Introduction: A Contemporary Social Psychology of Leadership

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From its inception as a distinct discipline devoted to the scientific study of how people influence and are influenced by others, social psychologists have explored the nature of leadership. After noting the origins of leadership research in the work of such early theorists as Le Bon, Freud, and Lewin, we discuss the four key themes addressed in this volume: (1) the characteristics of the leader; (2) people's perceptions of their leaders or their potential leaders; (3) what it is that leaders actually do; and (4) the nature of the interaction between leaders and followers.

No one discipline can claim the analysis of leadership as its sovereign dominion, but social psychology's emphasis on the scientific study of how people influence and respond to the influence of others makes it entirely appropriate that a collection of chapters written by the best minds in that field should stand beside ones examining leadership from the humanities on the one hand and political science on the other. Social psychology has much to say about leadership, hence its inclusion in the interdisciplinary Praeger set *Leadership at the Crossroads.*

How has the social psychological study of leadership evolved over the years? When psychology and social psychology emerged from philosophy as distinctive disciplines in the late nineteenth century, leadership was a central concern for many in the field of social psychology. Allport (1968, p. 1), writing in his classic historical analysis of social psychology, noted that the

field's intellectual ancestors were the political philosophers who understood that ''governments must conform to the nature of the men governed.'' Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, David Hume, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and other social philosophers speculated about the nature of humans and their societies, but it remained for the emerging social sciences—economics, sociology, psychology, social psychology, political science, and anthropology—to seek out data to test the validity of their conjectures. For example, Le Bon in his 1895 book *Psychologie des Foules* described the way leaders can hold sway over individuals who have been transformed by their membership in a mob or crowd. Wilhelm Wundt, the recognized founder of scientific psychology, turned his attention in the early 1900s to the study of Volkerpsychologie, which included within it substantial conceptual material pertaining to leadership, particularly with regards to the subordination of the individual to the will of the leader. One of the first textbooks in social psychology, Ross's (1908) *Social Psychology,* included detailed discussions of the heroic leader and the leader with natural authority, as did Allport's classic 1924 text. Freud (1921), although known primarily for his work on personality and psychodynamics, provided a provocative theoretical perspective on leadership in his *Group Psychology and the Analysis of Ego*.

As the field matured, journals began to carry research reports with such titles as ''The social psychology of leadership'' (Bartlett, 1926), ''Psychology, leadership, and democracy'' (Tait, 1927), and ''A psychological description of leadership'' (Nafe, 1930), and some of the new field's most iconic studies focused on leadership. This gradual increase in research was underscored by the 1939 publication of the classic work of Lewin, Lippitt, and White, which examined the consequences of different styles of leadership on productivity and satisfaction. In light of this early work, editions of the *Handbook of Social Psychology* and the highly influential series on *Readings in Social Psychology* from the 1940s and 1950s accorded leadership a significant place in the overall concerns of the discipline.

In recent decades, leadership has been upstaged as a topic of concern among social psychologists, but this respite is now over. Social psychologists' renewed interest in leadership points to the centrality of the topic in a field dedicated to understanding processes of social influence. The essays collected here show that many of the finest scholars in social psychology are exploring leadership and its connection to such central topics as attitudes and social cognition, group dynamics and interpersonal processes, and personality and individual differences. We also include chapters that look at leadership from such relatively new perspectives as evolutionary social psychology, terror management theory, emotional intelligence, and social identity theory. In sum, we are delighted to include here contributions illuminating leadership

from the most distinguished scholars doing work in the most central areas of the discipline of social psychology.

The chapters lend themselves to a variety of organizational schemes, depending on the readers' interests and orientation, but we have settled on an approach that pays homage to the earliest social psychological studies of leadership: (1) the characteristics of the leader; (2) people's perceptions of their leaders or their potential leaders; (3) what it is that leaders actually do; and (4) the nature of the interaction between leaders and followers. Most of our chapters fall clearly into one of these four categories. Those by Zaccaro, Gulick, and Khare; by Riggio and Riggio; and by Hogg, for example, discuss various leader qualities, such as charisma and prototypicality, that affect both their emergence as leaders and their success as leaders. Lee and Fiske and Forsyth and Nye deal squarely with perceptions of leaders, and concepts such as implicit theories of leadership. And so forth. On the other hand, some chapters may have required a bit of forcing to fit into one of the groupings. Kramer's chapter on ''group folly,'' for example, touches on several themes, but pays particularly close attention to the intricacy of leader-follower interactions. Having been as sensible as we could about organizing the book, let us provide an overview of what follows.

THE PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERS

Freud (1921), in his seminal analysis of leadership, said that groups crave leadership and the strong exercise of authority, and that this need carries the group ''half-way to meet the leader, yet he too must fit in with it in his personal qualities.'' Five of our chapters consider these personal qualities. Zaccaro, Gulick, and Khare ask a very old question—is leadership determined by one's personality?—but offer a very new set of answers. Although for many years experts maintained that there is no such thing as a ''born leader''—that is, that temperament and personality are unrelated to leadership—more sophisticated approaches that recognize the interaction of personality and situational factors reach a different conclusion. New research designs allow investigators to differentiate the effects of various personality factors from background causes, resulting in clearer estimates of the strength of the personality-leadership relationship.

The chapters by Riggio and Riggio and by Solomon, Cohen, Greenberg, and Pyszczynski address aspects of a leaders' charisma. The Riggios consider the characteristics of charismatic leaders but also how group dynamics and attribution processes affect perceptions of charismatic leadership. Charisma therefore has a great deal to do with personal qualities, but even more to do with perception and interaction within the group. Solomon and his colleagues use their terror management theory to explain the allure of

charismatic leaders. According to terror management theory, people manage the potential terror invoked by awareness of one's mortality by reaffirming a belief in a meaningful worldview and one's place in that world. Accordingly, people follow charismatic leaders because these leaders make them feel like a valued part of something great. The authors provide empirical evidence supporting this motivational account of the appeal of charismatic leaders.

Hogg's chapter explores the identity functions of leadership, and in so doing introduces the importance of group members' prototypicality, or the extent to which, in Freud's terms, they possess ''the typical qualities of the individuals concerned in a particularly clearly marked and pure form.'' His social identity theory-based approach maintains that as membership in a group or category becomes more important to one's sense of self, one is more influenced by group members, or leaders, who best embody the prototypical qualities of the group. Highly prototypical leaders have an effectiveness advantage over less prototypical leaders because they are well-liked, they are influential and gain compliance from followers, they earn their followers' trust, they are perceived as charismatic, and they are in a position to be both innovative and maintain their prototypicality.

Lopes and Salovey, in the final chapter dealing with personal qualities, consider the importance of a newly studied individual capacity, ''emotional intelligence.'' Emotional intelligence consists of a number of closely related abilities, namely the abilities: (1) to perceive accurately one's own and others' emotions; (2) to understand how emotions influence cognition and behavior; (3) to use emotions to stimulate thinking; and (4) to manage our own emotions and those of others. Lopes and Salovey clarify the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership, and how developing emotional intelligence contributes to the development of effective leadership.

PERCEIVING LEADERS

As Kurt Lewin aptly noted, ''social action no less than physical action is steered by perception'' (Lewin, 1997, p. 51). Indeed, leadership has long been considered to principally exist in the eye, or the mind, of the beholder. Le Bon, Freud, and other early scholars in social psychology believed that people's perceptions of leaders are complicated. Most are drawn to group members who match their expectations of what a leader should be, even if that image suggests the leader may be despotic or motivated by a desire to control others. These notions have evolved into concepts of implicit leadership theories or leader schemas, which are the focus of chapters by Lee and Fiske and Forsyth and Nye. These authors help us begin to examine the perceptual and cognitive processes that help both leaders and followers interpret the nature of their joint social situation. Both chapters view people as processors

of information who continually seek data about important others. This cognitive perspective assumes that people search for information that will help them understand the motives, actions, and emotions of others, and that they organize the clues they have available to them from their perceptions and their memories. Lee and Fiske provide an introduction to the importance of mental representations in the leadership process. Their general overview of social cognition focuses on three mental representations that are key in person perception: schemas, prototypes, and exemplars. They then demonstrate that, although leader perceptions vary across contexts, there are two main dimensions that underlie most leader images: competence and warmth. Forsyth and Nye extend this analysis by asking if people's cognitive expectations about leaders substantially influence the veridicality of their social inferences. They find that people's personal theories about leaders exert a strong influence in leadership situations, and that these cognitive schemas affect people's thinking about leaders across a wide variety of cultures and contexts.

Leader schemas also play an important conceptual role in Simonton's chapter on perceptions of presidential greatness. Simonton's work suggests that in rating U.S. presidents supposedly expert historians use many of the same implicit theories of leadership as laypeople, and that both groups are highly influenced by salient information, such as whether there was a scandal during a president's term. Simonton further suggests that situational rather than personal variables account for many of these ratings. For example, presidents who were assassinated tend to get favorable ratings. While this finding certainly points toward the impact of situations, there is an intriguing relationship between a personal variable, need for power, and assassination. Simonton unravels the complexities of historians' judgments in some of the familiar terms of social cognition.

Kugler and Goethals also consider what we might call political social cognition. Their research on assessments of performance in presidential and vice-presidential debates suggests that a large number of personal and situational variables combine and interact to affect viewers' perceptions. Most impressive, perhaps, is the extent to which those perceptions are influenced by the opinions of others. Their findings suggest that debates are often quite ambiguous, and different people's performance appraisals are affected in subtly different ways by what they learn from both peers and pundits.

A chapter by Hoyt and Chemers addresses the unique experiences of nondominant, or stigmatized, leaders such as women and minorities. It begins with the problem that leader schemas or prototypes are typically male and typically of a socially dominant race/ethnicity. They examine how people respond to and perceive stigmatized leaders as well as the experiences of those leaders themselves. Negative stereotypes of individuals based on skin color, gender, or other devaluing characteristics are incompatible with

expectations of effective leadership and can result in negative judgments by others. Additionally, members of stigmatized groups are fully aware of these stereotyped expectations, and their awareness often influences the way they behave, both negatively and positively, and the attributions they make in leadership positions.

Even though individuals tend to more strongly endorse leaders who match their personal beliefs about what makes for good leadership, their emotions and motivations can also prompt them to throw their support behind one type of leader and not another. In their chapter, Allison and Goethals review findings that suggest followers who feel sympathy, adoration, or concern for a leader tend to support that leader. These emotional foundations of leadership endorsement extend, for example, to underdog leaders who must overcome significant obstacles on their way to office or position. Similarly, and perhaps more surprisingly, followers are also more positive toward leaders after they have died, particularly if they were martyrs for a noble cause.

WHAT LEADERS DO

Social psychologists, skeptical of the principles of leadership so frequently offered by sages and self-proclaimed experts, early on sought to distinguish between prescriptive, normative analyses of leadership and descriptive, data-based analyses of leadership. Those studies of what leaders actually do as they strive to guide, organize, and inspire others suggest that leadership is more than just the traditional duality of socioemotional work and initiating structure. The role of leader is a multifaceted one, for one must be able to persuade others, make decisions, resolve conflicts, and effectively regulate oneself.

Freud (1921) emphasized that the most influential leaders had great faith in an idea and were able to articulate it in a way that appealed primarily to people's emotions. He wrote of ''the truly magical power of words'' and that while those words needed to use powerful images, they did not need to appeal to rationality. He articulated one of the most powerful principles of persuasion, repetition: the leader ''must repeat the same thing again and again.'' In accord with this emphasis on oratory, Olson and Haynes open this section with their look at leadership and persuasion. Their discussion of the attitude change literature relevant to leadership certainly points to the importance of nonrational factors in persuasion, particularly the idea that much of persuasion happens through the less deliberative ''peripheral route'' rather than the more thoughtful ''central route.'' On the other hand, they argue that using strong, cogent, and clear arguments is the leader's most effective path to persuasion. They also point to the personal characteristics that make

leaders maximally effective, including charisma, likability, poise, and self-assurance.

Although Freud focused on persuasion, he also understood the importance of perceptions of justice in effective leadership. For example, he discussed the idea that the leader had to foster an illusion of fairness, that is, that he loved ''all the individuals in the group with an equal love'' so that rivalries among followers would not disrupt the group, or induce them to challenge the leader. In effect, leaders had to be skillful negotiators. John F. Kennedy reminded us of this critical element of leadership when he asserted ''let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate.'' Kray and Haselhuhn contribute a chapter on negotiation as a critical skill in leadership, and emphasize the cognitive underpinnings of effective negotiation. They explore the importance of negotiator beliefs in determining negotiation effectiveness. Such beliefs include conceptions of the resource pool as fixed or expandable, whether an issue is even thought to be negotiable, and people's implicit beliefs about the traits needed to be an effective negotiator. Kray and Haselhuhn discuss their research examining the importance of implicit negotiation beliefs about whether negotiators are born (fixed ability) or made (malleable ability). Their work resonates with the age-old question of whether leaders are born or made. (We think the short answer is, both.)

Social psychologists have made a number of important contributions to our understanding of group decision-making processes and the role of leaders in those processes. Notably, Irving Janis's concept of *groupthink* has made a substantial impact on the field. Kramer's chapter reconsiders the role of groupthink in President John F. Kennedy's decision making leading to the Bay of Pigs fiasco during the first three months of his administration. Recent documents suggest that groupthink was less a dynamic in the covert plan to overthrow Castro's regime in Cuba than Kennedy's own political calculations and the ability of advisers in various agencies, including the CIA and the military, to manipulate Kennedy by playing on his political concerns. Kramer's work suggests that in the aftermath Kennedy understood that his own way of thinking was ultimately responsible for the decision to proceed with the operation. Furthermore, it suggests that Kennedy's awareness that he was ''the responsible officer of the government'' during the operation led to him being much more thoughtful about decision making during the Cuban missile crisis a year and a half later.

The first three chapters of this section emphasize behaviors leaders engage in with others: persuasion, negotiation, and decision making. The final chapter in this section speaks to the importance of leaders' self-oriented behaviors. Effective leadership demands both the motivation and capacity for effective self-regulation. Murphy, Reichard, and Johnson focus on this often overlooked aspect of leader behavior. They begin with a consideration of how

leaders' own self-perceptions affect their behavior and demonstrate the importance of using theories of the self, such as self-schema or identity theories, in understanding leader effectiveness. Their primary focus becomes the relationship of Bandura's notion of self-regulation to the domain of leadership and the significant roles of leadership self-efficacy, self-management, and self-awareness in effecting more constructive leader behavior. Finally, they examine leader self-development through the lens of self-regulation techniques.

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS

Freud once more is the source of insightful ideas about the relative power of the leader to exert influence over others. In some cases, he suggested, when followers are transformed into the primal horde, leaders can indulge their own wishes and their narcissism, and treat group members quite severely. Such a leader is ''free. His intellectual acts were strong and independent . . . and his will needed no reinforcement from others . . . he loved no one but himself, or other people only as they served his needs.'' In this final section, the authors more closely examine these interactions between leaders and followers by focusing on how evolutionary processes result in contemporary leaders who may be unfit to provide for the needs of their followers, how power can alter the dynamics between leaders and followers, and how followers' moral convictions guide their interactions with leaders.

Van Vugt, Johnson, Kaiser, and O'Gorman's chapter considers research on the evolutionary underpinnings of leadership that suggests a more complicated and balanced view of the development of relations between leaders and followers. They suggest that leadership is an evolutionarily stable adaptation that enhanced the fitness of human beings across long spans of time and a variety of situations. Actions that help others organize their communal activities and reduce conflict among members benefit the group but also increase the leader's access to resources and increase the likelihood that the leader will survive long enough to procreate. Leadership also benefits those who follow, for in scarce resource environments competition among members over resources, constant struggles for dominance, and uncoordinated defensive and domestic activities will be deadly to all. As Van Vugt and his colleagues note, however, leadership and followership processes evolved in human groups that existed in an environment of evolutionary adaptiveness (EEA) that differs in dramatic ways from the groups and communities where humans currently live. The result is that contemporary leaders sometimes fail because the psychological and interpersonal reactions of both followers and leaders are influenced by genetic tendencies that are not as behaviorally

adaptive as they were in earlier evolutionary contexts: the evolutionary mismatch hypothesis of leadership.

Consistent with the focus on the failures of contemporary leaders, the chapter by Galinsky, Jordan, and Sivanathan implicitly details Freud's view of a despotic leader who fully illustrates Lord Acton's famous warning that ''power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely.'' Galinsky et al. explain that since leaders tend to be more powerful than their followers, they are psychologically and behaviorally activated: more proactive, more self-promoting, and more likely to seek out rewards and exploit opportunities. Followers, in contrast, are more inhibited, for they tend to be more reactive, cautious, and vigilant. Galinsky and his colleagues identify a number of negative side effects of the acquisition of power by leaders, but they also suggest ways that power can be harnessed to energize positive forms of leadership.

In the final chapter of our volume, Skitka, Bauman, and Lytle provide a useful counterpoint in focusing on the follower's capacity to resist the demands of the powerful leader. Social psychologists have demonstrated that powerful leaders can extract obedience from their followers, to the point that they undertake actions that most would consider to be morally questionable. Skitka and her colleagues, however, note that leaders who direct their followers in ways that violate the followers' own core moral values will likely fail as a source of influence. Moral conviction, they suggest, is a more potent guide to behavior than more general attitudes and beliefs, and thereby provides followers with guides for action as well as criteria for the evaluation of a leader. Not only will they refuse to follow the direction of a leader who asks them to act in ways that are inconsistent with their convictions, but they will also come to question the legitimacy of that leader.

AN OVERVIEW

Although we can distinguish four aspects of leadership for the purposes of organizing the work of our colleagues in this volume, they are, in fact, very much interrelated, even intertwined. An understanding of the connections between these aspects is suggested by considering our chapters as a whole. The leader's personal characteristics are surely important, but what matters more is how they are perceived. There must be some correspondence between what followers or potential followers expect and desire, and what qualities leaders or potential leaders have, or are perceived to have. People have expectations not only about what leaders are like but also about what they do. They expect leaders to persuade, to push and prod, and to innovate. Furthermore, followers hold leaders responsible for success and failure, and so leaders, like President Kennedy, carefully weigh how actions are likely to affect their perceived competency and legitimacy. And then beyond mutual

sets of expectations, leaders and followers actually interact. Evolutionary analyses suggest that groups have developed highly adaptive ways for coordinating leading and following, in the interests of goal accomplishment, tranquility within the group, and protection from outside threats. Despite the evident adaptive nature of leader/follower coordination, the power leaders obtain leads to several varieties of exploitation of followers. Effective resistance by followers and effective self-regulation by leaders reduce these destructive aspects of power.

In conclusion, we are extremely pleased that the chapters in this book provide insight into the interrelated processes of leadership. They represent the state of the art of the social psychology of leadership. We are grateful to our contributors and excited for our readers. We hope that the latter will develop a useful and stimulating understanding of leadership from the work of the former.

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