Charisma and Religious Leadership: An Historical Analysis*

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While Max Weber formulated an “ideal” definition of charisma and its routinization, he did not fully address the question of charismatic origins. This paper proposes a theory of charismatic leadership which explores the social conditions under which charisma will emerge. Charismatic leaders are hypothesized to live in periods of radical social change or be cut off from the mainstream of society, perceive religious tradition as relative, and have innovative teachings if their religion is to be institutionalized. They are also not excluded from occupying an institutional office within a traditional religion. The theory is tentatively supported by an examination of biographical data for fifteen charismatic leaders and their successors from various periods of history and from different parts of the world.

Max Weber incorporated both psychological and sociological elements in his definition of charisma. He defined charisma (1922a: 48, 1968 reprint) as a “certain quality of an individual’s personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities.” This individualistic or psychological orientation towards charisma aligns itself with the more popular conception which holds that charisma originates from an inner, dynamic force of the leader’s personality. Sociologically, Weber conceived of charisma as a form of authority which is dependent upon the recognition of a group of people. In this regard, he (1922a: 49, 1968 reprint) stated, “It is the recognition on the part of those subject to authority which is decisive for the validity of charisma. This is freely given and guaranteed by what is held to be a ‘sign’ or proof, originally always a miracle, and consists in devotion to the corresponding revelation, hero worship, or absolute trust in the leader.” Thus, leaders depend upon the perceptions of people for their charismatic authority, but nonetheless they also must be exceptional to gain such recognition (Willner & Willner, 1975: 79).

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Charisma is a pivotal concept for Weber’s three pure types of authority because it is employed to explain radical social change. Charisma is personalistic, non-rational, and dynamic; whereas, traditional and legal-rational authority are more impersonal and stable. Although Weber explained in great detail the routinization of charisma into these other more stable forms of authority, except for a few references to social change he neglected the problem of the origin of charismatic leadership. This paper proposes a theory of charismatic leadership and institutionalized religion which more thoroughly explores the socio-historical conditions under which charisma will originate. Secondly, the methodology utilized for investigating charismatic leaders has usually been case studies. In this investigation biographical data of fifteen religious founders who are recognized by historians as charismatic leaders have been compiled in order to test the proposed theory. Whenever possible, information was also gathered for the leaders’ immediate successors.

A THEORY OF RELIGIOUS, CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP

The distinction between charisma and charismatic leadership is very important. There can be many different types of charismatic leaders who display a wide range of possible behavior, but charisma is limited to a particular authority relationship between the leaders and their followings. Willner and Willner (1965: 79) have developed a definition of charisma which captures this distinction. They state that charisma can be redefined “without departing from Weber’s intrinsic intention—as a leader’s capacity to elicit from a following deference, devotion and awe toward himself as the source of authority. A leader who can have this effect upon a group is charismatic for that group.” In agreement with Willner and Willner, charisma is defined here as that authority relationship which arises when a leader through the dynamics of a set of teachings, a unique personality, or both elicits responses of awe, deference, and devotion from a group of people.

Categorizing the unique personalities requisite for charisma is very difficult because leaders have ranged from frenzy-creating preachers to quiet, meditating sages. Various personal styles which demonstrate a capacity for charismatic leadership may include strategies such as rhetoric, use of simile and metaphor, allusions to myth and history, appropriate gestures, use of ritual, handling crises appropriately, and dealing with anxieties (Willner & Willner, 1965: 83). But regardless of the variety of personal styles, the teachings of a religious, charismatic leader must deal with the ultimate concerns of a group of people. Clifford Geertz (1966) states that meaning, morality, and suffering are three points where chaos threatens to break upon man, and any religion which hopes to persist must cope with these problems. Likewise, any religious, charismatic leaders who wish to maintain their authority over a following must also espouse an ideology to cope with these three basic points where chaos threatens to impinge on the consciousness of man.

The following theory of religious, charismatic leadership contains four basic propositions which suggest that certain variables or conditions must coincide within and around the same individual in order for charisma to exist. These characteristics in no way define charisma, but rather they stipulate certain relationships between charisma as a form of authority and other social and psychological variables. The
four basic propositions are that (1) charismatic leaders will be de-alienated because they perceive sacred symbols as subject to change or verification by their own personal experience with the divine; (2) they will live during a period of social change or be members of a minority group; (3) they will have an innovative set of teachings if their religion is to be institutionalized; and finally, (4) they can exist either within or outside of the context of traditional religion. Each of these propositions will be examined in order.

The Perception of Objective Symbols

The perception of objective symbols is one key concept for differentiating institutionalized religion and charismatic leadership. Two different ways to perceive objective symbols are alienation and de-alienation. Alienation is a term which has been used in many different ways in the sociological literature. In this paper, Peter Berger's assertion (1967: 81-101) that religion is generally alienated will be accepted. Charismatic leadership, on the other hand, tends to be de-alienated. De-alienation is the conscious realization that the social world is humanly constructed and therefore unstable (Berger, 1967: 96-101). Charismatic leaders usually have an intimate connection with a transcendent or immanent divine source. This intense connection with a force or being beyond everyday or normal reality enables the leader to perceive religious symbols in a de-alienated fashion. Secondly, because charismatic leaders manipulate religious symbols, they recognize that they are subject to change. Charismatic leaders who preach a "return to the true faith" do so because they have received private confirmation that the symbols of the "true faith" are an adequate manifestation or representation of the divine. The experience of or communication with a divine source will always take precedence over or complement previously revealed religious tradition. One common mechanism for religious change involves the claim that a leader has received from a divine source an updated version of previously established, religious doctrine. However, a leader whose personal experience does not take precedence over religious tradition would be classified as alienated.

There are two different ways in which charismatic leaders may be de-alienated based on their differing relationships to the divine. The first is a mystical de-alienation in which the leaders realize that their own teachings are of the same fleeting nature as all other systems of thought. They realize that no meaning systems are absolute. Weber's (1922: 55, 1964 reprint) ideal type of the exemplary prophet is one kind of charismatic leader who is de-alienated. This type of charismatic leader is completely aware of the tension between consciousness and its symbolic projections. The second type of de-alienation is prophetic. The leaders may reject or accept the traditional sacred symbols and institutionalized religion of their times, yet they present their own teachings or interpretation of tradition as representing the word of God or some other divine source. In this case the divinely inspired word of the leader is to be followed without question. Weber's (1922a: 55, 1964 reprint) conception of ethical prophecy would be associated with this type of de-alienation. Prophetic de-alienation assumes a transcendent deity or force which is revealing its will through the leader. But, the followers of the leader in this case are
alienated because they are asked to obey the will of the god and the leader. Thus, the first hypothesis is that charismatic leaders are either prophetically or mystically de-alienated because of their intense connection with an immanent or transcendent divine source.

A Period of Social Change

A period of radical social change which causes distress and dissatisfaction among a segment of the population or a group of people cut off from the mainstream of society is generally acknowledged as the typical environment within which a charismatic leader will arise (Friedland, 1964; Tucker, 1968; Willner & Willner, 1965; Jones & Anservitz, 1975). Institutionalized religion has a well developed tradition or ideology and has been dealing with the problem of meaning in life for generations, but at times it can be resistant to change. The individual stream of consciousness is more flexible, but the answers which ordinary individuals formulate for their ultimate concerns in life are usually not very creative. Charismatic leaders on the other hand face the threat of chaos which is disruptive to a particular social segment of the community, and resolve this confrontation by formulating their own answers to the problem of meaning in life. Because their problems turn out to be widespread among the populace, the charismatic leaders' individual solutions to their ultimate concerns in life may meet the standards of many others in the same society. People in the society begin to notice that the charismatic leader provides answers to the same problems which had been bothering them.

A breakdown in traditional authority is precisely the appropriate socio-historical circumstance which is necessary for charismatic leaders to gain acceptance for their authority. Without proper social conditions the society would regard the potential leader as an eccentric getting excited over nothing. In this regard, Friedland (1964: 21) indicates that "While charismatics are continually being generated, their 'charisma' can frequently be unrecognized or indeed be considered peculiar, deviant, or perhaps insane." Several studies of charisma (Willner & Willner, 1965; Apter, 1968; Friedland, 1964) have been carried out within the context of the breakdown of authority in ex-colonial, new states in Africa. Revivalist charismatic leaders are also known to spring up in the inner cities or rural areas where there is no institutionalized religion which intimately understands the needs of the local residents. In each of these cases charismatic leaders will attract followings based on their ideological and emotional support for a group of people. Thus, the second hypothesis is that the charismatic leader will arise in a period of social change or within a group of people who are cut off from the mainstream of society.

Institutionalization and the Leader's Teachings

A religion based on charismatic authority is usually inherently unstable. Charismatic leaders as individuals have two relevant means through which they can appeal to a group of followers: their unique personal style and the content of their teachings (Jones & Anservitz, 1975: 1097). With the death of charismatic leaders, the
CHARISMA AND RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

dynamics of their personality are no longer a major factor. The extraordinary quality resulting from the leaders' personal confrontation with chaos dies with them, and all that remains is their legacy and a group of followers. In a word, with the leader absent, the quality of their teachings are left exposed without refuge to their creator's personality or defense, and they must pass the test of time. Describing this critical period in a neophyte religion's existence, O'Dea (1966: 37) uses the term "crisis of continuity" which is essentially similar to what Weber (1922a: 55, 1968 reprint) calls the problem of succession. However, Weber would not limit the problems of routinization only to the time of the leader's death.

The two crucial variables for the institutionalization of a religion are the quality of the leaders' teachings and the organization of their followers. Weber (1922a: 55-61, 1968 reprint) presents an elaborate typology for routinizing charismatic authority which includes six different ways through which the leaders' followers can designate a successor. The motives for routinizing charisma are based on the material and ideal interests of the followers and the members of the administrative staff for keeping the community alive. However, not enough attention has been given to the institutionalization of a religion during the lifetime of a leader. One proposition which was developed during the historical research is that religions may have three different agents of institutionalization which are not mutually exclusive—the founder himself, a follower of the founder or his successor, and finally a religious council.

The quality of the leader's teachings may also be an important variable for institutionalizing a religion, although this is not clearly developed in Weber's work on routinization. Tucker (1968: 743) identifies charismatic leadership as "specifically salvationist or messianic in nature." Without the leader's unique personal style, the desire for a group to continue to adhere to the salvational purpose contained in the leader's message may be partially dependent on the innovativeness of those teachings. The teachings may be couched in terms of traditional mythology as is suggested by Willner and Willner (1965: 83) who investigated charisma in the context of ex-colonial, new states in Africa, or they may be a revolutionary ideology as is indicated by Tucker (1968: 75) in his study of Lenin and the Russian Revolution. However, for a religion to be institutionalized the leader's teachings must be innovative enough so that the religious community can identify unique salvational goals towards which to strive. Innovative teachings will enable the followers to clearly differentiate their religion from any other religious group. Thus, the third hypothesis is that the teachings of charismatic leaders must be innovative if their religion is to institutionalize.

The Relationship Between Charismatic Leaders and Traditional Religion

Earlier theoretical treatments of charisma have generally assumed an anti-institutional character. The prophet versus the priest dichotomy helped to further the bifurcation between the charismatic leader and the institutional order. Weber, for instance, has stated that "In order to do justice to their mission, the holders of charisma, the master as well as his disciples and followers, must stand outside of ties
to this world, outside routine occupations, as well as outside the routine occupations of family life.” Weber qualifies this statement by indicating that this is charisma in its pure form. Talcott Parsons and Peter Berger for different reasons argue that Weber’s conception of the prophet as radically breaking with societal institutions is misleading. Parsons (1964: lxiv) criticizes Weber’s ideal type methodology for its tendency to atomize traits instead of interrelating them. As a result, this atomization leads to a typological rigidity which characterizes the prophet as breaking with tradition. Berger (1963: 950) indicates that some of the historical data upon which Weber relied were found to be in error, and he concludes that the prophets of Israel were more connected to the institutional order of society than had previously been assumed by religious, historical scholarship. Accordingly, the prophet may emerge from the institutions or offices of society rather than be located primarily as a force outside the accepted institutional order.

The charismatic leader does not necessarily represent a force which is completely outside of institutionalized religion. In agreement with Parsons and Berger, the present theory of charismatic leadership allows the possibility that an individual within the social organization of a religion may possess charismatic authority. Berger (1963: 950) indicates that a charismatic leader who occupies an institutional office may attempt to change the religion by a “radicalization from within rather than of challenge from without.” Secondly, charismatic leaders may also be within a religious tradition such as Christianity, and yet form their own religious organization as was common during the Protestant reformation. Finally, leaders may also break with both the institutional structure and the religious tradition and found their own religion. The advantage of viewing charisma as one form of legitimizing social values is that it may be a very useful concept for investigating social change both within or outside of the framework of institutionalized religion. Thus, the final hypothesis is that charismatic leaders can occupy an office within a religious organization, they may be inside of the religious tradition exclusively, or they can be the founder of a completely new religious tradition and institution.

METHODS

Sample

The theory of charismatic leadership presented in this paper seeks to be universal, and therefore, a cross-cultural and cross-time sample must be employed to test the theory. An historical methodology has been used to analyze both the charismatic leaders and their immediate successors or seconds (whenever possible) according to available biographical information.

Fifteen religious founders were chosen from history on the basic assumption that they all were endowed with charisma. None of the theoretical points delineated above were utilized in the selection of the leaders. Unfortunately no list of charismatic religious founders exists from which the leaders could be randomly chosen. Therefore, the religious founders were chosen according to the following criteria. (1) They had to be recognized by historians as charismatic figures. (2) They
must be chosen from different cultural areas of the world. (3) If possible, they should be from different historical periods. (4) Finally, there should be adequate biographical data available so that a valid judgment is possible for all variables in the investigation. Table 1 presents a list of religious, charismatic leaders and their seconds who were chosen for evaluation in this study.

**TABLE 1**

**THE SAMPLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Religious Founders</th>
<th>Second Leaders</th>
<th>Main References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jainism</td>
<td>Mahavira</td>
<td></td>
<td>Taylor, 1970; Goplan, 1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hasidism</td>
<td>Bal Sham Tov</td>
<td>R. Dov Ber</td>
<td>Aron, 1969; Buber, 1960; Dresner, 1968; Rabinowitz, 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikhism</td>
<td>Guru Nanak</td>
<td>Guru Angad</td>
<td>Macauliffe, 1963; Court, 1959; Grewal, 1969; Gupta, 1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahai Faith</td>
<td>Baha’I’Llah</td>
<td>A. Baha</td>
<td>Eeselmont, 1970; Miller, 1931; Nabil-i-A’zam, 1932; Remey, 1912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>Muhammad</td>
<td>A. Bakr</td>
<td>Irving, 1850; Abulteda, 1940; Ali, 1954; Jeffrey, 1958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>Buddha</td>
<td>Kacyapa</td>
<td>Burtt, 1955; Wickremesinghe, 1972; Rockhill, 1972; Thapar, 1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nichiren Buddhism</td>
<td>Nichiren</td>
<td>Niko</td>
<td>Anesaki, 1916; Murata, 1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calvinism</td>
<td>Calvin</td>
<td>Theodore Beza</td>
<td>Harkness, 1931; Wendel, 1950; Schaff, 1892; McNell, 1954; Baird, 1899; MacKinnon, 1936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheranism</td>
<td>Luther</td>
<td></td>
<td>Erikson, 1958; Jorgensen, 1953; Bergendoff, 1967; Pascal, 1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormons</td>
<td>Joseph Smith</td>
<td>Brigham Young</td>
<td>Hirshson, 1969; Gates and Widtsoe, 1930; Smucker, 1856; Beardsley, 1931; Smith, 1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quakers</td>
<td>George Fox</td>
<td></td>
<td>Barbour, 1964; Braithwaite, 1961; Russell, 1942; Fox, 1919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confucianism</td>
<td>Confucius</td>
<td></td>
<td>Smith, 1973; Lin, 1938; Creel, 1949; Fung, 1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Kidd, 1922; MacKinnon, 1931; Foakes-Jackson, 1927; Fofick, 1949; Hitchcock, 1907; Cullman, 1953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gandhi’s Religion</td>
<td>Gandhi</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rudolph, 1967; Erikson, 1969; Gandhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCLC</td>
<td>Martin Luther King</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lewis, 1970; Miller, 1968; Lincoln, 1970</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The biographies of the leaders and the religious history of the movement with which they were associated were examined, and from this information the leaders were coded on specific variables suggested by the theory. The sample was admittedly limited to those leaders who are prominent figures in history; otherwise, not enough
detailed biographical information would exist for making a knowledgeable decision in coding the variables.

To test the proposed theory, a comparison group without charisma is also necessary in order to ensure that the charismatic leaders actually differ systematically from non-charismatic figures. In this study the second leaders of the religious movement were chosen for this purpose because they lived during similar time periods and within the same cultures as the primary leaders. Although the distinct possibility exists that second leaders could have charismatic qualities, they most likely will not have the same degree of charisma as the original founder. Also, the second leaders when compared to the founders should be identical on all variables with the exception of those measured in the study. One problem encountered, however, is that although a wealth of historical information exists for the primary leader, a conspicuous lack of information was found for the second leaders who followed him. For this reason only eight out of fifteen charismatic leaders can be compared to the second leader. A second problem for testing the proposed theory involves the question of why the religions of some charismatic leaders become institutionalized and others do not. The ideal research design for testing this aspect of the theory would involve having one group of charismatic leaders whose religions are institutionalized, and another group of leaders whose religions fail the crisis of continuity. However, most religious sects which fail to institutionalize fall into obscurity and adequate historical information is unavailable.

Data

Several different methodologies were considered at the inception of this study. First, a panel of experts intimately familiar with one or more of the charismatic leaders could objectively code the charismatic leaders. Subsequent interviews and only random success in attempting to contact scholars through the mail proved this method inadequate. The second method involved contacting religious historians who could rate at least part of the sample on the variables important for the study. Although the few historians contacted were very interested in the project, the information which they could provide proved to be very sporadic. It was finally decided that quotes and appropriate summaries for each leader and successor on all the variables would provide the most accurate and useful information. Blind ratings of the accumulated summaries and quotes were considered, but the leaders for this project are so well known that they could not truly be rated blindly. The inherent difficulties in obtaining a representative sample and accurate information for any group of charismatic leaders were countered by selecting appropriate leaders and developing a strict procedure for coding the variables.

The procedure for coding the variables included gathering information from several sources in order to increase the reliability and accuracy of the information concerning the leaders. The information was then categorized according to the variables suggested by the theory of charismatic leadership. The variables coded for this project were the leaders’ perception of objective symbols, the social environment of the leaders’ ministry, their position within the traditional religious structure, the
quality of their teachings, and finally how they succeeded the crisis of continuity.

The perception of objective symbols was divided into three mutually exclusive categories: alienation, mystical de-alienation, and prophetic de-alienation. The leaders who strictly believed that the sacred symbols of their religion are absolute were alienated. In this case the sacred symbols were approached as if they were divine and outside of the individual. Secondly, leaders who saw beyond the sacred beliefs of their time, including their own teachings, were mystically de-alienated. Such persons rejected any form of dogmatism, but they may have believed in a force, power, or order which is beyond religious ideology. Finally, the prophetically de-alienated leader was an individual who may have accepted or rejected the prevailing religious ideology, but the beliefs which they espoused were verified or passed through the leaders by their contact with some divine being, spirit, or inspiration. Thus, the perception of objective symbols was divided into three categories which measured the leader’s relative awareness of the tension between consciousness and its symbolic projections.

The social environment within which the leader lives is a very important variable for the proposed theory. The theory predicts that the leader will live during a period of radical social change or be cut off from the mainstream of society. If during the ministry of the leader a period of social upheaval or war was described by the historians and biographers, then the leader was coded as having lived during a period of radical social change. Secondly, being cut off from the mainstream of society was operationalized by ascertaining whether or not the leader was a member of a subordinate minority group. In both of the above cases groups of individuals may exist for whom traditional values of a religion do not adequately explain their spiritual needs. Finally, a period of stability was coded as a period of time in which there was no social upheaval or armed conflict. Coding the seconds presented somewhat of a problem because they usually lived during the lifetime of the leader. Therefore, both the primary and the second leaders were coded for that period of time in which they were actually the head of a group of followers.

The quality of the leaders’ teachings was operationalized by determining the extent of innovation within their teachings. If the biographers and historians regard the leaders’ teachings as creative or innovative, then they were coded has having a high quality of teachings. The specific question to be answered was did the leaders’ teachings deviate markedly from those of the religion of their times? If they did not, then the leader was classified as espousing a rather uninnovative religious doctrine. The seconds were coded as innovative only if their teachings deviated markedly from those of the charismatic leader. Thus, if the seconds merely repeated or organized the teachings of the religious founder, then they were classified as uninnovative.

The position of the charismatic leader within the traditional religious structure was coded in three possible ways. The leaders may have occupied a religious office within a religious tradition; they may have remained within the tradition, but established a new religious institutional structure; and finally, the leaders may have rejected both the religious tradition and the institutional structure and formed their own new religion. In most cases, the biographers and historians were explicit concerning whether the founder broke with religious tradition and institutional structure, accepted the tradition and rejected the institution, or remained within both
the structure and the tradition. In addition, the leaders' teachings provided some indication of whether they felt that they were founding a new religion. However, in coding this variable, the actual historical course of events was given precedence over the leader's own perception of the situation. The seconds were not coded on this variable because they all by definition fell into just one of the categories.

In the early stages of this study it was realized that the procedures for institutionalizing a religion vary considerably from leader to leader. Because this study is limited to religious founders and their seconds, all of them established a religious tradition and passed the crisis of continuity. However, the means through which the charismatic authority of the leader was transferred into institutional authority differed in many instances. Although this variable was not formally coded, because it was an unanticipated finding, a discussion of some of the different agents of institutionalizing a religion is also presented.

RESULTS

The reliability of the historical data utilized in this investigation may be questioned. After all, the biographers of the various leaders and the historians of the religious movements may not have been objective in describing the life of the founder. Embellishments and half truths inevitably seep into the objective framework of the actual historical course of events. For some of the leaders, the authors had scant reliable factual data with which to work. Another factor distorting the findings is that the author personally had to code all of the variables and all of the leaders.

These sources of error were minimized by several procedures. First, several different biographies or histories were consulted in order to check the reliability of the data. Also, information regarding the leaders has been coded from the best possible sources. Finally, the method employed to code the leaders was to compile quotes from various sources under the heading of different variables. A sampling of these quotes is presented in this section. It might be added that first assumptions concerning a leader were frequently proven wrong by the actual research. But while an attempt has been made to eliminate error from the study, eradicating all distortion from the study is impossible because the sample is of historical, charismatic leaders around whom many myths have been woven.

The general hypothesis of this paper is that religious, charismatic leaders differ significantly from their successors on the variables which are specified by the proposed theory. Tables 2 and 3 present a summary of the findings of the research. In these Tables both the number and the percent of the total are presented for leaders by variables. A category of selected charismatic leaders had to be created because information was not available for second leaders in many instances. This category contains only those religious founders for whom seconds were also coded. Using Fischer's exact probability test, the selected leaders vary significantly from the followers on the perception of objective symbols, nature of teachings, and institutional setting (after collapsing adjacent cells so the test was possible), but only approach the .05 level of significance for periods of social change. Although
### TABLE 2

NUMBER OF LEADERS ACCORDING TO PERCEPTION OF OBJECTIVE SYMBOLS AND SOCIAL CONDITION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of Objective Symbols</th>
<th>Social Conditions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alienation</td>
<td>Mystical</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Alienation</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Second Leaders</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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All percentages are row rather than column percentages.

### TABLE 3

NUMBER OF LEADERS ACCORDING TO NATURE OF TEACHINGS AND INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Teachings</th>
<th>Institutional Setting</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>Uninnovative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Institution</td>
<td>Within Tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Institution</td>
<td>Institution and Tradition</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>All Charismatic Leaders</th>
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<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
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<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>93%</td>
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<td>7%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td>N</td>
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</table>

All percentages are row rather than column percentages.

Selected Charismatic Leaders are those for whom information for coding the second leader was available.

### Notes
- Charismatic leaders definitely lived in periods of social change, a high percentage of second leaders tend to share this quality with the primary leaders.
- The charismatic leader's perception of objective symbols is according to the...
findings de-alienated. Out of the fifteen leaders coded none were classified as alienated. Although this result may be due to the choice of religious founders as the subset of charismatic leaders to be investigated by this project, it is complimented by the finding that five out of a possible nine second leaders were found to be alienated. In all, eight leaders fell in the mystically de-alienated category. Gandhi is an example of this kind of de-alienation. Concerning Gandhi’s perception of the relativity of objective symbols, Erikson (1969: 410-1) states, “The truth (for Gandhi) can only be revealed in the kind of appraisal which is in our action. . . . Gandhi commits himself only to ‘the relative truth as I have conceived it,’ but he also clings firmly to the dictum that only insofar as we can commit ourselves on selected occasions ‘to the death’ to test such truth—only to that extent can we be true to ourselves and other. . . .” Confucius, centuries before Gandhi, also demonstrates a mystical de-alienation by denying the absolute nature of laws. In this regard, Smith (1963: 68) states, “Confucius never refers to fixed unchangeable law or to a divine fiat which lays down what men can or cannot do in any particular circumstance, because he realizes that what is fitting on one occasion may be inappropriate to another.” Because of similar reasons, eight out of fifteen charismatic leaders were placed in the mystical de-alienation category.

The remaining seven charismatic leaders were classified as prophetically de-alienated. John Calvin, the Swiss reformer, believed that the original authority of the gospel had been lost through confusion and obfuscation by the Roman Catholic Church. In Calvin’s own words, his conversion was produced by “God himself” (Schaff, 1892: 310). According to McNeill (1954:216) “Calvin saw the Reformation as the restoration of the true Catholic Church that had been almost completely suppressed and undiscoverable in the previous era.” Concerning controversy, “He (Calvin) ordinarily reveals no doubt that the truth is on his side” (McNeill, 1954: 228). Nichiren, who has often been called Japan’s Luther, is also classified as prophetically de-alienated. He lived during the thirteenth century and claimed to be the Buddha who by prophecy was to appear in the Age of Mappo. Nichiren taught that the Lotus Sutra and his simple interpretation of it are the fundamental truth. According to Kiyoki Murata (1969: 30), “Nichiren meant that the canon of every other Buddhist sect was fake, and they must accept the supremacy of his own Buddhist canon, the Lotus Sutra.” Thus, all fifteen charismatic leaders were de-alienated with approximately half falling into each of the two possible categories.

The social environment of the religious founders can be described as a period of social upheaval. In fourteen out of fifteen cases, the leaders were cited by biographers to have existed during an era of social change. This finding, however, should be tempered with the knowledge that most biographers and social historians have a propensity for describing charismatic leaders as living during times of general unrest and tumult. Often the leaders were characterized as dynamic personalities who were able to forge order out of chaos. For example, George Fox, the founder of the Quakers, lived during a period of social unrest and spent much of his time in prison for conducting religious meetings. Rufus Jones (in Fox: 1919) in the preface to Fox’s autobiography states that, “Religious authority ceased to count as it had in the past. Existing religious conditions were no longer accepted as final. There was widespread restlessness which gradually produced a host of curious sects.” The only leader who
was not coded as living during a period of social change was Joseph Smith of the Mormons. He began his ministry during the 1820s and none of the biographies reviewed refer to any condition of social unrest. Although the group he founded was persecuted and Joseph Smith was assassinated in a jail in Illinois, his followers were not members of a minority group. The results of this variable are strengthened by the finding that out of the eight second leaders coded, four of them conducted their ministry during a period of relative stability.

The religious founders were randomly scattered throughout the three possible categories which define his relationship with the traditional religious structure. This finding radically challenges the contention that charisma is a force which must exist outside of the institutional structure. Out of fifteen religious founders, four were within a religious institutional office; six were within a religious tradition, but not within the institutional structure; and finally, five had broken with both the religious tradition and the institution in order to found a new religion. Martin Luther, paradoxically, is classified as within a religious institutional office. Much of his life was spent within the Catholic Church fighting for reform, and after he split with the Church his credentials as a theologian permitted him to reenter a religious office almost immediately as the leader of a previously established religious group. Mahatma Gandhi is an example of a leader who was well within the tradition of Hinduism, but did not fit within any institutionalized religious framework. Gandhi reinterpreted traditional Hinduism to meet the needs of an independence seeking India, but he never occupied any pre-existing religious office. The Buddha is a religious leader who broke both with the tradition and the institutional religion of his times. He ran away from his life as a noble much to the discontent of his father and became an ascetic. After having become disillusioned with the life of an ascetic, he finally attained enlightenment and began to preach the new doctrine of the middle way. Thus, the religious founders in this study tentatively confirm the hypothesis that charisma can be found both inside and outside of a religious institution or tradition. (The fact that the second leaders were all within a religious institution is probably a function of how they were defined.)

The teachings of the religious founders in all but one case were coded as innovative. Fourteen leaders espoused a set of teachings which differed systematically from those of the traditional religion of their times. This finding suggests that an innovative set of teachings is an important variable for the institutionalization of religion. Once again, it should be cautioned that most biographers and historians of the leaders and their sects tend to extoll and expound on their respective virtues, and this bias may be reflected in the high number of leaders classified with innovative teachings. Jesus is an example of a leader classified as innovative. According to MacKinnon (1931: 305-6), “Whilst granting this dependence on inherited Hebrew thought, it is none the less evident that he (Jesus) moulds it in the crucible of his own mind and religious experience and has impressed on it the stamp of his own personality and genius.” Joseph Smith’s teachings, although not radically breaking with tradition, nevertheless contain many new elements. Referring to Smith’s teachings Schmucker (1856: 67-8) states, “His doctrine was both old and new. It had sufficient of the old to attract those who would have been repelled by a creed entirely new, and it had sufficient of the new to
rivet attention and inflame the imagination of those whose minds an old... creed... would have fallen and taken no root.” George Fox is the only religious founder who was cited as having an uninnovative set of teachings. None of the biographies reviewed stated that his teachings were innovative. Jones (in Fox, 1919: 33) represents a typical sampling when he states, “His originality... lies... not so much in the discovery... of the principle (of Divine Guidance) as in the fearless application of it. Other men had believed in Divine guidance; other Christians had proclaimed the impenetration of God in the lives of men.” The finding that fourteen out of fifteen religious founders espoused an innovative set of teachings is buttressed by the contrasting results of the second leaders. Only one out of the nine second leaders coded were found to have teachings which differed significantly from the founder of the religion. Thus, innovative teaching is an important variable in distinguishing the religious founders from their seconds.

The procedure for institutionalizing charisma has always been a controversial subject in the sociology of religion. Although this variable was not coded per se, a summary of how each of the fifteen religions was institutionalized was compiled during the research. From these summaries it was found that a religion may be institutionalized by three different agents: the religious founder himself, a second or later follower, or finally a religious council. Each of the following cases represents one of these different forms of institutionalization. First, in several instances the religious founder himself is instrumental in the institutionalization of his own religion. For instance, George Fox, the founder of the Quakers, during his lifetime setup annual meetings of the clergy in which church doctrine and other matters were decided. Gradually, other meetings of laymen as well as clergy firmly institutionalized the religion well before Fox’s death in 1691. In the second instance, a second or later leader organizes the founder’s teachings and institutionalizes the religion. In such a case, the leader will usually justly or unjustly claim to have been designated by the charismatic leader to take over the reins of control within the neophyte religion. Within Islam a split occurred immediately after Muhammad’s death when Abu Bakr was approved as the second by the political powers, and Ali was chosen as the rightful heir to Muhammad because of his hereditary ties with the prophet. Eventually two religious traditions, the Sunnis and the Shi’ite, were established tracing their authority to Muhammad through two different means.

Finally, the third type of agent of institutionalizing a religion is not through any individual, but through a religious council whose task is to unify the religion. In the case of Martin Luther, his Church began to fragment after his death in 1546. The secular authorities, who could not abide by such disharmony caused by the conflicting factions, appointed a consistory to resolve the problems which were dividing the Lutherans. Thus, after Luther’s death, no individual institutionalized the religion, but rather a council of secularly appointed theologians decided on matters concerning church doctrine. These three types of institutionalizing agents are not mutually exclusive categories and, in fact, different combinations of them may be instrumental in the institutionalization of a religion.
DISCUSSION

The comparison of the religious founders to their second leaders is important for determining the unique characteristics of the charismatic leader. The seconds act as a comparison group in that they are expected to demonstrate a different pattern of attributes when compared with the founder. Because information was available for only nine second leaders, the comparisons, although stimulating, must not be understood as a rigorous test of the proposed theory. In general, the religious founders were de-alienated, lived during a period of radical social change, were inside or outside of the traditional and institutional structure of the religion, and their teachings were innovative. The second leaders were found to be alienated, lived during a period of social change or stability, were definitely within an institutional office, and generally their teachings were uninnovative. These findings suggest that the religious founder does systematically differ from the second on the variables which were deemed important by the proposed theory.

The findings of this study indicate that charisma is not an individualistic phenomena hinging only on the extraordinary quality of a leader’s personality. Rather, charisma stems from a complex of factors meeting in and around the same individual. For instance, the leader is likely to live during a period of radical social change in which the values of the society have changed leaving an opening for a new formulation of religious beliefs. Although social factors determine the relative likelihood of the emergence of charismatic leaders, they do not determine that they will arise or what their teachings will be. In this respect the leader has a freedom of the will upon which Weber insisted. Although all of the conditions indicated above must converge in order to have the possibility for the existence of charisma, this does not diminish the chemistry which occurs between the charismatic leaders and their followers once all of these factors have been combined.

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Nabil-i’A’zam  

O’Dea, Thomas  

Parsons, Talcott  

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Willner, Ann, and Dorothy Willner  

Yinger, Milton  
### Appendix

#### The Coding of the Leaders by the Variables

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<th>Social Conditions</th>
<th>Nature of Teachings</th>
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Mystical De-Alienation
Prophetic De-Alienation
Alienation
Within Institution and Tradition
Outside Institution and Within Tradition
Outside of both Institution and Tradition

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Period of Social Change
Period of Stability
Innovative Teachings
Teachings are not Innovative