Towards the Explication of
the Concept of Leadership
in Terms of the Concept of Power

KENNETH F. JANDA

The task of this paper is to present a conception of leadership as a particular type of power relationship. By way of an introduction to this presentation, some remarks will first be made concerning concept construction and social research. Two approaches to the study of leadership will then be examined, setting the stage for a discussion about the development of the concept of leadership. After examining some of the conceptual difficulties which have plagued the study of leadership, this paper will comment briefly on the relationship between the study of leadership and the study of power. Finally, attention will be directed to the main task of considering leadership as a power phenomenon.

CONCEPT CONSTRUCTION AND SOCIAL RESEARCH

The development of a cumulative body of knowledge depends, in part, upon the development of a precise vocabulary which can provide exact descriptions for the specific phenomena under study. Prefatory to developing their own technical vocabulary for identifying the things they study, scientists generally utilize the common vocabulary of the language in which they communicate. Of course, as used in everyday language, a word will frequently have several quite different denotations, more than one of which might be related to the subject of study. Moreover, conventional words sometimes acquire additional connotations which add to their richness but subtract from their precision.

Notwithstanding these semantic barriers to precise understanding, scholars are often led, for a variety of reasons, to adopt a familiar word, associated with related but diverse meanings, and use it in a more restricted, technical sense from that in which it is normally used in ordinary conversation. When employed in a specialized sense as a nominal definition for an independently defined phenomenon, our conventional word becomes a label for a scientific concept and eventually comes to stand for that concept itself. These word-labels then become candidates for inclusion within the technical vocabulary associated with the field of study. 'Leadership' and 'power' (i.e. the concept of leadership and the concept of power) are examples of conventional words which have been incorporated into the technical

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vocabulary of those attempting to construct a systematic body of knowledge about social behavior.

Although obvious benefits accompany the practice of identifying a scientific concept with a word which possesses some related meaning in normal use, there are at least two difficulties attending the use of familiar words in this manner. The first will be called the delusion of sufficiency, pertaining to a premature satisfaction with the analytical utility of the concept being proposed. The delusion of sufficiency sometimes results in concepts which are not independently defined but which incorporate the wealth of denotations and connotations associated with the normal use of the word. At other times, the delusion of sufficiency might lead to the hasty adoption of a fairly explicit common meaning without consideration of the problems involved in utilizing that meaning to support rigorous analysis. However it arises, the delusion of sufficiency produces concepts which are not analytically tight and are therefore inadequate for exacting study.

The second difficulty, called confusion by similarity, relates to the entanglement of a carefully formulated concept with one or more other analytically distinct concepts that share the same label. A clear concept might be confused with one prepared under the delusion of sufficiency, or perhaps the confusion would result when alternative analytically tight concepts were similarly named. Both the delusion of sufficiency and confusion by similarity present obstacles to the development of a cumulative body of knowledge, and—in view of social scientists’ disinclination to abandon common words for neologisms—both are particularly troublesome for the systematic study of social behavior.

Despite their special susceptibility to these two kinds of difficulty, the social sciences have only recently begun to grapple in earnest with the problems that these difficulties present. A great deal of fresh effort is now being directed to concept clarification in these disciplines. On the nature and function of concept clarification, Robert K. Merton (1957) has this to say:

'It is, then, one function of conceptual clarification to make explicit the character of data subsumed under a concept. . . .

'In a similar fashion, conceptual analysis may often resolve apparent antimonies in empirical findings by indicating that such contradictions are more apparent than real. This familiar phrase refers, in part, to the fact that initially crudely defined concepts have tacitly included significantly different elements so that data organized in terms of these concepts differ materially and thus exhibit apparently contradictory tendencies. The function of conceptual analysis in this instance is to maximize the likelihood of the comparability, in significant respects, of data which are to be included in research’ (pp. 90–1).

Unfortunately, the recent emphasis on conceptual clarification has lagged badly behind the development and application of methodological techniques used in operationizing concepts. As a result, our literature has become cluttered with a wealth of disparate findings on poorly defined, similarly named concepts. Both the study of leadership and the study of power offer prime examples of this conceptual-operational imbalance. However, the task of this paper will only be to inquire at length into the conceptual status of one of these, the study of leadership. A thorough treatment of the concept of power—the subject of another work—is precluded at this time. Nevertheless, the final portion of this paper will draw from the
literature on power in an attempt to explicate a concept of leadership in terms of power. But, first, the study of leadership must be investigated in some detail.

**APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF LEADERSHIP**

Anyone at all familiar with the literature of sociology and social psychology will readily grant that the topic of leadership has commanded considerable attention from students in these fields. However, it is not unfair to say that these disciplines have distinguished themselves more by accumulating *studies* on leadership than by cumulating *knowledge* on leadership.

The heroic efforts of some students to synthesize disparate findings by editing and categorizing these studies usually fail to satisfy anyone—including the persons who undertake the task. In a recent attempt to impose some order upon this literature, Browne and Cohn (1958) corroborate this general viewpoint of the study of leadership. They introduce their work with these comments:

‘Through all of the subsequent history of man’s attempts to record human experiences, leadership has been recognized to an increasingly greater extent as one of the significant aspects of human activity. As a result, there is now a great mass of “leadership literature” which, if it were to be assembled in one place, would fill many libraries. The great part of this mass, however, would have little organization; it would evidence little in the way of common assumptions and hypotheses; it would vary widely in theoretical and methodological approaches. To a great extent, therefore, leadership literature is a mass of content without any coagulating substances to bring it together or to produce coordination and point out interrelationships’ (Introduction, first page).

The history of the study of leadership is somewhat less chaotic than the study itself. Most students have identified two main approaches used in studying leadership. The earlier is commonly known as the ‘trait’ approach, and the other is usually called the ‘situational-interactional’ approach.

The old trait approach originally considered the ‘leader’ as a personality type that tends to assume a position of dominance in almost every social situation, and its early followers tried to discover the particular personality factors common to all such persons. With the acknowledgement that the same people do not always ‘lead’ in every social situation, the focus of the trait approach was shifted to discover the different personality traits demanded of a leader by each situation, but students following this approach were still concerned with identifying and examining the personalities of individuals considered to be leaders.

The obvious limitations of this method of study caused some students to divert their attention from cataloguing personality traits and led them to study leadership in terms of ‘situational-interactional’ factors. By focusing upon the interaction among individuals in their activities as group members, this approach removed personality traits of the leader from their determinant status and relegated them to the position of a contributing factor to be examined in conjunction with three other factors: (1) the social and physical nature of the environment within which the group must operate, (2) the nature of the group task, and (3) the personality characteristics of the other group members.

Whereas the student of the trait approach sought to account for the leadership
phenomenon solely by studying the personality factors of the leader himself, situational-interactionalists argued that there were other relevant variables that had to be taken into account. The existence of these other variables could be advanced to account for the disturbing fact that individuals who possessed leadership 'traits' frequently were not designated as leaders. The explanatory superiority of the situational-interactional approach demonstrated itself to the extent that current research on leadership is conducted almost exclusively in this framework.

THE CONCEPT OF LEADERSHIP, THE DELUSION OF SUFFICIENCY, AND CONFUSION BY SIMILARITY

The preceding section, while discussing two approaches to the study of leadership, used 'approach' to refer to the evaluative framework within which variables are judged for importance and are selected for examination. However, the concepts employed in these approaches have not yet been examined for their adequacy in defining the leadership phenomenon in terms of general characteristics which can be used to identify the specific phenomena to be studied by these approaches.

It is usually much easier to discover what specific phenomena people have been studying than to find out what conceptions have guided the selection of these phenomena, for in many cases the conceptions are implicit whereas the items under examination are nearly always explicit. What basic conception underlies the entire body of leadership literature when this literature is viewed in the aggregate; i.e. what concept provides the lowest common denominator that can be used to accommodate the findings on leadership? First, it appears that all students would agree that leadership is some type of group phenomenon, for virtually no one writes on leadership apart from group behavior. Moreover, the leadership phenomenon would appear to be concerned with the activities of 'salient' group members—those who could be positively differentiated from the other group members on the basis of behavior, perceptions, group structure, or personal factors. However, our common denominator cannot be reduced beyond this point and still be used to accommodate the entire body of literature on leadership; the collective conceptual and operational definitions advanced in the name of leadership are too disparate to be combined under a denomination more precise than that referring to some form of saliency attributable to individual members within a group.

In a general manner, the development of the concept of leadership can be traced through the trait approach and the situational-interactional approach in terms of the delusion of sufficiency and confusion by similarity. On the whole, it can be said that the concept used to guide inquiry into leadership under the trait approach was prepared almost completely under the delusion of sufficiency, as most inventories of leadership traits were conducted with only simple, commonsense notions of leadership. This point was brought out very clearly in Stogdill's review (1948), which noted that, in many cases, the notion of leadership was never independently defined. Instead, 'leaders' were designated by some manner—Stogdill listed five primary methods—and then leadership was assumed to be operative because of the existence of an individual named as a leader. However, it was seldom made clear whether leadership then referred to (1) the behavior of this individual in interaction with other group members, (2) the behavior of this individual as a group member—perhaps with differentiated role functions to perform, (3) the behavior of other
group members in interaction with the member designated as leader, (4) the social relationship which existed between the leader and other group members, (5) all of the above, or (6) none of the above.

Although many students following the situational-interactional approach also operated with dictionary definitions of leadership, some penetrated through the delusion of sufficiency to formulate more precise concepts of leadership. For example, R. B. Cattell (1952) has presented a conception of leadership which involves a group member's effect upon group syntality, and Stogdill (1953, p. 41) defined leadership as 'the process (act) of influencing the activities of an organized group in its efforts toward goal setting and goal achievement'. Each of these conceptions has a fairly explicit meaning, but they both bear different implications for research and theory. However, as they carry the same label, these conceptions are susceptible to confusion by similarity. The possibility of this confusion would not be bothersome if these were the only conceptions in competition, but of course there are many more. As a matter of fact, Stogdill (1957, p. 7) superseded his definition given above with another quite different one which views leadership as 'the behavior of an individual when he is directing the activities of a group toward a shared goal'. Furthermore, there are still many scholars writing on this topic who have yet to dispel the delusion of sufficiency and establish exactly what it is that they are studying. Their highly ambiguous ideas of leadership complicate the general concept even further.

Of course, these difficulties are not confined to the study of leadership; no doubt all disciplines are plagued by these problems. However, the case being made here is that the concept of leadership has been characterized by the delusion of sufficiency and confusion by similarity to such an extent as to render the accumulated literature on leadership almost valueless in the aggregate. Both difficulties have surrounded the concept of leadership with an ambiguity that is clearly reflected in the study of leadership. Regarding the chaotic state of this literature, Thibaut and Kelley (1959, p. 289) have this to say:

'Not much smaller than the bibliography on leadership is the diversity of views on the topic. Many of the studies essentially ask: what do people mean when they speak of a leader? Other studies begin with a conceptual or empirical definition of leadership and then proceed to determine the correlates or consequences of leadership so defined. Even a cursory review of these investigations show that leadership means many different things to different people.'

In witness that leadership means 'different things to different people', Shartle (1951) and Morris and Seeman (1950) offer similar listings of five criteria frequently used to identify leaders. According to Shartle's list, a leader has been identified as:

1. An individual who exercises positive influence acts upon others.
2. An individual who exercises more important positive influence acts than any other member of the group or organization he is in.
3. An individual who exercises most influence in goal-setting or goal-achievement of the group or organization.
4. An individual elected by the group as leader.
5. An individual in a given office or position of apparently high influence potential' (Shartle, 1951, pp. 121–2).
Gibb’s listing (1954) of leadership criteria includes all these under fewer headings and also adds two others:

‘6. The leader as a focus for the group.
7. The leader as one who engages in leadership behavior.’

As to what is involved in ‘leadership behavior’, Morris and Seeman would include:

‘A. Behavior involved in the execution of a given position.
B. All the behavior of an individual selected as leader.
C. Any positive influence act.
D. Behavior of any individual that makes a difference in the behavior or characteristics of the group.
E. Behavior of an individual when he is directing the activities of a group’ (p. 51).

The literature on leadership has, at one time or another, utilized all these criteria to identify ‘leaders’. Although students of the subject are often troubled by the obvious differences in the phenomena selected for study by these various criteria, they reluctantly do what Festinger (1955, p. 208) did and include studies under a heading of leadership ‘only because those reporting such studies call it leadership’.

CONCEPTUAL DIFFICULTIES AND THE STUDY OF LEADERSHIP

The question might be raised, ‘Why not include all studies which purport to examine leadership under a general heading of “leadership”? ’ Of course, the answer to this question involves considerations of a concept’s utility for guiding research which can contribute to a cumulative body of knowledge about the phenomenon being studied. Simply put, research findings about different phenomena do not become additive merely by labelling these phenomena as if they were identical. Furthermore, this practice of indiscriminate labelling is a step away from concept clarification rather than a step toward it, and the study of leadership reflects enough muddy analysis because of conceptual difficulties without the need for further obfuscation.

In order to support this general indictment of the literature on leadership, four specific charges against this literature will be set forth along with their substantiating statements.

1. Little comparability exists among leadership studies in the aggregate, for these studies, being guided by widely differing notions of the phenomenon called leadership, have not concerned themselves with common phenomena.

Numerous reports (see Borgatta et al., 1955; Cattell & Stice, 1954; Chowdhry & Newcomb, 1955; Gibb, 1954; Stogdill & Coons, 1957) have documented the easily understood fact that two or more operational definitions of a leader, applied to the same group, generally identify different individuals as the leaders of the group. As Cattell and Stice (1954) have shown with regard to personality factors, the specific criterion used to designate a leader conditions the findings about personality variables associated with the phenomenon of leadership. Nevertheless, findings on leadership are seldom categorized according to the operational definitions used to
identify leaders but, instead, these incomparable findings have assumed a false compatibility under the general label of leadership.

As long as findings can be identified with specific criteria used to identify leaders, some measure of comparability is still maintained. However, even this thin thread, tying the operational measure to some common conceptual basis, is sometimes snipped off. Chowdhry and Newcomb (1955) were guilty of this act when they added together the scores from sociometric questions based on four criteria of leadership: those individuals most capable of acting as president of the group, those who most influence the decisions of others, those most worthy of acting as group representatives to a convention, and those most liked as friends—and then called the individuals receiving the highest one-fifth of the total choices the ‘leaders’. This highly arbitrary procedure was also followed by Borgatta, Couch, and Bales (1955) but with different criteria and a different cut-off point. Both these studies became successful candidates for the literature on leadership simply by virtue of their titles.

2. Much of the research on leadership has been influenced by a conception which, upon inspection, blurs into another more fundamental concept employed in the study of group processes.

It has been suggested that the one thing which various leadership criteria have in common is their insistence upon some kind of saliency within the group. Clearly, a member cannot be salient unless he can be differentiated from other group members on one or more criteria, and, of course, almost every group member can be differentiated from other group members on the basis of one or more of these criteria. From this realization, it is just a short step to conclude that every group member can be, and often is, a leader. Moreover, this step has been taken by many students. For example, Bass (1960, p. 89) has claimed, ‘Any member of the group can exhibit some amount of leadership. Members will vary in the extent they do so.’

Again, Haythorn (1955) produced findings in express support of Cattell’s hypothesis that every man in a group is to some extent a leader in so far as every man has some effect upon group syntality. Haythorn’s conclusion was, ‘At least in small groups of this nature it seems probable that each individual member makes some contribution to the characteristics of the total group’ (1955, p. 339). Finally, Cartwright and Zander (1953, p. 538) state that if ‘Leadership is viewed as the performance of those acts which help the group achieve its objectives,’ then ‘In principle, leadership may be performed by one or many members of the group.’

Thus, we are confronted with a conception of leadership based on quantitative instead of qualitative considerations. Under this conception, the group is no longer studied to discover who leads, for everybody leads. The important thing to find out is how much they lead. In fact, this is the logical conclusion to an approach which equates leadership with contributions to group performance. Question: whatever became of the concept of group membership? Is there no residual of group activity left anywhere to attach to this concept? Apparently, ‘membership’ now only identifies the particular group to which each leader belongs, although there was a time when group members were expected to contribute to group performance.

Of course, the point being made here is that the current use of ‘leadership behavior’ is essentially the same as that of ‘membership behavior’ in that both seem to refer to behavior which contributes to group performance. Although some articles on leadership are still bold enough to hold that ‘A group may or may not
have leaders' (Stogdill, 1953, p. 41), the general conception of leadership has become sufficiently blurred into the concept of membership to produce a number of statements which contend that 'Every group member is thus in some degree a leader' (Cattell, 1952, p. 182).

3. The study of leadership has suffered under a dubious distinction between 'leadership' and 'headship' which has adversely conditioned much of the conceptualizing about leadership.

The literature on leadership reflects a tendency to dissociate the concept from considerations of group structure. Stogdill (1953) is one of the few who have presented a conception of leadership as a function of group organization, and Stogdill's conception was attacked by Gibb (1954, p. 880) who contended that it 'represents an unnecessary restriction on the concept of leadership and has no operational advantage in research'. Alone, these words conceal the frame of reference Gibb undoubtedly used in formulating this remark, for Gibb has held that leadership disappears and headship results when group activity is conducted under structure and organization. Gibb's criteria (1955a) for distinguishing between the concepts of headship and leadership are these:

1. The position of headship is maintained through an organized system and not by the spontaneous recognition of the individual contribution to the group goal.
2. In headship, the group goal is not internally determined.
3. Headship does not really involve a group at all, since there is no sense of shared feeling or joint action.
4. A situation of headship involves a wide social gap between the group members and the head, who works to maintain this distance.

Why does Gibb bother with four criteria when his third one alone would suffice? If 'groupness' is requisite for leadership and 'non-groupness' is requisite for headship—where is the problem? Rarely can social scientists deal with concepts which dovetail so well. However, these other criteria of differentiation are erected to bolster a doubtful distinction. Each criterion dissolves upon close examination and serious reflection. Is leadership, however defined, predicated on 'the spontaneous recognition of the individual contribution to the group goal'? In leadership, is the group goal always 'internally determined'? Does leadership never involve the maintenance of a 'wide social gap'? A quick recollection of the literature reporting on research in leadership will produce a 'no' to all three of the above questions.

This is not the time or place to conduct an inquiry into this tangential concept. Simply stated, the issue at hand is that the leadership-headship dichotomy is not quite as sharp as frequently claimed. Perhaps the criteria can be supplemented and adjusted to produce a conceptual distinction between the terms which accords to an intuitional basis for that distinction. The fact is, this still remains to be done, and studies of leadership in even the most formalized social structures cannot be excluded purely on cries of 'headship'.

No doubt some readers will interpret the debunking of headship as an unnecessary parry of a fanciful thrust, but the thrust has a real basis in the literature. Writings on leadership radiate a genuine feeling that studies of leadership based on positional status in an organized group are somehow 'missing' the real leaders of a group. Apparently, the presumption is that such studies become so preoccupied
with the investigation of relationships as they should be that they frequently overlook relationships as they are. This has probably been done in the past and may be done in the future, but the fact that some research has been conducted poorly should not preclude efforts to pursue similar research properly. The tendency to explicitly dissociate the concept of leadership from group status is hardly fanciful; it is a real force.  

4. The study of leadership has emerged as a separate field in the study of group processes and has been conducted as if leadership were a totally unique phenomenon, although virtually all of the existing conceptions of leadership can be explicated in terms of more basic concepts of social psychology.

Normal usage of the word 'leadership' has cloaked the term with a false concreteness which students have tried to capture in constructing conceptions of leadership. However, the intuitive notion of leadership is too ambiguous to elicit agreement upon any single conception; alternative conceptions appear equally satisfying to our commonsense ideas. Moreover, the conceptions of leadership which have been formulated can frequently be interpreted as special cases of phenomena associated with more basic concepts of social psychology. This assessment of the literature finds support in the comments of Thibaut and Kelley (1959, p. 289) who say that 'among the complex aspects of leadership, there do not seem to be any properties unique to the phenomena. In virtually all cases leadership seems to be analyzeable in terms of other, simpler concepts.'

In order to substantiate this contention, let us review the previous listing of leadership criteria (pp. 349–50). Criteria 1, 2, and 3 all employ the concept of influence in identifying leaders; criterion 4 is based on perception processes; and number 5 involves considerations of group structure and influence processes. Criterion 6—at least as proposed by Redl (1955)—is dependent upon concepts of group psychoanalysis. Within the set of criteria included under No. 7, leadership behavior, A and E are both concerned with concepts of role differentiation; B includes practically every notion used in the study of human behavior; D involves concepts which attend the study of groups in general; and C once more employs the concept of influence.

Among the different concepts utilized in formulating criteria to identify leaders, the most prominent one appears to be the concept of influence. Indeed, this concept is utilized to such an extent that the study of influence itself might be expected to command considerable attention from those studying leadership. However, the actual relationship between these areas of study does not match this expectation.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE STUDY OF LEADERSHIP AND THE STUDY OF POWER (INFLUENCE)  

The first thing to be noted in a comparative review of the literature on leadership and that on power is that there is almost no overlap between the two. Studies of

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2. See Gouldner (1950, p. 16) for the position of another student of leadership who is concerned over the implications for research and theory produced by the perpetuation of the 'headship'- 'leadership' distinction.

3. Although both labels, 'power' and 'influence', have been employed by different students investigating the same type of social relationships, 'power' has probably been used more frequently

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leadership and studies of power have been conducted almost independently of each other. By this, it is meant that, in the main, those who write on leadership do not write on power and vice versa. Moreover, the number of cross-references between the two bodies of literature is amazingly small. Footnotes appearing in the literature on leadership seldom cite studies of power, and the reverse again holds true. Of course, verbal references to the other will be found in the literature on either concept, but these references are clearly of a superficial nature.

As an indication of the separation between the studies, consider the practice followed to 1959 in each volume of the Annual Review of Psychology. In each of these volumes, there is a chapter dealing with the literature on ‘Social Psychology and Group Processes’. With the exception of the first volume of the Review, in which Jerome Bruner (1950) passed only very lightly over some general literature on ‘group dynamics’, every subsequent chapter has, with minor modifications, devoted separate sections to the literature on ‘leadership’ and that on ‘influence processes’. Moreover, the literature cited in one section usually does not receive acknowledgement in the other. This practice was followed by Katz (1951), Smith (1952), Newcomb (1953), Crutcherfield (1954), Festinger (1955), French (1956), Cartwright (1957), Heyns (1958) and Gilchrist (1959) from 1951 through 1959. Of these authors, only French explicitly refers the reader on leadership to the other section on influence processes.4

Furthermore, it may be said that, whenever the two concepts are considered together in the same work, one of the two clearly becomes the real subject for analysis, and the treatment accorded to the subordinated concept is usually quite sophomorric, ignoring relevant literature on the topic. In short, we have two separate, practically self-contained bodies of literature—one on leadership, the other on power. The remainder of this paper will attempt to relate these literatures by presenting a concept of leadership in terms of power.

LEADERSHIP AS A POWER PHENOMENON

The conceptual complexities surrounding the power phenomenon are too involved to be discussed in detail at this time, and reference will only be made to what recent writers (Cartwright, 1959; Dahl, 1957; March, 1955; Simon, 1953) might agree on as a conceptual definition of power. These writers would view the power phenomenon as a particular type of social relationship in which one person adjusts his behavior to conform with a pattern of behavior communicated to him by another person. This concept supports these specific definitions:

power, used as an adjective modifying ‘relationship’—a particular type of social relationship which demonstrates the features involved in the conceptual definition

in the literature on the subject. However, an excellent case, based on the delusion of sufficiency and confusion by similarity, can be made for employing ‘influence’ as a label for this concept while excluding all references to ‘power’. Notwithstanding this fact, for the purposes of this paper, power and influence will be used synonymously.

4. Riecklen’s recent chapter on ‘Social Psychology’ in the 1960 volume of the Annual Review is the first to consider the literature under a heading of ‘Leadership and Power’. However, Riecklen reported mainly on research which examined the power variable in leadership behavior, and he did not review any works which attempted to relate the concepts.
power, noun—the ability to cause other persons to adjust their behavior in conformance with communicated behavior patterns

power-wielder—the individual who prescribes patterns of behavior which are followed by other individuals

power-recipient—the person who adjusts his behavior to conform with the prescribed pattern of behavior.

Regarding leadership and power, it should be immediately noted that this conceptual formulation of power is already close to some students’ formulation of leadership. For example, Warriner (1955, p. 367) conceives leadership ‘as a form of relationship between persons [which] requires that one or several persons act in conformance with the request of another’. According to this formulation, the concepts of leadership and power can hardly be differentiated from each other.

However, it is contended that a theoretically significant and operationally useful conception of leadership can be provided by considering leadership phenomena as a particular subset within the larger set of power phenomena. Thus, all leader-follower relationships are power-wielder-power-recipient relationships, but not all power relationships involve leadership. Leadership phenomena can be distinguished from other power phenomena when power relationships occur among members of the same group and when these relationships are based on the group members’ perceptions that another group member may, with reference to their group activities, legitimately prescribe behavior patterns for them to follow. Thus, in a situation of leadership, the power-recipients do not object to the power-wielder’s demands upon their behavior as group members. Essentially this same concept of leadership was advanced by Gouldner in 1950, but his presentation has not seemed to have much influence on the literature. In his words, ‘a leader would be an individual in a group who, in some situations, has the right to issue certain kinds of stimuli which tend to be accepted by others in the group as obligations’ (Gouldner, 1950, p. 19).

In order to examine this idea of legitimacy further, we must first answer some basic questions about power relationships in general. Why does anyone ‘accept’ influence? That is, why do power relationships exist at all? For now, the answer can be given that power relationships exist because some individuals can motivate other individuals to perform specific acts of behavior. Cartwright links motivation to power in this manner:

‘... “motive base” refers to the sorts of phenomena variously referred to as “need,” “motive,” “drive,” “tension system,” or “instinct.” The important feature of motive base as it relates to the conception of power is that an act of an agent must “tap” a motive base for it to activate a force’ (Cartwright, 1959, pp. 204–5).

‘... In our formulation, O can activate a force on P only if some act of O can tap a motive base of P. In this sense, P’s motive base may be thought of as a basis of O’s power’ (ibid., p. 206).

According to the conception proposed in this paper, the base of a power relationship provides the identifying element for distinguishing leadership phenomena from power phenomena in general. Writing in the same volume of studies as Cartwright, French and Raven (1959, pp. 155–6) expand upon this notion of the bases of power:
'By the basis of power we mean the relationship between O and P which is
the source of that power. . . . Although there are undoubtedly many possible
bases of power which may be distinguished, we shall here define five which seem
especially common and important. These five bases of O's power are: (1) reward
power, based on P's perception that O has the ability to mediate rewards for him;
(2) coercive power, based on P's perception that O has the ability to mediate
punishments for him; (3) legitimate power, based on the perception by P that O
has a legitimate right to prescribe behavior for him; (4) referent power, based on
P's identification with O; (5) expert power, based on the perception that O has
some knowledge or expertness.'

Now some students of leadership would probably call all intra-group power
relationships 'leadership', regardless of the power base used to support that rela-
tionship. Apparently, Warriner (1955) would subscribe to this position along with
Bass (1960, p. 94), who contends that 'leadership may be viewed as influence
occurring among members of the same group'. However, the conception of leader-
ship offered in this paper obviously excludes reward, coercive, referent, and expert
power from being considered as a basis of leadership. According to this paper's
conception, leadership does not occur unless the power-wielder secures the desired
behavior from the power-recipient on the basis of legitimate power—that is, when
the influence attempt comes from a group member who is perceived as having the
'right' to prescribe behavior for other group members to follow.

LEGITIMACY AS A POWER BASE AND THE
STUDY OF LEADERSHIP

At this point it must be emphasized that legitimate power per se is not sufficient to
support this conception of leadership. Simple equation of leadership with legitimate
power is essentially the conception proposed by Gouldner. However, this paper
identifies leadership with a particular type of legitimate power. That is, the power-
wielder must be perceived as having a particular right with reference to the activities
of power-recipients as group members to prescribe behavior patterns for them to
follow.

It is necessary to emphasize the association of leadership with a particular type
of legitimate power, for legitimacy itself stems from different sources. French and
Raven (1959, p. 160) disclose three important sub-bases for legitimate power:

'Cultural values constitute one common basis for the legitimate power of one
individual over another. O has characteristics which are specified by the culture
as giving him the right to prescribe behavior for P, who may not have these
characteristics. . . .

'Acceptance of the social structure is another basis for legitimate power. If
P accepts as right the social structure of his group, organization, or society,
especially the social structure involving a hierarchy of authority, P will accept the
legitimate authority of O who occupies a superior office in the hierarchy. . . .

'Designation by a legitimizing agent is a third basis for legitimate power. An
influencer O may be seen as legitimate in prescribing behavior for P because he
has been granted such power by a legitimizing agent whom $P$ accepts. . . . An election is perhaps the most common example of a group's serving to legitimate the authority of one individual or office for other individuals in the group.'

The inclusion of cultural values as a base of legitimacy reveals the necessity of adding a restriction to Gouldner's equation of leadership with legitimate power. Legitimate power based on cultural values includes power relationships that we would want to exclude from our conception of leadership, which would encompass only those power relationships produced by the power-recipient's perception that the power-wielder has the right to prescribe behavior for him as a member of a particular group.

We have not yet discussed the way in which group members develop perceptions of leaders. Acceptance of the social structure and designation by a legitimizing agent are obviously only operative in on-going groups of long duration. However, the leadership phenomenon can also be found in newly formed traditionless groups. In such groups, an individual may emerge as a leader because of his personality, abilities, resources, special knowledge, etc. In short, the group members identify his behavior requests with the group goal and, in the process of conforming to these requests, develop perceptions that this individual has the right to prescribe behavior patterns for them with reference to their activities as group members.

However, in on-going groups of long duration—which probably includes the groups of most interest to social scientists—the last two bases of legitimate power, acceptance of the social structure and designation by a legitimizing agent, assume great importance for students of leadership. A group member occupying a position in an accepted social structure or given formal status by a legitimizing agent may thereby acquire legitimate power and only need exercise that power base to demonstrate leadership. Of course, these two factors and leadership do not necessarily coincide. The extent to which these factors do coincide is, in fact, a subject for empirical examination. However, the literature dealing with leadership as a concept—apart from the literature reporting on research—distinctly subordinates the importance of these factors as determinants of leadership. Perhaps this failure can be attributed to the over-concern with promoting a distinction between 'headship' and 'leadership'. In any case, the literature on power has not ignored investigating these factors, and some of these findings may be reviewed with profit for leadership.

French and Snyder (1959) have produced findings which, in general, support their contention that formal group status in itself is a source of power. Raven and French (1958b, p. 83), conducting research specifically designed to examine several aspects of legitimate power, claim to 'have experimentally demonstrated that a member whose group has elected him to a position of authority will thereby achieve legitimate power over remaining members'. Furthermore, in another article experimenting with differences in the degree of influence demonstrated by elected and non-elected supervisors, Raven and French (1958a) clearly establish the superior influence of the elected supervisor but discover an unexpected finding in the amount of influence demonstrated by the non-elected supervisor. They explained this observation by stating, 'It thus seems likely that the very occupation of a key position in a structure lends legitimacy to the occupant' (ibid., p. 409).

In strong contrast to the literature conceptualizing about leadership, research studies provide an important place for formal group status, employing it as an
indicator of the leadership phenomenon. The examinations of political leadership conducted by Seligman (1955) and Moos and Koslin (1951, 1952) are certainly studies of individuals possessing formal group status. Similarly, Seeman (1953) investigates role conflict among leaders by concentrating on the individuals who hold top positions in social institutions. Kahn and Katz (1953) are two more students of leadership concerned with persons who possess formal group status. Morris and Seeman (1950, p. 152), reporting on early progress in the Ohio State Leadership Studies Program, also state that 'the method used to date in the various studies made by the staff has been the selection of individuals in high office as persons to examine for leadership . . .'.

The articles by Lewin and Lippitt (1955) and White and Lippitt (1953) utilize formal group status as a technique for inducing leadership, the type of which was then varied among 'authoritarian', 'democratic', and 'laissez-faire' roles. Preston and Heintz (1953) and Hare (1955) also equated leadership with formal group status while varying the leader's role between 'supervisory' and 'participatory' leadership. Torrance's study (1955) differed in that his formal leadership was altered between 'directive' and 'non-directive' roles. Gibb (1955b) and Maier and Solem (1953), explicitly considering groups without formal leaders as 'leaderless', examine the effect of leadership on group performance by comparing these groups with ones which elected leaders. Finally, the legitimization of the formal status of the conference chairman was specifically acknowledged by Berkowitz (1955).

As mentioned before, many studies identify 'leadership' on the basis of criteria other than formal group status. It is suggested that the variations discovered in the behavior of formally designated leaders from that shown by other types of leader might be due to the different bases of power upon which each can draw in establishing power relationships. The findings of Carter, Haythorn, Shriver, and Lanzetta (1953) on 'emergent' versus 'appointed' leaders would tend to indicate different bases of power were attached to each type. Maier and Solem also suggest a shift in the bases of power available to group members who still possess formal group status but who have suffered a loss in legitimate power. They hold, 'The great limitation to autocratic leadership is that such a leader has difficulty in having his decisions accepted so that appropriate action will follow' (1953, p. 561).

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

This paper has presented a conception of leadership as a particular type of power relationship characterized by a group member's perception that another group member has the right to prescribe behavior patterns for the former regarding his activity as a member of a particular group. This conception carries certain implications which were not discussed in the text. Some of these implications are immediately obvious: different group members can perceive different individuals as leaders; the same member can perceive more than one individual as his leader; leadership may or may not exist in a given group; etc. It would seem that these implications, when expanded upon and drawn more sharply, can account for much of the diversity existing within the literature on leadership. The task of strengthening this concept through further delineations of its implications for research and theory is
the subject of a future effort; this brief sketch of leadership in terms of power must suffice for now.\footnote{Other forms of leadership cannot always be easily related to this conception based on legitimate power. For example, 'leadership by coercion' contains a possibility of contradiction within the context of this conception, for this phrase appears to describe a power relationship based on coercive power as well as on legitimate power. Although it is generally thought that the operation of one base of power precludes the operation of another, this is, of course, an empirical question which must await a more precise formulation of the variables involved as well as further research on the nature of the bases of power, including the conditions under which they operate. However, the familiar concept of charismatic leadership can be accommodated within this conception with little difficulty by considering charismatic leadership as a particular type of leadership which can be characterized either by the strength of the power base available to the power-wielder or by his personal qualities which invoke the intense feelings of voluntary obedience within the group members.}

For those students who already view leadership as involving power relationships, this paper can be interpreted as a recommendation for them to raise the concept of power from its subordinated position and conduct their study with a greater attention to power relationships in general. This would involve drawing distinctions as to the type of power relationship being studied under the heading of leadership and utilizing findings on power relevant to power relationships among group members. It seems inconceivable that students of leadership who define their conceptions in terms of power can afford to ignore the large and growing body of literature on this subject and fail to incorporate its findings in their study. One of the results of this redirection of emphasis would involve paying greater attention to the behavior of the follower than is normally given, for, as Katz (1951, p. 140) says, 'Leadership is a relation involving two terms and it is impossible to study the influencing agent without also studying the people being influenced.'

For those students of leadership who are not satisfied with a conception of leadership explicated in terms of power, this paper urges that they re-examine precisely what it is that they are studying. Admittedly, there is no monopoly granted for the exclusive use of labels, and if one person chooses to call something else 'leadership', he is privileged to do so. Undoubtedly, we will always be subject to some degree of confusion by similarity as long as we are committed to the use of common words as labels for scientific concepts. However, this might be a small price to pay for retaining the benefits which accompany easy translation into common language.

As for the merits of other conceptions of leadership, the standard of utility must be the final arbiter, and the proof of utility must be borne by the advocates of these conceptions. As Cartwright (1959, p. 187) says, 'One must rely in the long run upon a sort of inverse "Gresham's law" which holds that good conceptual systems drive out bad.' Indeed, the conception proposed in this paper must also win its way, if it is to be won, through such competition. Furthermore, it is not thought that this conception is in anywhere near a perfected stage; it can probably be improved now and most certainly will be improved in the future, as new findings on power are brought to light and as new thinking is conducted on the concept of legitimacy.

Nevertheless, it is thought that this specific conception of leadership has advantages which will yield rewards for its users. It seems apparent that this conception—as well as any—closely approximates an 'intuitive' notion of leadership. As Seeman (1950, p. 41) said, 'Though specific definitions of leadership may vary considerably, the core of the concept—regardless of whether we define leadership
as "acts which make a difference in group effectiveness"—is the idea of a stratification in terms of power or influence. If the association of leadership and legitimate power is adopted, the study of power can hardly be avoided in the study of leadership, which has been isolated, to a large extent, from other aspects of social psychology. In Seeman's words:

'The extent to which status attributes and leadership ideology are correlated has an important bearing on the extent to which we may profitably conceive of "leadership" as a distinct research "area" separable from the more general problems of power, influence, or social status. Myrdal has pointed out that the concern with "leadership" is a distinctly American phenomenon, and it may well be that our research per se simply reflects this "American bias," and that from a social scientific point of view our work might be more profitable if we adopted such a more general framework . . . ' (ibid., pp. 47–8).

The general attitude of this paper is mirrored by the concluding comments of Thibaut and Kelley in their recent book, The Social Psychology of Groups (1959, p. 290):

'It is our opinion that leadership research will be most fruitful when it adopts an indirect and analytical approach to its task. Rather than going directly into the complex phenomena and surplus-meaning-laden terminology encompassed by the term leadership, research must first be directed toward clarifying problems of power structures, norms and goals, task requirements, functional roles, etc., each of which is complex and challenging enough in its own right. In short, an understanding of leadership must rest on a more basic understanding of the structure and functioning of groups.'

And this paper urges an approach to leadership which draws upon a basic understanding of power.

REFERENCES


KENNETH F. JANDA


BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

KENNETH JANDA is a political scientist with an interest in parts of sociology and psychology. He expects to receive his Ph.D. from the Department of Government at Indiana University, where he is completing his dissertation, which utilizes survey data to verify a behavioral theory of representative-constituency relationships. Mr Janda is currently a pre-doctoral Fellow of the Social Science Research Council.