Power: Interpersonal, Organizational, and Global Dimensions
Monday, 03 October 2005

TOPIC: Personal power, charisma, leadership.

We must distinguish between power and leadership.

Our current working definition of power is the capacity of person to produce intended and foreseen effects in a relationship with others.

Weber (turn of 19-20th century) – power is the probability that someone in social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will <u>despite resistance</u>.

leadership – influencing activities of a group in its efforts toward setting goals and achieving those goals

Both power and leadership are **interactive**
– both require a transaction between one party and another
– crucial distinction from the usual understanding of leadership: a leader advances **goals of group** not fulfillment of personal objectives

power holders = must have intended effects
leaders = may be people who don't have positions (e.g. Gandhi, MLK, Einstein), don't necessarily occupy any formal position but help groups formulate and achieve goals

Every leader has power but not every power holder is a leader.

Those who help groups to formulate goals exercise both power *and* leadership.

<u>**Theories of leadership**</u> – explain who, how, when, why leadership arises

1. Great Man (sic) theory – depends on the individual characteristics of person
– society is made up of people with different degrees of skill – intelligence, honor, etc. – and the masses will be led by those people of superior skill
– leadership arises when a person has an excess amount of imagination, intelligence, communicative skills, etc. that they use to exercise leadership over a group
– this is a common argument, especially in individualistic society – e.g. elites and the circulation of elites who replace one after another
– main concept: **man (sic) makes history, *not* history makes the man**
– historical examples: Napoleon and the French revolution, Washington and the American revolution, Luther and the Protestant Reformation, Lenin and Trotsky and the Russian revolution of 1917, Einstein and modern physics, Gandhi and independent India, MLK and de-segregation
– this theory was the basis of some of the earliest, most conventional notions of leadership
– reason for leadership is thought of as entirely *personal* – the leader has a disproportionate share of "good things"
– a bit more rational than more traditional notions of divine influence, e.g. the gods speaking

to rulers, such as was the case with emperors
- psychologists have tried studying but failed to find any dramatic difference – there is no single set of predictors/indicators that make a person a leader
  - some general trends found in these leaders: smarter, better adjusted, better judgment, interact more, give out and ask for more info, frequently the first to sum up/interpret situation
- (President Bush doesn't fit any of this! But a lot of presidents didn't – they may be power holders but not leaders)
- it's very hard to know whether these *correlations* come from of being in the position (are they there *before* an individual enters a situation?) or from people in certain situations becoming like this...where does the *causality* lie?

2. **Environmental/Situational** theories – reverses the first set
   - main concept: **history makes the man**
   - the emergence of a leader is a product of **time, place, and circumstance** (take a leader out of her specific historical context and you lose the probability of her being a leader!)
   - these theories ask us to notice that leadership doesn't reside in the person but in the specific needs/motives/aspirations of group that leader helps crystallize – a person into the leader
   - the question is not *what kind of person?* but instead *who, when, why does a leader become a leader?* This rests with knowing about the group and what they want. The needs of the group will tell us who might be a leader or why

3. **Sociological** theory – puts together Great Man and Environmental
   - leadership result of three factors:
     - person[ality]
     - nature of the group
     - problems, events confronting the group – the context
   - this theory explains why a leader in one situation is ineffective in another situation
   - does *not* argue that leaders are either authoritarian or democratic, they could be rational/technical type or charismatic/emotional
   - **there is not one type of leader effective in all situations**
   - depends on the personal qualities of the leader in the situation in which he/she leads

Illustration:
One of the White House press secretaries was conversing with some journalists, berating them because they say history will prove the government's mistakes. The secretary said, "You're wrong. We *make* history."
- press secretary wanted to assert that they have power to decide events as they unfold
- but the journalists meant that they'll be assessed not for what they controlled but what they did *not* control (e.g. researchers, historians)
- historians wait to see the consequences

And now onto a particular kind of leadership...

CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP

Max Weber always used the term *charisma* (credited for being the author of the theory) as something extraordinary possessed by a person/object thought to give that person/object a unique magical power

- exercise of **genuine charisma** = exercise of power (**authority**, power to command)
- differs from legal/traditional power because it is extraordinary, *not* routinized, not positional, not because they exercise force or coercion, not because they offer economic rewards or inducements – simply **by virtue of** *who they are*
- what does it mean to be *extra*ordinary? Weber meant it literally – not in the realm of the everyday, not usual, not found very often
- Weber uses the term in what he also calls **value-free** – he doesn't necessarily think it is good – it's just a description of how sometimes one finds people who exercise authority on the basis of their personal attraction (some scholars argue that Weber did indeed have a special regard for charisma; it seemed to be the only example he offered for challenging relentless rationalization he observed in modern history).
- essential for the Weberian understanding that people follow a charismatic leader out of **devotion, love, enthusiasm**, *not* out of fear (e.g. Joan of Arc, Jesus, Gandhi)

Characteristics of Charismatic Authority (from Weber)

(1) **extraordinary** and therefore **unstable** – an extraordinary **distance** (in assets, characteristics) between the leader and the members of the group

(2) always **innovative** – canonical example is Jesus, "It is written, but I say unto you..." But, I say unto you, expresses the innovation he urges in his teaching

(3) perceived as charismatic because they perform **authenticating acts**
- miracles, demonstrations, manifestations that show that "this is a special person"
- there is a **visible accomplishment**
- Rustow asks: Does legitimacy of the leader rest with the power or relationship between leader and follower? Weber seems to suggest it is in the relationship, it is not an attribute but a relational form:
  - the term *charisma* refers to these qualities whether they are **actual or presumed,** therefore the 'presuming' audience is critical;
  - again, the acts don't have to be materially demonstrable, real – they just have to be **believed**
  - the acceptance of charismatic leader rests with the beliefs of the group
  - the source of those beliefs and the proving of the charisma is through miracles victories, and other successes (e.g. Joan of Arc – could you believe a 15 year old girl led the French army to success?)
- **authenticating acts are for the welfare of the group**
- as soon as authenticating acts stop, the belief in the magic of the leader disappears

(4) charisma is an **interaction** – group *confers* charisma on a person
- it's an interaction between leaders and followers
- leader offers the group miracles and the group offers the leader their love and faith
- results of the action induce belief and the followers' belief becomes a criteria of authority
- transaction where each gives something to the other
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(5) almost always has a specific **organizational form**
- followers (as a consequence of innovation) **turn away** from the ordinary ways of doing things, from established rule and ways – they submit to the unprecedented and innovated order proclaimed by leader

– charismatic leadership frequently creates an **internal revolution** – people become different, act differently (in contrast to an **external revolution** where people adapt to legal rules in fear of punishment *without* internalizing the norm, e.g. de-segregation of schools)

(6) has particular **economic structure**
  – people give their money, wealth, income to the leader so he/she can be full-time
  – people often reject possessions of any kind – they go on to live a plain life, giving up regular income (e.g. Gandhi, Jesus)
  – their rejection is of any *concern* with regular sources of income, it is *not* the rejection of worldly goods per se, but of *concern with how to produce or acquire,* evident in the sentiment "God will provide"
  – the leader who seeks to acquire possessions (if he/she does) receives donations, endowments, related to rejection of worldly entanglements
  – often don't have regular occupations, often reject regular familial duties (religious orders, revolutionaries)
      – e.g. Jesus: if any man come to me and hates not his family and ye his own life also, he cannot be my disciple (message: service to god should come first)
  – practical celibacy often practiced because they do not have a regular familial life

(7) organization around a charismatic leader is composed of a **leader and disciples**:
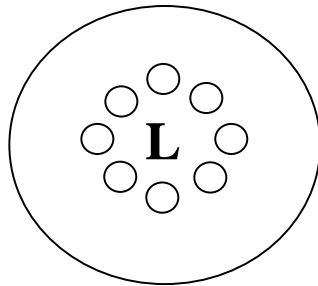
  – always an inner core – chosen for qualifications, constituting a **charismatic aristocracy**
  – bound together by common allegiance to leader and mission
  – sustenance does not depend on salaries, compensation, or titles
  – community living sharing goods procured by leader
  – always bound in concentric circle of organization: leaders, followers, disciples

(8) **temporally limited**
  – repeated miracles cease to be so great
  – **legitimacy** over time always has a problem
  – every form of charismatic leadership suffers from the problem of **succession**
      – how we got modern Islam – Sunni vs. Shi'ites vying over Mohammad's charismatic inheritance
  – what happens when the leader dies? when emergencies cease and routine life must continue?
      – charismatic authority doesn't know how to be ordinary
      – frequently the leadership functions are **divided** among individuals (power of the individual waxes/wanes depending on emergencies that challenge/rebuild the need for leadership)
      – every time there is **regularization of leadership**, it produces **institutional**

permanence and therefore the decline of charisma
- sometimes due to external circumstances (e.g. war), or a resignation that the gods have abandoned them (cult, religion)

3 common ways charisma is routinized
1. new leader is chosen/designated on the basis of **criteria** thought to also be special (e.g. the Dahlia Lama)
2. existing leader might designate **successor** or representation, acclamation (e.g. the Roman Empire where the next emperor was chosen in terms of the army, and granted the status of god by the Senate) – but if leaders don't designate a successor or the disciples don't find one, there are no external criteria
3. **disciples argue** among selves and may elect one of them as the new leader

*All this leads away from charismatic authority because it has created method/routine that is no longer special or magical. Nonetheless, three methods retain *some* element of charisma but this frequently doesn't work, as was the problem in China (Mao Tse Tung), the Soviet Union, Islam (Mohammad), the Catholic Church (Pope), French Revolution.

Sometimes leader can bring on a **social movement** (Castro, Hitler) but a movement can also *precede* the leader (Lenin). So how can we study charisma and charismatic leadership? We have important detailed histories and accounts, but these are almost always *ex post facto* judgments.

Because charisma is bound up with a social movement and is the interaction of followers and leaders and situation, we must ask the questions...
- Why does the leadership arise?
- What does the leader provide?
- Where do they get their vision?

Aside: This discussion builds on what Weber called an **ideal type**. We won't find real world situations with only *one* form of power. Ideal, not as in "good," but instead "logically complete."

(Notice, analytic move, basic social scientific perspective. Develop a concept and use it, without mistaking the world of phenomena for our description of it. We talk about reflexivity (as we will later when we get to post-structuralism, and post modernity) when our observations become part of the experienced world with a relatively rapid feedback loop.)

Thus, we shouldn't ask whether some leadership *is* charismatic, but rather, *to what extent* is there charisma in this situation?

Rustow writes about JFK: to what extent was his leadership charismatic?
- some followers considered him endowed with superhuman qualities, others accepted his authority as president, yet others carried out orders through elaborate bureaucracy and by habit of compliance, still others (the steel industry) considered his actions nefarious and illegitimate
- there's a variety of sentiment, and so the question is not whether he was or was not charismatic, but **charismatic to whom, when, and how much?**

Few leaders (who might be considered in part charismatic) actually exhibit these characteristics. Only when you go back and look in history do you realize, "Ah, this is what has happened!" And 9 out of 10 times, it's *before* 20th century.

What characterizes the second half of the 20th century/21st century? **Reflexive modernity, observer comes part of the action!**

observer outside loop

Action

Theorized

Observed

– **feedback loop**
– leaders have a consultant leadership team nowadays
  – it's in every textbook of organizational management - how to achieve this effect
  – but no one claims that Gandhi or Jesus did it that way, did they?

What is a miracle? A miracle in the modern world is to achieve something that no one thinks you can possibly do (e.g. Gandhi, liberate India, as against walking on water).

Erik Erikson – Professor of psychology at Harvard, popular in 60s and 70s
– offered commonsensical, reasonable theory of leadership
– charismatic leadership arises because people experience **distress** (either personal or social), e.g. famine, war, unemployment, inflation.

  Types of Distress (Erikson)

  ◆ **fear for life** – e.g. addressed by Hasidic Judaism, or JFK's fostering of international relations to ameliorate the fear of nuclear annihilation

  ◆ **fear loss of identity, anxiety** –knowing who/what we are is becoming uncertain for modern people, which explains the popularity of new age religions and even **identity politics**, where claim that they *are* this or that, a part of a smaller group of the nation
    – "who I am" in the modern world has become uncertain because of pluralist societies, consumer culture, and hyper reflexive culture
    – we are aware that we are authors of our lives but still not totally in control

  ◆ **existential dread** – meaninglessness (a bit further than loss of identity), what is it all about? no standards, nothing to believe in, loss of group cohesion, Durkheim's anomie (world without norms or more specifically normative regulation), rituals of existence break down
    - e.g. drug culture 60s/70s, hippies, people *looking* for something to believe in

  Distress ranges from physical safety to differentiation of self to sense of belonging.

Kai Erikson – son of Erik, wrote <u>Everything In Its Path</u> about existential dread (can be applied to New Orleans disaster)
- Buffalo Creek WV disappeared in flood when wall of sludge created by mining companies piling debris from mines broke and the valley flooded – some survived but had serious emotional, physical problems afterwards
- loss of community, familiarity of place and people = people can no longer function anymore since their whole world has disappeared
- we as Americans don't pay enough attention **how community constitutes our person** – we can't live without it! Popular ideology of individualism suggests that we are units from which community can be built, de-emphasizes the corollary, communities build persons.

Erik Erikson argues that the need for leadership is sometimes expressed by responding to these fears: **"history makes the man"** argument. Although the situation is necessary, it isn't a sufficient explanation...

What does the leader provide?
An answer, a response to this fear. He/she provides a **solution to the situation of distress**, a promise of salvation, a formula for action.
- e.g. "I will make you safe" says the medieval Hasidic Jewish charismatic,
- the task of leadership is to **define situation**, name it, and then give people a solution, to **reverse the intolerable conditions** and in this sense **charisma is a *tactic***
- *"it's just as bad as you think, or worse, and I can lead you out"* – leader must have a platform, must show the group that he/she can do something, and he/she is constantly called on to do this (**authenticating acts**)
- the strength lies in the power to **communicate** the *belief* that there is a solution – **"man makes history"** argument!

Leadership depends on the congruence between the social needs of the followers and the capacities of the leader. Characteristics of leaders depend on characteristics of the situation.
- George Washington wasn't a communicator, but what America needed was a military strategist, similar to the cases of Ataturk and de Gaulle – all had military experience to rescue nations,
- but Bismarck united Germany and was versed with administrative capacity, which Germany needed for union
- MLK had the necessary rhetorical skill to unite African Americans to create alliance with others who would mobilize in his cause

How do you put the person and the situation together? Where do they get their vision? What do they communicate as the solution to the problem?
Here is where psychology comes in...
- common characteristic despite variation – **most charismatic leaders have extraordinary communicative skills** – critical resource, certainly in modern world
- even in medieval world, communication was key – Luther was able to mobilize because he spoke/wrote in vernacular instead of Latin and had access to the printing press – may not have been an orator, but he had the ***tools* of communication**
- same for Attaturk who freed his people by using the telegraph to coordinate his movement
- Gandhi used the railroads that the Brits had built to mobilize Indian people all over the nation
- Uchima in Japan used magazines and the railroad "All leadership takes place through

communication of the ideas to the minds of others."

Politics is all about the control over communication! But is it unidirectional? Simmel would say no – it is **reciprocal** communication
- "I am their leader, therefore I must follow them."
- **leaders cannot lead where others cannot go**
- sometimes the ambiguity of communication is the key: "I am a *compassionate* conservative" (read: I am not like what you fear/ don't like in those *other* conservatives)

How do charismatic leaders communicate their vision? Almost all charismatic leaders (at some point) are **detached from ordinary circumstances.** They've gone outside their group/place.
- examples: Bismarck had various experiences with many jobs, Ataturk was increasingly disenchanted from allegiances, Jesus in desert
- this relates to Goffman (total institution) and Jim Jones (religious isolation)

detachment allows them to see something different
commitment at a particular moment to a particular cause
a belief in absolute rightness and an unwillingness to compromise but nonetheless versatile, with foresight and the willingness to innovate