The effects of crisis, cynicism about change, and value congruence on perceptions of leadership in the 2008 Presidential election: The role of authentic leadership and attributed charisma in the national vote.

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Abstract:

The current study examines leadership in the context of the 2008 presidential election. Longitudinal data were collected across three regions of the United States to yield 414 responses. Perceptions of crisis were positively related to attributed charisma but not perceptions of authentic leadership. Value congruence moderated the relationship between cynicism and attributed charisma for Obama (but not for McCain) and between cynicism and perceptions of authentic leadership for McCain (but not for Obama). Attributed charisma was found to have augmenting effects over authenticity in predicting voting behavior. The contributions made to the charismatic, authentic, and crisis leadership literatures are discussed and directions for future research presented.

Article:

1. Introduction

The context of the 2008 presidential election was punctuated by a country in crisis. Overtly evidenced by plunging financial and illiquid credit markets, the crisis was, at its core, a crisis of confidence in institutions and the leaders of those institutions. Public and private institutions heretofore regarded as too stalwart, too impenetrable, or too savvy to fail, suddenly did. The 2008 Presidential election thus provides a unique opportunity to study the selection of a leader during a crisis. It was also a unique opportunity to study a leader who not only promised change but also, at least symbolically, embodied change itself. This could be contrasted with a leader

who represented the status quo which was associated with two ongoing unpopular wars and evidence of what is arguably the greatest financial collapse since the great depression, precipitating a national crisis.

Given the public perceptions of an increasing decline in the morality of some of today's business and political leaders there has been a renewed interest in positive forms of leadership and in leaders who demonstrate authenticity or the ability to be true to their own values (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). There is also growing cynicism in the public's belief that leaders will deliver what they promise in terms of real change. Yorges, Weiss, and Strickland (1999) suggest that beyond situational factors, leadership perceptions are influenced by interpretations of the personal qualities of the leader based in observations over time. For instance, a leader who is perceived as decisive, risk-taking or achievement oriented could be the beneficiary of attributions of charisma (Shamir & Howell, 1999). Past studies have demonstrated the role of charismatic leadership in the context of a crisis. In this study, we posit that leadership evaluations, expressed in the form of voting behavior, may be further influenced by the authenticity of a leader's responses to contextual factors.

The current study focuses on an emerging area of leadership research: Authentic leadership. In the context of a decade of the various financial excesses (e.g., subprime mortgages) culminating in the financial collapse of 2008, there has been a steady stream of research on authentic leadership which draws from the literatures in leadership, ethics, and positive psychology, and organizational behavior (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). Walumbwa et al. (2008) conceptualize authentic leadership as "a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development" (2008: 95). The influence of context on leadership perceptions and attendant outcomes has received limited attention to date. Yet the role of context is crucial as it influences both follower cognitions (that crisis exists) and affect (cynicism about change) which are formative elements in the development of leadership perceptions (Day, 2000).

Crisis is an especially salient context. Crisis in general implies time pressured change relative to standard operating procedures (Mumford, Friedrich, Caughron, & Byrne, 2007). In the particular context of presidential leadership, swift decisions are needed to resolve severe domestic and international issues facing the nation (Williams, Pillai, Lowe, Jung, & Herst, 2009). Cynicism About Organizational Change (CAOC) (Wanous, Reichers, & Austin, 2000) is an individual attitude (Ajzen, 2001) which develops from experience with and a loss of faith in (Reichers, Wanous, & Austin, 1997) leaders who have failed previous attempts at change and who failed to

include follower participation in decisions. Kark and Shamir (2002) emphasize the importance of studying contextual variables as a mechanism through which to understand how a leader's identity and his or her resulting effectiveness are shaped. This sentiment is echoed by Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, and May (2004) who called for greater longitudinal integration of historical, current, and future possible contexts to extend our understanding of the authentic leadership process.

Research on charisma has often identified crisis as a sufficient but not necessary condition for the emergence of a charismatic leader (House, 1977 and Willner, 1984). Williams et al. (2009) found crisis to be positively related to attributions of charisma for the challenger to an incumbent. However, Pillai and Meindl (1998) found charisma was negatively related to perceived crisis for incumbent leaders, possibly because the existence of a crisis implies ineffective leadership. Although the influence of context on attributions of charisma has been studied in the past (Williams et al., 2009), there is limited or no research to examine how context influences perceptions of leader authenticity. Despite calls for investigations of the effects of context on leadership perceptions (Avolio et al., 2004), the extant literature on authentic leadership has not addressed its effects during times of crisis, nor has the influence of cynicism about change been explored as a contextual variable affecting authentic leadership perceptions. Further, as previous research has demonstrated, it is important to build an understanding of how value congruence influences leadership perceptions (Williams et al., 2009).

There have also been calls for theoretical integration between leadership theories and process variables such as value congruence (Avolio et al., 2004, Jung and Avolio, 2000 and Williams et al., 2009). Though few studies have heeded that call, Williams et al. (2009) found that leadership evaluations and value congruence were related to attributions of charisma and influenced reported voting behavior; they suggested that future research build on values that influence leadership emergence. Leader values must be aligned with those of followers if they are to engender trust (Jung & Avolio, 2000) and mitigate feelings of cynicism. Williams et al. (2009) suggest that an alignment of values might help followers connect more closely with the leader's vision. The purpose of this research therefore is to examine authentic leadership and leader charisma in the context of follower perceptions of crisis and attitudes of cynicism about the institution of government and also the role of value congruence in mitigating the negative effects of cynicism.

Walumbwa et al. (2008) suggest a need for greater theoretical integration of authentic leadership with behavioral theories and more longitudinal studies to explore the dynamics through which leader behavior influences follower attitudes and behaviors. In this study, we break new ground

by examining the extent to which authentic leadership provides a base for effective charismatic leadership effects by investigating the augmenting effects of attributed charisma over authentic leadership perceptions on a leadership outcome (selection via voting behavior). The U.S. presidential election of 2008 provided a rich contextual opportunity to study these relationships.

2. Background

The concept of authenticity may help to inform our understanding of how charismatic leaders influence followers by exploring the processes through which followers form perceptions and select leaders. Authentic leaders are individuals who behave ethically, are guided by a strict moral code, are impervious to external influences, engender hope and optimism in followers, help people find meaning in themselves and their life, facilitate recovery from catastrophic events, and are honest and truthful even when it is tough to stay the course (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, and Walumbwa (2005) posit that authenticity is associated with higher levels of cognitive, emotional, and moral development. Avolio et al. (2004) "…propose that authentic leadership influences followers' attitudes and behaviors through the key psychological processes of identification, hope, positive emotions, optimism, and trust" (p. 815).

Research by George, 2003 and Bass, 1985 illustrate how authentic leaders may or may not be charismatic or described as charismatic by others even though they build enduring relationships, work hard, and lead with purpose, meaning, and values. It follows then that the more authentic a charismatic leader is, the more potential that leader has to build trust with followers. The 'Leader Self-Awareness' component of authentic leadership indicates the level at which the individual trusts in their own emotions, cognitions, and motivations. In short, to be self-aware is to 'know one's self' (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Charismatic leaders may be able to create a 'vision' and lead with purpose, but followers may not develop trusting relationships because they have not had the time to develop a more personal relationship with the leader. In other words, the relationship may be 'at arm's length'. When we add authenticity, it allows for followers to see that the motivations and emotions a charismatic leader presents to the public are 'authentic' in that the leader truly values what he/she says they value and is not saying 'what people want to hear'. This leads to an increase in trust. Trust must be established early in developmental relationships through multiple interactions wherein leaders do what they say and act in accordance with their values. Interpersonal relationships characterized by trust are more effective, have an emotional component, and enjoy high levels of cooperation between individuals (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001), essential elements of both charismatic and authentic leadership. Followers are able to assess authenticity based on the leader's consistency between their values and behaviors. Authenticity engenders trust by permitting partners to evaluate future

behavior through the interpretation of both past and present behaviors (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001). Development of trust is critical for leaders because followers assume the vision of the leader will provide a more optimal or preferable situation than the current one. As we integrate the literatures that are relevant to the development of our hypotheses, three forms of trust are considered: affective, behavioral, and cognitive.

Charismatic leaders empower followers by setting lofty goals and expectations (House & Shamir, 1993) and often make personal sacrifices in the pursuit of group goals. Followers are often enamored with individuals who possess charismatic qualities and form deep emotional connections, particularly in charisma-conducive environments such as crisis (Klein & House, 1995). In fact, charismatic leaders are often selected because they are perceived by followers as being able to lead during times of crisis.

A review of the literature reveals some conceptual complementarities between the constructs of authenticity and attributed charisma but also some distinctions. Perceptions of charismatic and authentic leadership have been shown to be positively related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, rated job performance, and venture performance (Hofmann and Jones, 2005 and Walumbwa et al., 2008). Consistent in both theories is the concept of 'role modeling', indicating that such leaders prefer to lead by example (Avolio et al., 2004 and Kark and Shamir, 2002) and pass on positive values, emotions, motives, goals, and behaviors to followers (Gardner et al., 2005). Both authentic and charismatic leaders emphasize identification with the collective, a focus on common overarching goals, and they foster the development of high-quality connections (Gardner et al., 2005).

Authentic leaders, however, will influence follower self-awareness of values/moral perspective based more on their individual character, personal example, and dedication, than on inspirational appeals, dramatic presentations, or other forms of impression management (Gardner & Avolio, 1998). With the focus of the authentic leader on living their values rather than communicating their vision (the emphasis in charisma) it is likely that authenticity is less situational and more evolutional than charisma. However, it is possible that followers will look for both charismatic (e.g. inspirational, visionary) and authentic (e.g. dedication, trustworthiness) leaders in the context of a crisis.

3. Context influencing leadership perceptions

3.1. Crisis, charisma, and authentic leadership

The 2008 presidential elections represented a unique moment in U.S. history. Not since the days of Franklin D. Roosevelt's first campaign for president had the stakes been higher for the country to select an able leader who could face the enormous challenges precipitated by the sub-prime mortgage crisis, the near collapse of the financial system, rising unemployment, and two major wars that dragged on seemingly for the foreseeable future. The incumbent president, George W. Bush, was at the end of a two term presidency with various media outlets chronicling the long period of low popularity in the latter half of his second term. With every passing day, Bush and his staff seemed disconnected from the overwhelming dissatisfaction of the public with their policies (Bligh & Kohles, 2009). Partisan politics crippled the legislative branches of the government and stalled any real progress towards passage of new laws (CBS, 2009). In short, public perceptions of the situation and the need for effective leadership had reached crisis status. When the reality of a leader's efforts conflict with the vision they have presented to followers, trust in the leader's ability is decreased, particularly if the leaders themselves are viewed as having caused the crisis. A loss of trust in leadership often precedes, or is the impetus to, a desire for change in the type of current leadership to alternative and more effective styles. The crisis of confidence in leadership prior to the 2008 election resulted in calls for a new type of leadership that would overcome the crisis, perhaps through more positive forms of leadership, possibly by moral authentic leaders (Walumbwa et al., 2008) and through displays of charismatic qualities (House, Spangler, & Woycke, 1991).

Organizational crisis has been defined 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" (Pearson & Clair, 1998: 60). Empirical research has evidenced that leadership makes a difference under conditions of crisis (Bligh, Kohles, & Meindl, 2004) as follower perceptions of the leaders and the leader's influence on group performance are higher under crisis than no crisis conditions (Mumford et al., 2007 and Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996. Williams et al. (2009) showed that perceptions of crisis were positively related to attributions of charisma and leader selection in the 2004 U.S. presidential election for the challenger (John Kerry) and negatively for the incumbent (George W. Bush). Thus, the research on crisis and charisma has yielded both positive and negative relationships depending on whether followers believe that the leader is likely to have a solution for the crisis or is actually responsible for the crisis.

Followers feel a loss of control and accompanying levels of psychological stress during crisis and are more likely to accept a charismatic leader's interpretation of that crisis and believe in his or her ability to provide novel solutions (Bligh and Kohles, 2009, Mumford et al., 2007 and Waldman and Yammarino, 1999). Post-crisis followers "…will readily, even eagerly, accept the influence of a leader who seems to have high self-confidence and a vision that provides both

meaning to the current situation and promise of salvation from the currently acute distress"
(Shamir & Howell, 1999, p. 260) which leads to attributions of charisma.

Bass (1990) argues that during crises and conditions of uncertainty: (1) followers' need for
direction increases the likelihood that the charismatic leader's personality will emerge and (2)
individuals feel the need for greater direction and guidance. Given the presence of crisis during
the election, the conditions were favorable for the emergence of a leader perceived as
charismatic, whose vision of the future was seen as challenging the status quo and guiding the
nation in a more positive direction. Shamir and Howell (1999) note that when an incumbent
leader has lost charismatic appeal (as was the case during election 2008), attributions of charisma
to alternate leaders in times of crisis are likely to be greater.

H1a

. Perceptions of crisis will be positively related to attributions of charisma.

"American presidents are sometimes described as the nation's "First Optimist". They are
expected to affirm our better instincts, our hope and optimism. Candidate Obama celebrated the
audacity of hope almost as much as he promoted his policy initiatives" in the run up to the
presidential elections (Cronin, 2008: 465). Avolio and Gardner (2005) posit that authentic
leaders are individuals who possess a great deal of hope and optimism, are able to self regulate,
communicate their most accurate assessment of current and future environments, whose self-
perception is one of a leader, and have an enormous amount of person-role fusion. These leaders
are perceived as truthful and willing to communicate painful unpopular facts while avoiding
external influences (Cronin, 2008). Because an authentic leader's messages are perceived as
truthful regardless of contextual considerations or external influences, follower trust is enhanced.
By providing accurate information followers recognize the leader's authenticity.

Authentic leaders are acutely aware of the context in which they enact leadership and display
appropriate emotional intensity that befits the situation (Ladkin and Taylor, 2010 and Michie and
Gooty, 2005). By objectively considering and accepting their own strengths and weaknesses,
being direct and open, acting with a high level of integrity, and demonstrating a true commitment
to the success of followers, authentic leaders articulate very real and accurate assessments of
crisis and their own ability to successfully find a resolution (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). If leaders
are not in touch with their own values and unwilling to hear the truth from trusted followers, they
will be unable to deal with a crisis. This is the essence of authentic leadership. According to

George (2007), a crisis tests a leader's True North or authentic leadership ability and followers look to leaders to lead with their values. Authentic leaders possess an internalized moral perspective which enables them to act in ways that are consistent with their values and in turn may elicit trust in their actions during a crisis. An authentic leader's hope, optimism, and positive attitude may also contribute to the perception that the leader is confident and can successfully navigate the challenges of overcoming a crisis situation. Authentic leaders have a deep self-confidence (Avolio et al., 2004) that followers may perceive as a prerequisite for the accomplishment of articulated goals.

H1b

. Perceptions of crisis will be positively related to perceptions of authentic leadership.

4. Cynicism, charisma, and authentic leadership

4.1. Cynicism and charisma

The erosion of public confidence in social institutions including Congress, the presidency, the news media, and the federal government has been tending towards all time lows for several years (Bligh and Kohles, 2009 and Cappella and Jamieson, 1996) and has caused cynicism and mistrust to become commonplace. For example, Kanter and Mirvis (1989) found forty-three percent of American workers exhibit highly cynical attitudes about work and human nature. The various corporate scandals beginning with Enron have had far reaching effects on the livelihood and future savings of employees at all levels in these organizations prompting employees to become much more cynical about the promises delivered by charismatic leaders. Albrecht (2003) showed that trust in senior management was a significant determinant of employees' cynicism towards change. Andersson (1996) defines cynicism as both a general and specific attitude, characterized by frustration, hopelessness, and disillusionment, as well as contempt toward and distrust of a person, group, ideology, social convention, or institution. Cynicism is an attitude characterized by the attribution and assumption that institutional processes operate based on self-interested behavior and a management that will not change (Andersson, 1996).

In the 2008 election it appears that an attitude of cynicism was driven beyond failed attempts, by the absence of attempts at system wide change. The commitment to the status quo undermined public faith and trust in leaders. Even the most sincere and skillful attempts at organizational change will be impeded by the prevailing cynicism (Wanous et al., 2000) unless there is trust in the change leader and followers buy in to his or her vision. Cynical attitudes stem from expectancy that the individuals responsible for change will be unable to achieve it successfully.

Individuals who are cynical attribute the cause of their problems to the behavior of others (Wanous et al., 2000); in this case, the U.S. government and its leaders. At the time of election 2008, the voting public perceived President Bush as unwilling and unable to change and our system as gridlocked by partisan politics (Langer, 2007). In extraordinary situations such as those present at the time of the 2008 election, leaders and the systems and institutions in which they are a part are largely blamed for creating crises. Within the context of the 2008 election 'previously failed change attempts' are regarded as leadership attempts to change the direction of our economy and the overall welfare of the government. As such, our conceptualization of cynicism for purposes of the present study, is more focused on the future (i.e. will the leader charged with making the change be successful in accomplishing change) than we are on the past (i.e. cynicism about the past actions of leaders who precipitated the current crisis). It is possible that followers' trust is so eroded that they become cynical about the potential for change.

Emrich (1999) observed that when leaders are viewed as 'part of the problem' not 'part of the solution', this has negative associations with charisma. Followers may have, and express, doubts about the ability of their leaders to successfully extricate the country out of the crisis they (i.e., leaders) created. When followers operate under conditions of decreased faith in leaders and the systems in which they participate, an attitude of cynicism could potentially develop. Previous research has shown a negative relationship between followers' cynicism about change and leaders' transformational leadership (Wu, Neubert, & Yi, 2007). The communication of the vision of a leader will be undermined where there is cynicism about change. This could cause a waning of perceptions of the leader's charisma and could be exacerbated by the fact that in the context of a presidential election, the leader and followers share a distant relationship and most information about the leader is filtered through several levels.

H2a

. Cynicism about change will be negatively related to attributions of charisma.

4.2. Cynicism and authentic leadership

Cynicism is shaped by experiences (Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003), may be influenced by external factors (Wanous et al., 2000) and has been shown to develop out of the feeling that one's organization lacks integrity (Dean, Brandes, & Dharwadkar, 1998). This is then generalized to and directed at multiple objects (Andersson, 1996). In the context of this research, we argue that individuals developed a cynical attitude towards the institution of government and its elected leaders. Emotions play a pivotal role in enhancing an individual's perception and understanding

of people, phenomenon, and the world in which we live (Michie and Gooty, 2005 and Oakley, 1992). Cynicism about organizational change represents one process through which affective reactions to the negative political environment influence perceptions of leadership. Furthermore, in the context of a presidential election, the potential leaders are distant from the followers and follower perceptions of leadership are more likely to be influenced by attitudes such as cynicism (Davis & Gardner, 2004).

One outcome of cynicism is generalized lack of trust (Wanous et al., 2000). Since cynicism about organizational change contains an element of affective reactions to leaders, it is likely that affective-based trust will decrease in its presence. Noe, Tews, and McConnell Dachner (2010) suggest that positive social exchanges facilitate affective-based trust results. Affective-based trust is created through leader-followers identification process, wherein a close emotional bond is formed (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996), such as in authentic leader-follower relationships. When affective-based trust is present individuals are likely to participate in activities that facilitate social benefits (Noe et al., 2010), which in turn helps facilitate change. The absence of affective-based trust may lead to withdrawal from productive activities and a decreased perception of authenticity.

While authentic leaders inspire hope for a better future, their message must also be credible and plausible according to follower perceptions of potential realization. Establishing a base of trust in followers enables a leader's messages to be more freely accepted.

If leaders are unable to convince their followers that they are not self-serving but actually very sincere in their motives (Davis & Gardner, 2004), a difficult task in an era when cynicism pervades the thinking of most followers, such leaders may be viewed in a negative light. Such negative perceptions may be formed because followers may not trust that the leader's actions are authentic. While authentic leaders gain and sustain credibility by showing that they possess knowledge and expertise they have to consistently deliver tangible results (Luthans & Avolio, 2003), this will be undermined where there is a negative attitude about the leader's ability to enact change.

H2b

. Cynicism about change will be negatively related to authentic leadership.

5. Cynicism, value congruence, and leader perceptions

According to Lord and Maher (1991) individuals form prototypes of what they expect particular leaders to behave and look like in specific roles. Cronin (2008) posits that people expect leaders to be able to lead effectively during crisis, be honest, exercise good judgment, remind us of our natural obligations, shared beliefs, ties, traditions, and trust that bind us together. Value congruence refers to the similarity that exists between two individuals, evaluations of the environment (Bretz & Judge, 1994). Values are enduring beliefs that certain modes of conduct or end states are more desirable than others (Rokeach, 1979) upon which a person is prepared to act (Michie & Gooty, 2005). 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).

Value congruence may be an antecedent to cognitive based trust. Cognitive-based trust is based on the belief that authentic leaders have technical competence (Novicevic, Davis, Dorn, Buckley, & Brown, 2005), that their communications can be relied upon as having truth (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001), and have integrity (Walumbwa et al., 2008). In trusting relationships the level of psychological safety is high and individuals are able to express themselves without fear of negative consequences, an essential element to relational transparency (Walumbwa et al., 2008). When leaders are transparent and authentic in their expression of values, followers have greater access to the leader's 'true self' and are better equipped to evaluate congruence.

Pulakos and Wexley (1983) found that managers and subordinates who perceived greater similarity between each other evaluated each other more favorably and Foti (1998) suggests that this occurs less often when differences are perceived. In today's environment of ubiquitous exposure to political messages from leaders, followers have unparalleled access to hear leaders speak for themselves. Messages are laden with explicit articulation of plans but also with the implicit values that help to inform the moral positions behind their motivations for action and as such, perceptions of leadership can form at a distance (Pillai, Williams, Lowe, & Jung, 2003). Weierter (1997) demonstrated how value congruence among leaders and followers positively influences follower responses to charismatic messages and leader charisma, and helps in the development of the charismatic relationship.

Lord and Emrich (2000) propose that charismatic leaders link their visions to those of followers values and self structures through an assortment of communication based techniques – e.g., frame breaking, frame moving, and frame re-aligning (Fiol et al., 1999 and Lord and Emrich, 2000) – as well as invocation of symbols and icons (Cronin, 2008). In presidential elections this

point is particularly salient because voters are effectively selecting leaders based on perceptions of value congruence and a preconceived notion of how the leader will respond to environmental contingencies such as crisis. "Political leaders engage their audiences in a kind of identification, an organic connection: "I feel your pain", "I understand your situation, and "I really care about you". They, or their handlers, present them as representing 'us', as well as representing hope for the future — something new different, and honest" (Cronin, 2008: 461).

Followers are motivated by the vision of the charismatic leader when there is value congruence between the leader and follower (Bass, 1985 and Conger and Kanungo, 1988); to the point where followers are more likely to consider the goals of the collective as more important than their personal goals (Avolio & Bass, 1998). In the 2008 election both candidates echoed that sentiment to various degrees among the numerous topics debated. With less of a focus on the details of "what" and "how" change would occur followers may have focused more on the overarching vision of change communicated by the candidates and attributed charismatic qualities to them based on value congruence.

Charismatic leaders engender high levels of trust (House et al., 1991) by establishing a sense of similarity with followers by stressing value congruence (Conger et al., 2000 and Kark et al., 2003). Exposure to leaders through messages and social information processing enables followers to gain an appreciation for, and grasp of, the leader's values. It is possible that value congruence between leader and follower helps to attenuate a cynical attitude when the follower perceives the leader to be more like them. Kavanagh and Ashkanasy (2006) suggest one of the strongest motivations for leadership is internalization, with the acceptance of the leader's influence based on congruence with followers' behavioral motives. Thus, we hypothesize that:

H3

. The relationship between cynicism about change and attributed charisma will be moderated by value congruence with the leader such that the negative effect of cynicism on perceptions of attributed charisma will be weakened when there is high value congruence.

Authentic leaders are individuals whose image and identity embody trustworthiness (Kernis, 2003), credibility (i.e., when the leader's claims are subsequently confirmed [Gardner & Avolio, 1998]), adherence to morals (May, Chan, Hodges, & Avolio, 2003), an ethical approach, realistically and resiliently optimistic attitude during turbulent times (Gardner et al., 2005), and integrity. Authentic leaders create relationships based on high levels of implied trust in the

leader. Behaviorally based trust is formed when individuals see consistency in the actions and behaviors of another. Consistent with the construct of authentic leadership, authenticity exists when an individual's inner experience is consistent with their behaviors (e.g., expression of emotions and values) (Avolio et al., 2004). Thus, when leaders are authentic they are likely to gain behavioral-based trust from their followers.

Trust is a central component of an authentic leaders effectiveness because trust is a belief (or expectancy) that the word, promise, or oral or written statement of another individual or group can be relied on (Stack, 1978), which often results in followers being willing to give the leader the benefit of the doubt (Gardner et al., 2005). This benefit of the doubt provision may be especially important in times of crisis where the path forward is not easily discerned and the follower needs more than a compelling vision alone to stay the course. Effectively, leaders who generate high hopes among their followers see opportunities instead of threats and these hopes are developed by individual level identification with the authentic leader (Avolio et al., 2004).

An important element of cynicism about organizational change is that individuals have experienced failed change attempts in the past, most likely under the leadership of individuals who have claimed to be able to bring about change. The challenge followers face is differentiating between leaders who are authentic in their delivery of messages and aware of their strengths and weaknesses versus leaders who over state their own abilities to bring about the change that they have promised.

In order to achieve authentic leadership, leaders must be authentic in their interactions with others as well as align their espoused values with manifest actions (Gardner et al., 2005). Authentic leaders' actions are based on their personal values and convictions (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Through self-regulation, authentic leaders align their values with their intentions and actions (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Followers observe the leaders over a period of time taking repeated actions, and this enables them to identify with and expect some level of consistency from their leaders. Perceptions of authenticity are formed when followers see manifestations of the leader's integrity. The follower begins to see the leader as someone that they might aspire to be like and may begin to incorporate some of the leader's values over and above those already shared. As the level of value congruence increases, so too does implied trust and goal alignment (Avolio et al., 2004). Thus, value congruence may help followers overcome attitudes of cynicism.

H4

. The relationship between cynicism about change and authentic leadership will be moderated by value congruence with the leader such that the negative effect of cynicism on perceptions of authentic leadership will be weakened when there is high value congruence.

6. Augmenting effects of charisma over authentic leadership

Authentic leadership is conceptually distinct from, but may incorporate, other forms of positive leadership such as charisma (Avolio and Gardner, 2005 and Ilies et al., 2005). It helps inform our understanding of charisma by providing a base from which charisma may be attributed to a leader. Gardner and Avolio (1998) expect that the source of influence of authentic leaders may be based more on their individual character and personal example than on inspirational appeals. Avolio and Gardner (2005) suggest that charismatic influence is based on rhetoric to persuade followers while followers are energized by an authentic leader who creates meaning "…positively socially constructing reality for themselves and followers" (p. 330).

Avolio et al. (2004) state that authentic leadership, as a root construct, "…is necessary but not sufficient to explain how some leaders are able to inspire masses of people to achieve extraordinary accomplishments" (p. 818). Even though both authentic and charismatic leaders cause an emotional contagion, authentic leaders may not be inspiring. Ilies et al. (2005) posit charismatic contagion is more likely for authentic leaders higher in charisma. They go on to state that "given authentic leadership, charismatic leaders are more likely to transfer their positive emotions to their followers" (p. 384).

Kernis (2003) proposes that authentic leaders facilitate optimal self-esteem through self-awareness and relational transparency. While Willner (1984) notes that "It is not what the leader is but what people see the leader as that counts in generating the charismatic relationship" (p. 14). To the extent that the leader is genuinely representative of the group and aligns behaviors with espoused personal and group values, he or she will be seen as authentic and then might be attributed charisma (Bass, 1990). If an authentic leader is perceived as charismatic by his or her followers the vision of an idealized future that is communicated by the leader may appear to be that of someone who is genuinely hopeful and optimistic about the potential for its realization.

U.S. presidents who use more image-based rhetoric and master the art of succinctly articulating a palpable vision to followers, in their inaugural addresses and at pivotal points in their

administration, are attributed charisma to a greater extent than those presidents who used lesser amounts of rhetoric (Emrich et al., submitted for publication). Authentic leaders' distinctive capabilities are that they lead with hope, positive attitude, resiliency, display moral convictions, and stay the course through crisis. This is the base from which they display their moral perspective and self regulation as evidence of their values and ethics (Ilies et al., 2005). By choosing roles that are consistent with their self-concepts and goals, authentic leaders possess a high person-role fusion and align core beliefs with the actions taken in their roles (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Charisma may have augmenting effects over authenticity in predicting voting behavior when the values and beliefs that a leader espouses are not only visionary, but also consistent with their internal moral compass. Broder (2008) notes that interactions among followers that result in perceptions of the leader may be as important as the leader's actual behaviors; and goes on to describe Obama's "eye-popping" and "pulsating" early rallies and caucuses. Sommer (2008) characterizes these events as filled with energy and excitement, and enthusiastic supporters, suggesting that in these interactions perceptions of Obama's leadership were likely augmented through processes of social contagion. This example suggests that it may be the charismatic attributes of leaders such as the ability to excite followers with a theatrical delivery of their message, physical appearance (Bligh & Kohles, 2009), and overall exuberance for changing the status quo that augments over the effects of authenticity.

H5

. Attributed charisma has augmenting effects over authentic leadership in predicting voting behavior.

7. Method

7.1. Participants

Eight hundred and sixty-eight undergraduate and graduate business students from four universities participated in a pre-election survey. Seventeen percent of respondents were from the Southwest, thirty percent were from the Northeast, and fifty-three percent were from the Southern United States. The final sample was based on a matched sampling approach with a post-election survey administered to respondents 2 weeks after voting in the presidential election to capture voting behavior and the issues that influenced the vote. The post election survey also served to help eliminate some response bias by asking respondents to report voting behavior in a separate survey after the election (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Temporal

separation generally reduces demands for cognitive consistency either because the rater does not recall exactly what was stated at time 1 or is less certain about indications at time 1 (Diener & Larsen, 1984). Five hundred and fifty-three respondents participated in both the pre and post election surveys. Because our study is about participant reactions to the major party candidates with respect to their leadership in the context of a presidential election and participant voting behavior, we restricted our sample to those who were registered to vote. These individuals represented those who might be most likely to take an interest in the leadership of the candidates even though they did not typically have first-hand knowledge concerning how immediate subordinates would view them. After removing those who were not registered to vote the final sample included four hundred and forty-one registered voters (50.8% of the original sample of 868). After accounting for missing data the final analyses were conducted with four hundred and fourteen responses. We compared the combined College of Business characteristics (provided by an administrator in the dean's offices of the Colleges of Business) from the four participating universities with the samples (868, 553, and 414). The demographic statistics were generally comparable on the main areas of interest, and especially as they pertain to our analyses including age, dummy coded race (majority white vs. all others), and party affiliation (not available from college sources).

The sample was 49.3% female with a mean age of 24 years. Program enrollment varied according to the following percentages: 64.4% completing a bachelor's degree, and 35.6% completing a master's degree and 83.8% business majors. With regards to educational level 24.3% had a Bachelor's degree, 4.5% a Masters, and .8% had Doctoral degrees. Racial demographics were 64.2% Caucasian, 11.1% Hispanic, 8.1% African American, 7.7% Asian, and 4.8% other; with 73.6% of participants employed. Republicans represented 23.7% of the sample, Democrats 41.4%, Independents 25.1%, while "other" accounted for 5%. Of those who responded 34.5% indicated they voted for John McCain, 57.2% for Barack Obama, 1.4% for "other", and 6.8% did not vote. The U.S. Census report indicated that 64.9% of individuals over 18 years of age were registered to vote while 58.2% of those eligible actually voted (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008a). Of note, the age group of 18–24 years was the only group to show a statistically significant increase in turnout (49% versus 47% in 2004) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008b). The Census bureau reports show 52.9% of the votes going to Barack Obama while 45.6% went to John McCain (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

7.2. Procedures

Two waves of questionnaires were administered to business students in a variety of states in the classroom setting. The pre-election survey was administered two weeks before the 2008 U.S. presidential election. Respondents were asked to describe how they viewed John McCain and

Barack Obama as leaders. Participants were instructed to judge the degree to which each statement fit the candidates' leadership style. The current approach allows for assessment of leadership attributes based on observations of leader behavior. The most extensive media coverage in the history of U.S. presidential elections and the heightened attention paid by the nation given the sense of crisis and desire for action expressed across the country gave respondents ample opportunities to form impressions and even form a personal connection to the values espoused by the leader (Bligh et al., 2004). We captured the extent to which voters were involved in the election to gain some insight on the extent to which they followed the process on various media outlets: The average response was "agree" that they were actively involved in the election process by keeping up with information provided in the media.

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.

7.3. Measures

7.3.1. Perceptions of crisis

A four item of measure of crisis (Williams et al., 2009) was employed. Williams et al. (2009) provided evidence of construct validity. The items represented a general perception of crisis with "issues you think are important in selecting the next president". A five-point response scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree" was employed. The reliability of the scale, as measured by coefficient alpha, was .75 in this study.

7.3.2. Cynicism about change

An eight-item measure of cynicism about change was adapted from Wanous et al. (2000). The referent for two of the items was changed to national problems instead of organizational problems. A high score on this scale reflects a pessimistic opinion about the possibility of successful change. A five-point response scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree" was employed. A sample item is "Plans for future improvement will not amount to much". Wanous et al. (2000) confirmed the single factor structure supporting the eight items representing pessimism about change. The coefficient alpha of reliability for the scale in this study was .81.

7.3.3. Value congruence

A three-item measure of value congruence was taken from the work of Jung and Avolio (2000) to capture shared values between leader and follower (Meglino, Ravlin, & Adkins, 1989). 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 alphas of reliability were .83 for McCain and .86 for Obama.

7.3.4. Authentic leadership

The sixteen item measure of authentic leadership developed by Walumbwa et al. (2008) was employed as the measure of authentic leadership. These sixteen items were developed to represent the authentic leader's self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing. In developing and validating the scale Walumbwa et al. (2008) reported that the single factor best represents the measurement of authentic leadership. The coefficient alpha of reliability for the authentic leadership scale in the study was .92 for McCain and .94 for Obama.

7.3.5. Attributed charisma

The eight-item scale from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire was employed to measure attributed charisma (Bass & Avolio, 1991). The measurement of attributed charisma using this approach captures the leader's influence on followers through emotional attachment and identification with the vision 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 .90 for McCain and .92 for Obama.

7.3.6. Vote

On the post-election questionnaire respondents indicated who they voted for in the 2008 presidential election. The response choices provided were: McCain, Obama, Other, or Did not vote. The variable was coded into 2 separate vote variables for each candidate: (1) 1 for "McCain" and 0 for "all others" and (2) 1 for "Obama" and 0 for "all others".

We measured social desirability in responding using a 5 item scale employed in previous research (Hays et al., 1989 and Williams et al., 2009). Because the original SDRS measures tend to be lengthy (ranging from 33 to 128 items), the five item scale was employed to reduce the time burden on respondents. Prior research has shown that reduced versions of the SDRS can have comparable properties and are preferred to the full 33 item set (Fischer & Fick, 1993). The

reliability coefficient for the 5 item measure employed in this study was 0.62 which is similar to reliabilities estimates of 0.66 to 0.68 found in previous research utilizing this measure. This reliability coefficient is not too dissimilar from levels reported (low .7 range) for ten items versions of the Marlowe–Crowne (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960) Social Desirability Index (Verardi et al., 2010.). By capturing the extent to which individuals claim favorable attributes we can determine the presence of authenticity in responses (Ellingson, Smith, & Sackett, 2001). A sample item is, "I am always courteous even to people who are disagreeable". A five-point scale ranging from 1 "definitely true" to 5 "definitely false" was employed. The variable was reverse scored for data analysis with low scores indicating indifference to others' evaluations.

7.4. Background variables

The background characteristics of party affiliation and involvement in following the election process were included in all our analyses. Age and race were also included as covariates in all our analyses because these were considered to be pertinent in the context of an election with unprecedented turnout by younger and minority voters. Initial regression analyses revealed no significant differences between groups of voters from the various states on the background variables. For party affiliation "Democrat" was coded 1 for "democrat" and 0 for "all others" and "Republican" was coded 1 for "republican" and 0 for "all others". Race was coded as 1 for "white" and 0 for "all other races". The dummy coding was consistent with the rationale presented in Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) when presenting categories in each variable that are mutually exclusive (we consider additional dummy variables for the other categories to be redundant since our main interest is in the main category of interest coded "1" compared to the other categories together e.g., democrat compared to non democrats and white compared to minority). Involvement was measured using three items developed by Driskell, Embry, and Lyon (2008) to represent a political participation index that capture "visiting internet sites related to the election; reading stories related to the election; and watching the presidential election debates".

7.5. Data analysis

Hypotheses 1 through 4, with continuous independent variables and a continuous dependent variable, were tested using regression analysis. For Hypothesis H5, the dichotomous variable "vote" was employed as the dependent variable using logistic regression since this is appropriate for research designs with dichotomous dependent variables and both continuous and categorical independent variables (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1992).

8. Results

The means, standard deviations intercorrelations and coefficient alphas of reliability for our study variables are presented in Table 1. The first few rows of the table for "MCCAIN" and "OBAMA" provide statistics for the covariates (age, race, involvement, and party affiliation). The second set of rows reports ratings by all respondents for McCain and Obama on the study variables of attributed charisma, authentic leadership, crisis, cynicism about change, and value congruence. The vote variable reflects the direction of voting behavior for the candidate of interest (McCain or Obama) vs. all other candidates. For McCain and Obama, party affiliation was related to the main study variables. All other main study variables were interrelated (except crisis and cynicism about change). Where the intercorrelations were high multicollinearity was examined.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelation matrix for McCain and Obama.

Measures	Mean	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
MCCAIN												
1. Age	23.80	6.33	–									
2. Race	.73	.44	−.08	–								
3. Involvement	3.91	1.01	.03	−.04	.72							
4. Party: Republican	.30	.46	−.02	.29□□	−.05	–						
5. Crisis	4.23	.65	.15□□	−.02	.18□□	−.06	.75					
6. Cynicism	2.74	.70	.07	.05	−.09	−.04	−.09	.81				
7. *Value congruence*	3.98	1.64	−.03	.18□□	−.11□	.45□□	−.04	−.12□	.83			
8. *Authentic leadership*	2.29	.73	−.04	.13□□	−.10	.32□□	.01	−.19□□	.61□□	.92		
9. *Attributed charisma*	4.51	1.36	.03	.19□□	−.10□	.35□□	.07	−.13□□	.69□□	.69□□	.90	
10. Vote: McCain	.35	.48	−.03	.28□□	−.06	.63□□	−.08	.02	.29□□	.38□□	.43□□	–
OBAMA												
1. Age	23.80	6.33	–									

Measures	Mean	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
2. Race	.73	.44	−.08	–								
3. Involvement	3.91	1.01	.03	−.04	.72							
4. Party: Democrat	.41	.49	.01	−.32**	.02	–						
5. Crisis	4.23	.65	.15**	−.02	.18**	.10*	.75					
6. Cynicism	2.74	.70	.07	.05	−.09	−.10*	−.09	.81				
7. *Value congruence*	4.54	1.78	.04	−.28**	.13*	.51**	.16**	−.18**	.86			
8. *Authentic leadership*	2.65	.81	−.05	−.26*	.13*	.45**	.10	−.21**	.73**	.94		
9. *Attributed charisma*	5.14	1.33	.05	−.20**	.17**	.36**	.24**	−.23**	.72**	.66**	.92	
10. Vote: Obama	.57	.49	.06	−.29**	.13*	.52**	.09	−.03	.63**	.52**	.45**	–

Note: N = 441. Values presented for our main variables of interest in italics have McCain or Obama as the referent.

□ p < .05 (two tailed); reliabilities appear on the diagonal.

□□ p < .01 (two tailed); reliabilities appear on the diagonal.

We conducted a partial correlation procedure to partial out the effect of an unrelated variable to examine common source bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The social desirability scale (Hays et al., 1989) was employed and the results were unchanged when social desirability was partialled out. The procedure conducted adjusts the correlations among the variables of interest for the potential effects of social desirability to see if the results are inflated. The more conservative correlation coefficients did not differ in significance levels from those reported in Table 1. Confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to demonstrate the extent to which the main variables of interest discriminate from each other given the high intercorrelations reported. We included all items from the value congruence, attributed charisma, and authentic leadership measures and compared a one-factor model with a three-factor model. No post hoc adjustments were made. We conducted our analyses separately for responses about McCain and Obama. For the first set of analyses (McCain) our results support the three-factor model over the one-factor model with a change in chi-square of 682.47 and change of 3° of freedom. The fit statistics for the 3 factor model were a Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) of .91 and Comparative Fit index (CFI) of .92. The second set of analyses (Obama) also supported the three-factor model over the one-factor model

with a change in chi-square of 886.43 and change of 3° of freedom. The fit statistics for the 3 factor model were a NNFI of .94 and CFI of .95. The item loadings on each factor were all above .49. This empirical data supports the theoretical distinctions between constructs.

We also performed regression diagnostics to examine the possible problem of multicollinearity among the independent variables. The results revealed that the variance inflation factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.01 to 2.03 for McCain and from 1.03 to 2.70 for Obama for the main study variables. The findings do not suggest that the results reported here are artifacts of multicollinearity because the VIF values were lower than the recommended cutoff threshold of 10 (Hair et al., 1992).

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 positively related to attributed charisma for McCain and Obama. The results of regression analysis (Table 2, Step 1) indicate support for Hypothesis 1a. For Hypothesis 1b the results did not support that perceptions of crisis were related to authentic leadership (Table 3, Step 1).

Table 2. Results of regression analysis for H1a, H2a and H3: attributed charisma of McCain and Obama.

Variables	McCain Attributed charisma (B)	(Obama) Attributed charisma (B)
H1a		
Variables entered at Step 1:		
Age	.01	.00
Race	.37□	−.29□
Involvement	−.14□	.14□
Party affiliation:		
Republican (Democrat)	.99□□	.83□□
Crisis	.21□	.44□□
Overall R^2 (F)	.17 (15.62□)	.21 (19.85□□)
H2a		
Variables entered at Step 2:		

Variables	McCain Attributed charisma (B)	(Obama) Attributed charisma (B)
Age	.01	.01
Race	.41□□	−.28†
Involvement	−.15□	.13□
Party affiliation:		
Republican (Democrat)	.96□□	.80□□
Crisis	.19†	.41□□
Cynicism	−.23□	−.31□□
Overall R^2 (F Change)	.18 (6.39□)	.23 (13.37□□)
H3		
Variables entered at Step 3:		
Age	.14□□	.00
Race	.31□□	−.05
Involvement	−.07	.06
Party affiliation:		
Republican (Democrat)	.10□	−.03
Crisis	.20*	.27□□
Cynicism	−.37□	.45□□
Value congruence: McCain (Obama)	.35□□	.33□□
Cynicism ∗ value congruence		
McCain (Obama)	.07	.06□
Overall R^2 (F Change)	.50 (119.69□□)	.55 (136.48□□)

† $p < .10$.

□ $p < .05$.

□□ $p < .01$.

Table 3. Results of regression analysis for H1b, H1b and H4: authentic leadership of McCain and Obama.

Variables	McCain	(Obama)
	Authentic Leadership (B)	Authentic Leadership (B)
H1b		
Variables entered at Step 1:		
Age	.00	−.01
Race	.09	−.22□
Involvement	−.06[†]	.07[†]
Party affiliation:		
Republican (Democrat)	.50□□	.66□□
Crisis	−.04	.08
Overall R^2 (F)	.12 (10.43□□)	.23 (22.57□□)
H2b		
Variables entered at Step 2:		
Age	.00	−.01
Race	.12	−.21□
Involvement	−.07[†]	.06[†]
Party affiliation:		
Republican (Democrat)	.48□□	.64□□
Crisis	.02	.07
Cynicism	−.19□□	−.17□□
Overall R^2 (F Change)	.15 (14.97□□)	.25 (11.17□□)
H4		
Variables entered at Step 3:		
Age	.00□□	.00

Variables	McCain	(Obama)
	Authentic Leadership (B)	Authentic Leadership (B)
Race	.07 ††	−.07
Involvement	−.03	.03
Party affiliation:		
Republican (Democrat)	.08	−.15†
Crisis	.02	−.02
Cynicism	−.41††	−.10††
Value congruence: McCain (Obama)	.06††	.29††
Cynicism ∗ value congruence		
McCain (Obama)	.07††	.00
Overall R^2 (F Change)	.40 (80.16††)	.55 (123.07††)

† p < .10.

☐ p < .05.

☐☐ p < .01.

Table 4. Results of regression analysis for H5: voting for McCain and Obama.

Variables	McCain	(Obama)
	Vote (B)	Vote (B)
Eq. (1)		
Step 1		
Age	.01	.03
Race	.74†	−.74†
Involvement	−.06	.28†
Party affiliation:		

Variables	McCain	(Obama)
	Vote (B)	Vote (B)
Republican (Democrat)	2.79**	1.85**
Authentic leadership	1.03**	1.39**
− 2 log likelihood (Model χ^2 improvement)	315.88 (190.22**)	352.97 (181.24**)
Nagelkerke R^2	.53	.50
Step 2 (Addition of charisma)		
Authentic leadership	.54*	1.01**
Attributed charisma	.55**	.28*
− 2 log likelihood (Model χ^2 improvement)	303.02 (12.86**)	348.58 (4.39*)
Nagelkerke R^2	.56	.51
Eq. (2) (H5)		
Step 1		
Age	−.01	.01
Race	.59	−.78*
Involvement	−.05	.23[†]
Party affiliation:		
Republican (Democrat)	2.75	2.09**
Attributed charisma	.71**	.62**
− 2 log likelihood (Model χ^2 improvement)	307.01 (199.08**)	368.99 (165.22**)
Nagelkerke R^2	.55	.46
Step 2 (Addition of authentic leadership)		
Attributed charisma	−.55**	.28*
Authentic leadership	−.54*	1.10**

Variables	McCain	(Obama)
	Vote (B)	Vote (B)
− 2 log likelihood (Model χ^2 improvement)	303.02 (3.99)	348.58 (20.42$^{\square\square}$)
Nagelkerke R^2	.56	.51

† $p < .10$.

$\square$ $p < .05$.

$\square\square$ $p < .01$.

HypothesesH2a and H2b examined the relationship between cynicism about change and leadership perceptions. Step 2 in Table 2 presents the results for Hypothesis 2a. The hypothesis was supported with cynicism about change negatively related to attributed charisma for McCain and Obama. Hypothesis 2b was supported (Table 3, Step 2). There was a negative relationship between cynicism about change and authentic leadership for both McCain and Obama.

Hypothesis H3 examined value congruence as a moderator of the relationship between cynicism about change and attributed charisma. The relationship was supported for Obama with the negative relationship weakened when there was high value congruence (Table 2, Step 3 and Fig. 1). Hypothesis H4 examined value congruence as a moderator of the relationship between cynicism about change and authentic leadership. The relationship was supported for McCain with the negative relationship weakened when there was high value congruence (Table 3, Step 3 and Fig. 2). The results of the tests of hypothesesH3 and H4 are especially interesting given that the mechanisms attenuating the negative effects of cynicism about change appear to suggest a temporal component with charisma an explanatory variable for the relative newcomer and authenticity the explanatory variable for the candidate with the longer track record. We return to this point in our discussion.

Fig. 1. Value congruence as a moderator of the cynicism to attributed charisma relationship.
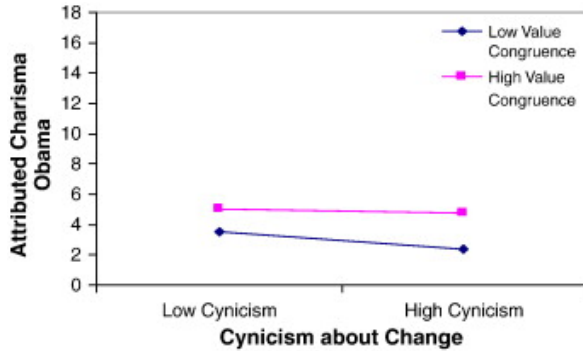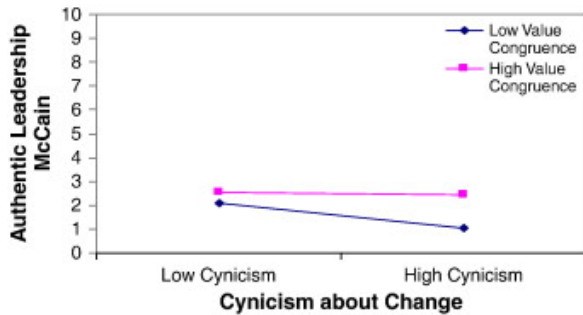

Fig. 2. Value congruence as a moderator of the cynicism to authentic leadership relationship.

Hypothesis H5 examines the augmenting effect of attributed charisma over authentic leadership in predicting voting behavior: Table 4, Eq. (1) shows support for voting for McCain, with significant variance explained when attributed charisma was added to the equation. The model χ^2 improvement statistics indicate that the additional variance explained attained statistical significance. The opposite was not found: no significant additional variance in voting behavior was explained for authentic leadership over charisma (Table 4, Eq. (2)). The model χ^2 improvement statistics indicate that the additional variance explained did not attain statistical significance. The results on voting behavior for Obama indicate that each variable (authentic leadership and attributed charisma) added significant variance over the other (Table 4, Eq. (2)).

9. Discussion

This longitudinal study was conducted in the midst of a presidential election with leaders whose campaign message and values were conveyed in real time through ubiquitous news media coverage. Voter responses were captured pre and post election, which is a unique contribution of this research. Structuring data collection in this manner allowed us to compare perceptions of leadership in the context of crisis as these perceptions developed through exposure to the candidates and their espoused values. Our results support earlier research that crisis is positively related to attributed charisma (Hypothesis 1a). Williams et al. (2009) demonstrated that

perceptions of crisis will be positively related to perceptions of charisma for a non incumbent leader. Both candidates positioned themselves as proponents of change, challenging the status quo. Although Senator McCain was the candidate from the same party as the incumbent president, his reputation as the "maverick" of the Senate may have influenced voter perceptions of him as a candidate who would have new solutions for a crisis.

This research makes several important contributions to the growing body of literature on authenticity. With the call in the literature to distinguish authenticity from other constructs and address its possible antecedents, we examined the influence of crisis on perceptions of authentic leadership. The finding that crisis did not have an influence on authentic leadership perceptions (Hypothesis 1b) suggests an area where the literatures on charismatic leadership and authentic leadership diverge. Authentic leadership focuses on lived values and is more evolutional than charisma which is more vision oriented and situational. In addition, perceivers of information often weigh negative events more heavily than positive events when assessing the morality of a leader (Cooper, Scandura, & Schriesheim, 2005). To be authentic, leaders must be truthful, open, and honest at all times. Thus, they achieve levels of authenticity over time (Harvey, Martinko, & Gardner, 2006). However, it is also possible for the leader to lose that "halo" of authenticity very quickly when he/she engages in behavior that is perceived as unethical and it may be difficult to regain it. A leader may be attributed as charismatic within the context of crisis whereas to be attributed authenticity leaders must act with integrity and morality across all times and contexts (Cooper et al., 2005). Thus, crisis may not be a sufficient condition for the emergence of perceptions of authentic leadership. Whereas charismatic leaders may experience a waning of their charisma when the crisis has passed (e.g. Rudy Guliani, mayor of New York City during the 9–11 attack), authentic leaders may be continued to be seen as enduringly authentic as long as they continue to act in ways that are consistent with their values.

Another unique contribution of the research is the introduction of cynicism about change as a variable related to perceptions of leadership (Hypothesis 2). Attitudes of cynicism are directed at others (Andersson, 1996) especially those viewed as unable to effect positive change. Based on news reports it appeared that the nation's focal leaders were largely blamed for causing the crisis whereas attitudes of cynicism were more generally directed at a broader collective of elected officials representing the institutions of the government as a whole. The finding that value congruence between a leader and follower has a mitigating role in reducing the effects of cynicism on perceptions of leadership supports the importance of positive forms of leadership that focus on leader–follower identification. Norman, Luthans, and Luthans (2005) have argued that hope can be transferred from a leader to the follower through positive forms of leadership such as authentic leadership. This social contagion process may in turn reduce the cynicism of the follower.

It is interesting to note that those who were more involved in following the election were likely to have lower attributions of charisma and perceptions of authentic leadership for McCain and higher attributions and perceptions for Obama. Similarly, greater involvement was positively associated with vote for Obama. The media's portrayal of McCain as 'another Bush' and Obama as the 'anti-Bush' may have contributed to the distinction between the two candidates. This was further amplified by media around the world, especially in countries that had strongly disagreed with American policy in the Bush years. Polls suggested that in many countries, 70% would choose Obama as the leader if they had the opportunity to vote in the U.S. election. The Obama campaign continually sought to perpetuate the perceived link between McCain and the Bush administration. Finally, during the final debate McCain declared: "Senator Obama, I am not President Bush, if you wanted to run against President Bush you should have run four years ago" (Bligh & Kohles, 2009: 487). Thus, while voters could still identify with McCain's values as an authentic leader, with value congruence overcoming the effects of cynicism (Hypothesis H4), this was not the case for attributions of charisma (Hypothesis H3). On the other hand Obama's message for change may have been more believable with value congruence mitigating the effects of cynicism on attributions of charisma (Hypothesis H3) but this was not the case for perceptions of authenticity (Hypothesis H4). Obama's only recent national exposure may have limited the ability of followers' value congruence to mitigate cynicism about change in relation to perceptions of authenticity because limited exposure might have prohibited matching his espoused values to his actions and behaviors (Avolio and Gardner, 2005 and Foti et al., 2008). It is also possible that the sustained attacks by his opponent, suggesting that his grand words were not matched by action, shaped the perceptions of some voters. For such voters, his charisma was undeniable but his authenticity may have been questionable. It may well be that whereas perceptions of charisma are formed relatively quickly especially in the case of distant candidates, authentic leadership evaluations develop over a longer period (and are likely more enduring).

In examining Hypothesis H5 we provide preliminary evidence that authentic leadership is distinct from charisma (Walumbwa et al., 2008) and suggest that it potentially serves as a basis for other forms of positive leadership (Avolio and Gardner, 2005 and Cooper et al., 2005). We suggest that once a leader has been seen as authentic (Avolio et al., 2004) followers may increasingly trust and identify with the vision articulated. From this authentic base a leader may be viewed as charismatic or not (Avolio and Gardner, 2005 and Cooper et al., 2005), but will continue to be viewed as authentic so long as they act in accordance with their own values. In this way attributed charisma may have augmenting effects over authenticity. This augmentation finding was supported for the relationship to voting for McCain. For Obama, charisma and authentic leadership had augmenting effects over each other in predicting vote. In reflecting on this finding, we suggest that with limited information about Obama as a leader, voters may have seen him as a positive leader who communicated hard truths about the current crisis and

appeared to genuinely believe in his ability to induce change making his authenticity and charisma equally new and influential. Newton-Small and Scherer (2008) noted that Obama had an "unusually hands-on approach" to speech writing whereby he constructed his own content. Thus, he may have appeared to be speaking the words that were a true reflection of his own values. Given that the tide of the country's opinion was for change and Obama's message was that of change this might have been a major factor in influencing voter perceptions. Further, Obama's campaign leveraged a number of social and professional networks, used the internet very effectively by sending text messages of key decisions, and delegated key responsibilities to local teams of supporters (Alex-Assensoh, 2008). He has been described as 'authentic leadership incarnate' (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010) and his message of hope and optimism resonated deeply with his followers. Even though Obama had minimal experience, his charisma, message of 'change we can believe in', and apparent authenticity may have made him an appealing candidate (Bligh & Kohles, 2009) for the times. It would be interesting to examine the waxing and waning of Obama's charisma and possible lack of validation of authenticity over the course of his presidency. The 2010 mid-term elections forced him to make changes that have attracted criticism from some of his followers who feel that he misinterpreted his mandate. As he gears up for his reelection, it will be interesting examine if his charisma and authenticity have both been eroded.

10. Theoretical and practical implications

Perceptions of leadership continue to be an important area of study (Lord, Foti, & De Vader, 1984). The current study provides insight into how contextual variables such as crisis and cynicism about change influence leadership perceptions. Our results support those of earlier studies that perceptions of crisis are positively related to attributions of charisma (Pillai et al., 2003 and Williams et al., 2009). The lack of an incumbent leader in the election is noteworthy because blame for causing the crisis was attributed to the outgoing administration. Prior research has noted that those responsible for creating crisis are typically not attributed charismatic qualities (Pillai & Meindl, 1998). Cyert and March (1963) discuss how the influence of a dominant coalition continues long after those individuals have been removed from power. In the environment of an election we may find that one party is 'guilty by association' and the leader's lineage may suffer the consequences. Organizations can learn from this by engaging in impression management techniques that attenuate the effects of such blame. For instance, if the tenure of a particular leader is associated with safety violations, the incoming leader could engage in both symbolic and real practical action to demonstrate their concern for the safety of their stakeholders. This process may be easier for business organizations than political parties.

Crisis was not associated with authentic leadership in the current study. Authentic leaders who are often characterized as humble by nature may not necessarily cause the emotional contagion so critical in transforming follower behaviors. Our examination of value congruence as a moderator of the relationship between cynicism and perceptions of authentic and charismatic leadership is particularly important to organizations. The results of our study indicate that value congruence attenuates attitudes of cynicism and thereby facilitates positive perceptions of leadership. Congruence becomes salient when a supervisor initiates tasks (Judge et al., 2004 and Stogdill, 1948) and subordinates must comply. Studies have shown that followers are more likely to comply so long as their perception of what the leader asks them to do is consistent with their moral compass. Charismatic and transformational leaders will make appeals to follower values and emotions (Conger & Kanungo, 1988) and if leaders are making attempts to influence the behavior of cynical employees who share low value congruence with them, their efforts may be in vain. However, such leaders may be able to influence the level of cynicism of employees who may have low value congruence if they are able to build group cohesion, acceptance of their values and demonstrate interpersonal and informational justice (Wu et al., 2007).

10.1. Limitations and strengths of the study

The sample used in the current study was limited in that it is comprised of undergraduate and graduate students in business schools. The average age was 23.8 years of age, which is younger than the national average age for voters as well as the U.S. population. This age group, however, represents a growing portion of the voting population — an especially important group in the 2008 elections. According to U.S. Census Bureau data of voting and registration in the 2008 election, voters in the 18–24 age group were the only group that turned out in higher numbers than the 2004 election (49% compared to 47%). In future research, attempts should be made to compare the voting group that we focused on in this study to other key voting groups (e.g., older Americans, tea party activists, labor, first-time voters, minority voters) that turn out for both parties in large numbers at different times.

The current study uses a newly developed measure for the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (Walumbwa et al., 2008) for which there is evidence of construct validity although further validation is needed. Evidence of some progress in this regard was provided with the current research supporting discrimination of this construct from value congruence and attributed charisma. Future research can further establish the divergent and convergent validity of measures related to authenticity, charisma, and value congruence since they possess unique attributes but are also correlated.

Media coverage of the candidates was extensive, taking place in real time and with up to the minute analysis, however generalizability of our results may be restricted since our respondents had no personal contact with the candidates and we relied on knowledge of the leader which most likely came from news intermediaries. However, as we discussed earlier, both campaigns were becoming increasingly internet savvy with the Obama campaign virtually mounting a grassroots movement to connect with the voters. Voters who signed up with the campaign received text messages, often personal in tone, of important announcement before they were released to the media. Thus, this particular election was different in that voters felt as if they were being reached out to by the candidate and were "in the know" with respect to the leader's decisions, fostering a sense of knowing the candidate and being included in the candidates' in-group. We asked respondents to use their own judgment when assessing leadership style, allowing them to respond according their view of the candidates' leadership styles. This approach is consistent with previous studies (Williams et al., 2009).

We examined only a limited number of contextual variables. There are other factors that may have also played a role in predicting voting behavior. For example, in an open ended question section we asked respondents to create a rank ordered list of issues most influential in their voting decision. The most frequent response for respondents who voted for McCain was 'economy' (18.55%), followed by 'experience' (11.49%) and 'taxes' (10.89%). For Obama, 'economy' (20.13%) was again the most frequent answer, followed by 'war' (12.94%) and 'change' (10.94%). Future research in the area could account for the influence of these contextual variables on leader perceptions.

A final limitation is the potential for social desirability in responding to the questions. Some questions may have been perceived as sensitive because they called for the respondent to compare their personal values with those of the candidates. Respondents might have provided politically correct answers based on strong social norms that called for change and possibly making history. The items in the current scale offer measurement properties similar to those found in longer versions of the SRDS. The reliability reported for the SDRS scale in the current study was below the threshold of .70 normally expected for established measures (Nunnally, 1978). We recognize that this suggests the possibility of the presence of response bias but may also be an artifact of employing a 5 item rather than the more traditional 10 item or 33 item scales and thereby incurring the mathematical "penalty" associated with shorter scales of comparable item qualities. We attempted to minimize this in our results by examining moderated relationships. The pattern of significant interaction terms reported suggests that results are unlikely to have resulted from single-informant bias (Kotabe, Martin, & Domoto, 2003). In addition we included longitudinal analysis in capturing voting after the election. Further, although our test for common source bias (partialling out the effects of an unrelated variable–

social desirability), had no effects on our study results we must acknowledge that when there is multicollinearity among predictors, a given predictor may be insignificant when the predictor itself would have been a significant one on its own (Chatterjee & Price, 1977, p. 144).

The study has a number of strengths including the use of reported voting behavior as opposed to the more frequently used measure of voter perceptions. In addition, while more traditional studies of leadership where supervisors/leaders are selected for subordinates by the organization and hold their position ex ante to the subordinates arrival, elections provide a unique opportunity to study actual leader selection. Another strength of the study is the longitudinal design, we were able to compare pre election voter intentions versus actual voting behavior over time. Data analysis showed a minimal number of changes in leader selection across the two surveys with 'intent to vote' and 'vote' correlated higher than .80 for each candidate. We also made a contribution to the crisis leadership literature, a literature identified in a recent survey of The Leadership Quarterly's Associate Editors and Editorial Board members as one of the top 3 directions for future leadership research (Gardner, Lowe, Cogliser, Moss, & Mahoney, 2010).

Our research suggests that when a follower has established perceptions of a leader, future interactions with that leader serve to reinforce the original categorization (Lord & Maher, 1993). We were also able to explore how leadership perceptions predict voting behavior for the largest portion of actual voter turnout. Forty-one percent of those who voted in the election were between 18–44 years of age (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008c). Bowden (2010) suggests that Obama articulated a vision of shared community and drew a number of young voters who had previously been disenchanted by the electoral process. Because studies have shown that polls are more accurate the closer they are to the actual election (Crespi, 1988) the time frame in our study design allowed for more accurate recall of the vote and important issues contributing to leader selection.

10.2. Directions for future research

Future research should identify other contextual variables that may serve as antecedents to perceptions of authentic leadership and the environmental conditions under which those perceptions are stronger or weaker. With the recent development of the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (Walumbwa et al., 2008), there is potential for future research that further validates the construct and examines the nomological network in which authentic leadership resides. One interesting area would be to begin explicating the affective processes that influence perceptions of authenticity. Authentic leaders are theorized to create an emotional contagion (Ilies et al., 2005) but this has yet to be tested empirically with regard to leader perceptions.

Research on implicit leadership theories (ILTs) (Lord et al., 1984) and the cognitive process of comparing categorizations of leaders with observed behavior is an important area in need of development. Researchers have yet to discover how ILTs compare to perceptions of authentic leadership. Future research might also consider follower personality traits (Judge et al., 2002 and Lord et al., 1986) to understand if certain personality types are more inclined to perceive authenticity than others. For example, Luthans and Avolio (2003) have suggested that positive psychological capacities such as confidence, hope, resilience, and optimism may be indicators of authentic leadership. Several of the Big Five personality factors (e.g., conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness) and emotional intelligence may also be related to perceptions of authentic leadership.

As a basis for other forms of positive leadership, authentic leadership theory has the potential to inform our understanding of the cognitive processes underlying why followers follow. It would be interesting to examine the extent to which authenticity inhibits the implementation of change efforts and researchers can continue to examine the potential for other leadership styles such as servant or values-centered leadership (Greenleaf, 1977 and Secretan, 2000) to have augmenting effects over authentic leadership.

11. Conclusion

Perceptions of leadership play an integral role in the selection of leaders. Presidential elections provide a unique lens through which to evaluate leader selection. We are able to make strong inferences and draw conclusions that have implications beyond the national vote. As history unfolds around the current presidency, we may learn more about leadership in times of crisis and we hope this research motivates future research on the context in which authentic leadership emerges. If campaign promises are not met, will this spur further cynicism about change and erode perceptions of President Obama's charisma and authentic leadership? Which one will suffer a bigger blow? The 2012 presidential elections provide a rich opportunity to further our understanding of how leadership perceptions evolve in relation to context. The resolution (or not) of economic crisis, the advent of major change, the implementation of financial reform, and changes in the composition of the Congress each provide a rich context for exploring the impacts of charismatic and authentic leadership and also other forms of leadership). We urge leadership scholars to study both the episodic and evolutional changes in leader(ship) perceptions surrounding events such as these and to introduce additional antecedents and moderators/mediators of the cognitive processes and attitudes that determine leader selection.

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