

# Self-discrepancy Theory of Charismatic Leadership

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## Abstract

This paper attempts to explain the changes, if any, in vitality and positive consequences of charisma after the departure of a charismatic leader. Drawing from the self-discrepancy theory and the self-expansion theory of motivation, this paper argues that leader charisma increases the accessibility of self-discrepancies of followers which are otherwise dormant. Furthermore, these accessible self-discrepancies are the determinants of follower personal identification and subsequent follower and organizational outcomes. Following this, the paper also argues that follower and organizational outcomes are likely to wane after the departure of the leader, because the departure of a charismatic leader results in follower self-discrepancies becoming dormant again. Consequently, the paper bridges the gap between the established theorization of charismatic effects found in the neo-charismatic literature and the new, ongoing discussions on the effects of charisma on follower regulatory focus. Finally, the paper provides some insights into validating the proposed theory and its pragmatic implications.

**Keywords:** Charisma, Self-discrepancy, Routinization, Follower personal identification, Theory development

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