

DOI 10.2478/doc-2025-0009

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Book Review of *Charismatic Leadership in Organizations: A Critique of Texts*, by Iga Maria Lehman. New York and London: Routledge, 2025

Received 12 March 2025

Accepted 31 March 2025

Available online 10 June 2025

As stated in the pages of this well-crafted monograph, charisma was once “thought by the ancient Greeks to have something of a divine gift about it” (Lehman, 2025, p. 46). Indeed, evidence of the timelessness of the curiosity surrounding

charisma was shown when its abbreviated 21st century incarnation (“rizz”) was selected as the 2023 Oxford Word of the Year (see Oxford University Press, 2023). Yet, despite charisma’s seeming ubiquity over millennia, little research has been done to date on the precise intersection that *Charismatic Leadership in Organizations: A Critique of Texts* addresses—namely, on the theoretical and empirical discussions relating to charisma, leadership, and academic writing. An associate professor at WSB University in Dąbrowa Górnicza (Poland), Iga Maria Lehman has a dual academic and research background in linguistics as well as in management and organization studies. Thus, as her previous work demonstrates (e.g. Lehman, 2018; also Lehman et al., 2024, etc.), she is excellently placed to tackle the subject matter at hand.

Comprising 129 pages, the volume is part of the prestigious Routledge Studies in Leadership Research series¹. It begins with a short Preface (pp. xi–xiv), by the distinguished organizational communications scholar T. Fairhurst. This paves the way for the opening chapter, entitled ‘Language and Leadership’ (pp. 1–16)², where Lehman first recapitulates the necessary context on language and discourse as social practices and how these relate to the specific discipline of management and organization studies. She then discusses the relevant literature on leadership, noting it as a “fuzzy concept” (Lehman, 2025, p. 10) and aligning herself with Grint (2010) in defining it in terms of position, purpose, result, and process. This then segues into a presentation of discursive leadership and its presentation through framing and reflexivity, leading to the insightful comparison of leader/follower vs. writer/reader. In drawing attention to how scholarly text production can also be considered as a form of leadership, Lehman highlights how this perspective, given the importance of ideological standpoints in the discipline, is particularly relevant for management and organization studies.

The second chapter, ‘Scholarly writing on management and organizations’ (pp. 17–43), opens by contrasting positivist and interpretivist approaches to

¹ For more information, please see: <https://www.routledge.com/Routledge-Studies-in-Leadership-Research/book-series/RSLR>.

² This chapter of the book is available in open access via OAPEN—for more information, please see: <https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/93197>.

scientific analysis, using this to outline the subjective way that authorial identity can be constructed. This is then followed by a recapitulation of the pressures inherent in the 'publish or perish' approach to scholarly research and production, which seems to be a hallmark of many modern academic systems. As with many other disciplines, for management and organization studies researchers this includes the ever-present need to publish in highly-ranked indexed journals often linked to Anglo-American academic traditions. Therefore, this leads to the concomitant requirement to conduct and report research in ways acceptable to Anglophone academia which, as Lehman illustrates, affects many aspects of authorial style and approaches to scholarly writing. In exhorting academic authors to write reflectively and to also consider the role of the reader of such texts, Lehman outlines the importance of the context of how texts are produced, as well as adherence to disciplinary norms, and the challenges that reporting qualitative work can bring.

The distinguishing characteristics of a charismatic leader are highlighted in the opening of the third chapter, 'The quest for charisma in scholarly writing about management and organizations' (pp. 44–59). Here, Lehman summarises previous academic work on charisma, and links it to writing on charisma within leadership studies, noting the importance of adopting a culturally-sensitive approach. This is then followed by an analysis of leadership in academic writing, including the author's positionality, which Lehman recapitulates in her innovative three-layer model of writer identity (Lehman, 2018).

The penultimate chapter, 'A blueprint for charismatic writing in management and organizations' (pp. 60–75), presents a valuable template which distils the expertise outlined in the volume's first three chapters. It opens with a detailed analysis of the rhetorical features (voice, pistis, and metadiscourse, as well as the role of metaphors, stories, and personal accounts) that Lehman identifies as crucial in creating textual charisma in scholarly writing. This is followed by an integrative framework—presented as a helpful table (Lehman, 2025, pp. 71–72)—which underlines the necessary requisite factors to generate leader charisma through texts: ethical appeal, the use of rhetorical traits, and by the deployment of selected rhetorical tactics. These aspects are all illustrated by both shorter and longer examples which are subsequently analysed, therefore

providing useful guidance regarding the successful usage and generation of textual charisma.

By presenting the results of an empirical study, the book's final chapter (pp. 76–102) demonstrates—in an applied manner—all of the theoretical features that Lehman has previously described. This quantitative-based study aimed to see how postgraduate students and academic staff ($n=130$) fared in identifying and evaluating the issue of authorial voice in selected academic writings taken from a corpus of highly-ranked peer-reviewed journals in management and organization studies. In providing the statistical analysis of the online questionnaire, this study consistently found interesting patterns, with discernible differences in line with the different scholarly stages surveyed (MA and PhD students vis-à-vis assistant and full professors). The volume is completed by an appendix comprising the survey questions, an index, and a full list of the more than 300 references cited in the book.

In summary, there are numerous reasons to recommend *Charismatic Leadership in Organizations: A Critique of Texts*, notably because the work itself represents an outstanding example of textual charisma. Lehman successfully blends theoretical and empirical approaches (as well as qualitative and quantitative perspectives) in a book that is eloquently written, informative, and insightful. Noting the paucity of previous monographs on textual charisma, this book can therefore be considered a pioneering and important contribution to the discipline. In a world where academic production seems to be constantly increasing (e.g., see *The Economist*, 2024), Iga Maria Lehman's volume encourages scholarly writers in management and organization studies to pursue a different, more reflective, and reader-conscious approach to their work. It is, therefore, recommended as a must-read not only for specialists in management, but also for researchers in linguistics, scholarly communication, and the wider social sciences. As exemplified by the novel framework on textual charisma, the handy practical hints grounded in deep analysis will surely be invaluable to all scholars—from students to professors—who seek to enhance their research by generating greater impact in their academic writing for publication.

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