CHAPTER 8

POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

MARGARET G. HERMANN

1 Introduction

Scholars taking a political psychology perspective on the study of political leadership are generally focused on establishing the linkages between what political leaders are like and the actions and policies of the institutions they run. They seek (1) to understand the factors that influence who becomes a political leader, (2) to explore what characteristics of leaders are likely to affect what they do politically, and (3) to examine the conditions under which political leaders' personalities and experiences are likely to shape what their political units do. It is the purpose of this chapter to overview what has been learned in each of these three areas.

2 Who Becomes a Political Leader?

What kinds of people choose to run, or work to get themselves selected, as political leaders? How are the decisions of those with the potential to assume such leadership positions shaped by the nature of the political system, the recruitment process, current demographic trends, and the zeitgeist of the time? Roughly sixty years ago, members of the scholarly and intelligence communities began wrestling with these questions, intrigued by some work that argued people become interested in political power and, in turn, positions of political leadership to compensate for low self-esteem (a lack of self-confidence) (Lasswell 1948). Like the authors of so many of the guides to becoming a successful leader found in bookstores today, these researchers sought to learn whether there was a set of traits that distinguished political leaders from their non-political counterparts. Or, if that was not the case, could they distinguish one group of political leaders from another—for example, those in legislatures and parliaments from those
aiming to be cabinet secretaries or presidents. Armed with such information, these students of political leadership believed that we would be able to identify people who were born to lead and foster their careers as well as weed out those without the appropriate characteristics. In the late 1970s, this line of research was fuelled by Bloom's (1978) description of the leadership traits that characterize transformational leadership and by Barber's (1977) description of the traits that define being an effective and not so effective president.

In general, however, the results of these types of studies proved contradictory and unsatisfactory. There was little homogeneity among leaders. Even those who explored the social backgrounds of various political elites (e.g. Quandt 1970; Rejal and Phillips 1983) were frustrated by the difficulties in finding consistent patterns allowing them to relate biographical data to accession to positions of leadership. In the process, however, these same researchers began to discover that who becomes a political leader appears to involve the interaction between what the leader is like and the context in which the leadership is exercised. For example, they found that individuals chose to run for offices that facilitated their particular leadership style (Browning and Jacob 1964); crisis and non-crisis situations catapulted different types of leaders into positions of power (Stewart 1977); and the nature of the recruitment process appeared differentially to include and exclude certain kinds of leaders (DiRenzo 1977).

At about the same time, students of both political and organizational leadership were coming to terms with the idea that leadership is a more complicated concept than had previously been thought. Indeed, there are no leaders without some kinds of followers; candidates are potential leaders. Even terrorist leaders must muster a group of followers to win the title. So part of the answer to who becomes a political leader rests with learning more about those making the choices of who should lead. Moreover, leadership involves the relationship between those chosen and their followers. It is an interaction or exchange between the leader and those constituents (be they special interests, the military, party members, or the voting public) to whom he or she is accountable. Moreover, leadership is exercised in a particular context—point in time, institutional setting, culture. The interrelationships among these various facets of leadership were studied in different kinds of organizational environments and evolved into what is called the contingency theory of leadership (e.g. Fiedler and Garcia 1987; Winter 1987; Hargrove 1989). This theoretical framework emphasizes the importance of the 'match' between what the potential leader is like, what relevant followers or constituents want, and what the setting calls for in understanding who is likely to become a political leader. Let us consider several examples of what we have learned about this matching process.

Correlations between type of political system (indicators of how democratic a government is) and national leaders' scores on responsiveness to the political context over the last three decades are, on average, 0.56 (Hermann and Kegley 1995; Hermann and Gerard 2009). The data suggest that there is a bias in the selection processes in these two types of political systems favouring leaders with particular types of predispositions. There appears to be a push in democratic cultures and institutions for voters to elect leaders who respect and respond to democratic values, who are not only attuned
to public opinion but also inclined to empower people to help shape policy, and who concentrate their attention on building coalitions through bargaining and compromise. Electoral politics and the institutional constraints that define democracy reward leaders who pay close attention to what their various constituencies want and who work to win approval by representing these interests. In more autocratic and hierarchically organized settings, leaders are more likely to be selected if they espouse and are guided by a set of ideas, a particular cause, a problem to be solved, or an ideology. Challenging constraints or successfully tackling a task others deem impossible becomes one way of gaining an audience with potential patrons or those who count, as well as facilitating the mobilization of followers dissatisfied with their current lives. Political leadership involves leaders persuading or coercing others to accept their positions and facilitates them in shaping norms and institutions to achieve their goals.

There is also the question of who can hold a particular leadership position. In other words, what are the formal requirements for the role (for example, age, training needed, party affiliation, political experience, time involved, relevant networking) and what are the informal expectations about the position (for example, the amount of influence the position affords, its flexibility, its usefulness as a stepping stone to higher office). The answers to these questions begin to narrow the field of potential candidates (e.g. Whitney 2001; Li 2002; Bank and Shlumberger 2004). Then there is the nature of the selection process itself. Who does the selecting (for example, party, leader or group of leaders, electorate)? How is selection generally made (for example, cooptation, conscription, self-nomination)? How complex is the selection process—how many steps or stages are there? What happens in the selection process indicates the level of control that others have over who can run for the position. If control is tight, the candidates are likely to be mirror images of those doing the selection. Loyalty, conformity, and agreement with the political attitudes and motivations of the sponsor become important. With less control and an emphasis on self-nomination, a wider range of points of view and leadership styles are likely to be represented among those who choose to run; unless there are particular beliefs among those doing the electing or selecting about the kind of leader that is sought (Taber and Lodge 2006).

Demographics and the political zeitgeist of the moment also affect who is recruited as a political leader. For example, consider what will happen in European countries as the median age of their populations goes from 40.6—in 2012—to the predicted 52.7 by 2050 and the percentage of their population over 60 goes from 24 per cent to 40 per cent (Economist Intelligence Unit 2011)? If this older group participates in elections in numbers even roughly proportional to their size, they will increasingly influence not only the nature of issues given priority in party platforms but also the types of candidates who will be viewed as viable. Large demographic groups, if they can be mobilized, have the ability not only to set the issue agenda but also to define who can become a political leader (Kotkin 2010).

Furthermore, research has indicated that, as we move from times of peace to those of crisis, from periods of relative stability to those of rapid change, and from times
where resources are plentiful to those when they are scarce, different types of leaders are required of those involved in both the recruitment and the selection processes (e.g. Hargrove 1989; Strategic Assessment Group 2003; Hermann and Gerard 2009). In more turbulent times, constituencies as well as those playing the gatekeeper role in the recruitment process seek leaders who have the skills needed to keep the political unit afloat—to take charge and provide the public with some sense of security if not optimism. When the situation is less turbulent, we find both constituents and gatekeepers wanting to be part of the process and quick to complain when their interests are not taken into account. Leaders who are good at day-to-day politics, at listening and building consensus, become more in demand. The elections and defeats of Winston Churchill and Charles de Gaulle are often used as examples of the relevance of the nature of the situation for who is chosen to lead. Both men were elected to positions of power during periods of turmoil and ‘unelected’ during times of relative peace. Both were ‘take-charge’ kinds of people who were less comfortable with the politics of consensus and compromise.

3 What Personal Characteristics of Leaders Matter?

A second question of interest to political psychologists studying political leaders focuses on which characteristics of leaders are likely to affect what they do politically. Here we are interested in what political leaders are like. A search of journalistic and scholarly writings on political leaders suggests five pieces of information that are important to learn about leaders. We want to know: (1) their basic political beliefs and views on politics, (2) their leadership style, (3) their motivation for seeking a political leadership position, (4) their reactions to stress and pressure, and (5) certain background factors (for example, their previous political experience). In effect, leaders’ rationality is bounded by their beliefs, what they want, the ways in which they process information and define problems, and their experiences (Simon 1985).

Beliefs

One of the most direct means of understanding the relationship between what political leaders are like and what they are likely to urge on their followers comes through learning about their basic political beliefs—in other words, how they view political reality. Beliefs indicate how leaders are likely to interpret their political environment and help them chart and map the political terrain in which they are operating. Indeed, as Abelson (1986) has observed, beliefs are like possessions and have implications for the goals and strategies that leaders will adopt as well as what in the political environment is likely to
capture their interest. Furthermore, their beliefs can become embodied in the norms
guiding the political institutions they are leading, framing what is ‘right’ and ‘wrong’
behaviour and difficult to change (e.g. Hagan 2001; Feng 2006).

In 1969, George proposed that leaders are generally guided by an ‘operational code’—
a set of philosophical and instrumental beliefs that set their parameters for action. These
beliefs help to define what is viewed as a problem and which options are seen as viable
within that particular political orientation. For instance, consider what might be the dif-
fferences in the proposals of leaders who believe that conflict is endemic to politics and
those that view conflict as generally temporary and the result of misunderstanding. For
the first type, the world is full of threats, vigilance is necessary as control and predict-
ability are limited, and all other actors are potential rivals; whereas with a misunder-
standing, there is an opportunity to change the other’s view and, thus, to control any
escalation as well as to establish a climate that can foster negotiation (Walker 2004). In
effect, ‘instead of passively reflecting reality, beliefs ‘shape leaders’ perceptions of real-
ity, acting as mechanisms . . . that [can] distort, block, and recast incoming information
from the environment’ (Schafer and Walker 2006: 5). Translating what George (1969)
proposed into an assessment-at-a-distance tool has allowed those studying political
leaders to learn more about the impact of a leader’s general view of political reality on
leadership behaviour as well as the effects of beliefs focused on a particular issue or tar-
get and those involved in the interaction between leaders and followers during a crisis.

In addition to learning about what leaders believe, we need to learn how strongly they
hold such beliefs. Are the leaders so persuaded of a particular belief or world view that
it becomes a dominant force in their lives, acting as a lens through which all external
events are interpreted, or are they more responsive to the environment, letting events
shape and change certain beliefs? Leaders’ beliefs have more direct impact on the leadership
setting the more resistant they are to outside influences (Thies 2006). Like the crus-
ader of old, the leader with a strong belief or world view seeks to convince others of his
position and is likely to view much of what is happening as relevant to the cause. Leaders
whose beliefs or world views are less firmly entrenched are likely to be more pragmatic.
The nature of the situation will generally determine how firmly—and whether—such
leaders press their case.

Leadership Style

Leadership style can also influence what political leaders do. The influence, however, is
more indirect than that of beliefs. Whereas political beliefs can directly impact policy,
leadership style sets the tone and pattern of leadership: how the leader interacts with
those he or she is leading and how he or she acts when representing those being led.
For example, does the leader emphasize personal diplomacy and face-to-face meet-
ings or does he or she prefer to work through intermediaries? Does the leader tend to
work with other people or does he or she prefer to ‘go it alone’? Is there an emphasis on
political rhetoric and propaganda? Does the leader have a flair for the dramatic? Is the
leader interested in studying problems in detail or satisfied with general information? Is secrecy essential during the policy-making process? Each of these questions focuses on an element of leadership style.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, there is growing evidence that there are differences among leaders in whether they respect (work within) or challenge (go around) the constraints in their environments (e.g., Keller 2005; Kille 2006). Two recent presidents in Iran represent this difference: Khatami, president until 2005, though charismatic, was concerned with working for change within the constraints of the political system in which he found himself; Ahmadinejad, president from 2005 to 2013, tackled the constraints that he had to work within head-on, willing to challenge the outside world and his own people. Data suggest that leaders willing to challenge constraints often come to their positions with an agenda and seek ‘true believers’ as advisers to help them implement that agenda. They are interested in controlling the flow of information; issues and events are not perceived as important or relevant unless they pertain to or affect the implementation of their agenda. On the other hand, leaders who focus on respecting constraints often seek out others’ perspectives, are interested in diverse opinions, work well in a team, and focus on building consensus and working towards compromise. In effect, leaders who focus on working within the constraints that are found in their positions of leadership are sensitive to the context and define as well as respond to problems on a case-by-case basis, while those who challenge constraints do so based on what they want or need—their personal predispositions.

Leadership style can have limiting effects on those working with the leader in at least two ways. First, those around the leaders tend to cater to their stylistic preferences in order to keep open access to them. Second, there is the doppelgänger effect: that is, political leaders tend to surround themselves with people who are their doubles—people with similar stylistic preferences or complementary styles. They select advisers and staff with whom they feel ‘comfortable’ and ‘compatible’ (Preston and Hermann 2004). It may mean that at times they look for a ‘team of rivals’ while at other times a group that is loyal—all depending on their own leadership style (Greenstein 2009).

**Motivation**

What are a leader’s reasons for seeking a leadership position? Among the motives attributed to political leaders are the need for power, a cause (a problem they want to fix, a philosophy they want adopted, a crisis), a sense of obligation, the need for approval and esteem from others, the challenge of the position, the need for status and recognition, and the need to compensate for personal shortcomings (Winter 2002). These motives have implications for what political leaders will do. In studying Connecticut legislators, Barber (1965) found that different motives for becoming a member of the state legislature were associated with different kinds of legislative behaviour. Some legislators were interested in status and recognition and used the legislature as a forum for self-advancement; others were motivated by the need for approval and were essentially
submissive in the legislative process; still others were in the legislature out of a sense of obligation and became the moral compass for what happened in that arena; and some were challenged by the position and became actively involved in initiating legislation and in committee work. Studies have found similar relationships between motivation for leadership and political behaviour in revolutionaries (Winter 2011).

In addition to influencing what they will do, leaders’ motives can drive them to seek political leadership positions that provide them with the opportunity for satisfying their needs. Indeed, several studies have reported a match between leaders’ motivation and the demands of the leadership role they occupy; moreover, those with the strongest motivation tend to seek out leadership positions with the greatest likelihood of satisfying their needs (e.g. Hermann and Gerard 2009; Winter 2010). In effect, there often appears to be a fit between what the leadership position will enable a leader to do and what the leader wants to do.

It is tempting at this point to suggest that political leaders fail or leave their positions at least partly because their motives are no longer compatible with the leadership position. The needs and interests of important constituents may have changed; the leader may have misperceived an opportunity; the situation may have changed with time; or the leader’s own needs may be different. Winter (1987) found that American presidents were more likely to be elected if their needs matched those of the public at that point in time as assessed through the mass media. Moreover, others have found that those in leadership positions are often forced out of these positions when their motivations and those demanded by the situation differ (e.g. Hermann and Gerard 2009; Hermann, Sakiew, and Smith 2010).

Reactions to Stress

Leadership positions are often stressful because the situations leaders face generally involve uncertainty and high stakes, depend on the cooperation of multiple groups and organizations, and force value trade-offs. To achieve such positions, political leaders have had to learn to deal with stress. What happens when stress becomes higher than usual or in situations when leaders become particularly vulnerable to stress?

A large literature has developed on political leaders’ reactions to stress (e.g. Boin et al. 2005; Hermann 2008). As stress increases, leaders tend to reach conclusions more quickly, to focus less on the consequences of their actions, to see the present in terms of the past, to rely only on close associates whose opinions and support can be counted on, and to want to take direct control of the decision-making process. These reactions result in a reduction in the number of options as well as the amount and kinds of information that are considered and enable leaders to focus more on searching for support than on dealing with the situation—that is, they permit leaders to deal with the stress by avoiding facing all the ramifications of the problem.

Not all leaders react in this fashion, however. As Robert Kennedy (1968: 81) observed about the group that composed the ExCom during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the quality
of the performances of these advisers and cabinet members was quite varied. Some were highly creative and resourceful while others were erratic and 'even appeared to lose their judgment and stability'. As Kennedy's comment suggests, some leaders find stressful situations motivating and rise to the challenge, others experience some distress in such situations and respond as the literature indicates, while a few become debilitated and unable to act. These various types of responses have implications for the leadership that the individual leader will provide. Thus, it is important to ascertain how a leader usually responds to stress.

Learning how leaders are likely to respond to stress becomes particularly relevant in situations where the stress is no longer something threatening only the group, organization, or government but is also threatening the leaders personally—that is, they internalize the threat and their own self-esteem becomes involved. Internalization can occur in situations that pose a threat to the leader's position as leader, to a policy in which the leader has invested time and political capital, to those immediately around him or to issues over which the leader has little control but for which he will be held accountable. The Iranian hostage crisis, 9/11, and the meltdown of Wall Street in 2008 have posed such situations for American presidents, the Arab spring to political leaders in the Middle East, and the tsunami in the spring of 2011 to the leadership of Japan. When internalized, these situations and problems can become all-consuming for the leaders and those they lead. Other issues are forgotten or set aside and attention becomes riveted on dealing with the 'life-or-death' issue. All resources are directed towards coping with the problem. Political leadership becomes focused, drawing the attention of all in the political unit to what is now the leader's problem. By studying how leaders have handled other potentially stressful situations, we gain some idea about which threats they are likely to internalize and how they will deal with the resulting stress once the threat is internalized.

Background Factors

Information about leaders' backgrounds can also provide insights into the kind of leadership they are likely to exercise. In particular, information on their first political positions, on the nature of their political experiences, and on the political climate into which they were socialized can help us in understanding what they will do.

Barber (1977) has argued that knowledge about a political leader's first political position provides clues about later leadership behaviour. The nature of the position, the means by which it was acquired, and the ways in which the leader behaved while in the position have implications for future leadership activities. In effect, in future situations leaders fall back on the rhetoric and practices that helped them succeed the first time. Because it is the first, this experience is often given added significance in memory and remains especially vivid. In talking over the initial political experiences of women members of the US Senate, Whitney (2001) learned how their first political interactions shaped not only how they considered politics but also the ways they chose to act in exercising leadership. 'Don't get mad, get elected' became their motto.
What kind of experiences have political leaders had in the kinds of positions they now hold? How similar is the present position to others they have held? How long a tenure have the leaders had in their present positions? The answers to these questions provide us with some ideas about the repertoire of behaviours the leaders are likely to have as well as how concerned they will need to be with consolidating and legitimating their power as opposed to getting on with the task at hand, how much influence the leaders will have over policy, and how much they will have to learn on the job. With experience, leaders gain a sense of what will work and not work and also which cues in the environment need to be taken into account and which are superfluous in specific situations (Beer, Healy, and Bourne 2004; Preston and Hermann 2006).

Just how did the leaders acquire their present positions and why? Did they work their way through the system; were they advanced by a patron; were they co-opted because of certain expertise or a particular set of beliefs? This information tells us how much the leaders know about the individuals, groups, and organizations with which they must work; how likely they are to be imbued with the organization’s norms and goals; how dependent they will be on certain other individuals and groups; and how broad a mandate they will have to institute change. Consider the difference between being an elected versus an appointed official.

In addition to their experiences, leaders are also products of their times. What was going on when the leader was growing up, seeking that first job, and assuming responsibility? What were the events and ideas shaping young people during the time that the leader was moving from adolescence through early adulthood, often the time when political socialization is occurring most rapidly? What were the problems and issues with which people were having to cope? As Schlesinger (2007: A23) has observed, leaders, like historians, ‘are prisoners of their own experience’; they bring with them ‘preconceptions’ of how politics works that are characteristic of their age. In effect, common generational experiences have an effect on those who become leaders, helping to shape the norms and beliefs of both leaders and their constituents about the nature of the political environment. If not completely imbued themselves with the ideas that have shaped their generation, leaders have to deal with these ideas in their constituents to retain their positions of leadership (e.g. Strategic Assessment Group 2003; Jennings 2004).

4 When Do Leaders Matter?

The third question that political psychologists have explored with regard to political leadership focuses on the conditions under which the characteristics of political leaders just described are likely to shape what their political units do. In effect, are there certain times when it becomes critical to know something about what leaders are like to understand what is happening in the governing process? Several conditions that have received attention in the literature revolve around (1) the ill-structured nature of most political
problems, (2) the tendency for authority to contract to leaders during crises, (3) turnover in government, and (4) the experience of the leader.

Most political problems are ill-structured and invite interpretation. As ill-structured problems, they have no ‘correct’ answer, often are laced with uncertainty regarding the nature and salience of the problem, provoke in the policymaker a need to provide some structure or frame to what is happening, and usually involve value trade-offs (Sylvan and Voss 1998). How policymakers define and represent the problem may or may not match how an outside observer might view it. In fact, research (Beasley et al. 2001) has shown that, on average, around 70 per cent of the time policymakers involved in dealing with such ill-structured problems disagree about the nature of the problem, the options that are feasible, or what should happen. Note how the same event—11 September 2001—was framed by leaders differently in Britain and in the United States. Tony Blair announced at the Labor Party Conference just hours after the Twin Towers had collapsed that we had just experienced a crime against civilization—the police and the courts were the instruments for dealing with what had happened with justice as the goal; George W. Bush framed the event as an attack on America and pronounced a war on terror engaging the military and calling forth nationalism. Here is where leaders’ beliefs can become like possessions, as noted earlier; the stronger said beliefs, the more likely they are to shape any interpretation (Taber and Lodge 2006). Moreover, how policymakers view the problem—as being a loss or a gain (things are going poorly versus well)—can shape how risk prone or averse they are likely to be in the options and solutions they pursue (McDermott 2001). Rationality becomes bounded by the leaders’ perceptions of reality and problems become structured in a particular way (Chollet and Goldgeier 2002).

Research has also shown that there is a contraction of authority to those most accountable for policy in crisis situations—to the leadership (Boin et al. 2005). Such a contraction appears to happen in decentralized as well as centralized political organizations (Hermann and Kegley 1995). Crises are considered to involve a serious threat to the values and interests of the political unit, provide little time for making a response, and come as a surprise (Stern 2003). Leaders and their interpretations of what is happening become important in these situations. Indeed, in a study of eighty-one crises that were identified as such by journalists, historians, and those involved, how leaders viewed the amount of time available to them and the degree of surprise in the situation led to different decision-making processes (Hermann and Dayton 2009). When they viewed themselves as having little time and were surprised (an 11 September 2001 type of event), leaders pushed to frame the event quickly; to reach consensus rapidly on what to do; and to implement their decision with little interest in, or reaction to, feedback regarding what they were doing—either positive or negative. They engaged in path-dependent behaviour. However, when leaders perceived themselves to have a little more time in which to respond to what was happening, even if they were caught by surprise (the US reaction to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, for example), they became more innovative—searching for information and expertise that could help them ascertain what was happening and trying to think outside the box. Leaders’ general reactions to stress and how
likely they are to internalize the crisis situation and make it their own suggest which of these two types of decision-making processes they will pursue. Moreover, leadership style often shapes how fast contraction of authority occurs and who becomes involved with the leaders in dealing with the crisis (Preston 2001).

Leaders of governments often change, and with each change can come a difference in perspective regarding politics that has the ability to influence what governments do. Consider the change from a George W. Bush to a Barack Obama, a Sarkozy to a Hollande, a Kim Jong Il to a Kim Jong Un, a Tony Blair to a Gordon Brown. At the least, leadership style and level of experience are different between these leaders (e.g. Kaarbo and Hermann 1998; Dyson 2006). Now note the fact that, between 1998 and 2008, the 29 Asian countries bordering the Pacific Rim had 133 governments—on average each had 4.6 governments during this time period (Dayton et al. 2009). Examining the leadership styles of those who came to positions of power as a result of these changes in government, we learn that 60 per cent of those who came to their positions with a specific agenda and the intention to control the policy-making process—they were prepared to challenge constraints—lost their positions after a short period of time through votes of no confidence, calls for early elections, parties withdrawing from a coalition, or coups. Interestingly, only 21 per cent of leaders who believed in the use of informal power and preferred to work behind the scenes to make policy experienced such an irregular loss of power—when regime change occurred for these leaders, it was through a regular and planned process. Furthermore, the first leadership style was associated with the use of repression and diversion in dealing with opposition to government policies, while the second leadership style was associated with bargaining and accommodation (Hermann, Sakiev and Smith 2010). In effect, leadership style and strategy affected longevity in office as well as how influential the leaders’ views were on what was considered a problem and who was involved in making policy.

Experience also appears to count as an important influence on how political leaders interpret and respond to events (e.g. Preston 2001; Beer, Healy, and Bourne 2004; Dyson and Preston 2006). With some expertise, they are more likely to rely on their knowledge and background and to engage in situations on a case-by-case basis. Indeed, such leaders are increasingly willing to assert, and actively advocate for, their positions in the policy-making process, even as they quickly integrate new information into their previous knowledge base, differentiate between relevant and irrelevant information, and make decisions using analogies based on past events. Without expertise, leaders are more affected by their personal predispositions such as their beliefs, motivations, or leadership style as well as led to depend on those whom they trust who have such experience. Moreover, policymakers feel more comfortable and confident dealing with domains in which they have some expertise and often drift towards these arenas. Consider, for example, the effects that Dick Cheney had on American foreign policy under the two Bush presidents. President George H. W. Bush had extensive experience in the foreign policy-making process and could differentiate between relevant and irrelevant information as well as recognize inconsistencies in the information provided to him and exceptions to the rules—he could say ‘no’ to Cheney based on his own
knowledge and expertise. His son, President George W. Bush, came to office with little foreign-policy experience and very little international travel. By necessity, he viewed Cheney as an expert and relied on his advice as well as on his own beliefs regarding the importance of the United States and democracy in the world in making policy (Preston and Hermann 2006).

5 In Conclusion

To understand leadership, political psychologists have argued that it is important to learn not only what the leaders involved are like but also what those they lead want and the nature of the context in which they are operating. Leadership can change as these factors change, with consequences for who is likely to become a political leader and for when gaining knowledge about what leaders are like will matter. From a political psychology perspective, leadership is an umbrella concept that can be understood only by examining these ingredients in combination. As this chapter suggests, we are currently more involved in exploring what leaders are like and are just in the initial stages of examining the effects such characteristics can have on who becomes a political leader as well as their impact on what the political organizations, institutions, or governments they lead do. Our challenge is to tackle the interaction among the ingredients of leadership. The studies overviewed here suggest the payoffs that may result from accepting this challenge.

References


