginning at the strategic level and hence the top of the organization. They identified the articulation of a strategic vision and the recruitment of subordinates who conform to the values included in this vision, as the key tasks of chief executives. It follows that another key element in the comparison of political-societal and organizational charismatic leadership is the scope of their decision-making, including the broadness, variety and urgency of their tasks.

4.3 Visibility

While translating the aforementioned theories into measurable hypotheses, House et al. (1991) introduced three other factors that had an impact on charisma and thus political-societal performance, being institutional age, foreign and domestic crises, and presidential motives. They argued that longer term in office offered a greater number of opportunities for demonstrating effective leadership due to the steady increasing flow of information, triggered by mass media, and an amplified likelihood to experience foreign and domestic crises which demand the transformational leader to act vigorously and forcefully, driven by his inner motives and the desire for long-term reputation. Therefore, long terms in office as well as highly uncertain environments substantially increase the leader’s visibility or follower’s awareness as they provide the chance or even the need for strong leadership skills and guidance.

4.4 Approachability

The element “affiliation” in McClelland’s leadership needs, describing the need for close, personal relationships, already implies the importance of such a dimension in the evaluation model. Whereas Shamir (1995) argued that charismatic leadership was restricted to a leader-follower relationship of close proximity, Hollander (1978)
and Katz & Kahn (1978) hypothesized that it was more likely to occur in large distance relationships (as referred to in Waldman and Yammarino, 1999). Waldman and Yammarino (1999) however, reasoned that both theories are correct. Thus, they gave further situational specifications and prerequisites for the occurrence of transformational leadership, both in close and large distance relationships between leader and follower. They argued that a close relationship with frequent interaction between the CEO and his followers would increase subordinates’ commitment, loyalty to the organization and foster a sense of cohesion with its members, which would eventually enhance organizational performance. Moreover, they acknowledged that even a distant relationship without frequent interaction between both parties could foster heightened integrity and collective effort provided that the CEO’s personality conforms to the characteristic attributes of a visionary leader and that the subordinates perceive the environment as highly volatile. Namely, in this context of extreme uncertainty, it is very likely that followers seek the leader’s guidance. Hence, the relationship distance between leaders and followers plays a significant role in the comparison of charismatic leadership in the political-societal and organizational context and is thus also included in the evaluation model.

5. The Comparison: Charismatic Leadership in Societal and Organizational Settings

5.1 Key Similarities

Naturally, the attributes of the charismatic leader in both settings must match the developed definition of a visionary leader. Hence, he must be very committed to change his environment and followers to the better, while being solely driven by an internal set of values (Kuhnert and Lewis, 1987) including a high sense of morality and
justice (House, 1977 and Burns, 1978) rather than the dependence on the social relationship with his followers (House et al., 1991 referring to Weber, 1978). Furthermore, leaders in both contexts have a large influence on their followers and the performance of these. Whereas Shamir et al. (1993) mention that effective charismatic leadership increases integrity as well as motivation and satisfaction levels of the subordinates which then impact their performance, Konger and Canungo (2000) argue that it also shapes their identities in terms of increased willingness to engage in self-sacrificing, and higher commitment and self-confidence. It is also assumed that transformational leaders are self-critical and able to fully evaluate a given situation or context to then choose the leadership style, which is most effective under the given environmental circumstances.

Secondly, it is useful to state that despite the commonly held belief as not to say hope based on the ubiquitous positive connotations with transformational leadership, this type of leadership style is not universally applicable but is only effective in particular situational and environmental circumstances. According to House et al. (1993), charismatic leadership is likely to develop and be effective when the organizational task conforms to the prevailing social norms and values to which the followers are exposed, offering more potential for identification, commitment and moral involvement. Additionally, highly uncertain situations in which objectives cannot easily be articulated and measured and which, thus, require strong intrinsic motivation rather than the use of external incentives, are favorable conditions for transformational leadership. Naturally, the chance of followers to be captured by a visionary leader is higher in a dynamic environment of task uncertainty in which they seek guidance than in a stable context with clearly defined goals. The state of affairs, which is described first can be referred to as “weak psychological
situation” (Mischel, 1973 cited in House *et al.*, 1993). Additionally, in his work *Changing toward Participative Management Approaches: A Model and Methods* (1976), Marshall Sashkin argued that transformational leadership is the most appropriate method when dealing with a dynamic, rapidly changing environment, in which high levels of trust and commitment as well as the development of a shared vision and collective values are of utmost importance. Lastly, leaders in both contexts cannot keep their position infinitely but are restricted in their tenure of office.

### 5.2 Key Differences

More important however, are the key differences between charismatic leadership in both contexts. Beginning with elaborating on the dimension of “Goals and Motivation,” it can be assumed that political-societal charismatic leaders can be characterized as having broader and more ambitious long-term goals than organizational visionary leaders. This hypothesis is based on the assumption that the goals of political leaders to lead an entire nation and to change society instead of a limited field (organization) can not only be viewed as more ambitious, but usually also develop at a very early stage of their life, mostly their childhood. Thus, this highly idealistic dream is deeply rooted in their character, helping them to accept and overcome any setbacks. It should be considered that political leaders must slowly work their way up within a certain party, requiring substantial stamina and long-term willingness to achieve their goal since they are not satisfied of making decisions of limited scope only. They must go through long and tiring election campaigns in which they must win not only the support of their immediate followers or the board of directors in organizations, but that of an entire nation.
Hypothesis 1:
Societal-political leaders have broader and more ambitious long-term goals than organizational visionary leaders.

The scope of decision making can be analyzed upon several dimensions, such as the degree of responsibility, accountability, influence on followers’ identities and task specification, whereby it is vital to note that these elements do not have to be fulfilled simultaneously nor are they necessarily dependent on each other. Instead, they simply provide a starting-point for analyzing this attribute. In this context however, the scope of decision-making can be regarded as larger for political leaders than for those of organizations. After all, the decisions of the latter affect only selected stakeholder groups directly whereas decisions of

Hypothesis 2:
Societal-political leaders have a larger scope of decision making than organizational leaders, implying more task variability, responsibility and accountability.

the first concern a whole population and mostly even the relations to other nations. Thus, the responsibility held in the political-societal context is substantially higher than in organizational settings as much more is at stake. Secondly, whereas organizational leaders are predominantly accountable to their board of directors and through those to their immediate stakeholders, societal leaders must be concerned with unifying or at least managing a wide variety of opposed interests. Thirdly, political leaders cannot only affect but also influence a significantly larger number of people,
shaping their identity as well as their values and beliefs. In this context, it is also more likely that the so-called “snowball effect” occurs. This phenomenon relates to people’s tendency to follow the crowd and to orientate themselves according to what the other followers think and do. This is based on the general assumptions that the majority cannot be too far off the right track and that people usually favor to be part of the group rather than to live in isolation. Last but not least, it is easier to define and specify the tasks of a chief executive leader than those of a president due to the broader range of tasks and constantly changing circumstances to which these are adapted. This comes along with more flexibility in everyday tasks, but less on representative matters since the followers have very clear expectations about how the president must behave in a certain situation.

When it comes to the aspect of visibility, it is evident that there is a higher degree of media coverage with respect to the political-societal leader. Especially in exceptional situations, he can put himself in a good light and achieve a larger impact than the CEO, by using his charisma and demonstrating his leadership skills when handling the crisis. Thus, it is also more likely that a larger number of individuals know or have at least heard of a nation’s president, especially as he is the only one, rather than one out of many CEOs. Nevertheless, one must also consider the downsides of increased media coverage, which implicates augmented expectations of followers for specific, representative actions and hereby higher pressure on the leader “to do the right thing” in a given situation. These annotations however, focus more on the first, thus the more apparent dimension of “influence on followers” as discussed earlier. Hence, it is essential to note that even though more people are probably aware of his personality and tasks in a rather broad sense, fewer people will be able
to give very specific and clear indications of his everyday actions and tasks since their own ordinary life is affected on a limited basis only. On contrast, organizational members are confronted with the chief executive officer, or rather, their “boss” on more frequent basis, especially through internal communication, firm updates, networking events or large employee assemblies. In this aspect, their personal everyday or rather working life is said to be more dependent on their leader’s actions, which is why this element is closely connected to the last aspect, being the approachability of the leader.

As defined earlier, approachability measures if the leader can be approached easily, for example, for seeking guidance in personal matters or for discussing. Thus, it refers to the power distance between leader and followers as examined by Waldman and Yammarino (1999) who argue that charismatic leadership can be effective both in close and long distance relationships. However, they restricted successful charismatic leadership in long-distance relationships to rapidly changing and uncertain environments in which followers seek the leader’s guidance and support.

Hypothesis 3:
Societal-political leaders and their actions are more visible for a larger number of people than organizational leaders.

Hypothesis 4:
Societal-political leaders are less easily approachable by their followers than organizational visionary leaders. Hence, the power distance between the societal leader and his followers is substantially larger.

Naturally, it is easier to gain access to the leader and potential assistance on specific tasks in a relatively close rela-
tionship, meaning fewer levels of separation between the leader and his followers, as one can find it between the chief executive officer and his organizational members. Hence, the organizational leader can be viewed as more approachable and might be able to affect his followers' identity and every day life in a more direct, trustful and specific way whereas the political leader rather influences his devotees' life in a broad sense. Considering the low approachability of the latter due to the relatively large distance to his followers and their life, he is more likely to influence them on general matters and to become a vague hero-figure. After all, whether or not it is feasible in its own, an employee is more likely to set a meeting with his boss than any arbitrary citizen is able to schedule one with his nation's president.

5. Research Methodology
After evaluating the relative similarities and differences between both environmental contexts and examining their presumed connectivity, the research hypotheses can be summarized in the following way:

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<th>Hypothesis 1</th>
<th>Hypothesis 2</th>
<th>Hypothesis 3</th>
<th>Hypothesis 4</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Societal-political leaders have broader and more ambitious long-term goals than organizational visionary leaders.</td>
<td>- Societal-political leaders have a larger <strong>scope of decision making</strong> than organizational leaders, implying more task variability, responsibility and accountability.</td>
<td>- Societal-political leaders and their actions are more visible for a larger number of people than organizational leaders.</td>
<td>- Societal-political leaders are less easily approachable by their followers than organizational visionary leaders. Hence, the power distance between the societal leader and his followers is substantially larger.</td>
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In order to draw valid as well as relevant comparisons and conclusions from the presented hypotheses, one would have to assure that exactly the same research treatment is applied to both the political-societal context and to the organizational setting. Although personal interviews would be the
preferred method in both contexts, this qualitative method can be regarded as unfeasible due to the immense time constraints of top leaders. A second potential course of action could entail the distribution of surveys among CEOs and presidents, which should include questions on the leader’s childhood, development of dreams, past, present and future plans and aspirations as well as on their personal and working life. To avoid low response rates, one would have to assure that this highly personal and sensitive information is treated with utmost caution and confidentiality. Certainly, this approach is highly desirable; however its feasibility can be regarded as low since it is not very likely that a sufficient number of organizational leaders and especially presidents would participate, for example due to personal time constraints and lack of immediate benefits. Hence, one should base the analysis on historical data, speeches, potential bibliographies and extraordinary events during their tenure in office. Scandals or other crises and how they had been dealt with would naturally have to be taken into consideration as well. Although this third proposition can be regarded as least desirable, it is still the most realistic approach to researching the differences of charismatic leadership in both contexts. Lastly, an adequate sample size could involve 30 presidents from Western countries, 80-100 CEOs and, of course, to measure the impact of their leadership, a large number of followers in each research context: surveys amongst their closest and more distant followers should also be distributed in order to learn how they perceive their leader’s long-term goals & motivations and their scope of decision making.

Research on the dimensions “Visibility” and “Approachability,” thus Hypothesis 3 and Hypothesis 4 respectively, should focus exclusively on the followers’ perceptions. Here, one should examine how many people know the leader under investigation and can elaborate on his personality and actions. Furthermore, the level of detail given
when asked to describe and define his responsibilities is of utmost importance and will be considered in the final analysis. Lastly, one should aim to identify how and to what degree followers feel affected and inspired by their leader. Results from the examination of all dimensions should subsequently be categorized and coded so that one could develop a scale and assign points to each leader, which should then, after being weighted according to their relative importance, give more insight on the rightness of the developed hypotheses.

6. Conclusion
In this paper, charismatic leadership was examined in the political-societal context as well as in organizational settings: the attributes of charismatic leaders and their influence on followers as well as situational factors which have an effect on leadership were discussed. Subsequently, the analysis focused on identifying the key similarities and key differences of charismatic leadership in both contexts. The latter were identified as variances in goals and motivations, scope of decision making, visibility and approachability, which then translate into a distinct influence on their follower’s everyday life. It was argued that political leaders can be characterized through broader and more ambitious long-term goals and dissatisfaction with decisions that are restricted in their scope. Furthermore, their followers are more likely to be aware of their personality and actions due to their increased visibility, find it however more difficult to define them in much detail, based on their large scope of decision making. Taking into account that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to consult them for personal purposes or to seek direct guidance on highly specific matters, labeled as “low approachability,” the impact on their followers’ life and value system can be regarded as high, but certainly in a very broad sense. Consequently, these leaders
serve as relatively abstract role models, influencing their followers’ broad identities and general beliefs rather than actions on specific, everyday tasks. The latter however, can be said to apply to the influence of organizational leaders whose focus lies mostly on shaping the identity of their immediate followers, in a more direct, specific and personal way (higher approachability). Thus, their awareness is restricted to a rather limited number of people who are however more likely to be able to explain their tasks and actions in detail due to a narrower scope of decision making. Furthermore, some suggestions were given on how these hypotheses could be researched and verified.

To conclude, charismatic leaders in both settings impact their followers’ identities and ordinary life in a very distinct way, making it not viable to determine which one is more influential. However, the outcomes of this analysis can be used to build upon the relative strengths of each: Political leaders shape their devotee’s life, identities and value system in very broad, wide-ranging terms, whereas organizational leaders can be approached for personal assistance and guidance on very specific matters. Moreover, the hope of this research paper is to stimulate further thought on the comparison of societal and organizational settings to understand the context-specific implications of leadership style and to give recommendations for their most successful application.
Bibliography


