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Audience perceptions of charismatic and non-charismatic oratory: The case of management gurus

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Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to investigate whether people consider someone a charismatic speaker because they are deploying the generic features commonly identified as being associated with charismatic oratory in the literature, or whether the attribution of charisma is informed by factors which vary across different settings. Video-taped extracts from speeches given by seven people widely regarded as influential thought leaders – Kenneth Blanchard, Stephen Covey, Daniel Goleman, Gary Hamel, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Tom Peters and Peter Senge – were shown to different audiences. After viewing each extract they rated the extent to which they found the speaker charismatic or non-charismatic and why. In addition, the whole speeches and focal messages were content analysed for the presence a number of factors – delivery, rhetorical techniques, abstraction and inclusion – identified in the previous literature as underpinning charismatic oratory. When the speeches are taken as a whole the speakers rated as charismatic differed significantly from their non-charismatic counterparts only in terms of delivery. For focal sentences delivery remains significant but in addition the speakers rated as charismatic use a higher proportion of rhetorical techniques. This has important implications for theory and practice that are elaborated.

Keywords

Charismatic oratory, Speaker effectiveness, Management gurus

1. Introduction

Oratory is viewed as a critical but elusive leadership skill which significantly influences followers' perceptions of leaders, particularly when there is little or no personal contact between them (Shamir, 1995). There are at least two reasons for the importance of live oratory. The first is that public speaking is a very effective medium for persuading, motivating, inspiring, building trust and connecting emotionally with a range of audiences within organizations (Awamleh and Gardner, 1999, Conger, 1991, Morgan, 2001, Niadoo and Lord, 2008). The second is that a leader's oratorical skill is often viewed as a proxy measure of their broader abilities and it is therefore unlikely that anyone could achieve or sustain a senior position without being a technically proficient orator (Atkinson, 1984a, Conger, 1991). Indeed, the

commentaries of speeches made during the US Presidential election in 2008 frequently allude to this link (Nightingale, 2008, The Washington Times, 2008, Zeleny, 2008).

The ability of a leader to captivate and energize an audience through effective and powerful public oratory has been seen as a special ability that requires the mastery of a number of key techniques at least since the Greeks (Dobson, 1919, Kennedy, 1963). Consequently, amongst both leadership training professionals and academic researchers there is a tendency to view speaker effectiveness, and charismatic oratory in particular, as involving the use of a set of common practices across different speakers and settings. Management training courses often equate effective oratory with a single dynamic charismatic style (e.g., Frese, Beimel & Schoenborn, 2003). Much prior research has been founded on experimental studies which often begin with definitions of charismatic and non-charismatic oratory that assume a common style across different speakers, audiences and contexts (e.g., Awamleh and Gardner, 1999, Howell and Frost, 1989, Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1996). However, there is evidence to suggest that participants in such studies cannot always distinguish between 'pre-defined' charismatic and non-charismatic speaking styles (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996). This raises serious questions about the extent to which perceptions of speaker charisma are in fact informed by a set of common factors which do not vary across speakers and contexts. In this paper we therefore ask whether people consider someone a charismatic speaker because they are deploying the generic features commonly identified as being associated with charismatic oratory in the literature, or whether the attribution of charisma is informed by factors which vary across different settings.

We explore this issue by focusing on a group of successful and very prominent thought leaders who build and sustain follower commitment to their ideas through writing best-selling management books and giving public speeches on the international lecture circuit. In the context of the general issue which forms the basis of this article they are a particularly pertinent group to focus on since they are widely considered to be very effective and charismatic speakers and their live talks are critical to their ability to build and sustain followers (Baur, 1994, Clark and Salaman, 1996, Clark and Salaman, 1998, Huczynski, 1993; Jackson, 2001, Jackson, 2002). To a large extent the continuing authority and legitimacy of their ideas is intimately linked to their personal communication and impression management abilities (Conger and Kanungo, 1988, Gardner and Avolio, 1998, Greatbatch and Clark, 2003, Greatbatch and Clark, 2005). Along with certain kinds of political and religious leaders, they are almost a pure form of what has been termed "rhetorical leadership" (Dorsey, 2002, Tulis, 1987, Willner, 1984). In this respect they are leadership orators par excellence. That is their relationship with their followers is based upon the continuing communication of a message which in turn 'relies for its authorization upon the individual who developed and popularized it' (Huczynski, 1993: 38). They are therefore thought leaders in the sense that they exercise 'a profound influence on followers by the strength of their personal abilities' particularly via their oratory (House & Baetz, 1979, p. 399).

The article is structured as follows. We begin with a discussion of the key factors that have been identified as underpinning effective/charismatic oratory. We then discuss our methods and results before identifying the ways in which the paper contributes to theory and practice.

2. The nature of charismatic oratory

There is quite a diverse literature on leader oratory and charisma. As we will show this emphasizes the role of a number of fixed generic factors in underpinning followers' attributions of speaker effectiveness and charisma to leaders. The literature can be divided into three streams. The first two are closely interrelated and focus on the management/organizational context in that they emanate from the "new leadership" literature (Bryman, 1992). One of these streams comprises studies that focus on message content, whilst the other comprises a smaller number of studies which focus on the impact of delivery, especially in eliciting perceptions of charisma. The third stream of research focuses on the ways in which public speakers interact with their audiences, paying particular attention to the social organization of

collective audience responses such as applause, laughter and booing. With very few notable exceptions (e.g., Greatbatch and Clark, 2003, Greatbatch and Clark, 2005, McIlvenny, 1996) this latter group of studies has focused on leader oratory within a political context.

2.1. Content

There have been numerous studies of the relationship between the content of speeches and leadership charisma. Many of these have focused on the articulation of visionary messages, which are seen as critical to effective leadership by the charismatic and transformational leadership literature. The role and impact of leader oratory has been examined by several advocates of what Bryman (1992) refers to as "new leadership" theories, which include the charismatic (e.g., Conger and Kanungo, 1987, Conger and Kanungo, 1988, House, 1977, Shamir et al., 1993), transformational (e.g. Bass, 1985, Bass and Avolio, 1994, Bass and Riggio, 2006, Tichy and Devanna, 1986), visionary (e.g., Nanus, 1992, Sashkin, 1998), and dramaturgical (Gardner & Avolio, 1998) leadership perspectives. These perspectives all share the view that (i) leader influence is ultimately determined by followers' perceptions of leadership charisma and leadership effectiveness, and that (ii) a key source of such perceptions is the creation and articulation of a vision, which can be defined as 'a mental image(s) that a leader evokes to portray an idealized future for an organization' (Conger, 1989: 38).

An idealized visionary message is generally regarded as a prerequisite for a leader to be perceived as charismatic, effective and transformational (e.g., Bass, 1990, Conger, 1991, Conger and Kanungo, 1987). Once formulated, or framed (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996), this visionary message must be articulated by the leader to mobilize followers to jointly pursue it (Awamleh and Gardner, 1999, Conger, 1991, Holladay and Coombs, 1993, Holladay and Coombs, 1994). Although there is relatively little empirical research on the formulation and delivery of idealized visions, a handful of studies of leader rhetoric have provided insights into the formulation and/or delivery of visionary and non-visionary messages by leaders in the context of speeches, which are recognized as being a key medium through which leaders communicate with followers. In terms of content, these studies indicate that 'the leader's choice of words, symbols, and expressions constitute critical content elements which determine the extent to which the audience becomes aroused, inspired, and committed to the vision' (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999: 346; see also Conger, 1991). Leaders who are perceived as charismatic and transformational appeal to followers' emotions, values, identities, and hopes, as opposed to followers' more pragmatic and instrumental considerations. Effective orators are inclusive by referring to a collective history and identity, their own identification with followers, praising followers' worth, identifying shared values and moral justification (Shamir, et al., 1994). Similarly, Fiol, Harris and House (1999) argue that specifically, in terms of the content of their speeches, they engage more frequently in inclusive, consensual language and higher levels of abstraction, thus permitting a wider range of interpretations, than their non-charismatic counterparts. An extended replication of this study by Seyranian and Bligh (2008) confirmed that charismatic leaders use more inclusive language than non-charismatic leaders. Building on this work we shall examine the extent to which the different management speakers involved in our study use inclusive/consensual language and different levels of abstraction in their speeches.

2.2. Delivery

The few studies of the role of delivery in eliciting perceptions of leadership charisma indicate that charismatic leaders project a powerful, confident and dynamic presence through a range of verbal and non-verbal behaviours. These include varying pitch and exhibiting verbal fluency, maintaining eye contact with the audience, gesturing freely, adopting a relaxed posture and using facial expressions (Bass, 1985, Bass, 1990, Bryman, 1992, Holladay and Coombs, 1993, Holladay and Coombs, 1994, Howell and Frost, 1989, Willner, 1984). Holladay and Coombs (1994) suggest that such delivery factors are the key determinants of attributions of leader charisma. Their effects are more pronounced than those of content and thus are ultimately more important than even the use of 'visionary' messages. Such a finding confirms the results of an earlier study by Heinberg (1963: 107) which reported that delivery is 'almost

three times as influential as content in determining the effectiveness of attempts to “sell” an idea’. Indeed, studies by communication researchers have consistently found that audiences attribute speakers with strong deliveries with greater terminal credibility than speakers presenting the same message with weak delivery (e.g., Awamleh and Gardner, 1999, Bowers, 1965, Burgoon et al., 1990). Weak delivery undermines the impact of speeches, no matter how visionary and inspirational their content.

Building on this literature we shall conduct a comparative analysis of the management speakers in order to examine the extent to which they use the verbal and non-verbal practices which are identified in the literature to differentiate ‘strong’/'charismatic’ and ‘weak’/'non-charismatic’ delivery , including: gaze, variations in volume and pitch, rhythmic shifts, facial gestures and body movement.

2.3. Speaker–audience interaction

Although this research on the content and delivery of oratory by organizational leaders provides rich insights into leader rhetoric in particular, the literature as a whole fails to systematically examine the ways in which speakers interact with their audiences. The third stream of literature seeks to rectify this by examining how the delivery and content of speeches primarily given by political leaders evoke and are shaped by the immediate reactions of audience members. Drawing on conversation analysis (CA) this body of work demonstrates that collective audience responses, such as applause, are not simply spontaneous reactions to the messages which evoke them (e.g., Atkinson, 1984a, Atkinson, 1984b, Clayman, 1993, Heritage and Greatbatch, 1986). As collective actions, their production is underpinned by the basic sociological principle that people prefer to act like those around them so as to avoid social isolation (Asch, 1951). Thus, for example, while individual audience members may wish to clap in response to a public speakers' remarks, they will generally wish to do so in situations in which they are assured that other audience members will do the same. As a result, audience members usually clap in situations in which public speakers indicate clearly to them that and when these responses will be expected (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986). In most cases, the speakers then confirm the relevance of applause by ceding the floor until audiences' responses end or begin to subside (Atkinson, 1984a).

Atkinson, 1984a, Atkinson, 1984b, Heritage and Greatbatch, 1986 identify seven rhetorical devices (contrasts, lists, puzzle-solution, headline-punchline, combinations, position taking and pursuits) through which speakers elicit applause from their audiences (see also Brodine, 1986, Clayman, 1993, Grady and Potter, 1985, McIlvenny, 1996). These devices can be used by public speakers to facilitate applause by emphasizing messages and by providing clearly projectable message completion points around which individual audience members can coordinate their actions.[2] Heritage and Greatbatch's (1986) analysis of political speeches delivered to the British Conservative, Labour and Liberal party conferences in 1981 revealed that just over two-thirds of the instances of full-scale applause in the speeches occurred in response to messages which were packaged in one or more of the rhetorical formats. Atkinson, 1984a, Atkinson, 1984b suggests that these devices are not restricted to political oratory but have a powerful appeal when used effectively in a wide range of contexts where the aim is to persuade an audience. Building on this observation, Den Hartog and Verburg (1997) examined the use of the rhetorical devices in speeches given by three organizational leaders who were widely described as charismatic[3]and reported that they were replete with examples of these rhetorical techniques. This work has also been extended to an examination of management guru lectures by Greatbatch and Clark, 2003, Greatbatch and Clark, 2005, Greatbatch and Clark, 2010. Their research shows that management gurus use these devices, together with a range of presentation techniques specifically related to humour, to elicit collective audience response in the form of laughter. We shall draw upon this body of work to examine the extent to which the gurus use the rhetorical devices in the lectures, regardless of whether they are associated with collective audience responses. We are therefore not concerned in this study with speaker–audience interaction but rather with the frequency with which the rhetorical devices are used to package the gurus' messages.

The three streams of research considered above all concentrate on identifying common practices which are associated with effective and charismatic speaking, although the CA literature does recognize the potential importance of individual variation (Atkinson 1984a); as a result, they largely reinforce the view that there is a single style of charismatic speaking. The problems associated with this are exemplified by the findings of a laboratory study conducted by Kirkpatrick and Locke (1996). Following the procedures used by Howell and Frost (1989) they trained actors to deliver two speeches that were determined a priori to be charismatic and non-charismatic. The charismatic style involved speakers having 'a captivating, engaging voice tone … dynamism and energy … pacing … maintaining direct eye contact and … animated facial expressions' (Howell & Frost, 1989: 252). In contrast the non-charismatic style involved the speaker appearing 'friendly and polite … not showing interest in the participants' work … [and speaking] in a monotone voice with constant pace and medium voice tone. His or her presence was uninvolved' ('Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996, p. 41). However, the latter authors found that, contrary to their expectations', 'participants (in the study) perceived both the charismatic and non-charismatic communication style manipulations as charismatic' (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996, p. 46). As these authors recognized, different styles of oratory can potentially be perceived as charismatic.

A further weakness with prior work is that by not conducting naturalistic studies of the actual delivery and reception of a speech over its entire length they fail to appreciate that speakers do not sustain a particular style throughout a speech. This would potentially be exhausting for the speaker and monotonous for the audience. In actuality, as we shall discuss in more detail below, a speaker's intensity usually ebbs and flows during a speech. Some sentences and passages are therefore given greater emphasis than others. Indeed, as Heritage and Greatbatch (1986) demonstrate, a speech can be viewed as a series of sentences which present background information and gradually funnel towards a target message. Research has shown that focal sentences of speeches contain a disproportionate amount of audience response (Atkinson, 1984a, Atkinson, 1984b, Clayman, 1993, Heritage and Greatbatch, 1986). They are therefore projected as particularly significant by the speaker. So we cannot assume, as the great majority of previous studies of charismatic oratory have, that every component or sentence of a speech carries the same significance for the speaker and the audience.

Drawing on a study of seven management gurus' oratory, in what follows we will examine the relationship between the features of charismatic oratory identified in the literature reviewed above and audience ratings of charisma. In addition, drawing on Heritage and Greatbatch (1986) we will examine whether these elements vary for different kinds of sentences within the speeches.

3. Data and method

This study analysed sixteen speeches given by seven people widely described as leading management gurus—Kenneth Blanchard, Stephen Covey, Daniel Goleman, Gary Hamel, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Tom Peters and Peter Senge (see Appendix 1). These seven individuals are the proselytizers of some of the most influential management ideas of the past twenty-five years and in this respect they are viewed as the figurehead and leader of a particular idea movement (Abrahamson, 1996, Clark and Salaman, 1998, Kieser, 1997, Spell, 1999, Spell, 2001). Given the critical importance of rhetoric as the basis of their relationship with their audiences they have all been active and renowned speakers on the international lecture circuit for some time. Consequently, they have each built strong reputations as effective management speakers (Baur, 1994, Caulkin, 1997, Krohe, 2004, The Economist, 1994a, The Economist, 1994b). Not only are they in high demand because of their speaking abilities but several have had their oratorical skills acknowledged by winning national awards and each are able to command large fees for their talks.

The selection of speeches was determined in part by their availability. We were only able to acquire one video of Stephen Covey and two videos of speeches given by Kenneth Blanchard, Daniel Goleman and Gary Hamel. However, we were able to obtain access to a slightly larger range of videos for the other

three gurus—Tom Peters, Rosabeth Moss Kanter and Peter Senge. Each of the speeches elaborates their key ideas and so can be considered 'pivotal' (Emrich et al, 2001).

Building on our prior argument the study was designed in two phases. In Phase I, we ascertained which speakers were rated as charismatic and non-charismatic by five groups of managers who viewed excerpts from video recordings of the gurus' speeches. In Phase 2 we determined whether the factors identified in the previous literature as underpinning charismatic oratory varied according to these ratings of charisma.

3.1. Phase I: Differences in levels of speaker charisma

In this phase, we sought to ascertain the extent to which the speakers were rated as charismatic orators by the managers. Five groups of managers (N = 98) viewed an excerpt from a speech given by each guru. These individuals came from a range of public and private sector organizations and were recruited from a response to an open invitation to attend a workshop or seminar on leadership and/or oratory at two universities and a management training consultancy in the United Kingdom. The average age of participants was about 34, approximately one third were female and around a fifth were non-European. Given that guru talks are open events and as such are marketed to a broad management audience and the general population, the individuals who watched clips would be similar to many of those who attend the actual events. Each clip lasted between four and nine minutes and showed the gurus each funneling towards and delivering a core message. These passages were selected so as to be consistent with the ways in which the gurus set-up and delivered their messages and the argument structures they employed throughout their lectures. In addition the clips were selected so as to exemplify their overall style of delivery and use of rhetorical formats, inclusiveness and abstraction.

After watching a clip the audience members rated the speaker on a ten point scale from 1 (non-charismatic) to 10 (incredibly charismatic) and stated why they made this evaluation. This is similar to a procedure used by House, Woycke and Fodor (1988) and subsequently used in studies of presidential oratory by Fiol et al., 1999, Emrich et al., 2001, Seyranian and Bligh, 2008. To account for possible order effects the sequence of speeches was randomly varied in each of the groups and subsequent tests showed no significant differences between the groups. To underpin the analysis for the second element of the study we split the speakers into two groups; those who were rated as charismatic (i.e. on or above the midpoint on the scale) and those who were coded as non-charismatic (i.e. below the midpoint on the scale).

3.2. Phase II: Differences between speakers

In the second and related phase we conducted a detailed content analysis of recordings of the speeches given by the seven gurus. The speeches totaled a little over 3400 sentences. Building upon the point that the sentences within a speech carry different levels of importance, we differentiated between background sentences and those that contained focal messages. Focal messages were identified as those sentences that contained substantive assertions about the core ideas the gurus were seeking to convey. They formed a boundary in that once complete the speaker proceeded to initiate a new point. These key sentences therefore represent a clear completion point for a particular position being developed.

Each sentence was coded in terms of variables that were derived from the literature on charismatic oratory. All the variables have been treated as key generic factors underpinning effective and charismatic oratory. To guard against the introduction of subjective bias in the coding we initially randomly selected 100 sentences from three speeches. These were independently coded in the ways outlined below by separate people. We then compared the different sets of codings. In this first coding comparison 73% of the data were coded the same by the different coders. Any ambiguities, vagueness or differences in coding

were discussed in detail. A further round of trial coding was conducted. Interrater reliability this time rose to 91% for all the coded dimensions in this subsample of material (Cohen's Kappa of 0.87).

3.2.1. Rhetorical formats

Each sentence was coded for the presence of one of the seven rhetorical formats identified by Atkinson, 1984a, Atkinson, 1984b, Heritage and Greatbatch, 1986.

[1] *Contrasts*. These comprise two juxtapositioned sentences that are opposed in words, or sense, or both and in the process emphasize messages by making the core assertion twice—in a 'positive' and 'negative' form.
[2] *Lists*. These occur when three or more items are repeated.
[3] *Puzzle-solution*. These involve speakers establishing a puzzle in the minds of audience members before offering a statement that embodies the core message as a solution to the puzzle.
[4] *Headline-punchlines*. These are structurally similar to the puzzle-solution format described above. Here the speaker indicates that they are about to make a declaration, pledge or announcement and then proceeds to make it.
[5] *Combinations.* All of the devices outlined above may be combined with one another with the result that the message will be still further emphasized (e.g., a list with a contrast).
[6] *Position taking*. These involve a speaker first describing a state of affairs and then overtly and unequivocally praising or condemning it.
[7] *Pursuits.* The speaker re-completes or re-summarizes a previous point.

An example of how a speech was coded is given below. Kanter produces three successive contrasts (signified by A and B). The first parts of the second and third of these contrasts are formatted as three-part lists.

Kanter: A→ Those things that suddenly spring up looking as though they happened over night

B→ really are the results of an immense amount of team work flexibility and planning and replanning that allow people to persist even when top management is losing faith in order to make a valuable new idea come into being. I think

A → 3pl→ these skills, these lessons, these learnings can produce masters

B→ not victims of change.

A → 3pl→ That is people who are producing and anticipating and leading the changes

B→ rather than simply reacting to somebody else's. Thank you. And enjoy the conference.

Audience Applause

A sentence may contain a single rhetorical device or a subcomponent of a multi-part device. Where a rhetorical technique was present either in whole or in part a sentence was coded "1"; where it was absent it was coded "0".

3.2.2. Inclusiveness/consensus

Fiol et al. (1999: 479) and subsequently Seyranian and Bligh (2008) have argued that the absence of the personal pronoun usually indicates that the audience members were excluded by that sentence. Therefore, we coded each sentence according to whether or not it contained a personal pronoun (I, me, we, our, and us). Those sentences which did not contain a personal pronoun were coded as "non-inclusive" (0) and those that did were coded as "inclusive" (1). As a further elaboration we coded some sentences as inclusive when they did not contain a personal pronoun. These sentences were projected as inclusive on the basis of their relationship to surrounding inclusive sentences (i.e., the other sentences imply that it is

intended as an inclusive statement). The following passage, in which Gary Hamel articulates one of his key arguments, demonstrates how this coding system was applied to the transcripts:

So the challenge is: How do you compete in this new world? **[**1**]** Clearly we see ourselves on the verge of a fundamental shift. **[**1**]** A shift from an industrial economy to the digital economy, knowledge economy, whatever it is called. **[**0**]** We know that of this new economy a lot of new wealth is going to get created. **[**1**]** We equally know that a lot of wealth is gonna get destroyed. **[**1**]**

Note how the first sentence is projected as inclusive through the subsequent elaboration of the answer to the initial question.

3.2.3. Abstraction

Drawing on the measure of abstraction developed by Fiol et al. (1999) and subsequently used by Seyranian and Bligh (2008) each sentence was classified according to whether reference was made to the individual (level 1), a particular thing such as a conference, organization, report etc. (level 2), an industry or group (level 3), a country (4), or the world of ideals (level 5). Where sentences contained ambiguous or dual levels of abstraction the higher level was used as the default.

The following extract in which Tom Peters berates his audience for failing to recognize more junior staff in company reports, illustrates how these codes were applied.

Do you want to know why we do not get the improvement on the front line that we are talking about? [L3**]** This annual report, and this happens to be a British company but I saw it in here and it turned me on so I did an analysis with an American annual report, they are all bad too. [L2] The annual report starts like all annual reports and says we owe all of our success to our wonderful people. **[**L2**]** Now this annual report, this marvellous annual report, this spectacular annual report includes within its pages pictures of employees, engineers, technicians, front-line people. **[**L2**]** But let me tell you the most interesting thing that apparently is true of British and American workers, company officers in Great Britain and the United States of America are apparently born with names and workers are not. **[**L4**]** Let's look at the United States and look at the last ten years, again a moderately short period of time. **[**L4**]** Had this conference been held ten years ago, which of course it would not have been because people were not talking about such silly issues as customers ten years ago, we were talking about discounted cash flow analysis instead of selling the product. **[**L3**]**

3.2.4. 'Strong' versus 'weak' delivery style

In assessing the strength of the gurus' delivery style we used the scheme devised by Holladay and Coombs, 1993, Holladay and Coombs, 1994 and subsequently used by Awamleh and Gardner (1999).[4] Each sentence was coded on whether:

1. The speaker was gazing at the audience;
2. It was delivered more loudly than surrounding speech material,
3. It was delivered with greater pitch or stress variation than surrounding speech material,
4. It was delivered with marked speeding up, slowing down, or some other rhythmic shift,
5. It was delivered accompanied by the use of facial, hand and/or body gestures.
6. It was delivered as the speaker walked around the stage/auditorium.

Following Heritage and Greatbatch (1986), in the absence of any of these features of emphasis the sentence was coded zero for "no stress". One feature was treated as evidence of "low stress". The presence of two features was coded as "intermediate stress" and three or more as "high stress". In the following example, Peter Senge delivers a focal message by supplying some kind of stress in every sentence even though at one point he closes his eyes.

So when I asked Vic if it was OK if Chrysler joined the consortium, and that was two or three years ago (*looks at audience, emphasizes word and gestures*) **[**3**]**, And I thought either well I am not so sure you know I mean we are really direct competitors (*looks at audience and gestures*) **[**2**]**. And he didn't say that

at all he said it would be great because we could get our top management to take this seriously (*looks at audience but closes eyes briefly, emphasizes word and gestures*) **[**3**]**. OK, so there are a lot of ways in which although we are competing there is funny dynamics below the surface where real innovation might be by its nature a more collaborative an undertaking than we kinda want to see (*looks at audience and gestures*) **[**2**]**.

4. Results

In this section we will begin by looking at which speakers the audience members rated as charismatic and non-charismatic and why before examining the differences of the factors between these two groups of speakers in the context of the whole speech and focal messages.

4.1. Charismatic versus non-charismatic speakers

The procedure outlined above resulted in relatively high charisma ratings for Gary Hamel (M = 7.01, SD = 1.67), Rosabeth Moss Kanter (M = 5.50, SD = 1.78) and Tom Peters (M = 5.32, SD = 2.38). Lower charisma ratings were assigned to Kenneth Blanchard (M = 3.35, SD = 1.90), Stephen Covey (M = 4.02, SD = 2.08) Daniel Goleman (M = 4.45, SD = 1.79) and Peter Senge (M = 3.30, SD = 1.68). Given that Kanter, Hamel and Peters were above the midpoint of the ten point scale they were coded as charismatic and the other four speakers were coded as non-charismatic.

The qualitative comments given by the audience members to explain their evaluations of the different speakers were subject to a form of grounded theory analysis using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1968) in order to examine similarities and differences in the way the gurus were characterised. Table 1 summarizes the findings of this analysis. For each guru there are two columns in the Table to differentiate between positive and negative comments. Audience members were able to make more than one comment on a speaker. The Table shows that whilst all speakers received both negative and positive comments, speakers rated as charismatic received a consistently higher proportion of positive comments. Sixty-four percent of audience members who commented rated the speakers as unambiguously positive in that they had no negative comments in relation to these three speakers. The remaining 36% offered more mixed views of the speakers, particularly in relation to Peters. Overall, Hamel and Kanter were overwhelmingly considered excellent speakers given that they each received relatively few negative comments, 15% and 7% respectively. They were generally felt to be fluent with good voice intonation, clear and use appropriate facial gestures and body movements combined with strong and sustained eye contact and audience awareness. Furthermore, their messages were felt to be clearly projected and easy to comprehend. Some people found Hamel's style a little over-exuberant with respect to certain aspects of his delivery. Although Peters was generally rated as charismatic 47% of comments were negative. Some audience members found his speaking style ‘aggressive’, ‘too fast paced’, and ‘overly energetic’. In essence, for these audience members the dramatic shifts in his intonation and “frenetic” facial gestures and body movements were seen as off-putting and as obscuring his key points.

Speakers rated as non-charismatic received a higher proportion of negative comments. Indeed, not one of these speakers was rated as unambiguously positive. All audience members raised at least one negative comment in relation to these gurus' performances. In the case of Blanchard and Senge the comments were overwhelmingly negative. Blanchard was viewed as being monotonous with the consequence that there was little variation in his intonation, gestures and movement. He was also considered to have poor eye contact and failing to pause to permit his messages to be clearly projected. Senge's intonation (high voice) and lack of gesture and movement combined with his habit of closing his eyes accounted for his exceedingly negative evaluations. For Covey, whilst some people found him soothing and thoughtful, a number also described him as monotonous and ponderous and found his habit of pausing for long periods of time irritating. Consequently, some audience members were not clear as to his key points because his emphasis was erratic. Whilst Goleman was rated positively in terms of intonation, body movement and

speed of delivery, his minimal facial gestures, poor eye contact and beard were seen to obfuscate his messages for some.

Table 1. Factors accounting for audience members' ratings of each guru.

Factor [a]	Kanter		Hamel		Peters		Blanchard		Covey		Goleman		Senge	
	+	−	+	−	+	−	+	−	+	−	+	−	+	−
Delivery														
Voice intonation	55	16	63	12	47	17	10	38	21	17	22	18	15	81
Gestures	35	–	24	4	32	10	7	26	12	–	4	4	9	28
Movement	47	–	35	11	27	18	4	29	14	16	17	14	5	33
Eye contact	31	–	20	6	26		4	8	14	–	5	6	–	40
Appearance	8	–	9		5	7	–	–	16	9	–	7	3	–
Variation/speed	16	–	16		19	18	5	3			16	–	6	22
Content														
Clarity of message	39	–	59		24	15	19	28	15	20	32	8	19	29
TOTAL	231	16	214	53	179	85	49	132	92	62	96	57	57	233

[a] Audience members were able to rate more than one factor for each speaker; not every audience member commented on each speaker.

When considering the performances of all the speakers, the great majority of the audiences' comments were focused on different aspects of delivery (intonation, facial gestures, body movement, eye contact and variation/speed of delivery). Factors relating to delivery therefore outweighed those relating to message content and charismatic speakers were rated more positively on these features. In addition, charismatic speakers were considered to project their messages more clearly than their non-charismatic counterparts. A detailed analysis of the responses indicates that audience members identify a greater level of variation of emphasis, rhythm and spacing within these speakers' performances. In contrast, speakers rated as non-charismatic are noted as adopting a flatter delivery style which meant that different passages of their speeches merged in such a way that key messages were difficult to ascertain.

4.2. Whole speech differences

Table 2 shows the means for the two groups of speakers for each of the key variables. All the gurus make extensive use of the rhetorical devices associated with persuasive oratory, which are examined in the CA literature. In terms of the speakers rated as charismatic, 56% of their sentences contained a rhetorical format of some kind. In contrast, rhetorical formats were present in 54% of sentences for the speakers regarded as non-charismatic. With respect to delivery, the charismatic speakers were “intermediate-high” stress speakers (M = 2.23) whereas the non-charismatic speakers were “low-intermediate” stress deliverers (M = 1.96). The results further show that the average number of inclusive sentences between the two groups of speakers was similar; 26% for charismatic speakers compared to 23% for non-charismatic speakers. Finally, the analysis indicates that both groups use fairly high levels of abstraction with an average of 2.33 for charismatic speakers and 2.31 for non-charismatic speakers. A comparison of the means between the two groups of speakers indicates that they differ significantly only in terms of delivery. Unlike Fiol et al. (1999) we do not find that speakers rated as charismatic differ significantly from those rated as non-charismatic in their use of inclusion and abstraction. Furthermore, the use of rhetorical techniques does not differ significantly.

Table 2. Means for charismatic and non-charismatic gurus on key variables for all sentences and focal sentences.

	Rhetorical format		Inclusion		Delivery/stress		Abstraction	
Sentences/gurus	All	Focal	All	Focal	All	Focal	All	Focal
Charismatic	0.56	0.88**	0.26	0.41	2.23**	2.68**	2.33	3.10
Non-charismatic	0.54	0.64	0.23	0.33	1.96	2.33	2.31	3.11
Means	0.55	0.77	0.24	0.37	2.10	2.52	2.32	3.10

**$p \leq 0.001$ (based on a Mann–Whitney Test).

In summary, these findings signify the importance of delivery as a key determinant of the difference between charismatic and non-charismatic speakers. Non-charismatic speakers are less exaggerated and low key when contrasted with the charismatic speakers. Overall, they are therefore more contained in that they operate within what we might term a narrower "bandwidth". Charismatic speakers, on the other hand, are more animated and dynamic in their delivery in they that put greater stress on their sentences.

4.3. Focal messages differences

The analysis revealed that 14.2% of sentences in the speeches were classified as containing focal assertions. Although the proportions of these sentences varied across the gurus (13.6% Blanchard, 17.8% Covey, 13.6% Goleman, 8.6% Senge, 11.5% Kanter, 15.3% Hamel, 19.3% Peters), Table 2 shows that the average for each factor increased for both charismatic and non-charismatic speakers. This signifies a capacity on the part of all the speakers to use these factors – rhetorical formats and higher levels of delivery, inclusion and abstraction – in their speeches in order to project and emphasize their central messages. Even so, the averages for the charismatic speakers remain higher than those for non-charismatic speakers. However, as Table 2 shows the differences between these two groups of speakers are only significant for rhetorical formats and delivery. A little under 90% of charismatic speakers' focal sentences contain rhetorical formats compared to 64% for non-charismatic speakers. Although both sets of speakers increase their levels of emphasis, two of the charismatic speakers, Hamel and Peters, in a small number of sentences in which they project key messages (11 and 15 respectively), use four forms of emphasis. Thus, these two speakers not only provide higher stress on key sentences, but very occasionally they also supply them with a level of emphasis not used by other speakers.

In general, therefore, at these points in their speeches charismatic speakers display the strong delivery style used to simulate charismatic oratory in laboratory based studies (Awamleh and Gardner, 1999, Holladay and Coombs, 1993, Holladay and Coombs, 1994, Howell and Frost, 1989, Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1996). More particularly at key junctures in their lectures they routinely opt to maximize the impact of their messages by significantly increasing their level of delivery in combination with using a range of rhetorical formats. In this way they give the foremost assertions within their speeches such prominence that they stand out from surrounding material.

5. Discussion and conclusion

In this paper we have examined how speakers who were attributed as charismatic or non-charismatic by audience members differed in their use of a range of elements that have been identified as underpinning charismatic oratory. When the speeches from which the segments were extracted are taken as a whole, the speakers rated as charismatic differ significantly from their non-charismatic counterparts only in terms of delivery. When we examine all focal sentences within these speeches (which were exemplified in the clips) delivery remains significant but in addition the speakers rated as charismatic use a higher proportion of rhetorical techniques associated with persuasive oratory. It is therefore the verbal and non-

verbal practices used to package and deliver their messages rather than the content of their speeches that differentiate charismatic from non-charismatic speakers in this context. In this respect the present study confirms the findings of prior work that has emphasized the importance of strong delivery over content (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1986, Howell and Frost, 1989, Holladay and Coombs, 1994, Burgoon et al., 1990, Awamleh and Gardner, 1999).

Whilst we find significant differences between speakers rated as charismatic and non-charismatic in terms of some of the features they used, audience ratings of the different speakers suggest a more mixed view. Whilst at a general level 64% of audience members who provided comments rated Hamel, Kanter and Peters as unambiguously charismatic, the remaining 36% of audience members rated some elements of these speakers' performances negatively. This indicates that even though there is broad consensus that they are effective not every audience member reacts wholly positively to every aspect of a performance from a speaker who is rated generally as charismatic. Sub-elements of a speaker's performance impact on audience members differently. For example, some people rate a speaker such as Peters, who employs a high level of stress, positively whilst others do not. The great majority rated Kanter's intonation positive whilst a small number did not. The notion that a single style of charisma can be identified and that it is universally well-received is therefore problematic.

In addition, these findings suggest that whilst charisma may be associated with a certain threshold of stress in delivery and the use of rhetorical formats when delivering key messages, there may be a limit to the level of dynamism that some people find acceptable. This may account for the more mixed evaluations of Peters reported in Table 1. Of the three charismatic speakers Peters exhibited the most exaggerated speaking style with dramatic shifts in intonation and vigorous facial gestures and body movements. Whilst not going to the extremes of Peters, Hamel also adopted a dynamic style. For some people there may be a limit to the levels of energy they find acceptable in a speaker. Thus charismatic speaking involves a minimum level of vigour but this has an upper limit with levels of acceptance varying across audience members and contexts in ways which have yet to be systematically examined.

As we have seen, experimental studies, which involve distinctions between charismatic and non-charismatic oratory, are based on the assumption that charismatic oratory is a single ‘style’, which can be readily distinguished from non-charismatic oratory. Our research suggests that the situation is more complicated than this as Kirkpatrick and Locke (1996) speculated in the discussion of their findings. The content and delivery of the compressed charismatic speeches delivered by actors in experimental studies tend to be similar to those passages we have identified as projecting focal messages (see Awamleh and Gardner, 1999, Holladay and Coombs, 1993, Holladay and Coombs, 1994, Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1996). They are built around a series of focal assertions each of which is delivered with a high level of stress. However, as we have seen, speakers who are widely characterised as highly effective, even charismatic, may use varying levels of pitch and volume when delivering such messages and this can have important implications for the ways in which different individuals and groups perceive their oratorical performances, despite the fact that in other respects the speakers use similar presentational techniques. It is noteworthy that experimental studies also tend to ignore background assertions, which lead up to focal assertions, and thus individual variations which could well inform audience members' reactions to the focal assertions that follow them. Our study lends further support to the proposal that charismatic oratory may comprise different styles in different contexts, and that individual variations between speakers must also be taken into account, as these may be key to understanding the reactions of audiences and attributions of charisma.

This point has important implications for the future design and conduct of research in the area. Awamleh and Gardner (1999: 363), drawing on Campbell and Stanley (1963), note ‘that the artificial nature of many laboratory experiments constitutes a potential threat to external validity, and hence the generalizability of results’. Wofford (1999) has responded to such concerns by arguing that laboratory experiments have an advantage over field studies in that ‘they can help improve construct validity by isolating and using as treatments only charismatic behaviours and characteristics’ (p. 525). In contrast, the

results of the present study show that creating “pure” constructs of charismatic oratory free from “nuisance variables” results in too narrow an understanding of what might constitute charismatic oratory. In the future studies should be designed in ways that accommodate the possibility that different audience members and social groups may regard different styles of speaking as more or less charismatic depending on, for example, the purposes of speeches and the contexts in which they are delivered. Several studies have already alluded to the possibility that the elements associated with charismatic oratory may vary across cultures (Bryman, 1992, Den Hartog and Verburg, 1997). However, subsequent research has failed to elaborate whether this is the case. More specifically, an audience to any speech is not a single undifferentiated entity but is constituted by individuals who may vary in terms of their levels of familiarity, affiliation and attention to the messages being conveyed. These, and other factors, mean that audience members might differ significantly from one another in ways that are relevant to the speech that is being witnessed. Researchers cannot therefore assume that perceptions of charismatic oratory are similarly shared across audience members and contexts. It is only by repeatedly studying people's actual reactions to naturally occurring speeches in different contexts that the range of speaking styles that are deemed charismatic will be identified and how these in turn are influenced by different settings and social contexts.

Finally and related to this last point, the findings also have several important implications for training leaders in charismatic oratory. Training to enhance charismatic oratorical skills has been called for by Barling, Weber and Kelloway (1996). Taking-up this challenge Frese, Beimel and Schoenborn (2003) used the instructions in Howell and Frost's (1989) study as the basis of an action research training programme for two groups of managers. They report that such training significantly improved participants' ability to deploy behaviours associated with this characterization of inspiration speaking. However, the present findings caution against training leaders in a style of speaking that emphasizes the continuous use of “high stress” delivery across the whole speech. As we have shown above, the speakers we studied varied their stress, as well as the other factors we examined, within a speech and increased it when they sought to demarcate key messages from surrounding talk. When naturally occurring speeches are examined speakers' levels of stress ebb and flow at different points in their speeches. What is critical is that trainers working in the area of oratorical skills appreciate that a speech is a dynamic entity and so teach people how to modulate their presentational approach in relation to the projection of different kinds of messages at various points in the speech. Furthermore, they need to move away from a speaker-centred training approach to one that takes account of the audience and context. This mirrors the observation that leadership research has failed to satisfactorily examine the role of followers in the leadership process (Howell and Shamir, 2005). Further research and training needs to give greater emphasis to the ways in which a speech may have to be modified to meet varying contextual and audience factors in order to be perceived as effective and charismatic. The combinations of different factors that underpin the projection of a speech may therefore vary in the extent of their effectiveness. Developing a more nuanced understanding of how these factors relate to one another will enable leaders to be trained so that they articulate their messages in ways that significantly increase their ability to capture the attention of different audiences and be rated as effective and charismatic orators.

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Appendix 1. Speakers and speeches

Kenneth Blanchard: Is a consultant and the co-author of *The One Minute Manager* (1994). The two speeches analysed were elaborations of the central ideas in this book, one was title *The One Minute Manager* the other was untitled.

Stephen Covey: Is the author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (1989) and co-founder of Franklin Covey. The speech analysed was an untitled talk at a leadership event elaborating his ideas in relation to leadership development.

Daniel Goleman: Is the author of *Emotional Intelligence* (1996). Both talks analysed elaborated his ideas in this book and had the same title as the book.

Gary Hamel: Is the co-author with C.K. Prahalad of *Competing for the Future* (1994) and a visiting professor at London Business School. The speeches analysed were untitled talks at a leadership and a strategy/innovation conference and drew on his key ideas in relation to strategy.

Rosabeth Moss Kanter: Is a Professor at Harvard Business School and former Editor of Harvard Business Review. She has written a large number of books with *The Change Masters* (1985), *When Giants Learn to Dance*(1989) and *World Class: Thriving Locally in the Global Economy* (1995) have been her most influential. The speeches analysed – *Managing Change, The Great Corporate Balancing Act* and an untitled talk at a leadership conference – reflect the ideas in the first two of these books.

Tom Peters: Tom Peters is widely regarded as the Ur-guru and came to prominence in 1982 by co-authoring *In Search Excellence* with Robert Waterman. His subsequent books *A Passion for Excellence* (Peters & Austin, 1985) and *Thriving on Chaos* (1987) were also successful. The three videos analysed – an untitled talk on service excellence, *Service with Soul* and *Thriving on Chaos* – reflect the ideas in these books.

Peter Senge: Is a Senior Lecturer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Chairperson of the Society for Organizational Learning (SoL). He is the author of *The Fifth Discipline* (1990) which popularized the notion of the "learning organization". The speeches analysed covered different aspects of this idea in relation to the *Infrastructures of a Learning Organization*, *The Knowledge-Building Process* and *Creating Transformational Knowledge.*

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