Power, Affect, and Meaning as Domains of Communication
William M. Kondrath

Abstract

This paper situates the discussion of power alongside discussions of meaning and affect. Drawing upon systems theorist, organizational consultant, and clinical researcher David Kantor, this paper first presents power as a communication domain, both a territory where actions take place and an orientation that reveals the aim or purpose of the person speaking or acting. Reflections from Rabbi Jonathon Sacks and theorists from the relational-cultural school of psychology are offered as complements to Kantor's work. The goal is to integrate the discussion of leadership and power into a framework that includes the discussion of feelings and meaning. Finally, three types of transparency will be addressed in relation to leadership. Frequently, leaders are deemed poor, or even subversive, because of a lack of power transparency. In keeping with the goal of including feelings and meaning (along with power) central to a discussion of leadership, I articulate my understanding of affective transparency and cognitive (meaning) transparency.

Introduction

Power[1] is too often spoken of apart from other dimensions of interactions between people. Discussion often focuses on the use and

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[1] The most neutral definition of power is "the ability to do or to be." In this regard, it speaks of the potential of the actor. Power is often viewed as the ability to get another person to do something that he or she would not otherwise do. In this sense, it is viewed negatively, as coercion or force. Following David Kantor, I will speak of power as a communication domain where the focus is on getting things done with goals of competence, efficiency, and completion.

abuse of power. Sometimes, this discussion is framed as *power with* versus *power over*. *Power with* is seen as an appropriate, egalitarian, collaborative, or liberative use of power. *Power over* is seen as abusive, oppressive, and domineering. Such considerations have merit, but they neglect two other important and intersecting dimensions (or domains) of human interactions: affect and meaning.[2] Neglect of these two dimensions and lack of understanding of how they intersect or collide are frequently the source of much confusion among colleagues, staff members, coworkers, and volunteers. Put positively, understanding the complementary roles of affect and meaning, along with the role of power, enables a deeper discussion among people working with one another. Giving due weight to power, affect, and meaning frees people for more intentional and satisfying relationships and more effective accomplishments. The exercise of robust leadership includes attention to decision-making practices, how we feel about what and how things are happening, and the assumptions, reasoning, and theology behind our actions.

For instance, I am currently consulting in a congregation that is in the midst of a clergy transition. The relationship with the pastor has been in trouble for five of the six years he has held the position. An agreement has finally been reached by which the pastor will leave just after Easter, six months earlier than he was expecting to retire due to age. With Holy Week approaching, the pastor sent out an email to the administrator, the organist/choir director, and the liturgy coordinator saying that he would not honor the congregation's thirty-year history of washing hands at the Maundy Thursday service. Nor would he wash feet as he did last year. Instead, he intends to focus on the institution of the eucharist. As a consultant, one of the things I attempted, through multiple conversations and emails with the pastor, was to encourage him to have a conversation with the liturgy coordinator to work out their differences. She wants him to honor the tradition of the congregation. So, what are the issues here?

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[2] *Affect* is the communication domain where the focus is on feelings and relationships, with goals of nurturance and intimacy. *Meaning* is the communication domain where the focus is on thinking, logic, and reasoning, with goals of identity and integration. Theology is most often done here.

Issues of power are certainly apparent in this situation. The pastor is exercising his right to decide the shape of the liturgy. He is acting unilaterally (in a *power over* manner). The issue of the ordained male ordering the lay female coordinator to set up for "his" service is clearly about power, and it represents two traditional power imbalances. The board exercised their power to reach an agreement to have the pastor leave before his intended retirement date. The joint decision-making and the financial and health trade-offs might represent some *power with,* though it certainly is not a kumbaya moment.

This example also contains issues of meaning. The foot washing is grounded in John's gospel, as well as in the service book. Numerous websites from the congregation's denomination contain articles about handwashing as a relevant, modern alternative. The suggestion by the pastor of focusing on the significance of the institution of the eucharist is also clearly about meaning.

The liturgical coordinator spoke about the sense of belonging and community that the congregation has felt in their long tradition of handwashing. This is about affect. There is also great unease that at a time when everyone is feeling fragile because of the imminent leadership transition, the service will be unlike anything they have done in the past twenty-five years. (Last year, the pastor inserted a symbolic foot washing after the sermon, followed by the congregation's traditional practice of handwashing by lay leaders immediately before communion.) In addition, the pastor, the lay leaders, and many who will attend will be carrying strong feelings about the way decisions were made regarding the Maundy Thursday service and about the timing of the pastor's departure. The church will be overflowing with anger and sadness—distracting nearly everyone from engaging in focused worship. Finally, as word has spread about the changed service details, several individuals are announcing plans to boycott the service altogether or to attend elsewhere—cutting themselves off from people they normally feel connected to at this sacred time of the year.

This story illustrates the multidimensionality of this event and the need for several approaches to understanding and acting in this complex story. Any individual's role in the story might well

influence his or her discussion of what is taking place, as well as what he or she believes should take place. And, because this story is not only about the key actors who are intimately involved, but also about the community as a whole, multiple viewpoints (and how they intersect) are required to describe and intervene in the story and to bring about healing if that is to take place.

With this complexity in mind, I begin by framing the discussion of affect, power, and meaning as domains of communication, following systems psychologist and leadership consultant and coach, David Kantor. Kantor's *Reading the Room: Group Dynamics for Coaches and Leaders*[3] offers a four-tiered analysis for understanding leader behavior: action stances or ways of acting (mover, follower, opposer, bystander); domains of communication (affect, power, meaning); operating systems (open, closed, random); and narratives of the actors.

Action Stances

Kantor begins with the simplest of these levels: action stances. In any situation requiring action, individuals can take one of four stances: move, follow, oppose, or bystand. All individuals are capable of all four stances, and all stances are morally neutral and nonjudgmental.

A *move* is made by a person to initiate an action. It might be a suggestion ("Let's talk about the Maundy Thursday service") or a statement of opinion or advocacy ("I am going to focus on the institution of the eucharistic in the Maundy Thursday service"). A move is a discrete language action, and individuals who tend to make moves on a regular basis are seen as movers in an organization.

A *follow* supports a stance that another person has taken. The support may be strong or weak; it may be full, partial, or ambivalent. It serves to perpetuate the action that is taking place.

> "Let's talk about the Maundy Thursday service." (Move)
> "Great idea." (Follow)
> "I'll get the prayer books so everyone can follow along." (Follow)

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[3] David Kantor, *Reading the Room: Group Dynamics for Coaches and Leaders* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 2012).

An *oppose* challenges the move or action under consideration. Oppose behaviors come in many flavors and have differing impacts.

> "Let's talk about the Maundy Thursday service" (Move)
> "It's a waste of time." (Oppose)
> "No. I've already designed the service." (Oppose)

A *bystand* is essentially a process action. It calls attention to what is taking place in the overall interactional space, often as a way of reconciling competing actions.

> "We've been repeating ourselves for some time now. Is there a reason that we seem to be stuck in this conversation?" (Bystand)

Kantor asserts that "communication is effective when individuals move fluidly between different action stances, making full use of the interaction space."[4] The problem is that speakers often get stuck in one or more action stances; that is, they do not exercise the ability to move from one stance to another. The pastor in the Maundy Thursday example appears stuck in an *oppose* stance: whatever suggestions the liturgical coordinator or other lay people make, he *opposes* their ideas.

Operating Systems

Operating systems are patterns of rules and expectations for how people should behave. Over our lifetime, we develop a preference for the rules that regulate our interactions because of our experiences in families, schools, churches, clubs, military service, and the like. When we focus on operating systems, we are turning our attention to "systems or norms of communication that persist both within and surrounding the individual and that shape her interactions in the room."[5]

For Kantor, operating systems originate from the application of systems thinking to face-to-face relationships, specifically the application of circularity and feedback loops to how people interact.[6]

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[4] Kantor, 9.
[5] Kantor, 82.
[6] Kantor, 10.

Kantor explains that circularity is the absence of true cause and effect. Rather than listening and responding to the specific comments of another person or persons, circularity happens when "Person A does something that has a controlling effect on Person B. Person B, reacting in turn, does something that has a controlling effect on Person A. As the pattern repeats, A and B begin to anticipate each other's acts"[7] and behave in ways that evoke the reciprocating actions. The behavior of the participants is regulated by feedback loops. Positive feedback loops regulate behavior by increasing or amplifying a particular output.[8] The behavior continues and is reinforced. Positive feedback can be used to deliberately accelerate change or growth in a system. But excessive use of positive feedback can send a system into overdrive.

Negative feedback loops reduce output.[9] Insistence that all decisions be approved by one individual may increase stability, consistency, and quality control in a system, but excessive negative feedback can stifle creativity and sap the energy of individuals in a system.

I recently led a board retreat where the pastor was complaining that board members didn't seem to have much energy or contribute much of themselves. The pastor was creative, but the congregation had the expectation, influenced by generations of previous pastors, that all new ideas be initiated or vetted and supported by the pastor. Another simple negative feedback mechanism is a meeting's agenda, which allows only certain information into the conversation while screening out other information.

Kantor discusses three types of systems: open, closed, and random. Each system is an implicit set of rules for how individuals govern boundaries, behavior, and relationships in groups.[10]

The Open Operating System
In an open system, speakers are regulated by one another and orient themselves toward the collective, their particular group.[11] In

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[7] Kantor, 10.
[8] Kantor, 82.
[9] Kantor, 83.
[10] Kantor, 10 and 82–96.
[11] Kantor, 85.

an open church system, authority for decisions is shared and not held solely by the senior pastor, the clergy, or the staff. Challengers, outsiders, and newcomers are welcomed. Boundaries are permeable. Doors are open; people walk in on each other and blithely invite themselves to meetings. An open system often borrows guidelines and procedures from closed systems for ending debates and acting expeditiously. Positive feedback loops increase and amplify new behaviors. A tyranny of process might ensue. Negative feedback loops function to end discussion. The leader might be nominal; the system might be in balance with no single person exercising unique leadership. Another danger is that the complete acceptance of all inputs might lead to the organization's demise, when individuals, intent on destroying the organization, have equal access to governance and decision making.

The Closed Operating System

Closed systems might be the most common type because of their efficiency in getting work done.[12] In open systems, leadership may be shared or diffuse. In closed systems, strong, formal leadership is essential. Leaders, staff, and even volunteers have clearly defined roles and job descriptions. These roles and job descriptions define the needs that the closed system serves. The monitoring of time, boundaries (who is included and excluded), and strict adherence to policy and tradition indicate that a closed system is in effect. Loyalty and self-sacrifice are encouraged, if not demanded.[13] In exchange for strict adherence to policies and procedures, those governed get predictability, stability, and security. Firm boundaries assure that intruders and dissidents are screened out. Meetings are frequently closed to nonmembers.

For instance, in annual church meetings, lists are carefully maintained regarding who can speak and vote by reason of membership, age, pledging, and official transfer. The distribution of information is guarded carefully. Negative feedback loops predominate, which maintains homeostasis, stability, and moderate control. Change, if and when it happens, is gradual and

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[12] Kantor, 89.
[13] Kantor, 89.

tightly controlled. Closed systems leaders run a tight ship. They can delegate, even handing over accountability and authority to qualified individuals. Closed systems run the risk of stagnation, and they often lack openness to newcomers and the ability to change with the times. For churches, liturgical rituals and traditional celebrations (whether the Christmas pageant, Holy Week and Easter services, or the parish Strawberry Festival) tolerate no adaptation. Many closed systems believe in the rightness of their vision and seal themselves off from the influence of the outside world. Internal battles over rules, the exit of key individuals, and church splits are signs of a closed system. When threatened, leaders in closed systems increase negative feedback loops and tighten the rules. Closed system churches often tend to be monochrome and assume congregants have the same needs

The Random Operating System

Random operating systems are the rarest and least understood, and thus they are the most suspect.[14] They are threatening to many church adherents because of a lack of certainty and control. It might be argued that the early church was largely a random system. Pop-up churches and alternate or emerging churches often have many of the characteristics of a random system. To an outsider, random systems might appear chaotic and out of control. To those within, the possibilities are infinite. Individual autonomy and freedom are the highest values. People, as well as information, tend to be unfiltered.[15] "All are welcome at the table" characterizes the eucharistic celebration and the board meeting. Individuals' feelings and ideas (not rank, position, or authority) influence decisions. Positive feedback loops that encourage individuality predominate to the near exclusion of negative feedback loops that would stifle change or bring about stability. "Well-functioning random systems rely on intuition, the same mechanism used to create and innovate, to know when to manage down or end discourse."[16] People who prefer open or closed systems "may feel inferior, uncreative, and undervalued" in a random-dominated system, and they may shut down entirely or feel driven out.[17]

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[14] Kantor, 93.
[15] Kantor, 94.
[16] Kantor, 95.
[17] Kantor, 95.

Figure 1: Kantor's Operating Systems[18]

	OPEN *"The best environment for me is one in which every individual voice can be heard in the interest of designing and meeting the group's goals."*	**CLOSED** *"I want to live in a world that is traditional, stable, orderly, and predictable."*	**RANDOM** *"I prefer an unpredictable, inspirational, and improvisational world where others respect my creativity and autonomy."*
Orientation Whose needs are given top priority?	Toward the collective	Toward the leader and the organization	Toward the individual
Values What do people care about?	Process of learning adaption through participation "Right to be heard" is sacrosanct Tries for consensus	Places community & history over individual	Individual autonomy and freedom
Boundaries Who enters the system, and how is entry regulated?	Permeable Welcomes input from outside Welcomes newcomers	Intruders and dissidents screened before entering "In" and "Out"	"Unfiltered" movement in and out with minimal constraint "Make it up" every time
Territory	Adaptation & Participation Consensus & Commitment	Order & Hierarchy Security & Stability	Exploration & Improvisation Creativity & Innovation
Characteristics	Teamwork Rule by process, rather than formal leadership	Clearly defined roles Strong formal leaders Planning emphasis	Lack of formal structures, processes, and leadership High level of individuality
Function	Leadership manages for balance of the good of the whole and the individual	Leadership manages for the good of the whole	Leadership manages for the good of the individual
Dysfunction	Tyranny of process	Tyranny of monarchy	Tyranny of anarchy

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[18] Figure 1 comprises Kantor's material on pages 82–96, especially his individual figures of open (4.1), closed (4.2), and random (4.3) systems.

Kantor believes that each of these operating systems is neutral.[19] Each has benefits, and each can become dysfunctional. One might ask how the work of God's Spirit might be described in each system, as well as how the work of the Spirit may be hindered in each system. Figure 1 (previous page) offers a view of Kantor's operating systems, looking at their orientation, values, treatment of boundaries, territory, characteristics, function, and dysfunction.

Given the choice of operating systems (open, closed, random) in which individuals can take action stances (move, support, oppose, bystand), we now turn to the communication domains and the discussion of power, affect, and meaning.

Communication Domains

Communication domains describe the territory where actions originate and their aim or purpose. Each domain can be viewed as an orientation or worldview that preoccupies a person as he or she communicates. Some people focus heavily on their own and others' feelings (affect). Others focus on getting things done (power). Still others focus on the significance, value, or implication of what is happening or being said (meaning).[20]

Kantor focuses carefully on the language speakers use because "our language is connected to a deep inner sense of what matters."[21] Though all three languages or domains are essential for successful leadership, Kantor believes that each individual has a preference for operating in one domain or another. Kantor's decision to look at power together with meaning and affect changes the conversation about leadership and power. This approach relativizes conversations about power—systematically. It makes affect and meaning equal partners with power. It suggests that to discuss leadership and power without reference to meaning and affect would be like speaking about human communication and pretending that English were the only language humans used, or the superior language.

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[19] Kantor, 83.
[20] Kantor, 49.
[21] Kantor, 50.

The following example shows how to recognize the three language domains and their relationship to making a move (an action stance). I study leadership and talk to people about leadership. Why leadership? I could answer from three difference domains, and each would tell you something significant about what is important to me.[22]

1) "I study and talk about leadership because I *care* about people when I am consulting. I also *care* about people here, in this room, and I want to maximize the quality and depth of my *relationships* in all my interactions." This is a move in the affect domain. A move in this domain focuses on relationships and social connections, perhaps even nurturance and intimacy.

2) "I study and talk about leadership because I believe using leadership skills will help me *get what I want* (for example, more consulting work, resolution of differences within a group, success as a theorist on systems)." This is a move in the power domain, focusing on what I want as an outcome and how to achieve it.

3) "I study and talk about leadership because I want to *learn* what I don't *know*. Studying and talking about leadership increases my *knowledge* and *understanding*." This is a move in the meaning domain—a search for ideas, truth, and understanding.

Figure 2 (next page) offers an overview of Kantor's communication domains with examples, looking at their orientation, territory, goals, strengths, weaknesses, and dysfunctions.

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[22] The italicized words in each of my answers are a key to understanding from which domain I speak.

Figure 2: Kantor's Communication Domains[23]

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(axis) [metaphor]	**AFFECT** (horizontal) [heart]	**POWER** (vertical) [muscle or sinew]	**MEANING** (depth) [mind]
Orientation	Feelings and relationships	Getting things done	Thinking, logic, and ideas
Territory	How people are feeling; caring and being cared for	Action; productivity	Thought; search for answers
Goals	Nurturance and intimacy	Competence, efficacy, and completion	Identity and integration
Examples	"How will people feel about the decision we're making?"	"Who's going to make sure that there is follow-through here?"	"This campaign is the right one because of its consistency with our strategic direction."
Strengths	Creates a sense of safety and well-being; releases energy by putting feelings on the table	Tasks always get accomplished	People understand how everything fits together; solid data support all conclusions
Weaknesses	By itself, does not result in action on the issue at hand	May stifle other contributions, including unspoken issues about meaning and affect	Can feel too abstract for real work; endless data mining can be used to delay decision making
Dysfunction **Typical Crisis**	"Psychobabble" Fusion Alienation	"Steamrolling" Anarchy Tyranny	"All talk, no action" Irrelevance Conformity to absolute meaning Conceptual isolation

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[23] Figure 2 comprises Kantor's material on pages 49–59, especially his individual figures of the Affect Communication Domain (3.1), the Power Communication Domain (3.2), and the Meaning Communication Domain (3.3).

Kantor views the communication domains as three dimensions, and he assigns a bodily metaphor to each domain. Power is the vertical dimension; the metaphor is muscle or sinew. Affect is the horizontal dimension; the metaphor is heart. Meaning is the depth dimension; the metaphor is mind. For Kantor, misunderstandings and conflicts arise on all three levels we have spoken about: the stances people take, the operating systems in which people function, and the communication domains from which they speak.

The following diagram, courtesy of the Rev. Dr. Thomas Eoyang, shows Kantor's communication domains as three interacting dimensions.

Figure 3: Kantor's Target Dimensions of Interactional Activity
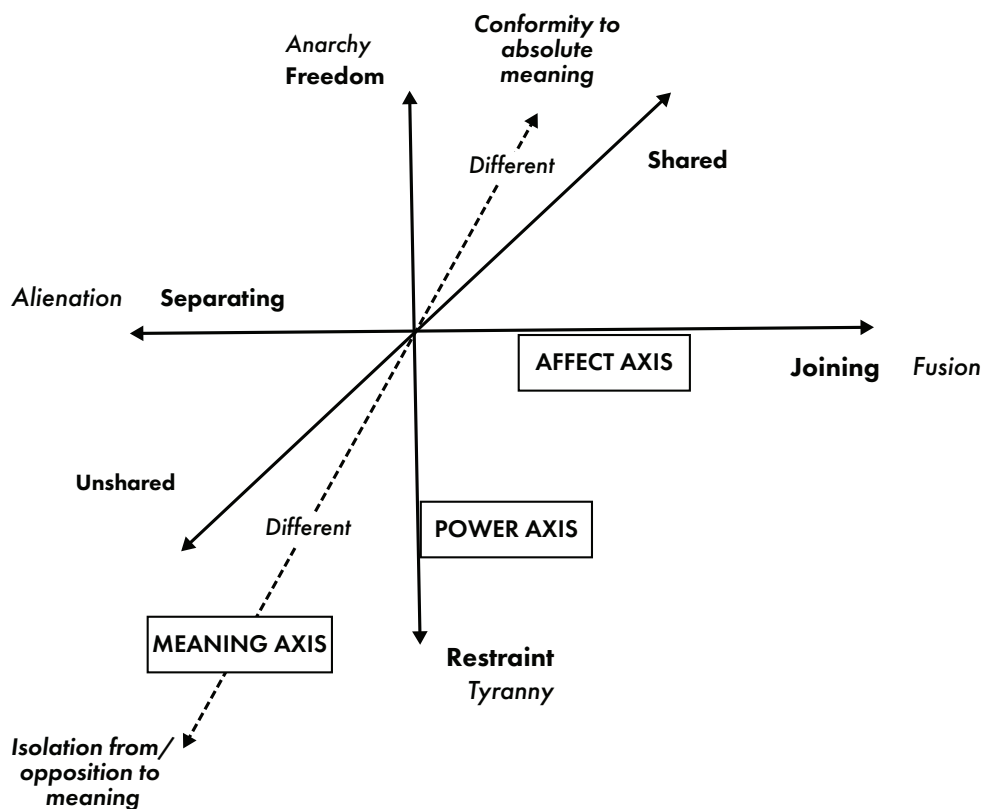
Learning Kantor's system of structural dynamics felt like trying to juggle garden rakes, kitchen knives, and bowling balls. After becoming more familiar with his system, it became possible to effectively choose the level that offered the most relevance to a

client. Sometimes the action stances of individuals and the habits and patterns in which individuals move, follow, oppose, and bystand was the focus. For example, working with a seminary faculty that was utterly frustrated with a dean who refused to articulate any vision for the future of the school, I suggested that she was stuck in opposing behavior. She easily articulated what she didn't want the school to be or do, but she never said what she believed it was called to be or do.

Other times, as with an alternative eucharistic community that included many marginalized and homeless people and veterans of the Occupy Movement, it was useful to focus a discussion on operating systems and help people to discuss boundaries, roles, and accountability.

Working with congregational boards, particularly when conflict arises among board members or between the board and the pastor, and during times of leadership transition, Kantor's communication domains have been the most appropriate place to begin a conversation. During leadership conflicts and leadership transitions, individuals often think the content of their discussions is what keeps them apart and makes progress difficult. It is a revelation to them that they are actually speaking at least three different languages (power, affect, and meaning). Once they notice that the language they are speaking (outside of their awareness) is creating a "miss," they are free to slow down their process and notice that they might be able to attend to complementary values and goals.

Furthermore, when the board turns to the tasks of gathering thoughts and feelings regarding the future during the process of discerning new pastoral leadership, they become aware that the input from congregants comes by way of three different domains. They also realize that their own communication back to the congregation must use all three communication domains in order to reach everyone.

Jonathan Sacks on Power and Influence

Jonathan Sacks, former chief rabbi of Great Britain and the British Commonwealth, offers a useful distinction between leading

with power or with influence. His concept of influence is a way of talking about the balance of power and meaning, and to some extent, affect.

Sacks begins by saying, "Power works by division, influence by multiplication. Power, in other words, is a zero-sum game; the more you share, the less you have. Influence is a non-zero-sum game: the more you share, the more you have."[24] According to Sacks, kings in ancient Israel had power, including power over life and death, which ceased when they died. Prophets, on the other hand, had influence, which extends even to this day. This difference between power and influence, Sacks explains, is why Moses's reaction to Eldad and Medad is so different from his reaction to Korah. Concerning Eldad and Medad, Moses says, "I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them" (Num. 11:29). Moses sees them as extending his influence, not as competition.[25] Korah is a different case. He, or at least some of his followers, sought power. Their attempted coup d'état needed to be resisted with force, lest the nation be divided into two, as happened after the death of King Solomon.

Sacks goes on to assert that, according to the Torah, all power rightly belongs to God. "The Torah recognises (sic) the need, in an imperfect world, for the use of coercive force in maintaining the rule of law and the defence (sic) of the realm. Hence its endorsement of the appointment of a king should the people so desire it (Deut. 17:15–20; I Sam. 8)."[26] For Sacks, the use of coercive force (power over) is a concession, not an ideal. He asserts that the ultimate tribute given to Moses in Jewish tradition is that he is known as Moshe Rabbenu, Moses our teacher. Similar reverence was paid to Jesus in his time, such as when he is addressed "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" (Matt. 22:36)[27] or

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[24] Jonathan Sacks, *Lessons in Leadership: A Weekly Reading of the Jewish Bible* (New Milford, Conn.: Maggid Books and the Orthodox Union, 2015), 194.
[25] Sacks, 195.
[26] Sacks, 195–6.
[27] There are six direct addresses in Matthew, eleven in Mark, eleven in Luke, and four in John, as well as several other times when Jesus is referred to as "the teacher."

when Mary Magdalene sees Jesus risen from the dead and says, "Rabbouni, which means teacher" (John 20:16).

For Sacks, Moses was the first figure of many who represent "one of Judaism's most revolutionary ideas: *the teacher as hero.*"[28] This revolutionary idea became the basis of Judaism's survival, based "on education, houses of study, and learning as a religious experience higher even than prayer."[29] This emphasis on leadership through education clearly reflects the enactment of Kantor's meaning domain. To education, Sacks adds the strength of a vision (meaning) and the ability to articulate shared ideals "in a language with which people can identify" that leads them to achieve things as a community.[30] Though not purely affect in Kantor's language, there are hints here of the emphasis on relationship and caring. The power domain is almost absent from the way Sacks conceptualizes leadership (as influence) operating in the Jewish tradition. Power, for Sacks, is a concession or an aberration for the leader.

Jean Baker Miller: Relationship, Not Self, as the Primary Category

Psychologist Jean Baker Miller, sometimes referred to as the grandmother of relational-cultural theory, also helps to set power in the context of other dimensions of leadership and community. Miller, together with Stone Center collaborators (Irene Stiver, Judith Jordan, Janet Surrey, Alexandra Kaplan, Amy Banks, Joyce Fletcher,

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[28] Sacks, 196.
[29] Sacks, 196.
[30] Sacks, 196.

and Maureen Walker),[31] Harvard Research Project authors (Carol Gilligan, Lyn Mikel Brown, Nona Lyons, and Annie Rogers),[32] and Victims of Violence activists and therapists (Judith Lewis Herman and Mary Harvey)[33] led a movement to place *relationship,* as opposed to *self,* at the center of the discussion of human development. This tectonic shift means that leadership and all its characteristics need to reside in relationship, not in an individual.

One of the clearest places to see the implications of this paradigm shift is in Miller's description of the five good things that flow from healthy relationships.[34] The first of these qualities is *zest,* which connotes vitality, aliveness, energy, and a sense of spaciousness. Zest is not to be confused with being happy. One can have zest in the midst of sadness or pain if one is aware of

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[31] See Jean Baker Miller, *Towards a New Psychology of Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976), the seminal work of the movement. Also Judith V. Jordan, Alexandra G. Kaplan, Jean Baker Miller, Irene P. Stiver, and Janet L. Surrey, *Women's Growth in Connection: Writings from the Stone Center* (New York: Guilford Press, 1991); *Women's Growth in Diversity: More Writings from the Stone Center,* ed. Judith V. Jordan (New York: Guilford Press, 1997); Judith V. Jordan, Maureen Walker, and Linda M. Hartling, *The Complexity of Connection: Writings from the Stone Center's Jean Baker Miller Training Institute* (New York: Guilford Press, 2004); Samuel Shem and Janet Surrey, *We Have to Talk: Healing Dialogues Between Women and Men* (New York: Basic Books, 1998); *How Connections Heal: Stories from Relational-Cultural Therapy,* eds. Maureen Walker and Wendy B. Rosen (New York: Guilford Press, 2004); Joyce Fletcher, *Disappearing Acts: Gender Power, and Relational Practice at Work* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999); Amy Banks, *Four Ways to Click: Rewire Your Brain for Stronger, More Rewarding Relationships* (New York: Jeremy P. Thatcher/Penguin, 2015). Christina E. Robb, *This Changes Everything: The Relational Revolution in Psychology* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2006) traces the history of the relational psychology movement from its origins in the civil rights, feminist, and antiwar movements. In 1995 the Jean Baker Miller Training Institute (JBMTI) was created as a program of the Wellesley Centers for Women (WCW), the single organization established when the Stone Center for Developmental Services and Studies at Wellesley College and the Center for Research on Women (founded in 1974) joined together.
[32] Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982).
[33] Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).
[34] Jean Baker Miller, "What Do We Mean by Relationships?" *Work in Progress* 22 (Wellesley, Mass.: Stone Center, Wellesley College, 1986).

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being connected with someone else in the sorrow or pain. Zest is feeling full of vitality, sheer aliveness. Having zest is like watching brilliant high-definition TV or fine-tuning an old radio dial to get the station as clearly as possible.

Good relationships are characterized by power and effectiveness. Miller wrote that in a good relationship, you feel "empowered to act *right in the immediate relationship—in this interplay, itself*."[35] This empowerment is relational; it is power you share with another person, not power over the other person. It allows someone who is in need (for example, someone who is about to lose a job or a loved one or someone who is struggling with cancer) to feel heard and gives that person the courage and energy to move into the next relationship where he or she will be heard and be even more able to change or heal. Speaking about the mutuality of such relationships, Janet L. Surrey writes that as people allow their relationships to deeply change them, "neither person is in control; instead each is enlarged and feels empowered, energized, and more real."[36]

Knowledge is the third characteristic of a good relationship. People in good relationships explore and discover more about how they feel and what they think. They increase their knowledge about themselves and about others *with others* through being immersed in relationship.

A *sense of worth* flows from healthy relationships. When you are and feel alive, effective, and aware, you have a greater sense of dignity. This sense of worth does not develop until people who are important to us convey to us that they recognize and acknowledge our experience. They listen to us; they see us; they pay attention to us. When I feel free to truly express myself, and another person I respect really hears me, sees me, accepts me, and wants to be connected with me, then I feel worth more.

Miller's final characteristic of a good relationship is the *desire for even more connection*. Because we feel more zest, more effectiveness, deeper knowledge, and increased worth, we desire more connection

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[35] Miller, "What Do We Mean . . . ", 9.
[36] Janet L. Surrey, "Relationships and Empowerment," in *Women's Growth in Connection: Writings from the Stone Center* (New York: Guilford Press, 1991), 168.

to the people who bring these things out in us, and we want to enter new relationships. Miller writes that this desire for more connection is different from being loved or feeling approval. She states:

> It is much more valuable. It is the active, outgoing feeling of caring about another person because that person is so valued in our eyes. It leads to the desire for more and fuller connection with that person and also to a concern for that person's well-being. We cannot will this feeling into existence. It comes along as a concomitant of this kind of interchange. And it leads to wanting more relationship with the person whom we value and care about.[37]

In addition, the momentum of a good relationship pushes us into wanting relationships with people we don't know or don't know well yet. So, the idea of being connected becomes more attractive. Even persons who previously experienced isolation as a form of protection begin to believe that connection might offer more protection.

When we set Miller's five good things about a healthy relationship alongside Kantor's communication domains, we note that Miller's second characteristic, power and effectiveness, lines up with Kantor's power domain, and her third characteristic, knowledge, resonates with Kantor's meaning domain, although both also have shades of the domain of affect. Zest can best be seen as the impact of a relationship in which the domains of power, affect, and meaning are in balance, where individuals are free to speak in each language about the territory and content that makes most sense at the moment and they are heard accordingly. I experience a sense of worth, or dignity, when the domains of meaning and power are engaged in such a way that people are listening to me and what I value (meaning) and treating me as an equal (power). What I feel is not simply joy, but a sense that my vision of myself is seen and valued by another or others. I am showing up as who I am in all

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[37] Miller, "What Do We Mean . . . ", 10.

my complexity and enabling others to do the same. The desire for more relationship and deeper relationship is an affective response to a balance in the power domain. When there is fluid expertise, when leadership is held and exercised within and by the group, and not merely by one individual, I desire to be more deeply engaged and to invite others into similar relationships. The correspondence between Kantor and Miller is expressed in Table 1.

Table 1: Correspondence Between Miller and Kantor's Models

Miller	Kantor
Zest	Impact of relationship when power, meaning, and affect domains are in balance
Power and effectiveness	Power domain
Knowledge	Meaning domain
Sense of worth	Others listening to me and what I value (meaning domain) and treating me as an equal (power domain)
Desire for more relationship	Affective response to power balance

Joyce Fletcher, Distinguished Research Scholar at the Center for Gender in Organizations at the Simmons College School of Management, also speaks in a way that allows Kantor's communication domains to overlap and infuse one another. She talks about *mutual empowering*, which is characterized by a focus on other. It is behavior that values and makes possible the contributions and achievements of others. It sees these contributions not as a threat to one's self-advancement but rather as necessary to the overall success of a project. The development and enhancement of others' power and abilities is a goal of leaders and all team members. Mutual empowerment includes empathic teaching,

where the expressed or perceived needs of the learner are seen as more important than the teacher's need to express dominance by exhibiting superior knowledge. In addition, the outcome of a project is expanded to include increasing the knowledge and competence of team members by encouraging them to learn new skills from one another or from other individuals or teams. Kantor's domains of power and meaning impact one another, and we are reminded of Sacks's assertion that influence means that the more you share, the more you have.

For Fletcher, not only is information (meaning) shared, attention is paid to emotions (affect), and this skill is widely shared throughout the organization. Mutual empowerment means seeing requests for help as helpful to the success of the project and the development of the team rather than as deficiencies of the individual whom the project manager then labels as inferior. It means creating a culture where anyone in any position can ask for help without feeling guilty, inferior, or inadequate.

Think of the implications of mutual empowerment regarding the expectation of male and female clergy. Male clergy might find it hard to ask for help if they expect themselves, or are expected by their congregation, to have all the answers. Female clergy might think that asking for help indicates to others that they are not as good as male clergy and that they do not measure up to the standard of omniscience, omnicompetence, or stand-alone leadership that men have been expected to display.

Mutual empowerment values interdependence over independence. It "reflects a concept of power and expertise that is fluid, where dependency on others is assumed to be a natural, but temporary, state."[38] This notion of fluid expertise means that "power and expertise shift from one party to the other, not only over time but in the course of one interaction," and it requires the skills of empowering others and being able to be empowered—the ability to teach and to learn from and be influenced by those above you, beside you, and below in status or seniority.[39] Mutual

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[38] Fletcher, 64.
[39] Fletcher, 64.

empowerment takes place in a congregation when the senior pastor publicly solicits the expertise of the associate pastor regarding worship or seeks expert advice from a lay member of the board regarding strategic planning, finances, or dealing with conflict.

Three Types of Transparency

It is common when talking about leadership to include a discussion of transparency.[40] Most often when people demand transparency from leaders, they are asking that leaders do not operate in secrecy. The conversation is about underlying, hidden assumptions and values, and asks that these should be made clear and apparent to all parties. This desire for openness can be labeled *cognitive transparency*. It corresponds to Kantor's meaning domain.

A second type of clarity and candor that healthy communities demand concerns clarity about how decisions are made and who makes them. This is *power transparency*. This is achieved by making decisions publicly when possible, or at least making sure all constituents know who is making decisions, and creating pathways for those affected by decisions to have input into the outcomes. Thus, power transparency is often a call for mutual or collaborative decision-making.

Finally, I would advocate for *affective transparency*. By this, I mean that leaders should strive to solicit clearly and openly the feelings of people who are going to be affected by decisions that are under consideration. They should also reveal clearly and openly their feelings relative to what is under consideration. This is particularly important regarding feelings of anger (related to boundary violations and unmet expectations), sadness (connected to loss, including loss of agency and representation), and fear (related to a real or perceived danger). The open discussion of feelings allows people to "show up" or bring all of

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[40] I have treated the topic of transparency briefly in the introduction to the Fall 2014 issue of the *Journal of Religious Leadership*, which focused on the role of emotions in religious leadership and community. A more extensive discussion of feelings can be found in William Kondrath, *Facing Feelings in Faith Communities* (Herndon, Va.: Alban Institute, 2013). See also www.billkondrath.com for downloadable articles on feelings and transparency.

who they are to the table and to learn the perhaps very different feelings of others. When leaders do not recognize their own feelings or hide their feelings from other staff members, coworkers, volunteers, parishioners, or clients, conflicts get even knottier than when assumptions, goals, and rationales are hidden or unexplained. Confusion or obstruction happens more rapidly when feelings are hidden or opaque than when cognitive assumptions are concealed or ideas are unclear. Furthermore, the theory and practices that most groups employ in exposing assumptions and goals is much more developed and accessible than the theory and practice of articulating emotions and examining how profoundly feelings impact our relationships and our work.

Conclusion

Situating the discussion of power as one dimension of leadership, alongside meaning and affect, allows us to better understand healthy relationships and healthy communities. Assessing the health of a community or system, according to Kantor, requires looking at the action stances of individuals (move, follow, oppose, bystand), the operating systems in which people live and act (open, closed, random), and the communication domains in which they speak (power, affect, meaning). When looking at the communication domains, we note that dysfunction can occur in any or all the domains. On the vertical axis, the power domain, tyranny and anarchy are the opposite poles where maximum dysfunction is displayed. On the horizontal axis, the affect domain, fusion with another and alienation are the opposite poles. On the depth axis, the meaning domain, the opposite poles are conformity to absolute meaning and meaninglessness or opposition to meaning. A system can become out of balance on any individual axis. The system is also out of balance when any axis or communication dimension dominates the other two or is completely absent. In this context, misuse and abuse of power (tyranny/anarchy) finds parallels in misuse and abuse of meaning (conformity to absolute power/meaninglessness or opposition to meaning) and misuse or abuse of affect (fusion/alienation). Leadership in and by a community is robust and effective when power, meaning, and affect are in balance.