

# TechNews

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF ILLINOIS INSTITUTE OF  
TECHNOLOGY SINCE 1928

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Our mission is to promote student discussion and bolster the IIT community by providing a newspaper that is highly accessible, a stalwart of journalistic integrity, and a student forum. TechNews is a dedicated to the belief that a strong campus newspaper is essential to a strong campus community.

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# Learning through historic leaders

**Jerry Sha**

TECHNEWS WRITER

There exists a distinction between a leader and a tyrant that is at once bold and indistinguishable.

Many historical great leaders were, in fact, tyrants with a talent for demagoguery. Figures such as Caesar, Napoleon, Elizabeth, Stalin, or Hitler commanded a great amount of respect and genuine loyalty from their numerous followers, but they were in essence clever tyrants who found a way to convince a mass of people to willingly embrace their personality and ideology. While their power is great, such figures impose the likeliness of their personal beliefs and biases upon their followers, often at the expense of the individuals who comprise their following. Such leaders overwrite the personal beliefs and individualism of those they propose to lead, and as such, while the personal virtues of the leadership figure is amplified by the reproduction of those virtues in their followers, amplified also are the vices, prejudices, and other shortcomings of the very human character which seeks to impose. Although the power these figures attain through the pervasive distribution of their ideology is great, the very nature of their leadership, which is to dominate and to impose a very flawed and imperfect image, leads to the rapid rise and equally rapid downfall of their legacies.

True organic leadership isn't to have authority vested upon you by sophistry, demagoguery, or other sly means, but the craft of persuading a general population of your worthiness to undertake certain tasks on their behalf. Historical organic leaders such as Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. rose naturally to the positions they are remembered for out of a de-

sire to serve the body of people whose interests they represented. As opposed to the tyrant who proposes a set of values for his/her followers to accept and identify with, an organic leader recognizes the needs and the identities of the group that he/she is fit to lead. Organic leaders often emerge and are quick to be discredited by those outside of the demographic they have naturally risen to serve, but the actions they take, the motivation that they instill naturally by resonating with the needs and desires of the group they have chosen to represent will far outlast the legacies of the most successful tyrant. While potential organic leaders are numerous, those who actually find occasion and motivation to rise to their potential are few, and these few are often overpowered by those who pursue means of leadership which more heavily incorporate tyrannical methods.

These two archetypes of leadership are not mutually exclusive, nor are they some arrogantly proposed model, which seeks to encompass all possible means of leadership. I am also, by no means, suggesting that tyrannical leadership is fundamentally inferior to the organic sort or vice versa. It is my sincere opinion that a truly successful leader must recognize and be proficient in utilizing all the modes of leadership, including and beyond the two archetypes discussed above, according to the situation and requirements that the leader is currently facing.

A commissioned military officer, for example, does not have the luxury of becoming intimately aware of the needs and abilities of the men and women he/she commands, for their responsibility comes from the orders of superior officers above them and their group. In this situation, organic leadership springing from empathy and personal connection must

be overruled by tyrannical military traditionalism. But when that same officer completes his/her commission and, later in life, becomes a civilian manager in a large corporation, he/she might then find it beneficial to rebalance their approach as to be at once sympathetic and organic to his coworkers, but also still stringent enough to meet the goals of the managers and the company. Finally, this same person may one day settle down and raise a family, in which case he/she must then manage another drastic transformation from leading and managing professionals to resolving conflicts between him/herself and their spouse, as well as guiding the development of their children, activities which, no doubt, require an infinite capacity of compassion and empathy, but also retain a residual trace of self-imprinting and dominance.

The ideal leader is, therefore, knowledgeable in the many ways that men and women are led, but also open to and capable of imposing drastic changes upon him/herself regarding both, the method and purpose of his leadership. Simple, brutal instruction can stamp out the efficient taskmaster, while natural, loving care can raise the compassionate father or mother. However, a true leader is all of this and more, able to understand the needs and capabilities of his/her flock, and able to grasp and pursue the objectives towards which he/she proposes to lead. The education of a true leader starts at the beginning of reaching this understanding, and that education and development never truly ends. Just as the group being led is never static, the world in which we navigate is never still, and the goal that we pursue is ever changing.

# Are the rich more unethical than the poor?

**Jerry Sha**

TECHNEWS WRITER

Research has previously suggested that individuals with higher socioeconomic standing (SES) are more likely to behave unethically. This finding was very much in alignment with the popular perception of the upper class, as evidenced by campaign slogans such as the 99%, or films such as The Wolf of Wall Street. However, a group of new researchers have suggested in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology that these prior results hold true only under a specific range of conditions and definitions.

How one defines moral and ethical behavior is critical to making generalizing claims regarding such behavior. Unethical behavior is usually associated with the employment of unfair methods in search of selfish gain. An example would be cheating on a test to get a better grade. However, unethical behavior covers much more than selfish gain. For example, if a friend of yours wants to see your old test from last semester when the professor forbids it, you giving up the test would still be unethical, but it would not be for direct self-benefit.

A new study in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology attempts to account for such unselfish but likewise unethical behavior, and its findings are quite interesting: There isn't a reliably reproducible difference in the observed ethicality of the rich and poor, but when unethical behavior does occur, those with higher SES are more likely to act unethically for the sake of themselves, while the opposite is true in that those with lower SES are more likely to act unethically for others. For the full study, visit <http://goo.gl/90wPOK>.

In an example experimental setup, groups of participants were told to play a

computerized dice game. For one trial, the researchers stated that if the sum of a series of dice rolls totaled above 14, then the participant would be entered to win a \$50 gift card. For the opposing trial, the condition for the gift card was the same, but the gift card would be given to someone else of the participant's choice.

The dice program used in the trials was programmed to never exceed a sum of 12, and therefore, any participant that reported a sum of 14 or above was lying. However, the participants with higher SES lied more frequently when the recipients of the card were themselves, and the opposite was true for the group with lower SES.

Before we jump to any snide conclusions, it is important to take a closer look at what SES actually constitutes, and which factors are most influential in ethical decision making. Of the many factors included in the term, education and income seems to be the major factor, and conveniently, both are simple to account for in experimental trials.

Eighty-one participants were surveyed on their income and level of education before being subjected to a battery of tests and surveys regarding their decision morality. As it turns out, income played a much greater role than education, and the conclusion reached by the researchers begs further attention.

The researchers contend that income is much more closely associated with power. Power, furthermore, is an unstable state of being. A person could move frequently through short periods of time from positions of high to low power. Your correspondent, for example, finds himself in low to average power positions during his classes through the day, but that position improves drastically during extracurricular student clubs, sports, and numerous other activities. Depending on our personality, we expend our effort throughout

the day to either enter into or avoid positions of power, and more importantly, those individuals at a higher SES find themselves in positions of high power, intentionally or not, much more frequently than individuals with lower SES.

Income, as it happens, is an excellent measure of the average power wielded in our capitalist society. Those with high income are generally more used to making decisions on their own grounds for themselves, and each of those decisions usually lead them toward positions of higher power, creating a positive feedback loop. Those who are unaccustomed to the expression of power, on the other hand, are not as confident when they are placed into powerful positions, especially when asked to openly utilize the power they attain for their own, personal gain. This process, therefore, creates a negative feedback.

Will to power has been, for a long time, a fascinating facet of sociology, and this recent publication, taken in that light, shows that the acquisition and expression of power is still a very powerful force in creating the subtler boundaries of our society, with major implications in other critical concepts such as class warfare, inequality, and class mobility.

It is not the intention of your correspondent in penning this article to incite a call to action or personal reform. The paper and its findings are simply a very interesting lens with which we can see the world. For those power-minded individuals, a careful and in depth reading of the full article will yield valuable insights to assist them in communication, persuasion, and the outright manipulation of other individuals, whereas a more timid reader will attain a more thorough understanding of how various power structures in society came to be.

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# IN PRINT

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