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In this chapter, we'll discuss why we have a penchant for the depiction of leadership through the stories of individual leaders and why that tendency poses serious challenges to understanding leadership. One of the key distinctions in this collection of essays is the one between leaders and leadership. Following James MacGregor Burns, Richard Couto has tried to focus scholars and practitioners on the dynamics of leadership rather than on the lives of leaders. It may well be a losing battle. We'll try to explain why.

Our discussion proceeds as follows. First, we will discuss the ways human wiring leads us from infancy forward to focus on other people, and then how that focus leads us be extraordinarily intrigued by leaders. Second, we will discuss some of the systematic biases in our perceptions and evaluation of leaders, and the challenges these biases pose for understanding leadership through biographies. Third, we will explore how the focus on leaders combines with basic aspects of social perception to see leaders as by far the most important element in group activity and success. This happens to the near exclusion of other important dynamic elements in our thinking about group performance. Finally, with these problems in mind, we will explore the leadership of four U.S. presidents in the area of equal rights for African Americans and how their efforts and actions have been understood by various historians and biographers.

Social Cognition and the Perception of Leaders

With good reason, Elliot Aronson's classic text on social psychology is called *The Social Animal* (2007). That humans are highly social isn't news to most people, but the extent to which we focus on other human beings is quite remarkable. Studies of auditory perception show that infants can "easily distinguish human voices from other sounds" (Crider, Goethals, Kavanaugh, & Solomon, 1989, p. 348). We are wired to attend to other people and to assess their significance for us. Studies of visual perception show that infants as young as 2 days old reveal strong preferences for gazing at human faces. Furthermore, they systematically appraise the various features of others' faces and show a remarkable ability to discriminate emotional expressions in those faces. It makes good evolutionary sense that infants are attuned to the other people in their environment. These individuals determine whether an infant will live or die, and if live, thrive or not thrive.

The idea that evolution has provided us with an inclination to attend to and respond to other people and their emotional dispositions, especially perhaps their emotional dispositions toward us, is nicely captured in Carl Jung's (1959) controversial theory of the collective unconscious and archetypes. Jung argued that we are born with a collective unconscious composed of an evolved set of potential or latent images, often called archetypes. These latent images have strong emotions connected with them. For example, the collective unconscious includes a *mother* archetype. This is an inherited latent image of a mother, based on human beings' collective evolutionary experience with mothers. When the mother, or a person who assumes a maternal role, actually appears in an infant's life, and generally fits the inherited *mother* archetype, the archetype will be elicited and the infant's experience of that person will reflect the archetype. The archetype will guide both

the perception of the person and the emotional reaction to him or her. A person who fits the *mother* archetype will typically elicit a positive emotion in the infant, and the infant will be drawn toward that figure. In short, when an infant encounters a person corresponding to the *mother* archetype, that person is recognized and elicits a strong, and in this case, positive, emotion. More generally, we pay attention to, and are drawn to, or repelled from, objects that fit a latent image. A mother is just one example.

For understanding leadership, we note that Jung also talked about other relevant archetypes, such as *God, Hero, Demon,* and *Wise Old Man.* When encountering people who fit the archetype, we perceive them in ways that are consistent with the archetype. For example, someone who elicits the *hero* archetype might be seen as bold and capable and might produce feelings of awe and reverence.

Taken together, the implication of the infant research in responding to human forms and voices and the Jungian theory of archetypes is that human beings are born to attend, appraise, and respond emotionally to other human beings. Also, we are prepared by evolution to see some of them in accord with inherited leader-like images.

The idea that humans possess images of leaders, whether based on individual experience or evolutionary history, is a central part of what research psychologists today call *implicit leadership theories* or *leader schemas.* Our implicit leadership theories include our beliefs about what leaders are like, or more specifically, both what traits they have and how they behave. Consider, for example, our beliefs about the traits of leaders. Assessing both historians' and the public's evaluations of U.S. presidents, Dean Keith Simonton (1987) argues that we compare U.S. presidents to leader schemas that define the ideal or archetypical leader as strong, active, and good (p. 238). That is, our "theory" about leadership includes the idea that leaders are very generally strong and active and that they are good human beings. Simonton further argues that the leader schema we use to assess presidents is quite abstract and "gives us an ideal or archetype having transhistorical, even-cross cultural, relevance" that "may even possess a sociobiological substratum" (pp. 239, 240). In effect then, Simonton suggests, like Jung, that human beings have inherited conceptions of good leaders. And we tend to compare leaders or potential leaders with these (inherited) templates. Again, the overall implication is that we are attuned to other people, especially potential leaders, and have ready leader images or schemas by which to assess people's attributes as leaders. See also Chapter 7, "The Hero Myth," Chapter 71, "Individuation and Archetypes," and Simonton's work in this book, Chapter 70, "Personality and Leadership."

How do schemas work? One central idea is that if people are perceived and evaluated with reference to a schema, they will be perceived as having attributes included in the schema, whether they do or not. Similarly, they will be perceived not to have traits that don't fit the schema, even though they may have them. In short, we fill in the blanks in ways that fit our preconceptions. Thus, a newly elected leader might be perceived as strong, until later information disconfirms that expectation. Interesting in this regard is Malcolm Gladwell's discussion of "The Warren Harding Error" in his book *Blink* (2005). Ohio politico Harry Daugherty said that Warren G. Harding just looked like a senator. His appearance, manner, and voice fit the schema of a senator, or of a leader more generally. People then attributed other leadership qualities to Harding, such as intelligence and competence. Unfortunately for him and the nation, Harding didn't have those qualities. An interesting example of the workings of a schema in the realm of sports comes from baseball statistician Bill James. James writes that we think about ballplayers in images, essentially schemas. One of our images is about sluggers. They are slow, strong musclemen (James, 1992, p. 377). James argues that this image makes baseball fans (mis)remember that famous Chicago Cubs slugger Ernie Banks was not a great fielder because being a good fielder isn't part of the slugger image. Actually, Banks was a much better fielder than he was typically given credit for.

A recent theory of leadership based on social identity theory (Hogg, 2008) discusses further how our attention to leaders and our theories of their personal characteristics affect our perceptions of them. This account emphasizes the constructive nature of social perception and specifically proposes that once someone is identified as a leader, followers build a charismatic image of that individual. Doing so would fit with the Jungian notion that many leaders elicit the *hero* archetype, and we attribute the qualities we have learned are heroic to leaders (see Chapter 7, "The Hero Myth," and Chapter 71, "Individuation and Archetypes"). It also fits with research on schemas, again showing that we fill in the blanks and attribute qualities to leaders that are consistent with our preconceptions.

All these ideas about constructing charismatic or even heroic images of leaders follow from the first principle that from very beginnings of life we attend to important others in our environment, people who have the power to affect our lives for the better or worse. Although initially we may attend to persons who affect our individual well-being, as we develop into adults, we give more attention to persons who affect the well-being of important groups of which we see as selves as part. And to the extent that either common citizens or sophisticated biographers are affected by the tendency to construct charismatic images, or perceive leaders as fitting the archetypical schema of leaders as strong, active, and good, there is room for bias and error.

Another aspect of social perception poses challenges to understanding leadership through biography. Both biographers and their readers implicitly and perhaps explicitly organize their knowledge about specific leaders in ways that slant their treatments of those persons. First, we tend to have positive or negative overall appraisals of other people. We like them or we don't. And even though biographers may recognize the complexity of an individual's life and personality, they generally have a clearly perceptible positive or negative appraisal (i.e., bias) that provides an

interpretive framework for whatever a leader does. In the case of a positive appraisal, positive characteristics or actions are likely to be characterized as representative and reflecting a leader's true character whereas negative ones are likely to be excused in one way or another. Also, schemas are generally stable and not particularly flexible. This may lead biographers to perceive more stability in a leader's character than is actually there and not acknowledge as much genuine change over the life cycle as actually occurs. Biographers may try to overcome their biases to varying degrees, but they will be hampered by some of the ways humans automatically organize knowledge.

An additional aspect of the organization of knowledge poses a further challenge to accurately understanding leaders, and therefore leadership, through biography. Research by Robert Zajonc (1960) shows that, when people organize knowledge to convey it to others, they endeavor to develop a more coherent account of the information than they possess themselves, one that is perhaps simpler but more internally consistent. This further tendency in the organization of knowledge may lead biographers to portray leaders in one-sided ways. In addition, of course, readers of biographies will further organize the information that is conveyed in them, and perhaps further simplify their understanding of a leader. In turn, that simplification is likely to further polarize the reader's evaluation of a leader, and draw the reader toward oversimplified and overpolarized conceptions of a leader.

We have considered how our implicit leadership theories suggest the personal qualities of leaders. Other important elements of those theories are notions about the causality of leadership (Emrich, 1999). That is, we have implicit ideas about what causes leadership and what leadership causes. For our purposes, the most interesting relevant research focuses on what James R. Meindl (1990) has called the *romance of leadership*. This term reflects research (e.g., Bligh & Meindl, 2005) showing that the success or failure of groups is often attributed to good or bad leadership, respectively. We believe in leadership, and we look to leaders to supply it and cause the groups they lead successfully to reach their goals as a result of their leadership. In many cases, probably most, however, group success or failure is influenced by much more than the actions of a leader. In this regard, some sports writers argue that pro football teams pay quarterbacks too much because the team owners attribute too much of team success or failure to a leader on the field, but writers fall prey to the same error.

The romance of leadership attributional tendency to assign causality for group outcomes to a leader is likely based in a more fundamental attribution bias. This bias has been called both the correspondence bias (Jones, 1990) and the fundamental attribution error (Ross, 1977). These terms refer to people's tendencies to attribute other people's behavior, or the outcome of their behavior, to the others' internal or personal qualities rather than to external or situational influences. For example, the correspondence bias would lead us to attribute a child's failure on a test to the child's low intelligence rather to than the difficulty of the test, or to classroom distractions. Or, it would lead people to attribute a person's statement of support for a political candidate to the person's real opinion rather than to conformity pressures.

A closely related bias can have special relevance for understanding both the biographies of leaders and the leaders themselves. Quite often, individuals' analyses of and attributions for their own actions differ from those of biographers or historians. We can understand these divergent perspectives by what is known as "the actor-observer bias." We noted earlier the correspondence bias, the tendency to attribute another person's behavior to internal qualities. This can be seen as one-half of the actor–observer bias (Jones & Nisbett, 1971). Specifically, the actor–observer bias is the tendency of observers to attribute another person's behavior to motives, traits, or other personal qualities, whereas the people who performed the behavior, the actors, see their behavior as attributable to environmental circumstances. That is, we see ourselves as doing things that are appropriate to the situation, things that are responsive to our environment. But the correspondence bias slants observers of our actions in the opposite direction, toward seeing those actions as reflecting our traits and personalities. Whose perspective comes closer to the truth? We don't really know, but we'd be wise to bet on the actor. B. F. Skinner has argued quite persuasively that behavior is under the control of environmental contingencies. Our behavior is strongly influenced by the situations in which we find ourselves. No matter who is right, we should be aware that biographers often make attributions about leaders behavior that are different than the attributions that leaders themselves make.

Let us summarize the implications of these aspects of human perception and information processing for understanding the importance of biographies in shaping people's understanding of leadership. First, from the very earliest moments of life, human infants focus on other people and process the implications of other people's dispositions for their well-being. Second, we interpret the people we attend to in terms of schemas or knowledge structures, which include inherited, unconscious archetypes that affect our conscious images and constructions of leaders. Third, we tend to see leader behavior as highly causal, and therefore being responsible for the well-being of groups as well as individuals. Therefore, we are highly attentive to biographies of leaders. Furthermore, both biographers and readers of biographies probably overestimate both the role of individual dispositions in causing the subject's behavior as well as the relative importance of that behavior in causing the group actions and their success or failure.

Understanding Presidential Leadership and the Rights of African Americans

In the remainder of this chapter, we will consider how we can best understand through biography and other sources the leadership with respect to the rights of African

Americans of four U.S. presidents, Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, Woodrow Wilson, and Lyndon B. Johnson. Although each case differs from the others, some general considerations are important. First, despite the problems discussed earlier, biographies are not useless. They convey a great deal of information about both leaders and leadership that might be very difficult to obtain otherwise. The sophisticated reader's job is to be aware that human beings are imperfect perceivers of each other, and of the several ways that that is true. Readers might also make themselves aware of the different perspectives that different historians and biographers have on different leaders. If biographers disagree, readers must do a little digging on their own. As we will see in the case of Lincoln, good primary material is available to those who want to understand Lincoln on their own terms. If biographers agree, especially biographers from different political or intellectual perspectives, there is perhaps some correction for bias. Maybe the leadership of a particular figure is well triangulated by observers with diverging points of view. But then again, perhaps they are all making the same social perception errors. It's hard to know. Ronald Reagan once said about negotiating with the Soviet Union, trust but verify. That's good advice for people picking up the biography of a leader.

Abraham Lincoln

There's no better place to start than with Lincoln. During his presidency, the Civil War was fought and won (by the Union), and "American Slavery," "one of those offenses, which in the providence of God, must needs come," was removed. Because Lincoln's 200th birthday passed recently, his life and career have been scrutinized to an extraordinary degree. And appraisals of Lincoln are still being contested, even though he is usually rated as our greatest president, or if not the greatest, just behind George Washington or Franklin D. Roosevelt. For example, a piece in the February 2009 issue of *Smithsonian* magazine by presidential scholar Philip Kunhardt asks whether Lincoln was the "Great Emancipator or unreconstructed racist?" Different biographers, historians, and other commentators have addressed that question differently. Their different answers depend on many matters of perspective. However, one thing that seems plain is that Lincoln's views evolved in some ways but endured in others. Fortunately, we have his words, in speeches, letters, and official messages, to help us answer our question. All biographies use these materials to some extent. Those biographies can guide our own study of Lincoln's words. But ultimately, we have to develop or construct our own understanding from the original data. Fortunately, those data have been made easily available to us online and through carefully edited volumes (most notably, Don Fehrenbacher's Library of America two-volume set, *Abraham Lincoln: Speeches and Writings,* 1989). Through them, we can track both the ways Lincoln was unmoving and the ways he adapted.

A good place to start is Lincoln's first inaugural address, delivered on March 4, 1861. The context is important. Lincoln was elected with no support from the South. He won only because the Democratic Party split into northern and southern tickets and divided the pro-slavery electorate, with Lincoln winning less than 40% of the total popular vote. Just after Lincoln's election, and before his inauguration, seven Deep South states seceded from the Union. Their leader was South Carolina, followed shortly by Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. But four "upper South" states, Arkansas, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia, had not yet seceded, nor had four slave-holding "border" states, Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri. Lincoln knew that the more of these states that seceded, the more difficult it would be to save the Union. "I think to lose Kentucky is nearly the same as to lose the whole game. Kentucky gone, we can not hold Missouri, nor, as I think, Maryland. These all against us, and the job on our hands is too large for us" (Fehrenbacher, 1989, p. 269). Also, Lincoln still held hope of restoring the Union without civil war. Therefore, he had to walk a very fine line. He needed to say he would enforce the law but not disturb slavery in the states where it existed.

In this context, what Lincoln said about *not* freeing slaves is more understandable, but it is jarring to those who think of Lincoln as the Great Emancipator: "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so." Lincoln went so far as to indicate he would support an amendment to the Constitution "to the effect that the federal government, shall never interfere with the domestic institutions of the States, including that of persons held to service." Lincoln did implicitly repeat his opposition to slavery: "One section of our country believes slavery is *right,* and ought to be extended, while the other believes it is *wrong,* and ought not to be extended." But the emphasis of the entire speech is that he will not move against slavery where it exists, and that war is therefore unnecessary and unwise.

Of course, the war came, the four upper South states seceded, but the four border states did not. And the war created exigencies with respect to slavery that none had anticipated before its outbreak. When escaped slaves fled to Union armies, some kind of policy for dealing with them had to be devised. And that policy had to recognize the reality that it would almost surely be impossible to actually force the return of the escaped slaves to their owners. Gradually, the policy first devised by General Benjamin Butler to keep the slaves within Union lines and use them as contraband of war was implicitly and then explicitly adopted. Early in the war, Butler, Union commander in Norfolk, Virginia, essentially laughed at Southern planters' demands that he return their fugitive slaves under existing U.S. laws. How, asked Butler, can you secede from the Union and then ask us to enforce laws on

your behalf that will aid the rebellion? In line with this logic, the Congress enacted Confiscation Acts in August 1861 and July 1862, which allowed the Union armies to free escaped slaves being used by the Confederate military. And Union commanders began to use the labor of these escaped slaves in the war effort. Lincoln understood the value to the Union of effort of using slaves in its cause and developed the idea, as an extension of what was already being done, of freeing slaves in areas that were in armed rebellion against the federal government.

This line of thinking was subtly expressed in Lincoln's famous August 22, 1862, letter to Horace Greeley, in which Lincoln again can be read as neutral with respect to emancipation. Lincoln wrote that the purpose of his war policy was "to save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution." He famously went on, "If I could save the Union without freeing *any* slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing *all* the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would do that." This apparent indifference to slavery was contradicted by Lincoln's seldom-quoted closing sentence. "I have here stated by purpose according to my view of *official* duty; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed *personal* wish that all men every where could be free." Still, Lincoln was criticized then and now for saying he was willing to save the Union without freeing any slaves.

When Lincoln wrote the letter to Greeley, the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation was in his desk drawer. He had discussed it with his cabinet and decided to announce it when the time seemed right, specifically after a Union military victory. Then it would seem to be issued from a position of strength, rather than one of desperation. Less than a month after the letter to Greeley, following almost immediately after the Union success at the battle of Antietam, Lincoln did in fact issue the preliminary emancipation proclamation, stating that unless the states still in rebellion returned to the Union in one hundred days, the slaves in those states would "be thenceforth, and forever free." In retrospect, Lincoln's letter to Greeley can be read as preparing the nation for the Emancipation Proclamation. It was sweeping in its implied assertion that Lincoln *could* (he had said he "would") free slaves ("all" or "some") to save the Union. This position was miles beyond what Lincoln had said in his first inaugural, which was categorical in stating he had no inclination to disturb slavery where it existed.

The preliminary and then the final Emancipation Proclamation, issued on January 1, 1863, have been criticized for falling short of the meaningful abolition of slavery. It said that slaves were free in states or areas of states still in rebellion. But the government had no power in those areas. In contrast, slaves were not freed in slave-holding areas that were under federal control, such as in the border states of Kentucky and Maryland. Lincoln adopted this approach to keep the border states in the Union (he is reputed to have quipped, "I hope to have God on my side, but I must have Kentucky") and because he planned to use

means other than force to free slaves in those areas. But those plans themselves were and are often criticized for being both misguided and unrealistic.

Lincoln's approach to the border states was compensated emancipation, and colonization of freed slaves in Africa, the Caribbean, or possibly the western United States. He made the case for this plan in his December 1862 message to Congress, a message that is famous for its soaring eloquence if not for the flawed idea it proposed:

> In *giving* freedom to the *slave,* we *assure* freedom to the *free*—honorable alike in what we give, and what we preserve. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of earth. Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just—a way which, if followed, the world will forever applaud, and God must forever bless.

In discussions both with White border state leaders and African American leaders, Lincoln learned that this plan had no support, and it was largely abandoned. Eventually, slavery ended in the border states by changes to their own state constitutions (Maryland) or by the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (Delaware, Kentucky, and Missouri).

Lincoln's seemingly cautious approach to emancipation must be understood in terms of the distinction he made in his letter to Greeley between his official duty and his personal wishes. He believed that he must follow the Constitution in all matters. And initially he felt that he had no authority to interfere with slavery where it existed. He only embraced emancipation when he had convinced himself that it was militarily convenient and actually indispensable to saving the Union. This view is clearly expressed in a letter Lincoln wrote to Albert Hodges in the spring of 1864. Lincoln repeated his personal belief about slavery: "I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I can not remember when I did not so think, and feel." But Lincoln continued he did not believe that he had "an unrestricted right to act officially upon this judgment and feeling." It was only when he came to believe that emancipation was an "indispensable necessity" in saving the Union that he embraced it. Lincoln used that specific phrase—indispensable necessity—repeatedly in this letter.

Lincoln embraced emancipation fully after signing the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. Even though he was pressured intensely and consistently to abandon it to bring the South back into the government, his commitment was clear. He would go on to actively support the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, ratified after his death. He wrote in another important letter, "The promise being made, must be kept." Despite his unwavering commitment, once made, Lincoln understood, as so many other leaders understand, that their actions are strongly influenced by context and external circumstances. Lincoln felt that the correct attribution for his behavior was to those externals, not simply to his personal wishes or desires. In the last

paragraph of his letter to Hodges about emancipation as an indispensable necessity, he wrote these memorable words:

> In telling this tale I attempt no compliment to my own sagacity. I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me. Now, at the end of 3 years struggle the nation's condition is not what either party, or any man devised, or expected. God alone can claim it.

Here, Lincoln is being too modest. Although events largely shaped his evolving approach to emancipation, once he believed that he had found a way to marry his personal wishes to his constitutional duty, he refused to let any event, including the likely prospect of losing reelection in 1864, to sway him from his creative forging of purposes: preserving the Union *and* freeing all slaves.

Ulysses S. Grant

Lincoln clearly understood, as he expressed in the opening of his second inaugural address that "the progress of our arms" was that "upon which all else chiefly depends." More specifically, he depended on the progress of his general in chief, Grant. Lincoln once commented of Grant, in the words of a familiar hymn, "I am his and he is mine." That is, Lincoln's political success depended on Grant's military success, and Grant's military success depended on Lincoln's political backing. The actor–observer bias can be seen to operate in Grant's case. For example, biographers and Civil War historians have written about the climactic meeting of Grant and Robert E. Lee at Appomattox on April 9, 1865, when Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia to Grant. Lee was resplendent, wearing a fresh dress uniform and a sword, which he expected to surrender ceremoniously to Grant. Grant was in a shabby private's uniform, largely covered with mud, looking, one of his officers later wrote, "like a fly on a shoulder of beef." Grant was clearly embarrassed by the contrast and explained that his baggage train had been delayed during his army's pursuit of Lee's army. That is, his dress was something that just happened, given the exigencies of warfare. Some biographers have argued that Grant's dress revealed his personal preferences, and that he deliberately dressed down because to him, dressing up felt pretentious.

The actor–observer bias aside, our larger focus is on Grant's attitudes and actions toward slavery and the rights of African Americans. Before the Civil War, Grant was not particularly concerned with slavery one way or another. His wife's family owned slaves, and for a short time, near St. Louis, Grant did too. He was uncommonly kind to his slaves, foolishly so according to some of his White peers. As he rose to higher levels of command in the Union army, like other northern commanders Grant had to figure out what to do with slaves that had escaped from their masters as federal armies came near southern plantations and other concentrations of slaves. As noted earlier, pressured by several union generals, President Lincoln had come around to

the position that escaped slaves constituted "contraband of war," that is, enemy property that should not be returned. Grant willingly went along with this policy.

At first, Grant employed an army chaplain, John Logan, to organize and care for escaped slaves, but then began to use them for menial tasks associated with supporting his army. His usage of escaped slaves evolved, perhaps inevitably. He first used them for guard duty. Then he used them as soldiers. This evolution paralleled Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. That document provided for the use of freed slaves to garrison forts and man vessels. Their more general use as soldiers quickly followed. Grant strongly supported this policy. He once told German leader Otto von Bismarck that although at the beginning of the war, most soldiers fought to preserve the Union, not end slavery, when slaves were used against the Union "we all felt, even those who did not object to slaves, that slavery must be destroyed" (Bunting, 2004, p. 49). Although Grant may not have been correct about how others felt, his own commitment to freeing slaves and destroying slavery, in line with Lincoln's policy, was strong and never wavered.

In conforming to Lincoln's policy, Grant was drawn into politics, a realm he had never entered before. He understood that his duty was to obey civilian authority and he did so, with relish. After the war, he was drawn in much more deeply. Lincoln was shot on April 14, 1865, and died the next morning. The new president, Andrew Johnson, had a very different idea of Reconstruction, or "restoration" as he called it, than did Lincoln. He opposed suffrage for Blacks and wanted essentially to turn the governments of the Southern states back to White supremacists who would institute a regime that was as close to the old regime of slavery as possible. Grant, still serving as general in chief of the army, was appalled. He strongly favored Lincoln's policy, protecting Blacks' economic rights and giving then at least some suffrage, starting with those who were educated or who had fought for the Union during the war. Grant believed that to practically re-enslave Blacks would give back the gains that were made in the war. He strongly opposed Johnson's policy but was constrained against speaking out by his position in the military. Grant became more radical in his beliefs, resigned from the army, and accepted the Republican nomination for president in 1868. He won easily.

Grant's approach to African Americans during his presidency was made clear in his first inaugural address, delivered on March 4, 1869. He unequivocally argued for full suffrage for Blacks:

> The question of suffrage is one which is likely to agitate the public so long as a portion of the citizens of the nation are excluded from its privileges in any State. It seems desirable that this question should be settled now, and I entertain the hope and express the desire that it may be by the ratification of the fifteenth article of amendment to the Constitution.

(When ratified, the amendment read: The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged

by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.) Grant pushed hard for the passage of the amendment, even pressing the governor of Nebraska to convene a special ratification session of the state legislature. When the amendment was passed, Grant took the unusual step of sending a special message to Congress expressing his pleasure. He called the amendment one "of grander importance than any other act of the kind from the foundation of our free government to the present day." In that message, he also pressed for educational benefits for Blacks so that the franchise would be "a blessing."

Grant's support for Blacks never wavered. His policies were strongly resisted in the South. Yet in his second inaugural, he pressed forward, arguing that Blacks are still "not possessed of the civil rights which citizenship should carry with it. This is wrong, and should be corrected." He continued that a Black citizen should be given "a fair chance to develop what is good in him, give him access to the schools, and when he travels let him feel assured that his conduct will regulate the treatment and the fare he will receive." Although there is some criticism that Grant did not back up his rhetoric with action, especially after the mid-term election of 1874 overwhelmingly rejected his policies, he did all he could with the limited resources available to him. As late as October 1876, the month before the election to succeed him, Grant issued a proclamation authorizing the use of military force in South Carolina to protect Black citizens and keep the peace.

It is remarkable how Grant's views changed during his lifetime. His military experience and his commitment to Lincoln's vision and to what the Civil War had achieved help explain the change. But the way historians and biographers treated Grant has obscured this enormously important part of his legacy. First, the alleged scandals in Grant's administration, blown out of proportion, have obscured almost every other aspect. Second, Grant was vilified by "lost cause" historians for many years in the early days of the 20th century. Those scholars saw Reconstruction and efforts for Blacks as a misguided abuse by Northerners of federal power and of Southern states rights. They argued that Grant pushed entirely too hard for Black rights. Ironically, later historians, who have come to believe that efforts to support Blacks during Reconstruction were right, have suggested that Grant didn't do enough. Presently, the historical consensus, shaped by a number of biographers, is that Grant had it about right. He did what he could against opposition that was not overcome until the 1960s. Interestingly, in a 2009 C-Span survey of historians rating presidents, Grant has moved more than any other president from an earlier survey in 2000. At that point Grant was ranked 33rd of 41 presidents. That in itself was an improvement over surveys from the 1960s and 1970s, which put Grant at the very bottom, along with Harding. In the 2009 survey, Grant was ranked 23rd. On the dimension of "pursued equal justice for all," he had moved from 18 to the top 10, specifically, number 9. In my view, he should have ranked higher, ahead of both Roosevelts and John F. Kennedy, and behind only Lincoln, Johnson, Harry Truman, Bill Clinton, and Jimmy Carter. In fact, after emancipation, only Johnson and Truman had to buck political winds anywhere near as fierce as those Grant fought.

Woodrow Wilson

Wilson, the 28th president of the United States, from 1913–1921, provides a particularly interesting example of what we do and don't learn from biographies and historical studies of individuals. Most treatments of Wilson emphasize the successful and progressive domestic policies of his first administration and the U.S. entry into World War I in his second. Then special attention is given to Wilson's long trip to Paris after the war and his efforts there to negotiate the terms of a lasting world peace. Scholars also focus on the personal qualities that led to the ultimate failure of Wilson's dream of U.S. participation in the League of Nations.

Comparatively little is said about Wilson and race relations. Brief biographical sketches in collections of presidential biographies typically omit this subject from their treatments. The other aspects of his career are salient to historians and biographers. However, Wilson's record on rights for African Americans is consequential and from today's perspective, shameful. Wilson was elected in 1912 in a three-way race between himself, incumbent Republican president William Howard Taft, and former president Theodore Roosevelt. Taft and Roosevelt split the GOP vote, and Wilson won an overwhelming victory in the electoral college, but garnered only 42% of the popular vote. Most of Wilson's support came from the "solid South," the most reliable Democratic constituency, and Wilson filled his cabinet with Southern Democrats. Soon formal segregation was imposed in federal facilities. Wilson was born in Virginia and raised in Georgia. Some biographers have suggested that he was more sympathetic to Blacks than would be expected given his Southern roots. But Wilson argued against the admission of Blacks to Princeton University, where he was president from 1902–1910, and supported the segregationist policies of his cabinet officers. "I do approve of the segregation that is being attempted in several of the departments," he wrote. He argued that it was to the advantage of Blacks to be "organized" in separate facilities so that there would be less friction arising from Black and White interactions. He believed that this was in the interest of African Americans. Wilson took the United States into World War I with a segregated military. In fact, Black units were the first from the United States to enter the war, under European command. Margaret MacMillan's (2002) book on the Paris peace conference

in 1919 notes Wilson's treatment of his Black servants and aides, and his opposition to a racial equality clause in the postwar treaties.

Wilson's attitudes and behaviors toward Blacks can be understood with reference to his Southern background and the anti-Black policies of most of the Democratic party. But whatever the explanation, little of this facet of Wilson's personality and policy received much attention from many historians and biographers. It is mentioned, and then only briefly, in only one of three recent compendia of presidential biographies.

Appraisals of presidents change over time, as new information by biographers and historians is made salient to the scholarly community more generally. It appears that Wilson's star may be fading, and that his racist racial policies are responsible. In the early surveys of presidential greatness by Arthur Schlesinger, in 1948 and 1962, Wilson was rated fourth greatest, after Lincoln, Washington, and Franklin Roosevelt. In surveys from the 1980s, Wilson was generally ranked sixth, falling behind Thomas Jefferson and Theodore Roosevelt. In the 2000 C-Span survey, Wilson was also ranked sixth, after Washington, Lincoln, the two Roosevelts, and Truman. But Wilson was also second most controversial (after Clinton) in a 2000 Federalist Society and *Wall Street Journal* survey, and he fell to ninth in a 2009 C-Span survey. The comparison of the 2000 and 2009 C-Span surveys suggests that policies pertaining to race account for the modest drop. Wilson fell slightly on a number of the C-Span "Individual Leadership Characteristics." The two largest drops are from 6 to 10 on International Relations, and 20 to 27 on Pursued Equal Justice for All. That is, he fell from just above the median in 2000, to distinctly below the median in 2009. Still, we must be sobered by the extent to which the race-related aspects of Wilson's life and leadership are so little known and so lightly weighted.

Lyndon B. Johnson

If Wilson can be understood as not moving much past his Southern roots, Johnson provides a remarkable contrast. Johnson absorbed many regional prejudices and was politically dependent on wealthy Texas racists who offered financial support. Furthermore, Johnson could at times be personally crude and cruel, startlingly so to individual African Americans. Still, he transcended his native prejudices and acted with remarkable energy and effectiveness to pass civil rights legislation transforming the South and the entire nation. He is justifiably ranked second only to Lincoln in C-Span's category of Pursued Equal Justice for All.

In Johnson's case, the evolving clarity of his commitments and the inspiring quality of his biographies by Robert A. Caro (2003) and Robert Dallek (1998) have left little room for doubt or debate about his personal and political embodiment of the fight for civil rights.

Summary

It is ironic that as perceivers of leadership we pay so much attention to individual leaders yet risk misperceiving them in so many ways. It is biographers' project to consider individual leaders, so we can't blame biographers for doing their job. Yet we see, especially in the cases of Grant and Wilson, how imperfectly historians' work is sometimes done. Thus, we return to the beginning and note that paying less attention to individual leaders may be a good idea, but it's unlikely to happen. We must therefore read biographies carefully, keeping in mind the ways that they can be biased. It is not clear that other approaches to depicting and understanding leadership are necessarily superior to biography. It is clear that we have to be extremely thoughtful about the value of any biographical rendering of leadership.

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