

## Crisis, charisma, values, and voting behavior in the 2004 presidential election

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### **Abstract:**

This study extends Pillai and Williams [1998, Pillai, R., Williams, E.A., Lowe, K.B., & Jung, D.I. (2003). Personality, transformational leadership, trust, and the 2000 U.S. presidential vote. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 14, 161–192] and examines leadership in the context of the 2004 U.S. presidential election. Data were collected at two time periods from respondents in three locations across two major regions of the U.S. Our results indicate that respondents' perception of crisis was related to charismatic leadership in the negative direction for the incumbent George W. Bush and in the positive direction for the challenger John Kerry. For Bush and Kerry the relationship between crisis and voting behavior was mediated by charismatic leadership. For Bush, decisiveness was related to charismatic leadership, which in turn predicted voting behavior. For Kerry, decisiveness and charismatic leadership predicted voting behavior. Implications of the findings for leadership research, in particular with respect to an incumbent and the challenger to an incumbent leader, are discussed.

Keywords: Crisis; Charisma; Values; Leadership

### **Article:**

The events of September 11, 2001 (“9/11”) and subsequent military initiatives in Afghanistan and Iraq have highlighted the enormous challenges faced by the U.S. president. Voter concerns have been jolted from an insular focus on domestic economic issues to an increased emphasis on candidate leadership abilities. The reality of 21st century U.S. presidential leadership is that voters are focused on an increasingly complex global stage both politically and economically. In this environment, presidential candidates who can make meaning from seemingly insurmountable complexity, provide a clear sense of direction, and appear willing to take principled action will be sought by voters. Thus, voter evaluations of candidates' leadership ability, character, and identification with his or her values are likely to play an even more important role in determining voting behavior in post 9/11 presidential elections. However, until recently, most studies of voting behavior have focused on voter party affiliation and identification.

Leadership and personality issues are receiving increased attention in research seeking to explain presidential performance ([Simonton, 2006](#)). This increase is not surprising given that most polling data collected close to a presidential election indicate that perceptions of leadership and character are often defining issues for the voter. In many popular polls (e.g., CNN, Gallup), it is customary to include single item questions about what is important (e.g., How important is leadership in your decision to vote for a particular candidate?). These impressions and attributions are likely to be extremely important in determining which candidates emerge as the victor since perceptions of leadership traits and behavioral characteristics have been argued to be far more

important than actual leadership measured by group effectiveness in the emergence of leadership (Rubin, Bartels, & Bommer, 2002). Though leader emergence and leadership effectiveness are distinct concepts, when measured perceptually they often become blurred in practice (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002). The idea of voting for the leader of one's choice lends itself to the emergence framework in which voters assess the candidates and cast their vote for someone who is perceived as most leader-like in conjunction with their perceptions of personality, values, and leadership. The present study, set in the context of the 2004 U.S. Presidential election, builds on a framework of prior research to explore substantive new questions into the process through which context, charismatic leadership, leader values, and decisiveness impact voting behavior. Pillai & Williams (1998) showed that leadership perceptions were positively related to both intent to vote and actual voting behavior, after accounting for the impact of traditional variables such as party affiliation. Pillai, Williams, Lowe, & Jung (2003) showed that perceptions of candidate proactive behavior, empathy, and need for achievement were related to transformational and charismatic leadership. Leadership mediated the relationship between personality (in the form of need for achievement and emotional empathy) and vote. Further, trust in the leader was shown to be an important mediating variable between leadership perceptions and voting behavior. The work of Pillai et al. provided important insights into the process whereby voters evaluate leadership abilities and consequently make voting decisions. However, the variables investigated by Pillai et al. are relatively context free since they would be of high importance to voter choice in any presidential election context.

The 2004 elections were the first Presidential elections to be held after the terrorist attacks on September 11 and are historic in that regard. The elections were also the first elections in recent memory to be conducted when the nation was engaged in conflict. Consequently the 2004 presidential election provided an opportunity to explore the impact that a crisis context has on leadership evaluations and subsequent voting behavior. Consistent with our interest in crisis as context we are further interested in the role played by perceptions of value congruence and specific candidate traits such as decisiveness, in determining the vote.

The purpose of this study is to extend the scope of the Pillai and Williams (1998) and Pillai et al. (2003) studies in the context of the 2004 presidential elections by examining the role of crisis, value congruence, and decisiveness in influencing charismatic leadership perceptions and reported voting behavior. We begin by reviewing the elements of charismatic leadership theories and the major findings in that domain. Next we review the importance of context, specifically a context of crisis to the leadership literature and position our study within those research streams. This research helps to increase our understanding of how crisis shapes perceptions of leadership and then explores the process through which the effects of crisis on voting behavior might be mediated by other intervening variables.

## **1. Charisma**

Interest in charismatic leadership has grown over the last two decades (Conger & Kanungo, 1998). Charismatic leadership has been studied quite extensively in recent years (Lowe & Gardner, 2000) and is often described as one of the “new” leadership approaches that are better suited to the dynamic political and sociological environments that we live in (Bryman, 1993). Bass (1990) discusses charisma as a critical element in transformational leadership. Transformational leaders are described as influencing subordinates to perform beyond expected levels through activation of subordinates' higher order needs (Bass, 1990). The charismatic leader exerts influence on subordinates through a process of emotional identification with the leader which induces them to transcend their own self-interests for a superordinate goal. While transactional leaders are identified by an exchange relationship based on compliance (Bass, 1985), charismatic leaders are identified by the engagement of follower beliefs, needs, and values (Burns, 1978). Research by Bass (1985) has demonstrated that transformational leadership augments the effects of transactional leadership on outcomes.

Weber (1968) described charismatic individuals as possessing a personality that distinguishes the person as extraordinary and is therefore “...treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities” (p. 241). Bryman (1993) suggests that charismatic leaders enjoy great personal loyalty from followers because of their characteristics which cause them to be perceived as exceptional and thus deserving of commitment to accomplish their mission. Based on the work of Shamir (1995) and Yammarino (1994) it appears that this attribution of charisma operates for immediate followers as well as for those who follow at a distance as occurs in the context of a presidential election. In the present research, we suggest that voters are able to evaluate their candidates using values, perceptions of traits, and contextual criteria and allow a particular candidate to emerge as a charismatic leader for whom they signal their acceptance by casting their vote.

Research has examined charismatic leadership in a variety of settings. An empirical link has been established for such leadership with individual and organizational outcomes such as performance, satisfaction, and commitment ([Lowe et al., 1996], [DeGroot et al., 2000], [Dumdum et al., 2002] and [Judge and Piccolo, 2004]). As noted by House & Shamir (1993), these studies have been conducted across a wide variety of samples including managers, the military, and U.S. presidents. In the political science literature charismatic leaders are characterized not only as accomplishing “the emotional seizure” of the masses (Schweitzer 1974: 157) but also ruling by that. Shamir & Howell (1999) suggest that perceptions of charisma can be influenced by the nature of the leader's prior performance in office. Madsen & Snow (1991) assert that perceptions of charisma are heightened when contextual circumstances cause followers to look to political leaders for a solution and the often evokes an emotional response to leaders that enables them to exert strong influence over followers. In the next few paragraphs, we examine the role of crisis in facilitating the emergence of charismatic leadership.

## **2. Crisis and charisma**

Shamir & Howell (1999) develop a number of propositions concerning characteristics of the situation such as a crisis that may be more or less conducive to the emergence of a charismatic leader. Earlier research such as that by Grusky (1963) suggests that leadership changes tend to occur more often when organizational performance is lower than expected. In such situations, leadership change often occurs because leaders are convenient ‘scapegoats’ who might easily be blamed for low performance (Shamir & Howell, 1999). Bycio, Hackett, & Allen (1995) suggested that researchers might get a better understanding of charismatic leadership by studying such leadership in turbulent environments. Yukl (1999) in his review of charismatic leadership posited that uncertain and turbulent environments are a facilitating condition for the emergence of charismatic leadership. Following Weber's (1947) argument that times of crisis increases opportunities for charismatic leadership to emerge, research has examined leadership in situations of crisis (e.g., [Bligh et al., 2004], [House et al., 1991], [Hunt et al., 1999], [Lord and Maher, 1991] and [Pillai and Meindl, 1998]). Pearson & Clair (1998) define organizational crisis as “a low probability, high-impact event that threatens the viability of the organization and is characterized by ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution, as well as by a belief that decisions must be made swiftly” (p. 60). For this study we define crisis as the combination of potentially high impact events and national issues that are perceived as a threat to the individual. For instance, the uncertainty experienced in the post 9/11 environment serves as an example of crisis (terror threat: Pearson & Clair, 1998).

Recent research discusses crisis on a national level. For example, According to Roberts (1995) and Weyland (2003), the rise of charismatic leaders such as Fujimori in Peru and Chavez in Venezuela was precipitated by crisis in these Latin American countries. An article in Business Week (Smith, 2006) suggested that “Vicente Fox won the Mexican presidency in 2000 by using his charisma and marketing savvy to sell himself as an agent of change and the country's best hope of booting the corrupt Institutional Revolutionary Party [PRI] — in power for seven decades — from office” (p. 8). Merolla, Ramos, & Zechmesiter (2006) experimentally manipulated crisis (terrorist attack) prior to the 2004 elections and found that subjects in the “crisis” condition rated President Bush significantly higher on charisma than subjects in the “good times” condition. Halverston, Murphy, & Riggio (2004) also experimentally manipulated stress conditions and found that leaders of groups in the stress condition were perceived as significantly more charismatic than leaders in the no-stress condition. Past research has tended to look at crisis and charisma in general with very few comparing the incumbent with a challenger. In the context of presidential elections in the U.S., McCann (1997) reported that more charismatic presidents are likely to be elected during threatening times. Riggio (2004) describes how the Bush Administration used the fear of future terrorist attacks to maintain an atmosphere of looming crisis and subsequently portrayed Bush as the candidate most capable of managing the war on terror. In a crisis situation leaders who are not the cause of the crisis are likely to be seen as charismatic. In a context, however, of an unresolved crisis in which respondents evaluating a leader are able to compare the leadership of the incumbent with a challenger, the incumbent might be less likely to be viewed as the stronger leader (Bligh, Kohles, & Pillai, 2005).

The number of studies that examine charisma in various crisis situations has grown in recent years and future research is needed to further our understanding of charismatic processes and its facilitation in crisis situations (Bligh et al., 2005). As Shamir & Howell (1999: 258) point out, “while crisis can facilitate the emergence of charismatic leadership, it is not a necessary condition for its emergence, or for the success of such leadership.” As the United States approached the 2004 Presidential elections, a sizable section of the electorate (50%), felt that the country was moving in the wrong direction with the daily news of bombings in Iraq, the failure to find weapons of mass destruction which had been offered as the prima facie rationale for going to war, and the uncertain state of the economy (CNN.com, 2005). In this same poll the challenger, John Kerry, a four-term U.S. senator from Massachusetts, and the incumbent, George W. Bush, were essentially tied when poll respondents were asked who would better handle the situation in Iraq.

A Presidential election provides a definitive opportunity for subordinates to initiate a leadership change or to validate existing leadership. The promises and rhetoric that characterize the election process usually serve to increase follower expectations for change. Entering the organization, the new leader has “numerous opportunities to re-frame and change existing interpretations, suggest new solutions to existing problems, and infuse a new spirit” (Shamir & Howell, 1999: 273). If an incumbent leader is perceived to have caused the crisis or been unable to resolve it effectively (e.g., the war in Iraq), this may lead followers to see the individual as less charismatic and attribute relatively more charisma to the challenger who may present an alternative and emerge as the leader with a solution to the crisis (Bligh et al., 2005). Thus, while both might be viewed as charismatic, in context, leadership perceptions of the incumbent will likely suffer when respondents reflect on the crisis situation. In fact, in the case of existing leaders who are seen as being associated with the crisis, it may likely lead to decreased perceptions of charisma (Bligh et al., 2004). Pillai & Meindl (1998) suggest that “charismatic attributions may be sustained over a period of time only through the successful resolution of crises” (p. 664). In the context of an election when voters compare the incumbent to the challenger they are more likely to be dissatisfied with the unresolved crisis (McAllister, 2006). These findings are consistent with Pillai & Meindl's (1998) study, where they found a negative correlation between perceptions of crisis and the emergence of charisma of the current unit leaders because the unit members were still experiencing the crisis. Therefore, we present the following hypotheses:

### **Hypothesis 1a**

Perceptions of crisis will be negatively related to perceptions of charisma for an incumbent leader.

### **Hypothesis 1b**

Perceptions of crisis will be positively related to perceptions of charisma for the challenger to an incumbent leader.

Using a similar logic, it could be argued that if followers perceive a crisis, they are less likely to vote for the individual (i.e., the incumbent) whom they associate with the unresolved crisis or lacking the ability to solve the crisis. On the other hand, they may see the challenger as being able to handle the crisis and be willing to vote for that individual in the hope that the crisis will be resolved. In fact during the presidential election campaign, opinions on the war in Iraq specifically, were evenly divided and there was a decline in the approval of Bush. The 2004 American National Election Study reported that 56% disapproved of Bush's handling of the war, 56% felt the war was not worth the cost, and with respect to the threat of terrorism after the war 35% felt it stayed the same and 39% felt it had increased (McAllister, 2006). Such perceptions reflect the high impact events and threatening environment that define crisis (Pearson & Clair, 1998). With perceptions about the Iraq war and terrorism defining the context of crisis there was fertile ground for voters to be willing to choose a challenger over the incumbent. While actual blame for the crisis might not be placed on the incumbent (Pillai & Meindl, 1998) the democratic process which provides a choice might influence voters to choose the challenger over the incumbent. This leads us to Hypotheses 2a and 2b and Hypotheses 2a and 2b:

### **Hypothesis 2a**

Perceptions of crisis will be negatively related to reported voting behavior for an incumbent leader.

### **Hypothesis 2b**

Perceptions of crisis will be positively related to reported voting behavior for the challenger to an incumbent leader.

In previous studies of the U.S. Presidential elections ([Pillai and Williams, 1998] and [Pillai et al., 2003]) attributed charisma was linked to reported voting behavior along presidential party lines. Democrats saw democratic candidates as significantly more charismatic than Republicans and this in turn influenced their decision to vote for the democratic candidate. A similar pattern of results was found for Republicans. This pattern suggests that identifying with the values of a particular party and perceiving the candidate from that party as the embodiment of those values (and attributing charisma to that candidate) influences the decision to vote for that candidate, allowing that candidate to emerge as the leader. Chen, Belkin, McNamee, & Kurtzberg (2007) argue that leader–follower interest alignment plays a very important role in the emergence of charismatic leadership because followers look for a leader who will represent and look out for their interests. This may override the perception of crisis, especially if the alternative to the incumbent is not perceived as a radical solution to the crisis. As noted by Anderson & Glomm (1992) incumbents often have the higher probability of being elected than challengers. Thus, the incumbent's advantage for creating a favorable image for voters may offset the disadvantage of being a leader, especially during a crisis. This may be especially true where in a crisis situation the incumbent appears less risky than the challenger, due to intervening variables. Thus, it is possible that attributions of charisma may mediate the relationship between perceptions of crisis and reported voting

behavior for followers of both Democrats and Republicans in the context of the presidential election.

### **Hypothesis 3**

The relationship between perceptions of crisis and reported voting behavior will be mediated by attributed charisma.

### **3. Charisma, value congruence, and voting behavior**

Given our discussion above it might be expected that the incumbent will be at a disadvantage in becoming elected. Anderson & Glomm (1992), however, discuss the incumbency effects in political campaigns to explain how the incumbent is able to take advantage of their previous success (having been preferred over a challenger in a previous election). Through the charisma advantage, that tends to be realized at election time, the first mover advantage allows the incumbent to take advantage of intervening events such as bad press received by the challenger or by taking a strong policy position in advance of the challenger.

Value congruence is one intervening variable which refers to the fit or similarity that an individual's characteristics have with another's characteristics in their environment (Bretz & Judge, 1994). Value congruence plays an especially important role for charismatic leaders who seek to develop shared and internalized values as a key mechanism for motivating followers ([Bass, 1985] and [Dirks and Ferrin, 2002]). Bass (1985) suggests that followers are inspired by the charisma of a transformational leader because they identify with his or her vision. As conceptualized by Burns (1978), in the charismatic relationship, leaders and followers experience increased interpersonal trust and motivation (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002) which may lead to higher levels of leader–follower congruence in value hierarchies. This may be because presenting a vision of the future often serves to communicate the leader's values to the followers. Such value system congruence between the leader and followers can lead to increased satisfaction and commitment by followers (Meglino, Ravlin, & Adkins, 1989). Thus, the high level of agreement in the value systems characterized by value congruence appears to positively impact work attitudes. Research conducted by Meglino et al. (1989) reported that workers were more satisfied and committed when their personal values were congruent with the values of their supervisors. Although this limited evidence appears promising, Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter (1990) have noted that there is a need for more studies that examine the potential mediating role of value congruence in the leadership process.

Charismatic leaders increase value congruence among followers through articulating a vision. Conger & Kanungo (1998) argued that, while the transactional relationship creates follower compliance through rewards and sanctions, the charismatic and transformational relationships create followers' commitment through their internalization of the leader's vision. This is why leadership scholars argue that a leader's influence on followers is more enduring and potentially permanent. Another mechanism through which charismatic leaders help

followers internalize values articulated by their leader is different bases of power. Many scholars have argued that transformational and charismatic leaders tend to use personal power more often than position power. Since personal power oftentimes is based on idealized vision to challenge the status quo, followers who put themselves under the influence of their charismatic leader must undergo transformational processes so as to align their personal values (Bass, 1990). Conger & Kanungo (1998) succinctly summarize the importance of value congruence and sharedness in the charismatic leadership process as follows: “After leaders formulate an idealized vision, they articulate it by demonstrating their identification with the vision and their commitment to achieve the vision. The leader's identification with the vision and commitment, and the exertion of efforts to realize the idealized and shared vision, serve as a model to inspire the followers to undergo a self- and inner transformation consistent with the vision” (p.59).

Charismatic leadership encourages followers to consider group interest over self-interest and thus, encourages commitment to goal oriented courses of action (Avolio & Bass, 1988). This process may be especially effective when the values of leaders and followers are highly congruent. Such an alignment of values may allow the follower to interpret environmental stimuli in a similar manner and to buy into the leader's vision for action. This may be especially true where followers perceive the leader to be competent and successful (Weiss, 1978). Jung & Avolio (2000) reported that value congruence had a mediating effect on the relationship between transformational leadership and performance.

In the context of an election, an individual may be motivated to vote for a candidate if they identify with the values of that candidate, an idea that is consistent with Shamir's (1995) argument that the leader's vision might be especially powerful when followers' personal values are in congruence with the vision. When leaders are distant, such as in presidential elections, value congruence may act as a substitute for leadership, informing followers thought processes and behaviors about what the leader would do. Klein & House (1995) and Shamir (1995) emphasize the importance of leaders and followers having shared personal values for charismatic leadership effects on performance to be realized.

The context of an election presents an opportunity for the leader to communicate that their values are consistent with the values of the follower. In previous studies on presidential elections ([Pillai and Williams, 1998] and [Pillai et al., 2003]), party identification, which may be a rough proxy for value congruence with the leader, has played a significant role in predicting the vote such that voters usually cast their ballots for the candidate representing their party. Research by Howell & Hall-Merenda (1999) explored the role of distance in leadership perceptions and reported significant differences in ratings when the leader was the immediate supervisor versus a leader that followers had limited interactions with. Thus, it is important to understand if and how followers can identify with a leader who is not the immediate supervisor. Capturing follower reports of value congruence is one approach that can help further leadership research in the presidential arena. Thus, perceptions of charismatic leadership may influence identification with the leader's values which in turn may influence reported voting behavior.



## Hypothesis 4

The relationship of attributed charisma with reported voting behavior will be mediated by perceived value congruence with a leader.

### 4. Leader decisiveness, charisma, and voting behavior

The research of Pillai and Williams (1998) and other presidential leadership scholars suggest that party affiliation is a strong influence on voter behavior (e.g., Crespi, 1988). However, previous research has also shown that several leader traits contribute to perceptions of charismatic leadership and that leadership perceptions influence voting behavior. Results from the Pillai et al. (2003) study of the 2000 elections showed that perceptions of candidate proactive behavior, empathy, and need for achievement were related to transformational and charismatic leadership. Traits predict leader style and perceived leader style (Zaccaro, 2007). Perceived leader characteristics also predict the attainment or emergence of leadership because individuals share a common understanding of the traits that leaders possess and these traits are used as benchmarks for deciding who emerges as the leader (Rubin et al., 2002). Friedman (1994) suggests that voters rely on personality assessments at a distance because they help clarify a leader's governing orientation. For instance Clinton's "Comeback Kid" image signaled resiliency under stress and endeared him to voters. House et al. (1991) suggest that perceptions of charisma may be an interaction of environmental characteristics and presidential characteristics. Prior to the 2004 election, the media emphasized polls consistently showing that for a nation at war on several fronts (e.g., terrorism, Iraq), it was important to have a decisive president. As far back as 1948, Stogdill's review cited decisiveness in judgment as a stable leader quality. Leader decisiveness refers to the degree to which the leader is willing to make decisions or take decisive action (House, Filley, & Gujariti, 1971). This is likely to influence the attributions that are made about the leader since leader selection and attributions are often based on observations made and perceptions about leader traits (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). A decisive decision making style is important in leadership contexts since it reflects positive capability: attributes and abilities that allow the individual to promote decisive action even in the face of uncertainty (Simpson, French, & Harvey, 2002). As Shenkman (2000) suggested one of the qualities of a great president is decisiveness (e.g., Truman's decision to drop the bomb on Hiroshima, President H.W. Bush's decision to turn back Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait).

Interestingly, despite popular opinion on the importance of decisiveness, there is virtually no scientific evidence linking decisive characteristics to charismatic leadership. Decisiveness is discussed as an important trait for leaders to possess and has been theoretically associated with assertiveness ([Simon, 2006] and [Zaccaro, 2007]) which might suggest an association with the Big Five personality dimension of extraversion, since extraverts are described as assertive (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Decisiveness has also described as a behavioral characteristic

(Drummond, 1991). Decisive leader behavior is described as projecting a sense of clarity and certainty in their decisions while indecisiveness is characterized as leading to organizational failure (Simon, 2006). Simon (2006) goes so far as to state that "...individuals who behave this way will not stay in positions of leadership" (p. 98) in describing the effects of indecisiveness. Being indecisive is considered a component of agreeableness (Barrick, Stewart, & Piotrowski, 2002) based on the *Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ)*. The OPQ is used to measure personality (Saville & Holdsworth Ltd., 1998) and "decisiveness" is reverse scored as one descriptor used to measure agreeableness.

Strong and decisive leadership appears to be especially important when crisis exists (Yukl, 2002). According to Pillai & Meindl (1998: 647), "crises provide leaders with opportunities to take bold purposeful action."

Decisiveness therefore appears to reflect a behavioral style (Drummond, 1991) that is in contrast to decision making inhibited by anxiety associated with decision making (Simon, 2006). The dominant logic in media calls for decisive leadership is that such leaders possess high levels of self-confidence and that leader decisiveness increases the likelihood that the vision will be implemented in a timely and consistent fashion. Following from these arguments, we suggest that perceptions of leader decisiveness would influence charismatic leadership evaluations in voters. The actions of charismatic leaders can be considered proactive since they take initiative in communicating and implementing the vision (Deluga, 1998). Proactive initiatives are especially important in times of war because the context of conflict provides the leader an opportunity to take decisive action. In a wartime election, voters may see a decisive candidate as being more charismatic and this in turn, influences their decision to vote for the candidate that they can identify with. Therefore,

## **Hypothesis 5**

The relationship between perceived decisiveness of a leader and reported voting behavior will be mediated by attributed charisma.

In summary, this research examines how a context reflecting perceptions of crisis influences attributions of charisma and allows leaders to emerge in a presidential election. The influence of crisis on voting behavior is examined and intervening variables including attributed charisma, value congruence and decisiveness are included to develop an understanding of how these variables mediate the effects of crisis on voting behavior and mediate the effects of charisma on the way respondents vote and elect their leaders.

## **5. Method**

### **5.1. Participants**

A pre-election survey was administered to a sample of eight hundred and twenty-eight students enrolled in business courses. Fifty-nine percent of the respondents attended universities in the southern United States and

forty-one percent attended universities in the western United States. Six hundred and fifty-nine were registered voters. After matching responses with a post-election survey the sample yielded five hundred and fifty-two matched responses for registered voters. Evaluating voting behavior in a separate survey after the election helped to eliminate some response bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). After accounting for missing data and including only those who were registered voters, analyses were completed for five hundred and forty respondents. The sample was 53.1% female with a mean age of 25.5 years. With respect to education, 95% of the sample was completing a bachelor's degree and 6% was completing a master's degree. For race, 71.9% of respondents were white, 10.9% Hispanic, 8.8% Black, 6.1% Asian, and the remainder percent placed themselves in the "other" category. Average work experience for the sample was 6.1 years with 77.3% currently employed. Republicans represented 35.5% of the sample, while 35.5% were Democrats, 25.3% were Independents, and 3.6% were in the "other" category. Respondents indicated that 41.3% voted for Bush, 51.3% for Kerry and .2% for "other;" 7.2% did not vote. The figures compare with 50.6% voting for Bush and 48.1% voting for Kerry (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Voter turnout was nearly 60% of eligible voters, the highest turnout since 1968 (CNN.com, 2005).

## 5.2. Procedures

Following the procedures outlined in Pillai et al. (2003), questionnaires were administered as a class activity two weeks before the 2004 U.S. presidential election. Respondent anonymity was protected and assured in our cover letter to decrease respondents' tendency to make socially desirable responses or be lenient in crafting responses (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Respondents were asked to rate the candidates Republican (George Bush) and Democratic (John Kerry) from the perspective of a follower or direct report. Because US presidents have made significant economic, political, and social contributions to the rest of the world, their leadership effectiveness has been a frequent subject of research among leadership scholars. However, due to the fact that people perceive and evaluate US presidents' or presidential candidates' leadership style mainly through various means of indirect rather than direct sources such as TV, newspaper, and/or the internet, investigating presidential leadership posed a big challenge and therefore, many scholars relied on historiometric procedures in the past. That is, most of these studies asked participants or expert judges to read archival data such as public speeches and biographical works and evaluate their leadership styles as if they were immediate subordinates of their target leaders ([Bass and Farrow, 1997], [Deluga, 1997], [Deluga, 2001], [Mio et al., 2005] and [Simonton, 1988]). It is also because the charisma of political candidates is perceptual and difficult to assess objectively that research on charisma in the political science literature has been controversial and sometimes even discouraged (Spinrad, 1991).

Pillai et al. (1998, 2003) and the current study take a different approach from the historiometric procedure and employ a method similar to the approach by Shamir (1994) who used a survey to capture respondent's perceptions of candidate charisma in Israel's general election in 1992. While Shamir (1994) asked respondents

to rate the perceived charisma of candidates our approach goes one step further by asking participants to rate each of the two presidential candidates' based on their perception as a follower or direct subordinate of the candidate. We prefer this approach to the historiometrics procedures mentioned above because prior research typically provided a very limited amount of information such as a part of presidential speeches or biography and asked two coders to judge his leadership style and personality attributes (e.g., [Deluga, 2001] and [House et al., 1991]). The current approach allows for a more direct assessment of leadership attributes.

Specifically, respondents were asked to “describe how you believe that you would rate George W. Bush and John Kerry as a leader if YOU were his immediate subordinate (follower or direct report or employee).” We suggested that “since you probably do not have first-hand knowledge concerning how his immediate subordinates would actually see him, please use your OWN judgment to answer each question.” The intended effect was to allow the respondents to use their impression of the candidates when they imagined themselves in direct contact as a “follower” as a substitute for alternative techniques such as watching a video or reading a speech from each candidate (Bligh et al., 2005). This avoids the risk of one particular event biasing responses. American children are socialized from an early age to view the president as the commander-in-chief with constituencies that must be managed; much the way business students are taught that CEOs are the commander-in-chief of an organization. Consequently most American voters are socialized to view the president's job effectiveness as a function of a range of activities including spanning boundaries to form coalitions and energizing follower behavior around a clear and compelling message that extrapolates from current events to make meaning for the future. When compared to how a subordinate might evaluate a direct or distant boss's effectiveness the criteria appear to have much similarity. Most of us want our leaders (our President) to span boundaries to effectively organize resources in a manner that pushes our agenda while making sense of how our efforts connect to a better future.

For the variables representing attributed charisma, value congruence, and decisiveness, each respondent rated the two main candidates (Bush and Kerry) on one of two forms of the survey. For each form of the survey, approximately one half of the sample in each location rated Bush first and Kerry second and the other half rated Kerry first and Bush second to control for order effects. Study variables were measured in the same order across all versions of the survey and both forms were randomly distributed to respondents. Two weeks after the election, students completed a post-election survey where they indicated which candidate they voted for and identified what issues were most important in influencing their vote. Pre-election and post-election surveys were matched based on a unique personal code created by and known only to the respondents who placed them on each survey to facilitate matching by the researchers. The crisis items were presented on their own near the end of the survey. In the survey the items on leadership and crisis were placed far apart (3 pages apart). Variables were not labeled. This reduces the likelihood of respondents guessing the relationship between variables and consciously matching their responses to the two measures (Parkhe, 1993).

### 5.3. Measures

#### 5.3.1. Perceptions of crisis

An eleven-item scale representing the issues that were important in selecting the next president given the context of war, large deficit, terrorism, and foreign relations was developed for purposes of this study. These eleven items were developed based on issues discussed extensively in the media and by both major political parties leading up to the election. The items were pre-tested by presenting the items developed, as well as the items reflecting transformational leadership to a sample of 20 undergraduate and 20 MBA students. The resulting coefficient alpha of reliability for the perceptions of crisis (Crisis) scale in the pre-test was .91 and the correlation with transformational leadership was .74. An exploratory factor analysis indicated that the items for the crisis measure loaded separately from the leadership items.

In the current study the eleven items were presented to respondents. However, to refine the measure and remove any bias or redundancy with our study of leadership we removed items that included a reference to leadership or loaded on a “leadership is needed” factor. The final items employed were four items that represented a general perception of crisis with “issues you think are important in selecting the next president.” The items reflect in part the measure developed by [Bligh, Kohles, & Pillai \(2005\)](#) to reflect [Pearson & Clair's \(1998\)](#) definition of crisis (p. 60 “... is characterized by ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution, as well as by a belief that decisions must be made swiftly”). The items reflected crisis in that swift decisions were needed to resolve domestic and international issues facing the nation and that the domestic and international problems facing the nation were severe. These items are provided in the [Appendix A](#). A five-point response scale ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree” was employed. The coefficient alpha of reliability for the Crisis scale in the study sample was .83.

#### 5.3.2. Attributed charisma

The eight-item scale of attributed charisma employed in this study was taken from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire ([Bass & Avolio, 1991](#)). The MLQ has four subscales that are used to measure transformational leadership ([Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003](#)). One of the subscales is referred to as attributed charisma and has been an important component of transformational leadership. [Bass & Avolio \(1991\)](#) used charisma as part of their transformational leadership assessment as a way to emphasize transformational leader's role in influencing followers through strong emotional attachment and identification. The definition of charisma used by [Bass & Avolio \(1993\)](#) and the 1991 measure ([Bass & Avolio, 1993](#)) contains several important characteristics that are considered “a standard paradigm” by [Conger & Kanungo \(1998\)](#) for charismatic leadership such as vision, inspiration, meaning-making, setting of high expectations, and fostering of collective identity. In fact, three studies that were compared in a recent study by [Agle, Nagarajan, Sonnenfeld, & Srinivasan \(2006\)](#) that investigated charismatic leadership and organizational performance used the MLQ to measure charismatic leadership of CEOs and its effect on organizational performance. A sample item is,

“Provides reassurance that he and his followers will overcome obstacles.” A seven-point scale ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 7 “strongly agree” was employed. The reliability coefficients were .91 for Bush and .91 for Kerry.

### **5.3.3. Value congruence**

A three-item measure of value congruence was employed. The measure was originally employed in Jung & Avolio (2000) and was adapted from Posner's (1992) measure of value congruence that was developed to assess person-organization value congruence. The measure captures congruence between leader and follower values. Research on shared values between leaders and followers has reported a positive relationship between value congruence and individual and organizational outcomes. Meglino et al. (1989) report that the positive association of value congruence with outcomes suggest that individuals who share similar personal values also hold similar perspectives on how to process information, behavior and make decisions leading to less conflict (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). Empirical support was found for the current measure of value congruence as an outcome of transformational leadership in Jung & Avolio (2000) in which path analysis was employed to examine the measurement and outcomes of leadership and related variables. A sample item is “There is a great deal of agreement between my personal values and his core values.” A seven-point response scale ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree” was employed. The coefficient alpha of reliability was .82 for Bush and .83 for Kerry.

### **5.3.4. Decisiveness**

The measure of decisiveness employed was adapted from the generalized indecisiveness subscale of the Career Factors Inventory (Chartrand, Robbins, Morrill, & Boggs, 1990). Chartrand et al. (1990) reviewed the career decision making literature and found that generalized indecisiveness is a personal–emotional trait of an individual. Indecisiveness as a construct reflects the inability to make decisions even though the necessary conditions to do so are present. In the adapted measure employed here, decisiveness reflects competence in formulating decisions. The measure of decisiveness employed in the current study was based on one dimension of the Career Factors Inventory (CFI) that was developed to examine informational and personal–emotional factors that facilitate or inhibit the career decision making process. Initially developed to facilitate interventions to help individuals overcome career choice anxiety the items can be applied in broader domains. In the CFI, decisiveness reflects the ability to make decisions with high decisiveness representing strong competence in formulating decisions. This is important in leadership contexts since it reflects positive capability, attributes, and abilities that allow the individual to promote decisive action even in the face of uncertainty.

The original scale contained seven items. For the study we employed the 5 items presented in the Appendix A. These items reflect how decision making seems for the leader and the perceived nature of the decision maker. The response scale ranged for example, from hard to easy for “how decision making seems” and from

“uncertain to certain” for the nature/emotion of the decision maker. The coefficient alpha of reliability for the measure of decisiveness was .76 for Bush and .74 for Kerry.

### **5.3.5. Party affiliation**

Respondents indicated whether their party affiliation was Democratic, Republican, Independent, or Other. For our analyses the variable “Democrat” was coded 1 for “democrat” and 0 for “all others” and “Republican” was coded 1 for “republican” and 0 for “all others.”

### **5.3.6. Vote**

On the post-election questionnaire respondents indicated who they voted for in the 2004 presidential election. The response choices were: Bush, Kerry, Other, or Did not vote. For our analyses vote was coded for Bush as 1 for “Bush” and 0 for “all others” and for Kerry was coded as 1 for “Kerry” and 0 for “all others.”

We also measured social desirability in responses using the 5 item scale developed by Hays, Hayashi, & Stewart (1989). This scale captures the extent to which individuals claim favorable attributes. High scores indicate concern with others' perceptions, leading to attempts to create an inaccurate perception. Low scores indicate indifference to others' evaluations suggesting the presence of authenticity in responses ([Nunnally, 1978] and [Ellingson et al., 2001]). Typical social desirability response sets (SDRS) measures tend to be lengthy and as a result their inclusion in surveys is limited since they impose an additional burden on respondents (Hays et al., 1989); for this reason we chose this short form. A sample item is, “I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.” Hays et al. (1989) found evidence for the reliability of the measure. A five-point scale ranging from 1 “definitely true” to 5 “definitely false” was employed. To examine the extent of extreme responding, the scale was scored as 1 for the extreme score (5) and 0 for all other responses (1, 2, 3, and 4).

## **5.4. Background variables**

The sample employed for this study was drawn from three U.S. states. Comparisons of the sample background characteristics revealed no significant differences between groups on the background variables of age, sex, education, work experience, employment status, occupation, and language. These background characteristics were pre-tested as covariates in our analyses. Race and language emerged as significant covariates and are included in our analyses. Race was coded as 1 for “white” and 0 for “all other races.” Language was coded as 1 for “English” and 0 for “all others.”

## **5.5. Data analysis**

Hypothesis 1, with a categorical and continuous independent variables and a continuous dependent variable, was tested using regression analysis. For Hypotheses 2a, 2b, 3–5, Hypotheses 2a, 2b, 3–5, Hypotheses 2a, 2b, 3–5, Hypotheses 2a, 2b, 3–5 and Hypotheses 2a, 2b, 3–5, the dichotomous variable “vote” was employed as the dependent variable using logistic regression. Pillai & Williams (1998) and Pillai et al. (2003) present arguments

to support logistic regression as appropriate for research designs with dichotomous dependent variables and both continuous and categorical independent variables. Such regression is supported by the research methods literature (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). Pillai et al. (2003) presents a detailed discussion of the benefits of logistic regression over alternative methods as well as an explanation of the statistics that are yielded.

## 6. Results

The means, standard deviations intercorrelations and coefficient alphas of reliability for our study variables are presented in Table 1. The first part of the table for “BUSH” and “KERRY” provides statistics for the covariates (race, language and party affiliation) and crisis. The second part of the table reports ratings by all respondents for Bush and Kerry on the study variables of attributed charisma, value congruence, and decisiveness. The vote variable reflects the direction of voting behavior for the candidate of interest (Bush or Kerry) vs. all other candidates. For Bush and Kerry, party affiliation was related to the main study variables. All other main study variables were interrelated. The resulting high intercorrelations were examined for multicollinearity and the findings are discussed in conjunction with the results presented for our hypotheses.

Table 1.

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelation matrix for Bush and Kerry

Measures	Mean	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
<i>Bush</i>										
1. Race	.72	.45	–							
2. Language	.93	.36	.23 * *	–						
3. Party: Republican	.36	.48	.22 * *	.06	–					
4. Crisis	3.99	.88	– .04	.04	– .14 * *	<b>.81</b>				
5. <i>Attributed charisma</i>	4.38	1.56	.24 * *	.08 *	.52 * *	– .20 * *	<b>.91</b>			
6. <i>Value congruence</i>	4.15	1.81	.21 * *	.10 *	.57 * *	– .15 * *	.78 * *	<b>.82</b>		
7. <i>Decisiveness</i>	3.22	.90	.16	.05	.42 * *	– .16 * *	.65 * *	.56 * *	<b>.76</b>	
8. Vote Bush	.41	.49	.21 * *	.08	.53 * *	– .19 * *	.61 * *	.62 * *	.45 * *	–
<i>Kerry</i>										
1. Race	.72	.45	–							
2. Language	.93	.36	.23 * *	–						
3. Party: Democrat	.36	.48	– .21 * *	– .03	–					



Measures	Mean	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
4. Crisis	3.99	.88	– .02	.03	.15 **	<b>.81</b>				
5. <i>Attributed charisma</i>	4.50	1.31	– .12 **	.01	.42 **	.20 **	<b>.91</b>			
6. <i>Value congruence</i>	4.01	1.66	– .18 **	– .04	.44 **	.21 **	.74 **	<b>.83</b>		
7. <i>Decisiveness</i>	3.07	.86	.00	– .14 **	.40 **	.17 **	.68 **	.63 **	<b>.74</b>	
8. Vote Kerry	.51	.50	– .15 **	.11 **	.44 **	.17 **	.49 **	.54 **	.46 **	–

Note:  $N = 552$ . Values presented for our main variables of interest in *italics* have Bush or Kerry as the referent.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$  (two tailed); reliabilities appear on the diagonal.

The partial correlation procedure was conducted to partial out social desirability (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The social desirability scale employed in the study to partial out social desirability, the SDRS (Hays et al., 1989), was also an unrelated “marker variable” in the study (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). Our results were unchanged when social desirability was partialled out. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to establish the independence of our constructs of interest. This allowed us to include all items from the crisis, attributed charisma, value congruence, and decisiveness constructs into a factor analysis and compare a one-factor model (similar to Harman's single-factor test: to determine that the majority of the variance was not accounted for by one general factor, Podsakoff et al., 2003) with a four-factor model. We did this separately for responses about Bush and Kerry: (1) Crisis, Bush attributed charisma, Bush value congruence, and Bush decisiveness and (2) Crisis, Kerry attributed charisma, Kerry value congruence, and Kerry decisiveness. For the first set of analyses (Bush) our results support the four-factor model over the one-factor model with a change in chi-square of 783.65 and change of 6 degrees of freedom. The fit statistics for the 4 factor model were a Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) of .90 and Comparative Fit index (CFI) of .92. For the second set of analyses (Kerry) our results support the four-factor model over the one-factor model with a change in chi-square of 894.26 and change of 6 degrees of freedom. The fit statistics for the 4 factor model were a NNFI of .93 and CFI of .94.

Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4, present the results of the tests of our hypotheses. To test Hypothesis 1a we examined whether perceptions of crisis were negatively related to attributed charisma for the incumbent leader (Bush). The results of regression analysis (Table 2, Equation 1) indicate support for Hypothesis 1a. For Hypothesis 1b the results support that perceptions of crisis was positively related to attributed charisma for the challenger to the incumbent, Kerry (Table 2, Equation 1).

Table 2.

Results of regression analysis for H1 and to establish criteria for mediation: Bush and Kerry

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Bush attributed charisma (B)</b>	<b>(Kerry) attributed charisma (B)</b>
<i>Equation 1 (H1a, b)</i>		
Race	.14 **	– .04
Language	.02	.00
Party affiliation		
Republican (Democrat)	.47 **	.40 **
Crisis	– .12 **	.14 **
Overall $R^2$ ( $F$ change)	.31 (70.49 **)	.20 (38.69 **)
<i>Equation 2 (H4)</i>		
Race	.09 **	.02
Language	– .01	.00
Party affiliation		
Republican (Democrat)	.09 **	.11 **
Crisis	– .08 *	.04
Value congruence: Bush (Kerry)	.71 **	.69 **
Overall $R^2$ ( $F$ chF change)	.63 (563.88 **)	.56 (532.52 **)
<i>Equation 3 (H5a)</i>		
Race	.08 **	.03
Language	– .01	– .01
Party affiliation		
Republican (Democrat)	.05	.06 *
Crisis	– .05 *	.02
Value congruence: Bush (Kerry)	.57 **	.50 **
Decisiveness: Bush (Kerry)	.29 **	.34 **
Overall $R^2$ ( $F$ chF change)	.68 (108.41 **)	.63 (113.74 **)

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

Table 3.

Results of regression analysis: Bush and Kerry

Variables	Bush vote (B)	(Kerry) vote (B)
<i>Equation 1 (H2a, b)</i>		
Race	.72 **	− .85 **
Language	− .10	− .31
Party affiliation		
Republican (Democrat)	2.40 **	1.90 **
Crisis	− .41 **	.29 *
− 2 log likelihood (model $\chi^2$ improvement)	556.62 (182.57 **)	620.92 (131.53 **)
<i>Equation 2 (H3)</i>		
Race	.36	− .80 **
Language	− .38	− .47
Party affiliation:		
Republican (Democrat)	1.63 **	1.28 **
Crisis	− .24	.21
Attributed charisma: Bush (Kerry)	1.01 **	.85 **
− 2 log likelihood (model $\chi^2$ improvement)	439.77 (116.84 **)	542.79 (78.13 *)
<i>Equation 3 (H4)</i>		
Race	.33	− .75 **
Language	− .41	− .44
Party affiliation		
Republican (Democrat)	1.31 **	1.09 **
Crisis	− .27	.11
Attributed charisma: Bush (Kerry)	.69 **	.44 **
Value congruence: Bush (Kerry)	.43 **	.51 **
− 2 log likelihood (model $\chi^2$ improvement)	314.38 (14.98 **)	516.87 (25.92 **)

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

Table 4.

Results of regression analysis: George Bush and John Kerry

Variables	Bush vote (B)	(Kerry) vote (B)
<i>Equation 1</i>		
Race	.63 *	− .81 * *
Language	− .21	− .35
Party affiliation		
Republican (Democrat)	2.00 * *	1.36 * *
Crisis	− .35 * *	.24
Decisiveness	.96 * *	1.16 * *
− 2 log likelihood (model $\chi^2$ improvement)	507.28 (227.56 * *)	552.93 (194.06 * *)
<i>Equation 2 (H5)</i>		
Race	.35	− .80 * *
Language	− .40	− .46
Party affiliation		
Republican (Democrat)	1.58 * *	1.14 * *
Crisis	− .24	.20
Decisiveness: Bush (Kerry)	.28	.63 * *
Attributed charisma: Bush (Kerry)	.92 * *	.63 * *
− 2 log likelihood (model $\chi^2$ improvement)	437.09 (70.19 * *)	526.95 (25.98 * *)

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

Hypothesis 2a and 2b and Hypothesis 2a and 2b examined the relationship between perceptions of crisis and reported voting behavior. Equation 1 in Table 3 presents the results. Hypothesis 2a was supported with perceptions of crisis negatively related to reported voting for Bush versus all others. The Nagelkerke  $R$  square was .38. Hypothesis 2b was supported with a Nagelkerke  $R$  square of .29 for equation 1 (Table 3). There was a positive relationship between perceptions of crisis and reported voting for Kerry versus all others.

Hypothesis 3 examined attributed charisma as a mediating variable on the relationship between perceptions of crisis and reported voting behavior. The relationship was supported for Bush and Kerry. Using the criteria for mediation presented by Baron & Kenny (1986) and Shrout & Bolger (2002) we find that perceptions of crisis were related to attributed charisma for Bush and Kerry (Table 2, Equation 1), perceptions of crisis were related to voting for Bush (Table 3, Equation 1) and attributed charisma was related to reported voting for Bush and Kerry (Table 3, Equation 2). Equation 2 in Table 3 shows that attributed charisma mediated the relationship

between perceptions of crisis and reported voting for Bush and Kerry. The Nagelkerke *R* square was .57 for Bush and .47 for Kerry in equation 2.

Hypothesis 4 examined value congruence as a mediating variable of the relationship between attributed charisma and reported voting behavior. Table 2, Equation 2 shows that the value congruence was related to attributed charisma. Table 3, Equation 2 shows that attributed charisma was related to voting for Bush. Table 3, Equation 3 shows that value congruence and attributed charisma predict voting for Bush and Kerry. Thus, the mediating effect of value congruence expected for Hypothesis 4 was not supported. The Nagelkerke *R* square was .59 for Bush and .47 For Kerry in equation 3.

Hypothesis 5 examined attributed charisma as a mediator of the relationship between decisiveness and reporting voting behavior: Table 2, Equation 3 shows that decisiveness was related to attributed charisma; Table 4, Equation 1 shows that decisiveness was related to voting for Bush and Kerry; Table 4 Equation 2 for Bush shows that attributed charisma mediated the relationship between decisiveness and voting for Bush. The Nagelkerke *R* squares was .57 for equations 2. Table 4, Equation 2 for Kerry shows that attributed charisma along with decisiveness predicted voting for Kerry. The Nagelkerke *R* squares was .45 for equations 2. We performed regression diagnostics to examine the possible problem of multicollinearity among the independent variables. The results revealed that the variance inflations factor (VIF) values range from 1.73 to 2.98 for Bush and from 1.97 to 2.77 for Kerry for the main study variables. Because the VIF values were lower than the recommended cutoff threshold of 10 (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1992), an assertion that the findings are an artifact of multicollinearity cannot be supported.

## **7. Discussion**

Overall, our findings suggest that situational and contextual elements play an important role in follower perceptions of charismatic leadership and effectiveness. This is one of the unique contributions of this research in the context of a presidential election. The findings show that both leadership ratings and party identification are related to voting preference and choice, and that, in combination, these variables can predict the vote for a particular candidate. This result replicates the findings of the Pillai & Williams (1998) study of the 1996 election and the Pillai et al. (2003) study of the 2000 election, reemphasizing the importance of leadership evaluations and party identification on voting behavior. The results also show that voters may be partisan when it comes to evaluating their leaders: Democrats saw John Kerry as significantly more charismatic than Republicans and the same held true for the Republicans with respect to George W. Bush. These perceptions may be deeply entrenched as one opinion poll conducted in June 2005, nearly 7 months after this very tight 2004 election, found that virtually all of Bush and Kerry voters (94%) still agreed with their vote with only 4% of Bush voters and 3% of Kerry voters indicating they regretted their vote.

This investigation goes beyond the earlier studies and examines the role of crisis, value congruence, and decisiveness in the voting decision. The results of our direct effects tests show that respondents' perceptions of

crisis are related to attributed charisma and to voting behavior. Both of these relationships were, as hypothesized, negative for Bush and positive for Kerry. The results of our tests of the more sophisticated mediation model was also supported with the relationship between crisis perceptions and voting behavior mediated by attributed charisma for both candidates. These findings have significant implications for those seeking to understand how voters make decisions as well as those seeking to influence those voting decisions. Assumptions such as crisis favors the Republican (conservative) party or that crisis favors the challenger are too simplistic. A more complex consideration of the interaction between the leaders positioning in the context (challenger versus incumbent), the subjective appraisal of the situation (crisis perception), and perception of leader characteristics (attributed charisma) is warranted. Our findings of direct (in different directions) and mediating effects for both candidates suggest that crisis does create differential challenges and opportunities for incumbents and challengers. However, the ability to ameliorate or capitalize on circumstances is impacted by the extent to which leadership perceptions are simultaneously developed or managed. This finding would appear to offer rich opportunities for social information processing where we might seek to deconstruct the cognitive processes that integrate individual perceptions of crisis with the process of attributing charisma to leaders.

Building on our model and the results of our first set of results, our second set of tests investigated the direct effects of attributed charisma and value congruence on voting behavior as well as the potential for attributed charisma to mediate the value congruence to voting behavior relationship. Our results show that both value congruence and attributed charisma have direct effects on voting behavior but that attributed charisma does not mediate the value congruence to voting behavior relationship. Thus, a simpler model than that for crisis perceptions is indicated here. Again, our results have significant implications for those seeking to understand how voters make decisions as well as those seeking to influence those voting decisions. Our results suggest that voters consider the leader attributes, as measured by attributed charisma somewhat independently of their assessment of congruence between their values and those of the leader. Since much of the leadership literature suggests that the *sine qua non* of leadership is aligning their message with the aspirations of followers, future research might explore how or why voters separate their assessment of leader charisma from their evaluation of the leader's values. It may well be that followers focus on the ability to deliver summary outcomes rather than the underlying processes when evaluating leadership abilities (e.g., can he get us out of the war even if my reasons for wanting this are different than the leader's?). From an applied perspective the results suggest that those wishing to influence voting behavior can simultaneously focus on communicating value congruence and on boosting charismatic impressions of leaders without an overriding concern for the potential costs of mixed messages.

Our third and final set of tests incorporated decisiveness to investigate the direct effects of decisiveness and attributed charisma on voting behavior as well as the potential for attributed charisma to mediate the decisiveness to voting behavior relationship. Our results show that both decisiveness and attributed charisma

have direct effects on voting behavior. However, our results for tests of mediation were mixed with attributed charisma a mediator for the incumbent Bush but not for the challenger Kerry. Thus, the interpretation and implications of this result are less straightforward than our other tests of hypotheses. One speculative explanation for this finding is that over an extended time period, follower observations of a leader's decisiveness are a primary input to attributions of leader charisma. Thus, for the incumbent, decisiveness and attributed charisma share considerable variance in follower evaluations. However, for challengers where follower observations have been fewer, of a shorter duration, and not "battle tested" decisiveness and charisma may still be relatively separate cognitive categorizations.

### **7.1. Theoretical and practical implications**

For incumbent leaders, crisis events will likely lead to decreased perceptions of charisma when leaders are perceived to be unsuccessful in their policies. This is probably due to the fact that the voters often blame the incumbents for the ongoing crisis. We recognize that this is speculative and that we did not test for this effect in the current study. The steady decline in President Bush's leadership ratings prior to and following the mid-term elections in 2006 is probably a reflection of blame attribution by voters for the country's problems. These findings are consistent with prior research which found a negative correlation between perceptions of crisis and perceptions of charisma of the existing unit leaders ([Pillai & Meindl, 1998](#)) and also a study of the California governor recall election of 2003 ([Bligh et al., 2004](#)). In the latter study they found that perceptions of crisis decreased charismatic attributions of the incumbent, Gray Davis, who was probably being blamed for the crisis by some of the voters. Our findings seem to indicate that the relationship between crisis and charisma and the resulting effects on outcomes may operate very differently depending on other characteristics of the leader and the situation, as [Shamir & Howell \(1999\)](#) have previously proposed.

An understanding of incumbency effects perhaps helps to explain how the process works. In [Anderson & Glomm's \(1992\)](#) discussion of the first mover advantage, a candidate who appears to avoid taking strong positions on key issues, or based on the current study, one who may be seen as indecisive, may be seen as the second mover and thus have a disadvantage. Since incumbents might have the higher probability of being elected than challengers, the perception of being slow to act or being seen as less decisive than the incumbent may allow the incumbent benefit from a charisma advantage. This may be reflected in political analysts' reports that voters believed they knew exactly what President Bush stood for but they never clearly understood how Kerry would solve the crises posed by the escalating violence in Iraq, the war on terrorism, and a weak national economy.

The Bush administration was the first one since Herbert Hoover to preside over a simultaneous decline in payroll jobs and the stock market. Obviously, Kerry was not an incumbent leader who was being blamed for the perceived crisis; rather, some of his supporters saw him as an alternative to the status quo. However, in a study conducted before the 2004 election, [Landau et al. \(2004\)](#) found that mortality salience and reminders of 9/11

increased support for Bush and the desire to vote for him in the forthcoming election but caused less favorable attitudes toward and reduced the inclination to vote for Kerry. This reflects terror management theory which posits that in times of crisis, people experience heightened fears of death, which causes them to turn to charismatic leaders to feel protected (Landau et al., 2004). In the end, given the crisis context of the situation, voters believing they knew where Bush stood, may have preferred “the devil you know to the devil you don't.” Identification with the leader and alignment between the values of the leader and followers is one of the important aspects of charismatic leadership. The interest that presidential leadership generates might be paralleled to that of leaders of prominent multi-nationals. In many cases there is similar media attention given to high profile CEOs and Presidential candidates, suggesting that the generalizability of our findings may extend to high profile leadership in organizational contexts. As Chen et al. (2007) argue, charismatic leadership constructions emerge and are sustained when the leader is perceived as looking out for the interests of the follower.

Considerable media attention was given to the importance of values in the 2004 presidential election, and values emerged as a top concern of voters. Indeed James McGregor Burns is cited in Riggio (2004) as suggesting that the greater than expected mobilization of right-wing and evangelical Christians was accomplished by a focus on moral values rather than on substantive issues such as education and the economy. Of those who said that “moral values” was their top concern, 78% voted for the president (Fineman, 2004). Our study shows that in general, leadership evaluations and value congruence influenced reported voting behavior. The relationship between value congruence and the emergence of charismatic leadership is consistent with past research (Jung & Avolio, 2000). Both Democrats and Republicans who identified with their leader's values and saw him as charismatic were influenced to vote for him. It would be interesting to see how this influences the 2008 presidential vote.

The present research added to findings from the Pillai et al. (2003) study which found support for predictions that empathy, achievement orientation, and proactivity would impact charisma and transformational leadership by showing that leader decisiveness played an important role in influencing ratings of charismatic leadership for both candidates. The Republicans perceived Bush as decisive and the Democrats perceived Kerry as decisive and this influenced their leadership evaluations of the candidates and allowed them to emerge as leaders among members of their party. It is possible that followers share perceptions of leadership characteristics and qualities that are then associated with leadership emergence. Through these series of studies, we are beginning to understand which characteristics are associated with presidential leadership.

The role of decisiveness and charisma therefore appears to be critical to understanding the role of leadership perceptions in the voting decision. Further analysis revealed that decisiveness mediated the effects of crisis on reported voting behavior for Kerry. His ratings on decisiveness were statistically significantly lower than the ratings for Bush (3.07 vs. 3.22, see Table 1). It therefore appears that perceptions of Kerry as less decisive than Bush were more important to the voting decision than the belief that a crisis situation existed. The ratings of



Kerry and Bush on attributed charisma were not statistically significantly different from each other. The mediating effects of attributed charisma on the relationship between crisis and voting for the incumbent and challenger suggest that charisma was more important to the voting decision than the belief that a crisis situation existed. Thus, even though the effects of crisis were negative for Bush's leadership ratings and reported voting for Bush, and positive for Kerry, at the end of the day it appears that Bush's charisma and perceived decisiveness were the determining factors in his success in the election.

In order to understand leader emergence and the advantage that incumbency effects provide, Cohen, Solomon, Maxfield, Pyszczynski, & Greenberg (2004) conducted an experiment to examine the effects of a subtle reminder of death on voting intentions for the 2004 U.S. presidential election. This research on mortality salience shows that the preference for charismatic leadership from political leaders increases when terror management needs are activated by the reminder of mortality (Cohen et al., 2004). When subjects were presented with a mortality salience induction condition and exposed to candidate statements with task-oriented, relationship-oriented, and charismatic messages, they were more likely to express a preference and vote for the political leader with a charismatic message (Cohen et al., 2004). Thus, it appears that Bush was favored over Kerry following a reminder of death, suggesting that President Bush's re-election may have been facilitated by nonconscious concerns about mortality in the aftermath of September 11, 2001.

## **7.2. Limitations and strengths of the study**

### **7.2.1. Limitations**

The current research sampled a limited set of voters in a large “Blue” (Democratic Party) state (California with 55 electoral votes), a large “Red” (Republican Party) state (Florida with 27 electoral votes) and a medium sized Red state (North Carolina with 15 electoral votes). Respondents were limited to a small section of the population since all were students in business schools and the average age of our sample was 25.5 years which is younger than the average age of the U.S. population.

Another limitation of this study is that our measures of decisiveness, value congruence, and leadership were obtained at one point in time. We therefore could not establish causality in the modeling of the relationships. The nature of our study necessitated asking respondents to report on decisiveness, crisis, and leadership variables observed. While research by Crampton & Wagner (1994) and Spector (1994) suggests that the bias caused by self reports might be overstated it is possible that common source or method variance affected our results.

We recognize that there might be an important gap between how people view these presidential candidates as merely “public figures” and how people rate them as supervisory leaders. Thus, the approach we took in having respondents describe each candidate as if they were the direct report or follower limits the conclusions that we can make and limits the generalizability of our findings. Research that has concluded that the much of the variance in the results across studies relating traits to leadership was found to be due to methodological artifacts

caution that their results generalize to leadership perceptions only (Judge, Colbert & Ilies, 2004). We also echo this caution that our results may generalize to leadership perceptions only. Similar to the approach employed by House et al. (1991), we employed a number of techniques in order to reduce biased responses due to the single-source approach employed and the approach that asked respondents to rate the candidate as if they were a direct follower.

While we attempted to capture respondents' evaluation of the decisiveness of the candidates we cannot be certain that our approach to have them think of themselves as a close follower was effective in having them be able to effectively ascertain the extent to which this was a trait of the candidate. Recent research on presidents highlights the fact that it is common to have biographers rate presidential personality but there are often only a few biographers available to provide such ratings. Other approaches include having individuals read biographies and then provide ratings (Rubenzler & Faschingbauer, 2004). Our approach was to have respondents rate how they perceived the candidates based on exposure to information in the media which is similar to the above approach but less reliable. Thus, our conclusions are based on respondent perceptions rather than a more objective approach. Our measure of decisiveness also mixed observation type questions with those that captured the nature of the candidates in order to have respondents think broadly about how decisions were made. Thus, our measure of decisiveness might have more accurately captured decisiveness of actions than been reflective of decisiveness as a trait.

The variables considered in the study were limited in scope and excluded potentially important factors that might affect the reported results. While we measured voter perceptions of crisis, attributed charisma, and leader decisiveness we did not measure voter knowledge of or involvement with political issues. It may well be that voters who intensely scrutinize various media to evaluate candidate characteristics and positions on political issues would report a different pattern of relationships than more casual observers of the political landscape. Such a finding would be consistent with the performance appraisal literature where subject matter experts report a different set of relationships between behavior and performance ratings than do novice observers. Future research might seek to control for intensity of voter involvement to determine how political awareness impacts ratings of crisis, decisiveness, and attributed charisma. We also would suggest that intensity of involvement might influence follower liking of the leader (c.f. Brown and Keeping, 2005) which may impact perceptions of value congruence and to some extent attributed charisma. Future research might also examine the traits of the respondents which might influence the way that the candidates were perceived.

### **7.2.2. Strengths**

In alignment with one report by the U.S. census bureau (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000) that by November 2000 about 40% of the voting age population would be ages 25 to 44, election reports by the major media outlets indicated that this age group represented a large segment of the electorate. Exit polling for the 2004 U.S. presidential election indicated that approximately 46% of the individuals reporting that they voted in the 2004

presidential election were between the ages of 18 and 44 (approximately 95% of our respondents fell into this age range). Thus, the age of our sample is representative of a substantial portion of the U.S. population while the education level is likely above the national average.

Although, future research needs to sample voters from across the country representing all elements of the voting population, the fact that the basic findings regarding party identification, leadership and voting behavior have been remarkably stable across three presidential elections provides some degree of confidence that future research will find similar results if the study is expanded to include a more diverse demographic and geographic sample. Further, all the analyses include registered voters and those who voted in the election, a departure from most previous studies that have focused largely on voting preferences and not on actual voting behavior measured after the election.

We included a SDRS scale with five items to allow us to examine the extent to which social desirability in responding was present. A small percentage of the respondents (less than 18%) responded in an extreme manner. The correlations of each of the items with our main study variables were not significant, indicating that reports are not inflated by biased responses. We also employed a number of corrections to partial out the effect of bias on our results, including separating scale items and partial correlation adjustments (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Harman's one factor test indicated that no single general factor was underlying our data (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Polls have been shown to be more accurate close to an election (Crespi, 1988). Our preliminary results indicated that the correlations between intent to vote and reported vote were .74 and .77 for Bush and Kerry respectively. Thus, it appears that the two week post election window in this study allowed the respondents to accurately recall their decisions and also captured that portion of the sample population that changed their voting inclinations as the polling date neared. Studies that examined charisma and the presidency with respect to the post 9/11 era indicated that the rhetoric of President Bush had become stronger and his charisma had increased in the eyes of the U.S. public, with increasingly favorable opinions regarding the president's leadership (Bligh et al., 2004). It therefore suggests that voters may have been clear in their choice for president far in advance of the 2004 election.

### **7.3. Implications for future research**

Future research might examine the extent to which leadership ratings of incumbent presidents rise and fall in conjunction with the popularity ratings and the extent to which this affects the way that the electorate votes. For instance, shortly after the Gulf War, President George H. Bush's job approval ratings were at an all time high. However, by the 1992 elections, his leadership ratings had declined significantly due to the attribution that he failed to stimulate a sluggish economy. Shortly after combat operations were deemed over in Iraq, positive public opinion of George W. Bush's presidency approached unprecedented levels and he received accolades in the press and from the public for being a leader with a clear vision, the necessary decisiveness to wage a tough

war on terrorism, and empathy for the negative consequences for some of his decisions. This was not the case a few months before the 2000 election when his legitimacy and fitness for the position were being questioned. This was also true in the period immediately following the very closely contested 2000 election which culminated in election recount fiascos. A question that was raised by political pundits during the 2004 election was whether election history (with George H. Bush) would repeat itself with the current president (George W. Bush) in the face of daily attacks in Iraq that resulted in the deaths of coalition forces and Iraqis on a regular basis and also the uncertainty of the economy.

President Bush has repeatedly expressed the desire to be perceived as a highly transformational leader who has strong values, a vision for the country and is willing to take bold decisive action. Clearly Bush appeared decisive in comparison to his opponent (Riggio, 2004). It may well be that a platform of perceived decisiveness and transparent values, rather than a position on any single political issue, is what propelled Bush to victory in the final analysis, despite the misgivings of almost half the electorate. Bush was also helped by the lack of a strong challenge from the Democratic candidate to change the status quo. However, history may judge his decisiveness to be symptomatic of a stubbornness and unwillingness to change in the face of evidence that his strategies were not particularly successful. This may explain the steady decline of his approval ratings and the defeat of his party in the 2006 mid-term elections. What was once perceived as strength in the wake of the September 11 attacks is now being perceived as stubbornness and fanatical adherence to a failed policy.

Simonton (1993) noted that since few voters know the candidates personally they may rely on inferences in judgments about the traits held. Most voters make inferences about personality, policy, and leadership based on their perceptions and limited familiarity with specific issues although this may be changing in the age of “Google” and “YouTube” where every controversial comment made by a candidate is reported and analyzed. While, there may be potential problems inherent in studying leadership at a distance, studies have been conducted that support this methodology (Simonton, 1993). Voters are routinely called upon to elect governmental representatives such as the presidents without having had direct contact and this is the case for the majority of the voting population. Between the extended exposure and detailed analysis provided by 24-hour news networks and the salience of the critical issues being decided in the 2004 U.S. presidential election, it is likely that voters were well informed in their voting decision. It is possible that with the extensive access to information via the media and the internet that characterize modern elections that voters are better able than ever before to assess their candidates as if they were in direct communication. It may also be argued that voters felt far more comfortable with the candidate whom they felt they knew (President Bush) and trusted him to lead the nation through difficult times rather than the challenger (John Kerry) who had yet to be tested in a national crisis.

The large voter turnout reported in the news suggests that the issues in the 2004 election drove voting behavior over and above party affiliation. It also appears that voters closely identified with the candidates. Values appeared to play a major role in the voting decision in 2004. We asked respondents to indicate on the post-

election surveys the top five issues that drove their decision to elect one candidate over the other. Approximately one-third identified the values of the candidate or “integrity” as a key factor. Approximately 12% identified the war in Iraq as an important factor and 10% identified “terrorism” as an important factor. Previous research on leadership supports arguments that personal characteristics of followers are antecedents of leadership evaluations ([Bass, 1998] and [Dvir and Shamir, 2003]). In future research we hope to include personality characteristics from the Big Five in our model to help explain how respondent characteristics influence leadership attributions. This paper is more narrowly focused on contextual factors such as crisis and behavioral style as a reflection of decisiveness but we hope to expand the model in future research on presidential candidates and CEOs. Independent ratings from various sources might be also useful in future research to evaluate leadership attributes.

Future research will need to build on the moral values and contextual elements and include more personality characteristics to fully understand the phenomenon of electing the U.S. President. It is possible that certain personality characteristics that are considered significant at a particular time for presidential leadership emergence may not be as significant at another time. The 2008 presidential election which had no incumbent candidates in the running for the first time in several decades provides a rich opportunity for examining the factors that facilitate the emergence of leadership at the national level. Overall, the series of studies of leadership and voting behavior carried out during the last three elections have provided important additive and incremental knowledge that provide a better understanding of what influences the American voter as they elect arguably the most powerful leader in the world every four years. Currently, the authors are analyzing data collected during the 2008 elections.

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## Appendix A. Items in the crisis measure and decisiveness measures

### A.1. Crisis

Respondents were instructed to indicate the level of agreement with the statements presented. They were advised that “these reflect issues you think are important in selecting the next president of the U.S.” The response scale employed was a five-point Likert-type format with anchors ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree.”

1. Swift decisions must be made to resolve the current domestic state of affairs in the nation.
2. Swift decisions must be made to resolve the current international state of affairs affecting the nation.
3. The domestic problems facing the nation are severe.
4. The international problems facing the nation are severe.

### A.2. Decisiveness

Respondents were asked to indicate their view on how each candidate made decisions. Each set of items was presented separately for each candidate. The two extremes of the response scale were provided with the numbers 1 through 5 provided to indicate the points between the two extremes.

<i>For “candidate name” decision making seems (please circle your choice)</i>						
Hard	1	2	3	4	5	Easy
Clear	1	2	3	4	5	Hazy (R)
Frustrating	1	2	3	4	5	Fulfilling
<i>While making most decisions “candidate name” is (please circle your choice)</i>						
Worried	1	2	3	4	5	Calm
Certain	1	2	3	4	5	Uncertain (R)

(R) indicates where an item is reverse scored.