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CHAPTER

53 Leadership as an Emotional Process: An Evolutionarily Informed Perspective

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Abstract

A growing literature has recently focused on evolutionary perspectives on both leadership and followership. Distinct from traditional approaches—rooted especially in organizational psychology and management—this body of work has mainly concentrated on the adaptive value and the phylogeny of leadership, while generally neglecting the role of emotions in structuring the emergence and effectiveness of leader-follower relationships. This chapter reviews theoretical and empirical results from both organizational and evolutionarily informed approaches to leadership and emotions, with the aim of bridging these literature streams. Ultimately, the authors ask, can we better understand leadership and followership in small groups or large organizations by studying jointly the evolutionary and emotional processes underpinning them? Within a multidisciplinary framework touching upon psychology, biology, and anthropology, they highlight how these fields can increasingly intersect in future research, discussing especially (but not only) the illustrative example of charismatic leadership.

Keywords: leadership, followership, emotion, evolution, charisma

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Evolutionary approaches to leadership have proliferated in the past decade, often involving interdisciplinary collaborations of anthropologists, biologists, economists, political scientists, and psychologists (e.g., Garfield, von Rueden, et al., 2019; Hooper et al., 2010; Lonati, 2020; J. E. Smith et al., 2016; Van Vugt, 2006; Van Vugt, Hogan, et al., 2008). A key focus of this field has been identifying inter-individual variation in leadership characteristics across social contexts, societies, and species, as well as classifying the socioecological conditions favoring distinct leadership styles. Significant advances have been

made (see Van Vugt & von Rueden, 2020), yet these recent evolutionary approaches have discussed only marginally a critical component of the leadership process: emotions.

This initial lack of attention can be attributed to the novelty of this research program and its focus on ultimate questions (cf., Tinbergen, 1963). However, in the organizational literature—the field with the strongest focus on leadership and followership (Gardner et al., 2020)—emotions and affect play a critical role (Gooty et al., 2010). Some scholars have even argued that leadership is essentially an emotional process (Pescosolido, 2002; Van Knippenberg & Van Kleef, 2016). Thus, integrating evolutionary and organizational perspectives could provide important insights to understand and explain leadership and followership.

p. 1022 We explore potential pathways for incorporating evolutionary and organizational viewpoints in the study of leadership and emotions. We first review leadership literature across organizational and evolutionary approaches. We then turn to the literature on emotions and leadership, covering, again, both perspectives. We close by discussing future directions for studying leadership and emotions in a multidisciplinary framework. To substantiate our suggestions, we concentrate especially on charismatic leadership, which represents an interesting "case study" for linking emotions and leadership with an evolutionary logic. Charisma has been recently studied through biological and evolutionary lenses (e.g., Grabo et al., 2017; Grabo & Van Vugt, 2016), and has been conceptualized as an emotional process in the organizational sciences (Antonakis et al., 2016; Shamir et al., 1993).

Our review is exploratory and preliminary, yet we aim to make three novel contributions. First, we begin to integrate organizational and evolutionary perspectives on emotions and leadership. This communication across fields is important, especially now that multidisciplinary approaches to social sciences are blooming (Al-Shawaf et al., 2016; Buyalskaya et al., 2021) and calls for more unified theories have been made in the field of leadership (Antonakis, 2017). While organizational researchers have already examined leadership as an emotional process, and there are numerous evolutionary studies on the role of emotions in status navigation (see, e.g., Cheng et al., 2010; Durkee, Chapter 30 in this volume; Durkee et al., 2019; Steckler & Tracy, 2014), leadership and status are distinct constructs (see Cheng & Tracy, 2020; Van Vugt & Smith, 2019), and much remains to be done to combine organizational and evolutionary perspectives on leadership and emotions.

Second, an evolutionarily informed study of leadership and emotions allows us to better bridge ultimate and proximate levels of analysis (cf. Tinbergen, 1963), sketching a research agenda focused on the interplays between leadership, followership, emotions, and their coevolution (cf. Al-Shawaf et al., 2021; Spisak, 2020). Employing evolutionary principles may allow researchers to derive new testable predictions on the relationship between leadership and emotions at both the proximate and ultimate levels. Moreover, whereas several evolved psychological mechanisms related to leadership and followership have been theorized (e.g., "when in danger, follow the orders of a leader"), research on emotions offers a useful starting point to identify theoretically and empirically the proximate building blocks of these mechanisms (Pietraszewski, 2020).

Third, we contribute to the literature on charismatic leadership, discussing especially the role of emotional displays from a signaling perspective, as well as the links between charisma, emotions, and their evolution in groups of varying dimensions and across different cultures. Beyond proposing new research directions, we also argue that bridging different disciplinary perspectives around topics like leadership, charisma, evolution, and emotions—all of which tend to be studied in isolation—provides a more comprehensive picture of them all, fostering clarity on definitions, conceptualizations, and methods used to study constructs of interest for various disciplines.

Leadership and Followership

Leadership and Followership in Organization Studies

The study of leadership has a long history, but its systematic examination in organization studies—the primary field for many leadership scholars—started about a century ago with the "great man" approach, which focused on identifying the individual characteristics that differentiate leaders from nonleaders (Antonakis & Day, 2018). This stream of research aimed at uncovering personality traits predicting leader emergence and effectiveness (Zaccaro et al., 2018). This approach, however, was largely abandoned when
p. 1023 two influential pieces (Mann, ↳ 1959; Stogdill, 1948)—together with the emergence of a post–World War II context opposed to the "great man" assumption—shifted leadership research toward leader behaviors (a change that also coincided with the emergence of behaviorism in psychology; Day, 2012). Researchers at Ohio State (e.g., Halpin & Winer, 1957) and at the University of Michigan (e.g., Taylor & Bowers, 1972) uncovered two broad classes of effective leader behaviors: one that focused on tasks (i.e., initiating structure or production-oriented), and one that focused on people (i.e., consideration or employee-oriented). This line of research also proliferated due to the emergence and wide acceptance of questionnaires to measure leader behaviors, which became available with the advance of statistical techniques and psychometrics (e.g., Stogdill, 1963). Acknowledging the conceptual and empirical limitations of behavioral theories of leadership, however, the contextual (or contingency) school also emerged in the 1960s (Fiedler, 1964). In its contemporary and simplified version (Oc, 2018), this school suggests that different contexts or situations have different requirements and that leaders need to adapt their behaviors to the context in which they operate.

In the 1970s and 1980s, leadership studies faced an important turning point. Survey studies and self-reported measures—the most common method to measure leadership and its effects—were heavily criticized, because leadership ratings were found to be driven also by the cognitive representations of ideal leader traits and behaviors held by raters (Rush et al., 1977). Also, the "romance of leadership" school argued that leadership is only a social construction, a mere way for individuals to make sense of the complexity of their lives (Meindl & Ehrlich, 1987). This school claimed that leaders do not matter, with some scholars arguing even that "the concept of leadership has outlived its usefulness" (Miner, 1975, p. 200).

Countering this idea, House (1977) published a pivotal manuscript on charismatic leadership. House argued that charismatic leaders, through a combination of traits, behaviors, and contextual variables, can have powerful effects on followers' motivation. This publication provided the theoretical basis for transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985; Bass & Riggio, 2006). This theory, which became extremely influential in the past decades (Antonakis, Bastardoz, et al., 2014), contrasts a transactional leadership style (based on contingent rewards and sanctions) with a transformational leadership style (based on values and inspiration). Transformational leaders induce followers to perform beyond expectations (Bass, 1985) by relying on four main sub-styles: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Although not without flaws (see Antonakis et al., 2016; Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013; Yukl, 1999), this theory remains highly influential (Gardner et al., 2020) and overlaps significantly with more recent theories, such as visionary leadership (Van Knippenberg & Stam, 2013), authentic leadership (Alvesson & Einola, 2019), and ethical leadership (Hoch et al., 2018).

Leadership and Followership from an Evolutionary Lens

Over the past decade, a relatively new leadership field—sometimes labeled "biology and evolution of leadership" or "evolutionary leadership theory"—emerged. Whereas an evolutionary approach to leadership was novel from a traditional organizational perspective, the study of leadership, followership, and hierarchies has been present for decades in biology, anthropology, and sociology (Allee, 1938; Morgan, 1877; Mumford, 1906). Indeed, anthropological evidence indicates that leadership is present in all human societies (Garfield et al., 2020; H. S. Lewis, 1974; Murdock, 1967).

Literature in political and evolutionary anthropology has historically suggested that community and political leadership evolved in a "U-shaped" dynamic (Gintis et al., 2015; Knauft et al., 1991; Mattison et al., 2016; von Rueden, 2020). Throughout hominin evolution, there ↳ was a general and global transition from primarily dominance-based, despotic social hierarchies among apes and early human ancestors to more egalitarian social hierarchies among mobile human hunter-gatherers, with the ultimate emergence of pronounced social stratification following the agricultural revolution. In this view, hunter-gatherer societies typical of the Pleistocene (i.e., 2.5 million years ago to 10,000 years ago) were largely egalitarian. Still, these mobile, kin-based societies exhibited social hierarchies, as some particularly skilled or experienced "first among equals" managed to exert differential influence over group outcomes (see the ethnographic portrait of the "Big Men" in New Guinea by Sahlins, 1963). Community leadership among mobile hunter-gatherers was probably mainly participatory and situational, non-hereditary, and characterized by little material differences between followers and leaders (cf. Boehm, 1993; R. L. Kelly, 2013; E. A. Smith et al., 2010; Woodburn, 1982). Nonagricultural populations, however, can and in many cases did develop highly stratified societies in some ecological conditions; these societies sometimes had multilevel social structures and complex, nested leadership systems (R. L. Kelly, 2013; Wengrow & Graeber, 2015). Notwithstanding, the agricultural revolution and other shifts in economic systems are thought to be responsible for a widespread reduction in egalitarianism and a transition to more rigid and institutionalized hierarchies across human societies (A. W. Johnson & Earle, 2000; Mattison et al., 2016; E. A. Smith & Choi, 2007).

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Bridging the Two Fields

In an attempt to bridge organizational and evolutionary literature streams on leadership, Van Vugt and colleagues developed a new line of research suggesting that our leader and follower psychologies are characterized by a modular set of adaptive cognitive and emotional mechanisms that helped solve recurrent adaptive problems faced in the social and ecological environments of hunter-gatherer bands in the Pleistocene (Van Vugt, 2006; Van Vugt, Hogan, et al., 2008; Van Vugt, Johnson, et al., 2008; Van Vugt & Kurzban, 2007). Rooted in evolutionary psychology (Barkow et al., 1992; Buss, 1995), this approach suggests that leader and follower psychologies evolved as neurocognitive decision rules fostering coordination and motivation of group members in collective actions (e.g., "follow a physically strong leader during conflict situations"; "avoid dominant leader if not experiencing conflict"; cf. Bøggild & Laustsen, 2016). This work has been fruitful and has gained some traction in organizational-focused outlets (see Van Vugt & von Rueden, 2020).

This line of research is still relatively nascent and will benefit from deeper integrations with the organization studies field. To facilitate cross-disciplinary interactions, however, conceptual clarity is required, especially around the definition of leadership. In that regard, the fact that even researchers in organization studies fail to agree on a common conceptualization does not provide a helpful starting point (Ashford & Sitkin, 2019; Bastardoz & Day, 2022; Bedeian & Hunt, 2006). Nonetheless, a generally accepted definition of leadership is that of a process of social influence toward the achievement of common goals (Antonakis & Day, 2018; Yukl, 2002). This definition has two important ramifications (Bastardoz & Day,

2022). First, leadership requires social influence. Without influence, there is no leadership. Second, leadership requires shared goals between leader(s) and follower(s), distinguishing it from similar constructs like power and authority.

In the evolutionarily informed literature, leadership is frequently conceptualized as the coordination of followers' activities (Garfield, Hubbard, et al., 2019; Glowacki & von Rueden, 2015; Lonati, 2020; Pietraszewski, 2020; Powers & Lehmann, 2014; J. E. Smith et al., 2016). In this process, leaders are defined as individuals with some influence on group activities, and followers are individuals who accept the
p. 1025 influence and goal of the leader (Bastardoz & Van ↳ Vugt, 2019). Relatedly, in the evolutionary literature, various versions of the dual-strategy theory (described in greater detail later) argue that achieving and maintaining social influence generally follow either a prestige-based or dominance-based strategy (Cheng et al., 2013; Henrich & Gil-White, 2001; Maner, 2017; Maner & Case, 2016). These two strategies have been identified as antecedents of status hierarchy and leadership.

Although correlated, status hierarchy and leadership are nonetheless distinct and should be differentiated. For instance, the most prestigious individuals in a group may be high status but are not necessarily leaders (Van Vugt & Smith, 2019). Also, a dominance-based strategy can lead to leadership when dominant individuals increase group coordination or collective action (e.g., by punishing free-riders; see Redhead et al., 2021). However, the exercise of a dominance strategy over targets who have no other options is not leadership per se (because of the lack of common goals), but rather authority or coercion (Bastardoz & Day, 2022; Bastardoz & Van Vugt, 2019).

Moreover, even though dual-strategy approaches have been influential in the human evolutionary sciences of leadership, scholars have recently begun to focus on various forms of capital (i.e., social, material, embodied) that allow individuals to bestow benefits or impose costs (Durkee et al., 2020; von Rueden, 2014). To this extent, prestige and dominance can overlap (e.g., physical strength can enhance economic productivity, earning respect, while also allowing physical coercion and instilling fear; see Garfield et al., 2020). Furthermore, exercising dominance can generate prestige: leaders' dominance may dissuade would-be free-riders, benefiting the group at large and thus begetting praise (Glowacki & von Rueden, 2015). Prestigious individuals can also draw on their following to enact dominance-based strategies. Thus, it is not uncommon for individual leaders to score highly on both dominance and prestige. For example, elected male leaders in a relatively egalitarian, forager-horticulturist society were found to score higher than nonleaders on peer ratings of both dominance—which included being feared by others—and prestige, which included respect and intelligence (Garfield & Hagen, 2020).

Emotions and Leadership

Emotions

Evolutionary views of emotions have developed substantially over the years. Drawing on Darwin, early evolutionary perspectives focused on putative universal "basic" human emotions, presumed to be broadly conserved across social mammals given their utility in solving recurrent adaptive problems. The universality and phylogeny of emotions such as "fear" of a threat, "anger" toward a rival, and "love" of a social partner are suggested to emerge from species-typical (across many species) adaptations produced by natural selection, because they increased survival or reproduction (Ekman, 1973, 1999). Following the modern synthesis (e.g., Dobzhansky, 1974; Mayr, 1961; Williams, 2018), evolutionary psychologists began to view emotions as evolved, function-specific information-processing mechanisms. These mechanisms rely on environmental inputs in the context of a wide range of adaptive problems and facilitate the coordination of physiological processes and behavioral responses (Cosmides & Tooby, 2000; Tooby & Cosmides, 1990).

More recently, greater emphasis has been placed on the coordinating role of emotions as the "superordinate mechanism" activating, deactivating, and managing programs and systems within the phenotype (Al-Shawaf et al., 2016). This view expands the range of emotions considered and the range of adaptive problems they may have evolved to solve to include a variety of domains, possibly also embracing leader-follower dynamics (see Al-Shawaf et al., 2016). One might thus speculate that emotions simultaneously
p. 1026 coordinate systems within the ↳ phenotype, while also serving to coordinate multiple phenotypes, facilitating leadership and followership, and possibly even promoting a variety of group-beneficial outcomes. Related to this idea, some literature has already focused on the links between emotions and hierarchies, a topic that is different, but certainly related to leadership. We turn now to a review of some key concepts.

Emotions and Leadership: Evolutionary Perspective

Dominance-based strategies—that is, coercive capacities based on force (Henrich & Gil-White, 2001)—are a feature of human sociality and of leadership across cultures and social contexts (Van Vugt & Smith, 2019). Still, the emotions related to dominance-based strategies are likely distinct from the ones invoked by other strategies (e.g., prestige) used to navigate social hierarchies (Garfield, von Rueden, et al., 2019; von Rueden, 2014). Individuals who regularly use a dominance strategy tend to be aggressive, narcissistic, and Machiavellian compared to those who use a prestige strategy, that is, status gained thanks to respected skills, abilities, or knowledge (Henrich & Gil-White, 2001). Individuals using a prestige strategy tend to be socially accepted, agreeable, and conscientious, and have high self-esteem (Cheng et al., 2010; R. T. Johnson et al., 2007). Prestige is, thus, associated with respect, reverence, and other positive emotional responses (Cheng et al., 2010; Henrich & Gil-White, 2001). High-prestige individuals, like group heads, teachers, or other influential group members, can evoke admiration and awe (Keltner et al., 2006).

A recent line of work also suggests that pride and shame, that is, positive or negative emotional responses to one's own accomplishments or lack thereof, might serve an adaptive function promoting the pursuit or maintenance of social status (Cohen et al., 2020; Durkee et al., 2019; Sznycer et al., 2012; Tracy et al., 2010; Tracy et al., 2013). Dominance is associated with feelings of arrogance, superiority, and conceit (i.e., hubristic pride), whereas prestige is associated with feelings of achievement, but without a sense of superiority or arrogance (i.e., authentic pride; see Cheng et al., 2010; Liu et al., 2016). As previously mentioned, the degree to which dominance and prestige are best described as distinct leadership styles or behavioral strategies has been debated, in part because the ability to dominate others can be a source of prestige when it generates benefits for followers (Durkee et al., 2020; Glowacki & von Rueden, 2015). Nevertheless, the distinction between dominance- and prestige-based strategies may be most observable in terms of both the emotions demonstrated by leaders and the emotional reactions of followers.

Emotions and Leadership: Organizational Perspective

The past 20 years have witnessed the emergence of a so-called affective revolution in the organizational literature (Ashkanasy & Dorris, 2017; Barsade & Gibson, 2007). Although early work discussed the importance of emotions in the leadership process (e.g., House, 1977; Wasielewski, 1985), scholars started to examine leadership as an emotion-laden process in a systematic fashion only at the turn of the 21st century (e.g., George, 2000). Pescosolido (2002) first conceptualized leaders as managers of group emotions, that is, individuals who can convey appropriate emotional responses across contexts and situations to create shared emotional experiences and allow group members to bond. This idea is rooted in an emotional contagion argument (Hatfield et al., 1992), which implies that leaders' emotional displays can spread to different members of a collective. Followers may consciously or unconsciously mimic leaders' emotional expressions, such as body language or facial expressions (cf. Hatfield et al., 1992). Emotional contagion—as well as related mechanisms outlined by alternative theories such as Emotions as Social Information (Van Kleef, 2009)—is thought to be a key ↳ mechanism for leaders to generate and diffuse norms in a group (J. R. Kelly & Barsade, 2001; Sy et al., 2005).

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Several leadership behaviors and traits have been linked to emotions, but this connection is especially visible in theories of charismatic leadership, that is, a construct rooted in the inspirational communication of values and emotions (Bass, 1990; House, 1977). Charismatic leaders use specific communication tactics to impart their vision (Emrich et al., 2001; Holladay & Coombs, 1994), which tap into the emotions and the self-esteem of their followers (Shamir et al., 1993). In turn, charismatic leaders are mainly associated with the expression of positive emotions and with followers' positive feelings, such as enthusiasm (Bono & Ilies, 2006; Cherulnik et al., 2001).

Charismatic leadership represents a powerful case study for taking stock of the literature on emotions and leadership and for integrating it with an evolutionary perspective. We do so in the next section, where we also discuss issues related to emotional valence, context, and culture in leadership and followership, briefly exploring additionally the coevolution of leadership, followership, and emotions.

Discussion

Charisma Signaling

Recent work on charisma and charismatic leadership has defined charisma as a signal that includes emotions, values, and symbols (Antonakis et al., 2016; Bastardoz, 2020). Grabo and colleagues (2016, 2017) suggested that charismatic leadership evolved given its functional role in facilitating the coordination of autonomous agents in ancestral environments (see also Bastardoz & Van Vugt, 2019). According to this framework, charisma—proxied by specific verbal tactics (e.g., metaphors, rhetorical questions, expression of the group's sentiments) and nonverbal expressions (i.e., animated voice, facial expressions, and gestures; Antonakis et al., 2011)—expresses leader's emotions and signals either the personal cognitive abilities of a potential leader or the willingness of an individual to lead based on specific values (Bastardoz, 2020), especially in the context of urgent cooperation and coordination problems (see Grabo & Van Vugt, 2016; McDermott, 2020).

According to signaling theory (e.g., Bliege Bird & Smith, 2005; B. L. Connelly et al., 2011; Spence, 1973; Zahavi, 1975), signals are communicative acts that convey a message about certain hidden characteristics of the signaler (e.g., traits, abilities, intents). Acting on the signal, recipients may adjust their behaviors in a way that ultimately results in a fitness increase for both the signaler and recipients. In these interactions, the cost of the signal is key. Signals that can be produced at low cost by individuals who do not possess the

hidden characteristic (referred to as "cheap signals") are unlikely to evolve, because they convey little to no information and cause no fitness benefits to the signaler and the receiver (Al-Shawaf & Lewis, 2021).

Communicating in a charismatic way involves various emotional displays that might provide information to the followers. From a signaling theory viewpoint, however, it is not clear whether charisma could ever be a credible (i.e., costly) signal of a leader's felt emotions. Research suggests that certain emotions can sometimes be displayed at will by leaders. For instance, business or political leaders frequently conceal their emotions, diluting the credibility of the emotional signals they send. Along these lines, organization studies have long focused on the concept of "emotional labor," that is, the active management of emotions through bodily displays (e.g., Hochschild, 2012). Thus, if leaders can manipulatively send fake emotional signals to their followers, how could charisma signaling have evolved?

We speculate that faking some emotional displays—charisma signaling included—may be cheap in the
p. 1028 short run or in one-shot interactions, but might be costly for the sender in the ↳ long run or in repeated interactions. When individuals (e.g., leaders and followers) interact over multiple interactions—thus mimicking the conditions that were most likely present in ancestral hunter-gatherer bands—they may learn if any individual (particularly a leader) is faking some emotional displays. Over time, leaders who fake their emotions often will lose their credibility, and followers will start to disregard the signals such leaders send. For instance, an individual who expresses emotions noticeably, employs an animated voice, and uses specific facial expressions (i.e., a strong charisma signal) might clearly signal a specific intent (e.g., to go against the status quo), and might become a leader. The same leader might lose her or his influence—without being able to recoup it later—once s/he starts showing incoherent emotions or if s/he fails to act based on the emotions initially expressed. Additionally, faking a charisma signal might even cause a direct fitness cost to a potential leader. Constantly faking emotional displays without experiencing them (commonly referred to as "surface acting") may create stress, exhaustion, and ultimately decrease well-being (Gardner et al., 2009; Lennard et al., 2019). Similarly, emotional labor in actual organizations is correlated with mental and physical disorders (e.g., Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Näring et al., 2006). In a recent review, Hofstee, Jansen, De Lange, Spisak, and Swinkels (2021) show that emotion regulation can also have adverse effects on cognitive performance.

Certainly, an argument based on the potential "long-term credibility" of charisma leaves followers vulnerable to fake leaders' emotional signals in the short term or in unusual situations (Bastardoz, 2020). For instance, the infrequent, indirect, or very short interactions between leaders and followers typical of contemporary organizations or political systems provide leaders with many opportunities for faking emotional signals with little reputation costs. Moreover, the recent COVID-19 crisis has disrupted many leader-follower relations in the workplace, leaving millions of people navigating organizational hierarchies in new and unprecedented modes (Kniffin et al., 2021). Following these systemic shifts, we hope future research will gain a more thorough understanding of how leaders and followers manage emotions and emotional displays (such as charisma signaling) in any novel environment. This topic is especially important for followers who must protect themselves from manipulative leaders (McDermott, 2020).

Assuming that charisma is rooted in a genuine emotional display, some scholars have hypothesized that charisma could have been recruited by natural or cultural selection as a signal of cooperative intents of the leader (see Grabo et al., 2017; Grabo & Van Vugt, 2016). Indeed, emotional displays such as Duchenne smiles or angry expressions can be costly signals of one's intentions or states (e.g., a cooperator or a defector; cf. De Melo et al., 2014; Feinberg et al., 2012; Shariff & Tracy, 2011), especially because emotional displays are often conceptualized as automatic or involuntary responses (e.g., embarrassment, excitement, happiness, anger; see Cosmides & Tooby, 2000; Keltner & Haidt, 1999). Moreover, nonverbal expressivity has been conceptualized as a sign of trustworthiness and cooperation (Boone & Buck, 2003; Centorrino et al., 2015; Schug et al., 2010). In turn, charismatic leadership appears to be linked to an enthusiastic and expressive communication style (e.g., Friedman et al., 1988; Venus et al., 2013).

Future research may benefit from investigating if and how the specific proxies of charisma can serve as credible signals. For instance, researchers could explore if verbal forms of expressivity can be faked, especially in the long run or in repeated interactions, and whether charisma signaling can persuade followers more easily in cooperative rather than competitive situations. As we have argued, a mechanism for keeping charisma signaling honest might be that the detection of fake emotional displays results in a leader's reputation loss or even direct punishment, at least in the long run. This latter kind of signal
p. 1029 enforcement is present in nonhumans ↳ (Tibbetts & Izzo, 2010), and empirical tests in the context of charismatic leadership might be interesting. Moreover, future work could also consider alternative explanations. For instance, charisma might be a simple byproduct (and, thus, not a signal per se) of other leader qualities; that is, the verbal and nonverbal tactics identified by the leadership literature might merely correlate with the personal qualities or intents that characterize certain leaders (e.g., intelligence, extraversion, courage, self-sacrifice; cf. Bastardoz, 2020; Garfield & Hagen, 2020; McDermott et al., 2016; von Rueden, 2014).

Charisma and Awe

Rudolph Sohm first introduced charismatic leadership in the context of religious leadership and spiritual experiences (Haley, 1980), implying a possible link with awe, veneration, and astonishment. Some organizational approaches have also conceptualized charisma as part of transformational leadership (Bass, 1990), fostering an intuitive link to the study of prestige and awe (Keltner & Haidt, 2003; Quesnel & Riecke, 2018). Empirical evidence suggests that followers of charismatic leaders may even become "awestruck" by the leader's communication (Menges et al., 2015). This prospect seems particularly interesting, especially considering recent approaches to awe as an evolved emotion (Stellar et al., 2017). We invite future research to systematically theorize and empirically test the link between awe and charismatic leadership.

Context, Leadership, and Emotions

Group Size

The context of leader-follower interactions can greatly influence leadership and followership (Antonakis & Atwater, 2002; Garfield et al., 2020; Oc, 2018). For instance, an important contextual element related to the effectiveness of charismatic leadership is group size. Group size introduces logistical considerations for leaders because a leader might be less visible and audible in a very large group. In addition, large group size can exacerbate coordination and free-rider problems for group members (Glowacki & von Rueden, 2015). Even though leadership might be less effective as group size increases, a leader signaling charisma might still be effective in large groups (due to emotion contagion; Bono & Ilies, 2006; Cherulnik et al., 2001) because any given follower might have positive expectations regarding how other followers will coordinate their actions in line with the leader's message (cf. Hermalin, 1998) or because the emotional reactions of other followers might serve as credible signals of coordination or cooperation intent (cf. Van Kleef, 2009).

Teasing out the exact mechanisms through which charisma affects coordination and cooperation in groups and exploring whether this effect is moderated by contextual variables like group size are important questions for future research (cf. Al-Shawaf et al., 2021). For instance, researchers could experimentally manipulate the context in which followers receive the charisma signal (e.g., alone vs. in a group; see Antonakis et al., 2022). Using a virtual reality setting, another research idea may be to manipulate the emotional response of followers to a given leader's action (e.g., a charismatic speech) and study its effect on a focal individual. Finally, as neither the mechanism nor the ultimate explanation behind the mood contagion effect is *prima facie* clear, future research could explore this topic in more detail, theorizing

clearly about the (fitness) costs and benefits of the mood contagion mechanism, and illuminating its adaptive value also with analytic models and simulations (cf. D. M. G. Lewis et al., 2017).

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Culture

A naïve reading of the central tenets of evolutionary psychology may imply that the relationship between leaders' emotional displays and followers' emotional reactions—being shaped by natural selection—should be universal. This theoretical prediction is nonetheless overly simplistic: an evolutionary psychological approach does not stipulate the strict universality of outputs (e.g., behaviors, emotional reactions), but rather of psychological mechanisms (Al-Shawaf & Lewis, 2017; Buss, 1990). That is, universal psychological mechanisms can interact with contextually variant inputs to produce heterogeneous outputs.

Such a lens might be beneficial for understanding how different leadership styles are enacted and endorsed across societies, and for studying how differences in emotional displays and felt emotions explain these differences (S. Connelly & Gooty, 2015; Rajah et al., 2011). For instance, cross-national evidence suggests the universality of inspirational and visionary behaviors typical of charismatic leadership (House et al., 2004). However, the actual enactment of the charisma signal is variable across societies (see also Garfield et al., 2020). For instance, American leaders are famous for displaying aggressive and colorful oratory, whereas the rhetoric and expressivity of political, business, and religious leaders in other areas of the world are often more discreet (Bligh & Robinson, 2010; Den Hartog et al., 1999; Den Hartog & Verburg, 1997).

Why do we observe these differences? More research is needed to answer this question, but one possibility is that different emotional signals may have evolved culturally (cf. Mesoudi, 2016). Indeed, cross-cultural differences in expressivity might be related to historical factors. Rychlowska et al. (2015) show that historical migrations (particularly whether current countries' populations descend from few or from many other countries) predict different functions of smiles and emotional expressivity. We do not yet know if cross-cultural variability in the verbal and nonverbal components of charisma is also explained by historical factors, even though recent evidence suggests that followers' preferences for another leadership style are predicted by socio-ecological characteristics of the past. Specifically, the traditional use of intensive agricultural practices (which is, in turn, predicted by different ecological conditions) correlates with the contemporary endorsement of a directive leadership style across different countries (Lonati, 2020). Future research could explore if and how historical factors shape other leadership styles, leaders' emotional expressions, or charisma.

Researchers interested specifically in the cross-cultural heterogeneity of charisma face, however, some important methodological difficulties. For instance, cross-cultural analyses of leaders' verbal communication require comparing speeches given in different languages. Ensuring cross-cultural equivalence when translating such speeches might be complex and even inappropriate (cf. Brislin, 1980). Methodological difficulties could be reduced if one were to study nonverbal displays. Still, observed differences in any emotional display across societies may also be due to observable or unobservable confounds different from culture per se (e.g., economic development, history, ecological conditions), which might be, in turn, the real drivers of the observed difference. A possible solution to this problem is employing migrants' data (for details, see Fernández, 2011), leveraging the fact that migrants and their children share the same context, yet differ in their cultures compared both to natives and to migrants from other regions or countries (for an example applied to leadership literature, see Lonati, 2021).

Emotion Valence in Context

A different question concerns the importance of negative emotional displays in leader-follower interactions. The evolutionarily informed literature suggests that prestige is associated with positive
p. 1031 emotions and dominance with negative emotions. In organization studies, leadership ↳ had initially been associated with positive emotions (Gooty et al., 2010). Based on a "symmetrical assumption" (Lindebaum & Jordan, 2014, p. 1038), this literature has mainly linked positive emotions with positive outcomes, and negative emotions with negative outcomes (Elfenbein, 2007). For instance, in line with Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden-and-Build Theory, McColl-Kennedy and Anderson (2002) found that transformational leaders were associated with more optimism and less frustration, and ultimately better group performance. A leader's positive mood is also related to a more positive group affective tone, which is associated with better group coordination (Sy et al., 2005).

Recent empirical evidence has taken a more balanced and context-sensitive approach, arguing for the positive effects of negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, or fear in specific situations (Geddes et al., 2020). In fact, leaders' negative emotional displays can provide important informational signals for followers (Fitness, 2000; Van Kleef, 2014). For instance, Wang, Restubog, Shao, Lu, and Van Kleef (2018) found that the effect of anger on perceived leader effectiveness depends on the situation (i.e., the type of violation in performance by followers) and the person (i.e., the type of leader who expresses anger). Also, the effectiveness of a leader's anger expression depends on the type of inferences that followers draw, such that a leader's display of anger attributed to a problematic situation is more effective than a leader's display of anger attributed to the disposition of the leader (Shao et al., 2018). Based on a dual threshold model (Geddes & Callister, 2007), Staw, DeCelles, and de Goey (2019) also found an inverted U-shape relationship between a leader's anger expression and team performance, so that a moderate amount of anger expression is appropriate and more effective than a low or high amount of anger expression.

The complex interplay between a leader's emotional expressions and context is particularly visible in threatening situations. For instance, we tend to be drawn to enthusiastic leaders who portray a bright vision for the future when the context is uncertain or in time of crisis (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Weber, 1968), that is, in times where fear and anxiety might be natural responses (cf. Nesse, 1994). Similarly, in threat conditions, followers might also seek leaders who challenge the status quo (cf. Spisak et al., 2014). Still, factors like economic harshness and other crises can also favor the emergence of autocratic leaders (Hamblin, 1958; Harms et al., 2018; Huang et al., 2015; Kakkar & Sivanathan, 2017). When group members perceive threats from other groups or experience heightened intra-group conflict, they may also show an increased preference for leaders whose physical formidability suggests a capacity to coordinate and motivate followers via intimidation or fear (Bøggild & Laustsen, 2016).

How can we reconcile these apparently opposing patterns? Future research will need to explore this question in more detail, especially because emotions like fear and outrage are potent coordination devices that leaders can use to build coalitions (McDermott, 2020; Tooby & Cosmides, 2010). A possibility is that fear, anxiety, or stress might be triggers that make followers more receptive to either leadership style, but that specific combinations of threats, leader characteristics, and followers' characteristics might favor the emergence of and the support for either autocratic or charismatic leaders. Still, one needs to consider that these two styles are not necessarily mutually exclusive and that a charismatic leader might also be autocratic. Future empirical studies could investigate why, when, and how similar contextual pressures can give rise to different leadership styles, and how the emotions felt by the followers might mediate these relationships. Moreover, the links between followers' negative emotions, leaders' emotional displays, and other leadership styles need to be explored more in detail, studying, for instance, if and how negative emotional displays can ever serve as charisma signals for potential leaders.

Bridging Emotions and the Evolution of Leadership

Our discussion points to several emotional facets that could have played a role in the evolution of leadership and followership. Concomitantly, pressures for individuals to coordinate their behaviors, as well as variation in the distribution of information across group members—that is, demands and opportunities for leadership—could have played a role in the evolution of human emotions. Conceptualizing leadership and followership as solutions to coordination and cooperation problems in humans and other social mammals (Bastardoz & Van Vugt, 2019; J. E. Smith et al., 2016), one might speculate that leadership would present strong selective pressures on emotionality, whereas emotionality would offer proximate mechanisms for facilitating leadership and followership processes (e.g., group identity, expression of shared values). Just as emotions are now viewed as superordinate mechanisms that evolved to solve problems of multi-mechanism coordination *within individual phenotypes* (Al-Shawaf et al., 2016), we propose that emotions could also be viewed as playing a critical role in the coordination of multiple *individuals within groups*.

In this view, human emotionality may have coevolved alongside human leadership as a coordinating mechanism. The communication of emotions, both consciously and subconsciously, could function as an interface between individuals (alongside language) to facilitate group-level organization. The communication of emotions, which can be done rapidly and independent of language, can encode threats of imposing costs and pledges to provide benefits for individuals potentially in conflict or facing coordination challenges. For example, with a series of distinct glances, gestures, and choice words, a mother, hunt leader, shift supervisor, or board chairperson can signal affective states to distinct group members, communicating approval or disapproval, suggesting and influencing behavioral change or stability. Emotional communication between individuals, and particularly from leaders to followers, may be in some contexts a more salient proximate mechanism for group coordination as opposed to verbal communication, status dynamics, informational asymmetries, or differences in physical formidability.

The dynamics between emotions and leadership raise several questions regarding selective pressures and causality. Some emotions could be evolved features that emerged to govern hierarchical relationships and, perhaps, leadership and followership (Cheng et al., 2010; Durkee et al., 2019; Henrich & Gil-White, 2001). For instance, the ability to detect hubristic pride or other "emotional markers" of dominance might be an important ability to defend oneself from dominant and aggressive leaders in contexts where dominance is not advantageous for followers.

A complementary and likely possibility is that these emotions were first selected for in other domains of social interaction and were then co-opted for leader-follower relations. For instance, anger toward despotic leadership might be a byproduct of similar angry reactions to generic "unfair treatments" documented in emotion science and neurosciences (see, e.g., Gabay et al., 2014; Seip et al., 2014) or evidence of insufficient welfare trade-off ratios, where followers react to perceptions of systematic inequality in leader decision-making (see Bøggild & Petersen, 2016; Sell et al., 2009). For instance, the work of Price and Van Vugt (2014) suggests that followers will exhibit punitive sentiments toward "disrespectful" followers or toward dominant leaders providing no material benefits to their followers. Such punitive sentiment may have first evolved in the context of dyadic relationships to enforce reciprocity.

Conclusion

The literature on evolutionary studies of emotions has grown significantly, as this volume testifies.
p. 1033 Similarly, evolutionary approaches to leadership have gained traction. We have aimed ↳ to link these two approaches, intersecting them with organizational perspectives on emotions and leadership. Our review and discussion offer more questions than answers, yet provide important bridges to reconcile different disciplines studying similar questions. We hope our suggestions will help researchers interested in leadership and followership, evolutionary psychology, evolutionary anthropology, cultural transmission, and organization studies tackle this broad topic, fostering a novel understanding of the functions and mechanisms of leadership, followership, and emotions.

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