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A follower-centric perspective on charismatic leadership:

**A follower-centric perspective on charismatic leadership:**

**An integrative review and agenda for future research**

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**Abstract**

Meindl (1993) highlighted the importance of “balancing” the leadership equation by placing equivalent weight on followers’ perspectives. Building upon his legacy, we review research on “follower-centric perspectives” to deepen our understanding of the charismatic leadership relationship. We define charisma as a relational phenomenon, which develops first in the eyes of followers and subsequently spreads through inter-follower dynamics. Adopting Doise’s multilevel framework (i.e. intrapersonal, relational/situational, intergroup, and ideological) highlights different plausible views of leader-follower interactions and helps to clarify when and how charisma is more likely to emerge in the eyes of followers. We conclude with recommendations for future research.

**Keywords:** Charismatic leadership, followership, follower-centric perspectives, romance of leadership, multiple levels-of-analysis framework.

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## Introduction: what is a follower-centric approach?

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Charisma has long fascinated scholars and practitioners as a phenomenon involving a person, relationship, or situation (Beyer, 1999). Weber (1947), in *The Theory of Social and Economic Organizations*, used the term to highlight that charisma is “an extraordinary quality of a person” (p. 295) that appeals to followers in situations of uncertainty due to a leader’s “supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities” (p. 358). Charisma resides in the eyes of followers when they perceive a leader to possess magnetic qualities. Weber emphasized that charismatic leadership is a complex equation that results from a leader whose extraordinary qualities attract the attention of a significant number of followers.

Some studies (e.g., Antonakis, Fenley, & Liechti, 2011; Bass, 1990) show that charisma is linked to positive organizational outcomes such as leader effectiveness, organizational performance, follower effort, satisfaction, and performance. The prevailing emphasis on the outcomes of charismatic leadership belies a leader-centric defined as an emphasis on leaders and leadership as solutions for organizational issues (Kohles, Bligh, & Carsten, 2012). The leader-centric perspective describes the direct control of leaders over followers by exacerbating leadership behaviors (Meindl, 1995). The heavy focus on the leader’s point of view promotes an oversimplified and exaggerated image of the leader and his or her efficacy associated with the stereotype of “heroic leadership.” Leaders are perceived to be unique and agentic, with the ability to single-handedly create positive and negative consequences for followers and organizations (Antonakis et al., 2011; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; O’Connor, Mumford, Clifton, Gessner, & Connelly, 1995).

Typically, charismatic leadership is analyzed from a leader-centric perspective. Here, follower-related outcomes have been limited to a dependent variable or moderator (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996). Furthermore, leader characteristics, behaviors, and attributions are the only

possible independent variables that predict follower motivation, attitudes, and behaviors. In recognition of this limitation, [Meindl, Ehrlich, and Dukerich \(1985\)](#) pointed out that extant literature tended to be overly leader-centric by ignoring followers' role and romanticizing leaders' role. This is equivalent to denying the social psychological foundations of leadership studies ([Meindl, 1993](#)). Social psychology is the science clarifying the processes through which individuals' thoughts and actions are influenced by others ([Allport, 1985](#)). Leadership studies should give equal weight to its three composing factors: leaders, followers, and context.

Meindl highlighted the research call to take a more complete approach to leadership as a contextually based, relational phenomenon. As such, the follower-centric approach emerged as a reaction to the predominant leader-centric approaches in Western cultures. A follower-centric approach focuses on the role played by followers in the leadership process, as leadership and followers are the causal factors for leadership outcomes ([Carsten, Bligh, Kohles, & Wing-Yan Lau, 2019](#)). The role of followers consists in actively taking part to co-constructing leadership as much as leaders do ([Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, & Carsten, 2014](#)). Hence, leadership is a social construction in which leaders emerge as a result of followers' cognitive, attributional, and social identity processes. Major leadership theories shedding light on follower-centric perspectives refer to the "romance of leadership" ([Meindl, 1990](#); [Meindl et al., 1985](#)), Implicit Leadership Theories ([Eden & Leviatan, 1975](#); [Phillips & Lord, 1981](#); [Rush, Thomas, & Lord, 1977](#)), and the Social Identity Theory of leadership ([Chemers, 2001](#); [Hogg, 2001](#); [Van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003](#); [Yukl, 2001](#)). These theories emphasize that our understanding of leadership is incomplete without a comprehension of research on follower-centric perspectives.

The role of followers in leadership remains an underexplored area of research. [Bligh \(2011\)](#) noted that between 1990 and 2008, only 14 percent of publications in *The Leadership Quarterly* included the word "follower" or its derivatives in the title or abstract. Followership has emerged as an independent research area only recently ([Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010](#); [Collinson, 2006](#); [Hopton, Christie, & Barling, 2012](#); [Sy, 2010](#)), and relatively few studies have explored what happens when followers are given a central role in the leadership

process (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Thus, a complete understanding of leadership is not possible without clarifying how followers and leader-follower relationship dynamics influence the leadership process (Carsten et al., 2010; Dvir & Shamir, 2003; Hollander, 1993; Howell & Shamir 2005; Sy, 2010).

According to the connectionist view (Lord & Brown, 2001), leadership is a dynamic system within which leaders and followers interact in a given context (Hollander, 1992; Lord, Brown, & Freiberg, 1999; Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007; Shamir, 2012; Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012). Building upon this definition, followership can be defined as a role or a social process (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Role theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978) similarly emphasizes social construction and considers followership as a role played by individuals in a subordinate position within the organization of individuals (i.e., managers) in a follower role. As such, followers are causal agents in the leadership process, follower characteristics and behaviors are the independent variables, and leader characteristics and behaviors are the dependent or moderator variables (Shamir, 2007; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Similarly, the latter constructionist approach (Derue & Ashforth, 2010; Fairhurst & Uhl-Bien, 2012; Shamir, 2007) emphasizes follower behaviors with potential impact on leaders. Therefore, the constructionist approach of followership acknowledges that leaders can engage in “following behaviors” (Fairhurst & Hamlett, 2003; Larsson & Lundholm, 2013).

In the following sections, follower-centric perspectives and followership approaches are distinguished, as these concepts are commonly referred to in the leadership literature. Research from ‘follower-centric perspectives’ elaborates the roles played by followers in leadership, and highlights that followers can also be causal factors for leadership outcomes (Carsten et al., 2019). The relational view of followership is defined as research that focuses on the interactions in the leader-follower relationship. Nevertheless, this chapter will use the term ‘follower-centric perspectives’ to broadly capture literature from both the follower-centric and followership perspectives that places a major emphasis on followers. This chapter also provides a review of research to date on charismatic leadership from follower-centric perspectives and details an

agenda for future charismatic leadership research. In the following sections, we examine the recommendations of Meindl (1993) by integrating theory on follower-centric perspectives and charismatic leadership within a multilevel of analysis framework. Specifically, we draw from Doise's (1986) model to explore how follower-centric perspectives are manifest at each level, allowing for deeper insight into a more complete spectrum of charismatic leadership. The chapter concludes with a summary agenda for future empirical work on follower-centric models of charismatic leadership.

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### Follower-centric perspectives on charismatic leadership

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During the 1980s, James Meindl and colleagues developed the “romance of leadership,” which defines leadership as an attributional phenomenon that followers co-create by idealizing the significance of leaders’ actions and activities. From this perspective, leadership extends beyond the notion of follower subordination to a leader, emphasizing followers’ co-creation of leadership through their desire to believe in the leader and the efficacy of leadership (Meindl, 1995). Although the romance of leadership has received criticism for undermining leaders and their importance (i.e., Bass, 1990; Yukl, 1989), it provides an alternative theoretical lens to one that places importance on the leader’s actions and activities (Meindl, 1995).

Meindl highlighted ways fascination with leadership exists across cultures and societies, the tendency to glorify leadership, and the collective urge to give credit to heroes and charismatic leaders without sufficient proof of their efficacy (Bligh, Pillai, & Uhl-Bien, 2007). The romance of leadership perspective is particularly relevant for charismatic leadership, as leader-follower charismatic relationships are emotionally laden and thus have a high potential to be romanticized (Mayo & Pastor, 2007). More specifically, the romance of leadership perspective emphasizes that the attribution of charismatic leadership is a social contagion process spreading among followers of a group or social collective based on affective and/or behavioral reactions of their peers (Meindl, 1993). Accordingly, charismatic phenomena occur within relationships between

followers (Meindl, 1995). Observing charismatic leadership from follower-centric perspectives deepens our analysis of the phenomenon (Weick, 2007). An application of follower-centric perspectives to charismatic leadership can help to enhance our comprehension of the role of followers in the leadership process (Bligh, 2011).

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### **Follower-centric perspectives of charismatic leadership using a levels-of-analysis framework**

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Drawing on Doise's (1986) framework, we present a model of charismatic leadership from follower-centric perspectives. Meindl emphasized the need to return to the social psychological foundations of leadership to embrace a more holistic vision of leadership that considers equally the roles of followers. Since then, several studies across research domains (i.e., Abrams & Hogg, 1988) have directed attention toward developing a holistic understanding of leadership. Figure 27.1 depicts follower-centric perspectives of charismatic leadership drawing from Doise's (1986) multiple levels-of-analysis framework. Doise (1986) described four levels of analysis to understand social psychological phenomenon, including: the intrapersonal (Level 1), the interpersonal and situational (Level 2), the socio-positional (Level 3), and the ideological levels (Level 4) (North & Hargreaves, 2008). Research at the intrapersonal level examines cognitive, perceptual, and biological processes by which individuals organize the social environment. Within the social psychology of follower-centric research, this level investigates individual characteristics of followers that affect charismatic leadership. The interpersonal and situational level examines relationships between followers to understand how they affect leader-follower relations and follower attribution of charisma; it also examines the processes that happen between people in a given situation. Within the social psychology of follower-centric research, this second level explores how interactions between leaders and followers influence charismatic leadership. The socio-positional level investigates relationships between individuals with reference to differences in their social position (e.g., group membership) or with reference to



larger social institutions. The ideological level refers to cultural systems of beliefs, representations, and norms, and explores the possible effects of follower gender or organizational culture on charismatic leadership. This framework can be applied to an organizational context as well. Now we provide an overview of research from each level and outline how each can augment our understanding of charismatic leadership.

## **Follower-centric perspectives of charismatic leadership at the intrapersonal level (Level 1)**

### **Followers' motivation to identify with leaders**

A long theoretical and empirical tradition emphasizes that some followers are more likely to develop attributions of charisma. Earlier writings on charisma mentioned that some followers have a strong desire to identify with charismatic leaders (Weber, 1947). Willner (1968) saw followers as having an intense emotional and cognitive attraction to charismatic leaders above and beyond ordinary esteem, affection, admiration, and trust; this attraction involves “devotion, awe, reverence, and blind faith” (p. 6). These followers have a strong belief in the “man and his mission about what is, what should be, and what should be done” (p. 9). From this approach, what followers feel for the charismatic leader is more important than the leader’s behavior or rhetoric. In fact, Madsen and Snow (1983) asserted that the “magnetizability” of the follower is as important as the magnetism of the leader.

For some followers, self-identification with leaders can resolve ego-superego conflicts, and can help resolve identity confusion, which occurs when individuals fail to mature in adolescence and young adulthood and further fail to construct a strong ego ideal due to the absence, oppression, or weakness of parental role models (Erikson, 1968). Thus, charismatic leaders can provide these followers with new goals and a positive identity to enhance their self-esteem. Followers are given another opportunity to mature thanks to the charismatic leader. While followers are likely to vary in their willingness to identify with a charismatic leader, some may have greater predispositions (e.g., personality traits) to be influenced by leaders.

### **The effect of followers' personality on attributions of charisma**

In line with Meindl's follower-centric perspectives, extant research has focused on elucidating follower personality traits that enhance susceptibility to charismatic attributions. [Felfe and Schyns \(2010\)](#) provided empirical evidence that some personality traits are related to charismatic or transformational leadership. A sample of 153 clerical workers completed a questionnaire asking about their personality, their perception of their direct supervisor's personality, and the extent to which their leader exhibits charismatic or transformational leadership. Personality was defined in terms of the Big Five model which assesses an individual's personality through five traits: extraversion, neuroticism, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Results showed that followers with high extraversion and agreeableness and low neuroticism perceive more charismatic or transformational leadership. Hence, followers' personality is a relevant variable to study when predicting perceptions of charismatic leadership.

In addition to individual personality and perceived personality of others, followers' self-concept clarity has also been identified as an important variable concerning perceptions of charismatic leadership. An individual's self-concept clarity is considered consistent and stable over time ([Campbell, 1990](#)). Although self-concept and self-esteem tend to be used interchangeably, these constructs are distinct ([Howell & Shamir, 2005](#)). For example, self-esteem describes the evaluation of the self-concept, or perceptions of identities and characteristics as positive or negative ([Gecas, 1982](#)). Individuals with high self-esteem are said to have a high self-concept clarity. Low self-esteem individuals have low self-concept clarity, define themselves negatively, and have a high level of uncertainty ([Campbell et al., 1996](#)). This distinction is important because charismatic leadership studies can build upon self-concept-based theories to explain the identification process with leaders experienced by followers ([Lord et al., 1999](#); [Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993](#)).

Traditional theories underscored that followers with low self-esteem and low self-concept clarity are more susceptible to influence by charismatic political and religious leaders

(Freemesser & Kaplan, 1976; Galanter, 1982). For example, Freemesser and Kaplan (1976) conducted a field experiment with members from a religious cult and with members of more traditional urban Protestant churches (the control group). In comparison with the control group, participants that chose to belong to the religious cult had a greater tendency to lower their self-derogation (i.e., self-esteem) toward the end of the experiment. Hence, previous research supports the idea that followers with low self-esteem, and, thus, low self-concept clarity, tend to engage more easily in charismatic relationships.

So far, we have identified characteristics of followers that are more likely to be influenced by charismatic leaders. However, the individual level of analysis by itself provides a limited vision of follower-centric research of charismatic leadership.

### **Follower-centric perspectives on charismatic leadership at the interpersonal and situational levels (Level 2)**

#### **Follower-centric perspectives on charismatic leadership at the interpersonal level**

The conceptual work of Howell and Shamir (2005) on charismatic relationships elevated follower-centric research of charismatic leadership. One of the contributions of this work resides in having shifted the unit of analysis from the individual to the relational level. In fact, observing charismatic leadership from follower-centric perspectives at the interpersonal levels helps to clarify how different levels of follower self-concept clarity results in different types of charismatic relationships. In fact, charismatic leadership appeals both to weak and to strong, confident followers. Followers with low self-concept clarity are more likely to form a personalized charismatic relationship with the leader. In the personalized charismatic relationship, the relational level of self is activated. Followers experience personal identification with the leader. Alternatively, followers with high self-concept clarity are more likely to form a socialized charismatic relationship with the leader. In the socialized relationship, the collective level of the self is activated. Followers experience social identification with the group or

organization (see [Howell & Shamir, 2005](#)). While follower self-concept clarity can determine the type of leader-follower relationship, followers are embedded in an organizational environment with other followers and are likely influenced by each other.

### **Follower-centric perspectives on charismatic leadership at the situational level**

The situational level (Level 2) is concerned with interpersonal processes in a given situation. A particular situation can also affect followers' susceptibility to charismatic leadership. In times of crisis, stress, anxiety, or ambiguity, followers are more susceptible to domination attempts and persuasive communications by charismatic leaders ([Fromm, 1971](#)). Shamir and Howell's conceptual paper ([1999](#)) suggests that after an organizational crisis, followers are more likely to unconditionally accept a leader perceived as high self-confident with a clear vision promising to save the organization from the crisis: these elements help followers in the sensemaking of the current situation. Under crisis situations, followers tend to refer to charismatic leadership criterion to report emergent leadership ([Pillai & Meindl, 1998](#)). Using the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, as an example, [Bligh, Kohles, and Meindl \(2004\)](#) also demonstrate that crisis situations foster follower charismatic attributions toward leaders. Their results highlight that followers attributed more charisma to President George W. Bush following 9/11. In the same vein, another study conducted in the context of the 2003 California Recall Election supports the importance of crisis for charismatic leadership to emerge ([Bligh, Kohles, & Pillai, 2005](#)). Participants reported their perceptions of the current crisis situation and, subsequently, watched video clips with high- and low-charismatic delivery styles. Participants who perceived that the crisis was greater also observed contender Arnold Schwarzenegger as more charismatic compared to the incumbent governor Gray Davis.

### **Follower-centric perspectives on charismatic leadership at the socio-positional level: inter-follower dynamics of charismatic leadership (Level 3)**

### **A social network perspective of charismatic leadership**

According to the social contagion model of charismatic leadership (Meindl, 1990, 1993), inter-follower social contagion processes provide an alternative explanation of charisma's diffusion among groups. This perspective avoids assuming that leaders' actions determine followers' perception of charisma. In many contexts, followers are unlikely to have direct interactions and experiences with their leader. As such, followers build their charismatic attributions based on other followers' attributions, emotions, and experiences. Mayo and Pastor (2007) provide preliminary empirical evidence supporting the idea that charisma spreads through the followers' network. In a longitudinal study, students of a business school were divided into small task groups. A questionnaire measuring the professor's leadership style and the frequency of students' social interactions with classmates was distributed at three different time periods every five weeks. Results showed that by the end of the semester, proximity in the social network was positively associated with similarity of charisma attributions. In addition, results revealed that the closer students were, the more their views of the leader's charisma were similar. As charisma is socially contagious, perceptions of charisma follow social groups (Meindl, 1990). Follower proximity with peers in the social network was also positively related to similarity of attributions of charisma within these small groups.

### **Self-concept theory of charismatic leadership**

While the social network theory of charismatic leadership explains how perceptions of charisma diffuses among groups, the self-concept theory of charismatic leadership (Shamir et al., 1993) explains how perceptions of charisma grow within an individual's self-concept and how followers develop a shared collective identity with a group in the workplace. This theory states that charismatic leaders augment the intrinsic value of the vision and collective goals by connecting the vision and the follower's self-concept (Shamir, Zakay, Breinin, & Popper, 1998, p. 388). As followers develop a stronger shared and collective identity, their self-efficacy grows

(Shamir, 1991). Leader-follower relations are strengthened through followers' self-concept that becomes more tied to the organizational goals and the shared experiences of their missions (Bass & Bass, 2008).

By drawing on social psychological theories of social identification and self-concept, [Shamir and colleagues \(1993\)](#) include the role of followers in the charismatic leadership process and develop the understanding of followers' psychology going beyond personal identification. According to the self-concept theory of charismatic leadership, members share values and ideologies, and the charismatic leader strengthens these with nonverbal symbolic behaviors: especially through visionary rhetoric, a critical component of charismatic leadership. Visionary rhetoric has two components consisting of the content and delivery of the leader's speech. Interestingly, the delivery style is often considered as more important than the content itself. Notably, in the context of charismatic leadership, the effect of nonverbal behaviors on followers is limited and the content of the speech is argued to create a lasting charismatic impression (Shamir, Arthur, & House, 1994).

#### **Follower-centric perspectives on charismatic leadership at the ideological level: social representations of charismatic leadership (Level 4)**

Implicit leadership theories explain leader behaviors and examine follower reactions, underscoring that individuals have predetermined images about leaders' traits ([Eden & Leviatan, 1975](#)). When followers meet a leader, they interpret the leader's behavior along these held images. For instance, research on the romance of leadership has shown that followers who overattribute company performance to leaders often perceive their leader to be more charismatic ([Shamir, 1992](#)). These findings affirm that charismatic leadership is a follower-centric phenomenon. Furthermore, cross-cultural research on implicit leadership theories highlights that culture also affects individuals' perceptions of leaders ([House, Javidan, Hanges, & Dorfman,](#)

2002). Therefore, implicit leadership theories have a socially shared aspect across cultures and groups.

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### **Recommendations around future research**

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Although there is some advancement in research from follower-centric perspectives, our future research directions could help to inform charismatic leadership research from follower-centric perspectives (see Table 27.1). Furthermore, this review reveals that, despite the numerous theoretical explorations of charismatic leadership from follower-centric perspectives, research that exclusively draws attention to the role of followers in charismatic leadership processes remains scarce.

#### **Recommendations at the intrapersonal level (Level 1)**

As Mayo and Pastor proposed (2007), future research should test how follower individual characteristics with an emotional dimension affect intensity (Larsen & Diener, 1987) and influence the diffusion of charisma in organizations. Although this chapter reviewed previous research advancing the role of follower personality traits, follower characteristics with emotional dimensions are largely underexplored. The topic of the emotional aspects of follower characteristics needs to be further explored because charismatic relationships are characterized by a high follower emotional connection with a leader. Affect intensity is a personal characteristic of the follower that emphasizes the emotions experienced by a person without modifying the content of emotions. Followers with high affect intensity are more prone to engage in a charismatic relationship with a leader because charismatic relationships depend on a follower's high level of emotional attachment with leaders. Empirical evidence shows that followers' emotional arousal is positively related to the emergence of charisma attributions to

leaders who are already perceived as charismatic by other members of a group (Pastor, Mayo, & Shamir, 2007).

Future research should also examine how different levels of follower self-concepts affect leader-follower relationships. Specifically, future research could test Howell and Shamir's (2005) propositions. If evidence shows that followers with high self-concepts identify with leaders, too, leaders could feel encouraged to manage their own leadership images and to build strategies appealing to followers with high self-concepts. For instance, if such followers identify with the leader's vision and organizational goals rather than identifying "personally" with the leader, leaders may find more incentives to deliver highly visionary speeches resonating to followers with a high self-concept.

### **Recommendations at the relational and situational levels (Level 2)**

Mayo and Pastor (2007) previously suggested that research should explore the process effect explaining how followers with a central position in a network have more power and are in favorable positions to influence others' charisma perceptions. Furthermore, it may be interesting to investigate the role of followers of a charismatic leader with high self-concept who has a central position in a network, as such followers are likely to be key in the diffusion process. Once the "virus" of charisma reaches such followers, they become individuals with the potential to spread and diffuse the content of the vision and/or the organizational goal to numerous members. Such ideological spread and diffusion may have a stronger impact compared to followers spotlighting personal attributes of the leader that only resonate with a limited number of members.

Future research should also examine the effect of social networks on spreading perceptions of charisma. Previous research reviewed in this chapter mainly investigated crisis as a contextual variable affecting follower perceptions of charisma. Results of the preliminary research on charismatic leadership from a social network approach could gain more visibility and



recognition if replicated through laboratory and field experiment. Longitudinal studies with data collected at different points could help to observe the impact of networks and the process through which different types of networks diffuse charisma (Bligh, Kohles, & Pillai, 2011).

### **Recommendations at the socio-positional level (Level 3)**

Following Bligh and Schyns's (2007) recommendation, future research on charismatic leadership and follower-centric perspectives should include the evaluation of the romance of leadership as a factor affecting attributions of charisma. Leadership ratings reflect follower perceptions of how they evaluate a leader. Furthermore, the phenomenon of charisma is influenced by social contagion processes. Therefore, the romance of leadership scores of followers should not be neglected in order to observe the extent to which leadership ratings are affected by such tendency to glorify leadership.

The field of charismatic leadership could also consider inter-follower relationships when conducting qualitative research on charismatic leaders and/or a successful organization (Gaines, 1993). Future research should expand the scope of analysis by interviewing followers and observing the structure of their network rather than assuming that charisma resides in the leader and that his or her charisma influences organizational performance. Examining inter-follower relationships will help to cement a better understanding of the mechanism of charisma's spread in organizations.

### **Recommendations at the ideological level (Level 4)**

As recommended by Schyns and Riggio (2017), research on implicit leadership theories should focus on developing measurement. Our understanding about the predictive capabilities of implicit leadership theories could be deepened. In the meantime, experimental studies such as those conducted with awareness exercises (see Schyns, Kiefer, Kerschreiter, & Tymon, 2011) should be replicated to raise both self- and others' awareness of their implicit leadership theories.

Such awareness exercises could help individuals in the workplace to become aware of their schemes. Thus, organizational systems will be less biased by preconceived ideas regarding charismatic leaders, male or female leaders, or other stereotypical categories. Ultimately, raising the awareness of implicit leadership theories can promote a more inclusive workplace.

Furthermore, supplementary investigation in implicit followership theories can also shed light on leader-follower relationships in charismatic leadership (Schyns et al., 2011). Research in implicit leadership theories could help to predict leader behaviors. For example, if leaders perceive a follower as competent, they may be more likely to delegate and vice versa. The fact that such leaders are able to delegate may be perceived as one of the reasons why the leader is perceived as charismatic by followers. Therefore, exploration in implicit followership theories contributes to the overall advancement of follower-centric research on charismatic leadership.

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### Conclusion

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Drawing upon Meindl's legacy on the romance of leadership, this chapter presented a literature review of charismatic leadership from follower-centric perspectives. Meindl et al. (1985) presented a theory on the romance of leadership to raise scholarly awareness about the tendency to investigate leadership from an overly leader-centric perspective. Part of the problem identified by Meindl was that leadership studies have moved away from their social psychological foundations. Thus, in efforts to revive and extend our understanding about charismatic leadership from follower-centric perspectives, we presented a review of literature with future research directions based on Doise's (1986) multiple levels-of-analysis framework. It is our hope that this chapter sparks interest in future empirical work on charismatic leadership from follower-centric perspectives.

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**Figure 27.1** Follower-centric perspectives of charismatic leadership using a levels-of-analysis framework

**Table 27.1** Summary of future research directions on follower-centric perspectives on charismatic leadership using a levels-of-analysis framework

Recommendations at the intrapersonal level (Level 1)
1. Future research should test empirically how follower individual characteristics with an emotional dimension (i.e., affect intensity) affect the diffusion of charisma in organizations (see Mayo & Pastor, 2007).
2. Future research should test the impact of highly emotional leader antecedents on followers (e.g., leader self-disclosure).
Recommendations at the interpersonal and situational level (Level 2)
3. Future research should examine how different levels of follower self-concepts (i.e. low or high) affect leader-follower relationships (see Howell & Shamir, 2005).
4. Future research should investigate the role of followers of a charismatic leader with high self-concept that has a central position in the network, as such individuals are likely to be key in the diffusion process. (see Howell & Shamir, 2005; Pastor & Mayo, 2005).

5. Future research should further examine the effect of social context (e.g., social network structure) on spreading perceptions of charisma (see Mayo & Pastor, 2007).

Recommendations at the socio-positional level (Level 3)

6. Future research on charismatic leadership and follower-centric perspectives should include the evaluation of the romance of leadership as a factor that affects attributions of charisma (see Bligh & Schyns, 2007).

7. Future qualitative research and case studies of an organization that attributes its success to a leader should include the voice of followers and observe the structure of their network in order to understand better how inter-follower relationships may affect the diffusion of charisma in this organization.

Recommendations at the ideological level (Level 4)

8. Future research on implicit leadership theories should focus on measurement development. In the meanwhile, it should pursue experimental studies of awareness exercises in order to raise followers' consciousness and to realize that charismatic leadership is a social construction.

9. Future research on implicit followership theories will help to predict better charismatic leaders' behaviors and how they impact followers.