

# Who Makes Whom Charismatic? Leadership Identity Negotiation in Work Teams

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## Abstract

This study examines charismatic attributions among peers within the informal leadership emergence process. We built and tested the theory with a longitudinal sample of 123 teams. Using an identity negotiation framework, we examined the processes by which individuals came to be perceived as charismatic by both teammates and themselves. We found that individuals engaged in self-verification, which caused their teammates to perceive them as they perceived themselves, while the collective team engaged in appraisal and influenced individual teammates to perceive themselves as the team did. Our findings suggest that these processes are stronger when initial perceptual differences are high and when the identity negotiation process aims at yielding a highly charismatic identity or reputation.

## Keywords

leadership, identity negotiation, self-verification, appraisal, charisma

## Introduction

Researchers and practitioners have been intrigued by the process of *informal leadership emergence* in organizations (Marinova et al., 2012), through which individuals emerge as leaders among their peers because they come to be perceived as “leader-like” (Judge et al., 2002). Leadership emergence garners significant attention because (a) organizations continue to look for ways to identify potential leaders among their rank and file (Conger & Fulmer, 2003); (b) leadership roles offer tangible and intangible rewards to those perceived as leaders (Gemmill & Oakley, 1992); and (c) organizational structures allow for more individuals to participate in the leadership process through interpersonal influence (Carson et al., 2007).

Prior research on emergent leadership has primarily examined the role of individual differences in the process and has investigated, for example, the differences in personality, skills, intelligence, and so on, that predict who will and will not come to be perceived as leaders among a group of peers (Marinova et al., 2012). Charisma is a key individual attribute that can shape the course of leadership emergence. One’s influence over others may emanate from a range of sources of personal power (French & Raven, 1959). Accordingly, formal leaders have a broad range of sources of power and influence to draw from in an attempt to motivate and influence subordinates and organizations (Marinova et al., 2012). By contrast, emergent leaders find themselves more limited and lack meaningful access to

bases of legitimate, reward, or coercive power. Instead, peers’ bases of power and influence are often limited to referent and expert power (Yukl & Falbe, 1991). However, charisma can be a central form of referent power (Conger & Kanungo, 1987), leading individuals to follow leaders out of a desire to court their favor. Prior research on implicit leadership theories confirms that potential followers cognitively link charisma with expectations of leadership (Lord et al., 1984). Consequently, peers perceive those showing high levels of charisma as commanding high levels of referent power (Yukl & Falbe, 1991). Those who are deemed charismatic command potential attention from followers through the attraction that emerges from charismatic attribution (Kark et al., 2003).

However, *how* charisma emerges among peers is less clearly understood. This requires examining the inter-follower processes that produce charisma and, ultimately, leadership. The main purpose of this study is, therefore, to examine the processes by which charisma is established between potential leaders and followers in the

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process of leadership emergence. Following previous research, we conceptualize charisma as a relational identity (Sluss & Ashford, 2007; Uhl-Bien, 2006) defined through the relationship between leaders and followers (e.g., Klein & House, 1995), specifically as an attribution made by the follower regarding the leader (or potential leader; Conger & Kanungo, 1987). Charisma thus emerges as a function of the interests and attitudes of both (Ehrhart & Klein, 2001), and is dynamic (Bligh et al., 2004) and socially constructed (Pastor et al., 2002). We suggest that, within a group or team, peers will mutually influence each other regarding their attributions of each other's charisma.

To analyze this process, we build on the theory of *identity negotiation* (Goffman, 1959; Swann, 1987), which suggests that when individuals enter a social setting, they engage in a process aimed at arriving at a consensus about the identities and reputations of those in the group or team (Swann et al., 2000). In this study, we examine charismatic identity negotiation within project teams. We clarify how team members determine who is or is not charismatic and, hence, is likely to ascend to a leadership role. We build a theory and test it empirically, examining the charismatic attribution process across a team's life cycle.

This study addresses two fundamental research questions. First, who influences whom? Prior research on identity negotiation suggests that actors influence the team and vice versa, with the individual having more sway (Swann et al., 2000). We reexamine that question here with a specific focus on charisma among peers. Second, what factors shape or define identity negotiation? To explore this question, we first establish the basic effects of identity negotiation. As identities and reputations are essentially perceptions, we are interested in the factors that shape perception or attitude change.

We tested our theory and hypotheses using a longitudinal study of 123 project teams. In doing so, we sought to make several contributions: Our primary contribution is in examining the intersection between charisma and emergent leadership. While it is intuitive and logical to consider charisma within the domain of emergent leadership, this avenue has seldom been explored by researchers. Thus, we contribute to the existing literature on emergent and charismatic leadership by making this connection and exploring the processes through which charisma is developed. In addition, through the identity negotiation framework, we highlight the roles that potential leaders and followers may play in this process. We thus contribute to the literature on relational leadership and respond to Uhl-Bien's (2006) call to extend the concept to more horizontal, peer-based environments. Finally, this study contributes to the literature on teams by examining the effects of team composition on the emergence of team leadership processes.

## Theory and Hypotheses

### *Charismatic Attributions: Identities and Reputations*

Both charismatic attributions and leadership behaviors develop over time (Bligh et al., 2004). When a team is formed, team members engage in several processes to gain clarity regarding the team's mission and objectives, as well as the strategy and plan through which the team will accomplish its goals (Mathieu et al., 2008). As part of this planning process, teams take stock of members' resources, skills, and abilities, as well as the roles necessary to achieve team-level success (Mathieu et al., 2008). One of the objectives of such early planning is to assign team members to roles specific to the work to be delivered, preferably by matching skills with needs. Scholars have highlighted leadership as a key role and process that team members design and assign, considering the resources or inputs that individuals contribute toward team success (Mathieu et al., 2008).

In assigning leadership, team members may come to a consensus regarding who is or is not charismatic. Charismatic attributions arise through bottom-up emergent processes (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000), drawing on the unique attributes and behaviors of the individual in question and the idiosyncratic interactions of these attributes within dyads or within the group as a whole. In particular, the process of arriving at charismatic attributions involves views of the individual as held both by himself or herself and by others in the group. We define charismatic *identity* as the extent to which a given team member perceives himself or herself as charismatic. Identity is a reflection of how individuals conceptualize, perceive, and experience themselves (Gecas, 1982). Individuals enter teams with a preconceived identity, such as how charismatic they are. Simultaneously, other team members have the opportunity to assess the charisma of the focal individual on their entry to the team. Following Zinko et al. (2007), we refer to this assessment of a focal individual by others as *reputation*, the attribution that the remainder of the team makes of a given team member. Reputations are socially constructed among group members (Pastor et al., 2002) and are not necessarily consistently held across an individual's alters, but typically coalesce over time (Zinko et al., 2007). Individuals' charismatic identities and reputations may not be consistent, particularly at the outset.

### *Negotiating Charismatic Identities and Reputations*

How do team members make sense of possibly discrepant charismatic identities and reputations within the team? How does the bottom-up process of charismatic emergence work?

We propose that individual team members, and the team as a whole, engage in *identity negotiation*. This concept, developed by Swann et al. (2000), describes how team members engage in efforts to shape each other's views of themselves. Two processes occur simultaneously. First, individuals engage in *self-verification* to influence others to perceive them as they perceive themselves. Individuals develop an identity or self-view, and then work to influence others to hold the same view, that is, a reputation of the focal actor. Individuals strive for self-verification for two reasons. First, self-verification serves the psychological purpose of uncertainty reduction. When others perceive an individual as he or she perceives himself or herself, he or she experiences alignment and, thus, feels secure and confident (Swann et al., 2000). Second, self-verification serves the organizationally political purpose of allowing the leader to achieve his or her desired reputation (Bromley, 1993). Individual reputations have value to those who hold them as they open up the possibility of the focal individual achieving rewards (e.g., compensation or promotions) within the organization (Zinko et al., 2007).

While individuals engage in self-verification, other members of the team simultaneously seek to achieve *appraisal effects*. This refers to when team members develop an assessment—a reputation—of particular team members, and then attempt to influence those team members to perceive themselves in a similar way—that is, develop their identity. Appraisal effects reflect the desire of individuals to meet the expectations of those around them and adjust their self-conceptions accordingly. Appraisal effects result from group-level social influences (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004) through which the views and perceptions of a group of alters may influence one's own views and perceptions of the same target. Swann et al. (2000) suggest that appraisal effects arise out of a pursuit of group cohesion, with members striving to establish their "in-group" status by holding beliefs and perceptions, and exhibiting behaviors that are consistent with group norms (Hogg, 2001). In pursuit of group membership, they take stock of what they think the group believes (Stryker, 1987) and then often adjust their views to match those of the group. The appraisal effect occurs when focal individuals adopt an identity consistent with the group's reputation of them.

Self-verification and appraisal occur sequentially and over time. For example, a team member enters the team and exhibits behaviors reflective of his or her desired charismatic identity. Under self-verification, other team members take in those signals, interpret them, and eventually perceive the team member as he or she desires. Appraisal effects follow a similar dynamic. The group arrives at an initial assessment of the focal individual, who then begins to adjust his or her own self-concept. Intriguingly, the processes may even occur in tandem, as each party arrives at a particular view at the outset.

We expect that individuals will engage in successful efforts toward self-verification of their charismatic identities. Some individuals generally view themselves as leaders (Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Harms et al., 2007) and are more likely to assert themselves as leaders among their peers. To the extent that they hold a charismatic identity, they are motivated to have others validate this identity as a step toward leadership emergence. They also engage in behaviors that portray this identity, either as conscious acts of impression management (Shamir et al., 1998) or simply as the outgrowth of extroversion and other personality traits that are common prerequisites of charismatic relationships (Judge & Bono, 2000). For example, these individuals are more likely than others to engage in vision setting and inspirational communication. When confronted with these activities, other group members—potential followers—are more likely to come to perceive these members as charismatic. Thus, we posit the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1a:** Charismatic attributions are subject to self-verification effects: Other team members' assessments of an individual's charisma (reputation) are positively predicted by the focal individual's prior self-conception as charismatic (identity).

In parallel, appraisal effects could have great influence in shaping one's charismatic self-concept or identity. The establishment of one member of a team as charismatic requires the joint establishment of the individual identity with the collective reputation. For a charismatic relationship to exist in a team, both the focal individual and the remainder of the team must perceive it as such. Those holding the reputation, therefore, have a vested interest in ensuring that the focal team member perceives himself or herself as the team desires. This provides fertile ground for appraisal effects.

Not all types of identities are relational and therefore, do not require congruence between identities and reputations. For example, the fact that Person A perceives himself or herself as athletic does not require Person B to also hold a similar view of Person A. In contrast, a charismatic identity requires that both parties share in the relational identity. The identity of "leader" requires the relationship of a "follower." Thus, the follower in a charismatic relationship has a vested interest in ensuring that the leader experiences the relationship in the same manner. No charismatic relationship exists in the absence of follower perceptions of charisma. Indeed, in the majority of research on charismatic leadership, charisma is assessed by followers, not the leader (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1987). Furthermore, followers (or potential followers) differ in their predisposition to perceive others as leaders (Kenny & Livi, 2009) or attribute charisma to them (Ehrhart & Klein, 2001). Thus, we posit the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1b:** Charismatic identities are subject to appraisal effects: An individual's identity of himself or herself as charismatic is positively predicted by other team members' prior assessments (reputation) of that individual as charismatic.

Prior research in identity negotiation suggests that self-verification effects are generally more common than appraisal effects (Swann et al., 2000). We suspect, however, that this will not hold for attributions of charisma. Charismatic leadership theory rests on the notion that charisma is attributed by followers to leaders (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1987). Thus, it may be that charismatic relationships are created by followers convincing leaders (appraisal effects) as much as through self-verification effects. Thus, we posit the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 2:** Appraisal effects will be as great as self-verification effects in the charismatic identity negotiation process.

### *Factors That Shape the Negotiation of Charismatic Relationships*

Some identity negotiation processes yield significant changes from initial identities and reputations, while others do not (Swann et al., 2000). This raises questions regarding what accounts for these differences and how scholars and managers can make use of these distinctions. The identity negotiation framework essentially describes the process by which the perceptions of an individual (as held by him or her or others) are subject to social influence. In this section, we propose two factors that shape the identity negotiation process. Drawing on the theory of extremity in impression formation (Fiske, 1980) and self-enhancement theory (e.g., Brown, 1986), we suggest that the *structure* of perceptions—as represented by discrepancies in perceptions between self and alters—shapes susceptibility to the change of the perception.

Individuals' attention is drawn to discrepancies in perceptions (Fiske & Taylor, 2013). Extreme, rather than more ordinary, views held by others capture more of a focal individual's attention (Fiske, 1980), and the larger the discrepancy, the more salient it becomes. Extreme behaviors or perceptions allow perceivers to unambiguously categorize a person, while moderate behaviors are open to interpretation (Skowronski & Carlston, 1987). The more salient perceptions are, the more likely focal individuals are to modify their views (Taylor et al., 1979). When confronted with large differences, both persons are less likely to "miss" the difference and may be motivated to explore how and why it has arisen (Warr & Jackson, 1975). In such circumstances, both parties may be more susceptible to the other's influence. Thus, we posit the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 3:** The greater the discrepancy in initial perceptions, the greater the magnitude of (a) self-verification and (b) appraisal effects.

While this logic of initial discrepancy seems strong and intuitive, we also suggest that identity negotiation is shaped by the individual's initial identity and desire for self-enhancement. Self-enhancement theory, dating back to Allport (1937), suggests that most people inherently desire to craft a positive reputation for themselves that is rooted, when possible, in a positive self-concept or identity. While self-verification suggests that individuals strive for cognitive consistency, self-enhancement theory suggests that individuals strive for positive, rather than negative, assessments (Swann et al., 1989). Where self-verification and appraisal would have similar effects when an individual holds a positive self-view, they may diverge when an individual holds a negative one. Self-verification would predict an effort to influence others to perceive the individual negatively, while self-enhancement suggests that, even with a negative identity, individuals would strive to develop a positive reputation (Brown, 1986; Swann et al., 1989). The self-enhancement view is also consistent with the literature on reputations within organizations, which suggests that positive reputations are valuable as they bring rewards (Zinko et al., 2007).

The self-enhancement view also resolves a potential conundrum left open by the appeal to extremity. A counter to the extremity argument is found in social adjustment theory, which suggests that individuals are subject to attitude or perception changes only when the proposed change falls within a personally acceptable range. This is called the *latitude of acceptance* (Eagly & Tetaak, 1972). The extremity argument seems to create the possibility that focal actors could be required to adopt a self-perception that may be too discrepant from their starting point. However, self-enhancement theory allows that positive or potentially positive perceptions might fall within a latitude of acceptance, thus resolving the extremity conundrum. In sum, there are strong psychological and political reasons for self-enhancement to play a role in the identity negotiation process.

We therefore propose that self-verification and appraisal effects are both asymmetrical and subject to the perception held by the influencer. We suggest that a charismatic reputation or identity is beneficial (because it is a path to leadership) and therefore positive. Thus, we suspect that identity negotiation is shaped by whether the influencer holds a highly charismatic or highly uncharismatic assessment of the focal individual. The focal individual is more likely to engage in self-verification efforts if his or her identity is highly charismatic (positive) than if it is highly uncharismatic (negative). Similarly, the focal individual is more likely to be susceptible to appraisal effects if the remainder of the team perceives him or her as highly charismatic

rather than highly uncharismatic. Thus, we posit the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 4a:** Self-verification effects will be positively associated with the initial charismatic identity held by the focal individual such that the effects will be greatest when the initial identity is highly charismatic.

**Hypothesis 4b:** Appraisal effects will be positively associated with the initial charismatic reputation held by the collective team such that the effects will be greatest when the initial reputation held by the team is highly charismatic.

## Method

### Setting and Sample

We tested our hypotheses on a longitudinal sample of teams of undergraduate students in an introductory management course at a large Eastern U.S. business school. The teams were composed of four to six participants working together over the course of a 14-week semester to analyze a current strategic or organizational problem faced by an organization of their choice. The teams were charged with generating two outputs, a 15- to 20-page paper and a 12- to 15-minute presentation summarizing the findings of the paper. The project accounted for approximately 25% of the students' grades in the course, with all members of each team receiving the same grade. This setting and sample were well suited to testing our hypotheses because team members needed to come together in a short period and negotiate roles and identities/reputations in pursuit of delivering the final product. Furthermore, undergraduates are in a salient period of personal development and are still formulating their self-concepts regarding many attributes, including charisma (Waterman, 1982).

### Data Collection

We collected data through online surveys at three stages: at the beginning of the course, prior to team formation (T0), within the first week after team formation (T1), and at the end of the 14-week course (T2). The initial sample included all 126 student teams ( $n = 615$ , average team size = 4.88) involved in the course over two semesters in a single academic year. Participation in the surveys was required as part of the pedagogy of the course. However, at the end of the course, participants could choose to have their data removed from the data set. The response rates to the surveys at T0, T1, and T2 were 92%, 92%, and 93%, respectively; 80% of participants responded to all three surveys. Three teams did not have enough respondents across all three time periods to construct team-level measures, thus reducing our sample to 123 teams and 494 team members.

At T0, we collected self-reported demographic information about each respondent. Respondents had an average age of 20 years; 5% were freshmen, 47% sophomores, 32% juniors, and 16% seniors. More than half (66%) were male, and 48% were White, 35% Asian, and 17% were of other ethnicities. At T1 and T2, we conducted round-robin assessments on charisma and leadership. We asked: "Please assess the extent to which the word 'charismatic' describes this person." These assessments formed the basis of the *charismatic identity* and *charismatic reputation* constructs of the study. In addition, we adapted wording from Carson et al. (2007), asking, "Please assess the extent to which this person provided leadership to the team." We conducted the leadership round-robin to confirm the link between charisma and leadership emergence, though this was not the primary objective of our study. For both questions, respondents rated all team members, including themselves, on a scale from 1 (*very little*) to 5 (*a great deal*).

### Measures

A team member's *charismatic identity* was measured as his or her self-assessment as charismatic (Swann et al., 2000). *Charismatic reputation* was measured by calculating the average of the assessments of charisma of the focal individual made by each of his or her alters (Swann et al., 2000). These measures were calculated at both T1 and T2. A single-item measure of charisma was used because we were concerned that multi-item scales may cause a response fall off from T1 to T2. Single-item measures are frequently used by researchers in studies on social networks and interpersonal perception (e.g., Anderson et al., 2006; Sparrowe & Liden, 2005; Venkataramani et al., 2010).

Charismatic reputation and leadership emergence were measured by aggregating the ratings of a given group member by all other group members. Although they had a unique individual target, they were also group-level measures. As such, we examined the level of interrater agreement on these measures. The median  $rwg(j)$  for each measure was as follows: T1 Charismatic Reputation, 0.83; T2 Charismatic Reputation, 0.83; T1 Leadership Emergence, 0.83; and T2 Leadership Emergence, 0.67. Each of these measures indicated a high level of agreement among raters, justifying an aggregate view by the group of each focal individual.

To calculate the self-verification effect, we followed Swann et al. (2000) and subtracted the absolute value of the difference between a given individual's charismatic identity at T1 and the team's charismatic reputation of that individual at T2 from the absolute value of the difference between the individual's charismatic identity at T1 and the team's average charismatic reputation at T1. In effect, we determined how much closer the final reputation was to the initial identity, as compared with the initial reputation. The closer the final reputation was to the initial identity, the

greater the self-verification effect. The equation was as follows: *Self-verification effect* = |T1 Identity – T1 Reputation| – |T1 Identity – T2 Reputation|.

To calculate the appraisal effect, we followed Swann et al. (2000) and subtracted the absolute value of the difference between the team's charismatic reputation of the focal individual at T1 and the focal individual's charismatic identity at T2 from the absolute value of the difference between the team's charismatic reputation at T1 and the focal individual's identity at T1. The equation was as follows: *Appraisal effect* = |T1 Reputation – T1 Identity| – |T1 Reputation – T2 Identity|.

Survey respondents identified their ethnicity as Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native American, White, or Other. As over 80% of the sample reported being White or Asian, we created two dummy variables to use as controls: *Asian* and *White* were coded as 1 if the respondent belonged to that ethnicity, and 0 if not.

## Results

The data for our analyses were nested, with 494 individuals nested within 123 teams. Therefore, our analyses used random intercept models to account for the nesting and to control for higher level effects that were likely present but not central to our core theory (Gelman & Hill, 2007; Klein & Kozlowski, 2000; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Our hypothesized effects regarding charismatic reputations lie at the individual level of analysis that focuses on the aggregate of teammates' perceptions of an individual. In a random intercept model, the analyst first conducts the analysis within each group (here, within each team) and isolates the difference in the dependent variable attributable to that particular group. This allows the analyst to enter fixed effects at the individual observation level—*independent variables for which the theory suggests that the effect on the dependent variable is consistent across groups—whose effects will be free of group-level confounding.* All the analyses were group-mean centered, which enhanced interpretation for both multilevel and interaction analyses. The summary statistics and correlations among the study variables are displayed in Table 1.

### Charismatic Perceptions and Leadership Emergence

This study began with the previously documented premise that charisma among peers is a determinant of leadership emergence (e.g., Antonakis et al., 2011). We checked for this relationship in our data. As shown in Table 1, the correlation between one's *charismatic reputation* and one's *leadership emergence* was  $r = .31$  ( $p < .01$ ) at T1 and  $r = .61$  ( $p < .01$ ) at T2. To further examine this, we constructed a simple regression, including both T1 Leadership

Emergence and T2 Charismatic Reputation as predictors of T2 Leadership Emergence. This allowed us to control for latent assessments of leadership and isolate the change in assessment, given the perceived charisma of the target individual at the time of leadership assessment. The results showed that T2 Charismatic Reputation significantly predicted T2 Leadership Emergence ( $b = .53$ ,  $p < .001$ ), even after controlling for T1 Leadership Emergence. This reinforces the argument that charismatic attributions are associated with leadership emergence within teams.

### Charismatic Identity Negotiation: Self-Verification and Appraisal Effects

Hypothesis 1 proposed that charismatic attributions are subject to (a) self-verification effects and (b) appraisal effects. As shown in Table 2, after controlling for initial charismatic reputation, we found a significant positive association between initial charismatic identity (held by self) and subsequent charismatic reputation (held by others;  $b = .07$ ,  $p < .01$ ), supporting Hypothesis 1a. After controlling for initial charismatic identity, we found a positive correlation between initial charismatic reputation (held by others) and subsequent charismatic identity (held by self;  $b = .25$ ,  $p < .01$ ), supporting Hypothesis 1b.

Hypothesis 2 suggested that, unlike many identity negotiation processes (Swann et al., 2000), appraisal effects will be as significant as self-verification effects in charismatic relationships. Accordingly, we conducted a multilevel multivariate analysis, simultaneously modeling final (T2) charismatic identity *and* reputation as dependent variables. Using this integrated model, we tested the difference between the coefficient on T1 Identity, predicting T2 Reputation, and the coefficient on T1 Reputation, predicting T2 Identity. The standardized parameter predicting T2 Identity as a function of T1 Reputation was 0.11, while the standardized parameter predicting T2 Reputation as a function of T1 Identity was 0.07, suggesting that appraisal effects could be greater than self-verification effects in this sample. We then conducted a Wald test, which revealed that the two standardized coefficients were not significantly different from each other (Wald statistic = 2.92,  $p = .09$ ). This suggests that appraisal and self-verification effects were equally present in the identity negotiation process, supporting Hypothesis 2, while providing an anecdotal sense that appraisal effects may be marginally larger.

### Effects of Initial Discrepancy on Self-Verification and Appraisal Effects

In Hypothesis 3, we suggested that both self-verification and appraisal effects would be greatest when the initial discrepancy between the group and individual assessments

**Table 1.** Summary Statistics and Correlations.

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Leadership Reputation T1	3.39	0.80							
2. Leadership Reputation T2	3.41	0.92	.50**						
3. Charismatic Identity T1	3.78	0.88	.12**	.16**					
4. Charismatic Identity T2	3.81	0.90	.17**	.16**	.51**				
5. Charismatic Reputation T1	3.39	0.64	.31**	.27**	.45**	.33**			
6. Charismatic Reputation T2	3.47	0.72	.38**	.61**	.29**	.36**	.49**		
7. Verification Effect	-0.05	0.59	.10*	.10*	.07	.02	-.19**	.13**	
8. Appraisal Effect	-0.06	1.02	-.07	.02	.15**	-.17**	.07	.01	.14**

Note.  $N = 494$ .

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table 2.** Baseline Self-Verification and Appraisal Effects.

Variable	Self-verification effect		Appraisal effect	
	Dependent variable: Charismatic reputation T2, <i>b</i>		Dependent variable: Charismatic identity T2, <i>b</i>	
Intercept		3.44**		3.80**
Charismatic reputation T1		0.52**		0.25**
Charismatic identity T1		0.07**		0.47**
Deviance		841.66		1186.96

Note. Random intercepts employed at team-level of analysis.  $N = 494$  individuals nested in 123 teams.

\*\* $p < .01$ .

was largest. Hypothesis 4 tempered this view by suggesting that the size of the effect would be shaped by the initial position of the influencer. We used polynomial regression (PNR) and response surface modeling (Edwards & Parry, 1993) to examine the effects of initial discrepancies between identity and reputation in shaping identity negotiations. PNR is used to examine the differences between the same construct as held by different individuals or at different points in time. Rather than constructing a difference score (e.g., T1 Reputation is lower than T1 Identity), PNR examined the effects of the two measurements independently and together by including five terms in a regression framework: T1 Reputation, T1 Identity, T1 Reputation squared, T1 Identity squared, and the interaction of the two (T1 Reputation  $\times$  T1 Identity). Thus, we were able to assess the impact of the discrepancy while not losing critical information, such as the initial starting positions (Edwards & Parry, 1993). The results of this analysis are displayed in Tables 3 and 4. The tables reveal several significant terms. Model 2, with the five PNR terms, is a significant improvement in terms of model fit beyond the intercept-only model, Model 1.

Given the complexity of the five terms, we also graphed the results in response surfaces. The independent variables, T1 Identity and T1 Reputation, are labeled on the “floor” of the chart, with ranges that encompass 2 standard deviations from the mean in either direction. The dependent variable (either self-verification effect or appraisal

**Table 3.** Magnitude of Self-Verification Effect as Dependent Variable.

	Model 1, <i>b</i>	Model 2, <i>b</i>
Intercept	-.04	-.04
Reputation T1		-.82*
Identity T1		1.28***
Reputation T1 squared		.27**
Identity T1 squared		-.01
Reputation T1 $\times$ Identity T1		-.33***
Deviance	829.421	756.155

Note. Random intercepts employed at team-level of analysis.  $N = 494$  individuals nested in 123 teams.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

effect) is on the vertical axis. As shown in Figure 1a, self-verification effects were highest when there was a large initial discrepancy, that is, when the focal individual had a high charismatic identity and the team began with a low charismatic reputation for that individual. However, the reverse effect did not hold. Individuals who did not perceive themselves as charismatic seemed to have no effect on the views of the team. These results provide partial support for Hypothesis 3a, that the self-verification effect is greatest when the initial discrepancy is largest. They provide more complete support for Hypothesis 4a, in which the effect is greatest when the focal individual holds a highly positive charismatic identity.

**Table 4.** Magnitude of Appraisal Effect as Dependent Variable.

	Model 1, <i>b</i>	Model 2, <i>b</i>
Intercept	-.08**	-.08**
Reputation T1		-.71***
Identity T1		.89*
Reputation T1 squared		.38***
Identity T1 squared		.17*
Reputation T1 × Identity T1		-.56***
Deviance	1009.93	885.013

Note. Random intercepts employed at team-level of analysis.  $N = 494$  individuals nested in 123 teams.

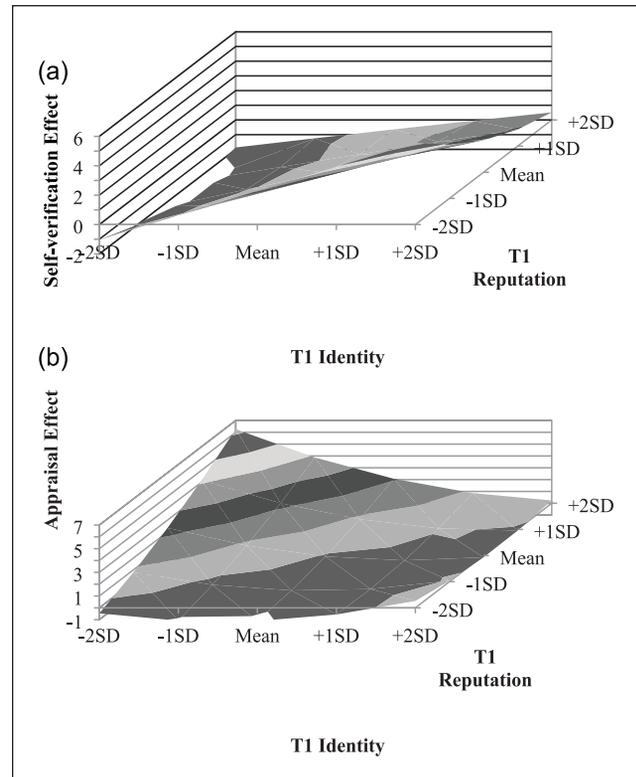
\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

A similar pattern was present for appraisal effects (Figure 1b): they were greatest when there was a large initial discrepancy, that is, when T1 Reputation was high and T1 Identity was low. However, the discrepancy effect did not hold in the other direction. If T1 Charismatic Reputation was low, there was no appraisal effect. Individuals, it seems, are susceptible to the influence of the collective team if the team perceives the member as highly charismatic, but not if the team perceives the individual as not charismatic. Thus, an individual who does not initially perceive himself or herself as charismatic can come to perceive himself or herself as such through the influence of the team members. However, the team cannot, it seems, influence a member to perceive himself or herself as less charismatic. These results partially support Hypothesis 3b and more fully support Hypothesis 4b.

## Discussion

We examined the process of charismatic attribution formation among peers and built and tested the theory empirically to examine the processes through which team members develop charismatic attributions of themselves and others. Unbundling these processes is important, as charisma can be a key determinant in leadership emergence (Antonakis et al., 2011). Our central finding is that team members engage in charismatic identity negotiation in the process of leadership emergence. Our results highlight identity negotiation and illustrate how followers' perceptions and processes of leader–follower identity negotiation produce charisma.

The notion of identity negotiation situates emergent leadership within the relational leadership literature (e.g., Uhl-Bien, 2006). Under relational leadership theory, leadership is socially constructed by leaders and followers working together. Identity negotiation is the mechanism through which this occurs. The current study extends the concept of relational leadership by moving beyond formal leadership roles and examining the processes of social construction among peers, thus potentially placing the concept



**Figure 1.** (a) Self-verification effects versus T1 Identity and Reputation. (b) Appraisal effects versus T1 Identity and Reputation.

of relational leadership within a broader set of organizational configurations.

The presence of appraisal extends the understanding of personal reputations in organizations (e.g., Zinko et al., 2007). In the extant literature, reputation formation is primarily intentional (Bromley, 1993) and stems from a desired reputation (often, but not always, an identity) to the ultimate establishment of reputation in the eyes of others. Our theory and findings suggest that causality may also run in the reverse direction, with the reputation that an individual enjoys shaping his or her identity (i.e., desired reputation). Given the tangible benefits that may accrue among those with certain reputations (Zinko et al., 2007), future research should investigate how organizations shape an individual's pursuit of both reputation and identity.

The extant literature suggests that self-verification effects are more prominent than appraisal effects (Swann et al., 2000). In effect, individuals have a greater stake in self-verification, removing uncertainty and validating their identities by influencing the outside world to perceive them as they perceive themselves. Our analyses paint a slightly different picture regarding charismatic attributions. While self-verification effects do exist in our analyses, our results suggest that appraisal effects are equally great, and possibly greater. The team collectively appears to have significant

influence in shaping an individual's sense of self. This finding is consistent with prior research that conceptualizes charisma as an attribution made by followers of leaders or potential leaders (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1987). It suggests that team members can influence others to hold charismatic identities and, as such, propel them to leadership status. This could place significant power and agency in the hands of the team, and suggests that they may choose their leaders and, importantly, induce potential leaders to enact the role. The notion that others can "make" one a leader raises questions for future research. For example, how do leaders who have been thrust into a role or identity by a collective of others feel, and how does this affect their performance? Furthermore, it may be worth investigating whether the possibility of appraisal effects on an attribute as potentially powerful as charisma opens up the possibility of abuse from misplaced motives.

Our study also examined the team-level conditions under which self-verification and appraisal effects were most prominent. We found that when the team perceives a member as charismatic, they can influence him or her to share that view. Similarly, when individuals perceive themselves as charismatic, they can influence the group to share that view. However, the effects do not appear to work in reverse. A team does not appear to have the ability to reduce individuals' opinions of themselves as charismatic, and individuals with a low charismatic identity are not likely to bring the group to perceive them that way. This set of findings is consistent with self-enhancement theory (Brown, 1986), which suggests that individuals have a vested interest in enjoying a positive identity and reputation. According to the theory, individuals hold this view out of a sense of psychological well-being, and there is a political or organizational benefit as well, in that individuals with positive reputations enjoy certain organizational rewards (Zinko et al., 2007). Our analyses suggest that appraisal effects are slightly more influenced by starting reputation than self-verification is by starting identity. This set of insights, again, places great influence in the hands of team members. Individuals seem likely to make conscious, intentional moves to be perceived as charismatic or to have others perceived as charismatic.

Our examinations of the charismatic identity negotiation process carry important implications for practicing managers as well. First, the results suggest that both charismatic identities and reputations may be malleable and susceptible to the influence of team members. Managers and leaders may use this knowledge when strategizing about team composition. Which members will be influential in the identity negotiation process and who will they anoint as charismatic? Are the likely nominees those whom the manager might desire? Or may the manager use appraisal effects to steer the leadership composition of the team? Where managers may have historically considered the portfolio of

skills and abilities on the team, our research suggests that managers may consider how appraisal effects may shape the implicit composition of the team. To be clear, we are not suggesting that every member of a team needs be a leader, or, by extension, enjoy a charismatic reputation. Rather, we are suggesting that managers and team leaders, armed with insights regarding charismatic identity negotiation, may find more latitude to influence who emerges as charismatic and as a leader.

The second potential implication relates to leadership development in terms of training or developing charisma. Mentors and supervisors may be well positioned to reinforce a leadership identity held by a mentee or subordinate. They may do this by engaging in their own efforts at appraisal effects. As suggested in the self-efficacy literature (e.g., Bandura, 1997), significant alters may play a key role in identity development by suggesting that the focal individual can or does enjoy the reputation in question. Alternatively, drawing on Pastor et al.'s (2002) theory of charismatic contagion, managers may focus their attention on convincing others that the focal individual is charismatic. The views of managers often influences subordinates, which allows them to shape the labeling of a given team member.

### *Limitations and Directions for Future Research*

As with any research, this study is the result of boundary choices that limit its scope. Our study population consisted of undergraduate student teams, which may be limited because of the age range and the convenience nature of the sample. Researchers have documented possible challenges in generalizing insights from student populations to the broader base of working adults (e.g., Levitt & List, 2007). We recognize these potential limitations, but suggest that, in many ways, 18- to 22-year-olds represent an intriguingly appropriate sample for this research. They are still in the process of identity development, and the college experience presents a multitude of forces that shape these processes (Waterman, 1982). Undergraduates are likely more susceptible to both self-verification and appraisal effects. As such, we believe this sample makes for a good "rule-out" sample, that is, if the theory did not hold in this sample, it would likely not hold elsewhere. Future research should explore these issues in other sectors and age groups.

We limited the scope of this study to the charismatic leadership identity negotiation process to minimize theoretical and empirical complexity. We focused on charisma because identity and reputation formation engage attributions, and researchers commonly conceptualize charisma as one of the key attributions of leaders. Future studies could examine other attributions related to leadership behaviors as well. For example, researchers could relate race and gender to the emerging literature on humble leadership (Nielsen

et al., 2010; Walters & Diab, 2016). Indeed, group leaders of a certain demographic may express themselves as humble and avoid boastful charismatic identities. Future research should extend this study to examine a broader range of leadership behaviors and attributions.

## Conclusion

Organizational researchers have a long history of studying charismatic leadership. Despite the wealth of research regarding formal leaders, little attention has been paid to charisma as an ingredient in informal leader emergence. Our work is part of an effort to expand on the nature of charisma among peers, as it links charisma to theories that embrace follower-centric views of leadership and explores the identity negotiation process as underlying charismatic leadership emergence. This study provides a more nuanced understanding of charismatic leadership by exploring how followers' perceptions and leader–follower processes produce the phenomenon of charisma.

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