Theories of Leadership

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Overview

Three theoretical questions
- Action dispensibility (actor or structure?)
- Action dispensibility (situation or person?)
- Cause or consequence?

Four empirical components
- Context
- Followers
- Relationship between leader and follower
- Leadership style
Question 1: ACTION DISPENSIBILITY?
The actor or the structure?

**The structure**

Analytical perspective:
- Situational factors (which also determine leadership behavior)

Focus:
- Contexts, systems, situations, procedures, processes

Theories:
- System theory, institutional theory, discourse analysis, social identity theory, etc.

**The actor**

Analytical perspective:
- Actors (which also determine leadership behavior)

Focus:
- Groups, coalitions, leaders (roles and positions)

Theories:
- Rational choice theory, cognitive theories, information processing theories, social psychology, etc.
Question 2: 

ACTOR DISPENSIBILITY?
Would it have been the same with Jimmy Carter?
The situation or the person?

The situation
- Situational characteristics are the best predictors of individual behavior
- Social psychology (ex. Milgram’s Obedience Experiment, Stanford Prison Experiment)

The person
- Personal characteristics are the best predictors of individual behavior
- Individual difference psychology (ex. ‘Big Five’, character)
Question 3:

CAUSE OR EFFECT?
The cause or the consequences?

**Causes**
Leadership is the independent variable
- What ‘works’ and when?
- Can the lessons be copied elsewhere?
- How do individuals matter?
- What individual characteristics (skills, traits, background) matters?

**Consequences**
Leadership is the dependent variable
- Who becomes a leader?
- How do they consolidate their power?
- How are leaders selected?
The empirical components of leadership:

CONTEXT, LEADERS, FOLLOWERS
Context

- Culture
- Political system
- Recruitment process
- Nature of the situation
Followers

• What kind of leader does followers want?
  – Images?
  – Expectations?
• How do followers select their leaders?
  – Informal processes?
  – Formal processes?
• When, why and how are leaders deemed legitimate in the mind of the followers?
Relations between leader and followers

**Leadership tools**
- Dominance
  - Coercion
- Incentives
  - ‘nudge’ theory
- Persuasion
  - Rhetoric

**Follower tools**
- The force of the masses
  - Voting, demonstrations, riots,
- The rise of competitors
  - Disempower

A struggle about legitimacy
Focusing on the Leader

LEADERSHIP STYLES
Three methodological approaches:

- Single case analysis
- Typological analysis
- Aggregation
Theoretical perspectives on leadership behavior:
1. General psychology, ex. cognitive theories, information processing theories, motivational theories, affect theories:
   Leaders are like all of us, flawed
2. Individual difference psychology, ex. Trait theory:
   Leaders are born, not made
3. Behavioral psychology, ex. Learning theory:
   Leaders are made, not born
4. Social psychology, ex. Group dynamic theory:
   Leaders are a function of groups
Frequently applied individual variables in studies on leaders:

- Beliefs ("operational code")
- Motivations
- Political skills
- Organizational capacity
- Cognitive style
- Emotional intelligence
- Reaction to stress
- Background
Effective leaders use specific sets of behaviors = *Leadership styles* (e.g. Directive, Participative, Laissez-faire, Supportive)
Leadership styles

Crusader vs. Pragmatist

Ideologue vs. Opportunist

Directive vs. Consultative

Task-oriented vs. Relationship oriented

Transformational vs. Transactional
The Leader

Transformational (or charismatic)

Leaders have certain personal qualities to inspire followers to reach new goals

- High moral and ethical standards
- Strong visions for the future based on values and ideals
- Intellectual stimulation (challenges norms and practices)
- Individual consideration (developmental needs of followers)
In Sum

UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP

• Analytical perspectives – contexts, situations, actors, persons, cause and consequences
• Theoretical approaches – behaviorism, social psychology, individual psychology, affect psychology
• Defining components – context, leaders, followers and the relationship between them
• Leadership styles – pragmatic, transformational, crusaders, etc.
  - Different styles useful in different situations!