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Political Leaders and their Publics

JAMES WALTER

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the psychological elements driving leaders and followers and the dynamic of their relationship to each other – with particular reference to recent Australian political leadership and experience. Building upon the work of Lasswell, Barber and Little, the paper analyses how political affect connects leaders and followers in the formation and mobilization of publics. The paper provides case studies of the leadership styles of three recent Australian Prime Ministers – Whitlam, Keating and Howard – and explores the resonance between the leader's world-view and emotional signature and the salient beliefs and passions of their followers. Copyright © 2008 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Key words: leadership, political leaders, followers, political personality, political types, public emotions

INTRODUCTION

We see leaders everywhere; in every group we join a leader will be given authority as a means of achieving collective aims. Someone has to do the leader's work – clarifying objectives, organizing, focusing, suggesting strategies, acting for us, taking responsibility. More broadly, as Graham Little once observed, "Political leadership has taken on a special significance in our age, as if politics and its leaders have to fill a space left by God and religion" (Little, 1988: 2). And yet leadership is mysterious: even in a small group, and even where leader roles are conscientiously rotated, not all will take a turn at the helm – some would resist even if pressed to do so. Then, sometimes events direct our attention to the perennial puzzles: who chooses to lead, and why? And why do we follow?

Consider, for instance, former Australian Labor leader Paul Keating, a career politician given to forceful speeches on good leadership, a leader himself in the historic transformation of the Australian economy, and finally prime minister: he impressed observers as thinking the prize was not worth the effort. Never more at home than when his back was against the wall, at last in office, when decisive action was imperative, he frequently seemed depressed, and was apt to

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disengage, "always somewhere else" (Watson, 2002: 30). In the three decades since national opinion polls have surveyed prime ministerial popularity, Keating averaged the lowest scores of any prime minister (McAllister, 2003: 267), yet media support for him "grew in inverse proportion to public sympathy" (Watson, 2002: 28). Focus group research revealed that significant sectors of the community loathed him (Gordon, 1993: 198), yet his "true believers" were inspired by him, and have not forgotten:

> Paul Keating . . . made me believe that if I worked hard enough, had an open mind and was passionate about the future, one day I too might become prime minister. . . . The sense of opportunity and hope that Keating helped craft has gone. . . . What has been forgotten by [Liberal prime minister] Howard, the Labor Party and the political pundits is Paul Keating's greatest legacy: his ability as a person and as a political leader to remove the ceiling of opportunity for the lower and middle classes, and in doing so to build a nation and not just an economy. . . . He was (and remains) a true inspiration. He made me believe I could do anything and be anybody. (McConville, 2005)

Keating's driving ambition, yet ambivalence about leading; the transformative achievements between 1983 and 1996 that depended on unremitting struggle, yet readiness to disengage; the evidence that committed followers were starkly at variance with public opinion, how are these to be explained? We can make a start by looking at the psychology of both leaders and followers – they must be understood in conjunction.

LEADERS

Social scientists exploring the dynamics of leadership, and the characteristics that might be expected of certain types of leadership aspirant, have found congruent patterns, as three examples indicate. First, consider Harold Lasswell, an influential early exponent of the psychological analysis of leadership at the University of Chicago and then Yale. Interested in why some people seem motivated to seek power, he proposed that the "political personality" tended to use power to overcome actual or threatened loss of values, including self-esteem (Lasswell, 1930; Lasswell, 1948). The political personality "steers by power chances" to exact deference from others (Davies, 1980: 5). Though motivated by this common impulse, Lasswell argued that leaders would nonetheless fall into different *types* according to the skills they relied on in gaining access to and then shaping decision-making. He identified three types: the *agitator*, who works on mobilizing people, seeking a response from the crowd; the *administrator*, who is more comfortable with direct interpersonal relations and with working through systems and organization to shape outcomes; and the *theorist*, who seeks to change the world though changing the ways in which we think (Lasswell, 1930). Lasswell cautioned that few political actors will turn out to be "pure" types – most will fall on a spectrum from the most people-oriented (agitators) to the most abstract (theorists).

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Typologies have since become a staple in the comparative study of US presidential leadership. A good example, our second instance, is the work of J.D. Barber on presidential *character* as a likely indicator of performance (Barber, 1972). Barber's typology depended upon two dimensions, the level of application to political work (*active* or *passive*), and the nature of emotional engagement with the work (*positive* or *negative*). The rubric is easily applied: what does a leader do, and how does he or she feel about it?

Applying these dimensions to presidential case studies, Barber generated four types: the *active-positive* (hard working, positively oriented, this leader is the ideal, the adaptive personality, for example, President Franklin Roosevelt); the *active-negative* (closer to Lasswell's "power" oriented personality, this leader is compulsive, hard-working but defensive, prone to provoke crises and then to persist in a failing policy position, for example President Richard Nixon); the *passive-positive* (compliant and other-directed, seeking rewards for being cooperative rather than assertive, for example President William H. Taft); and the *passive-negative* (withdrawn, often drafted into position and driven to serve by a sense of duty, for example President Dwight Eisenhower). Barber's message was that active-positive leaders and active-negative leaders tend to dominate – and that political systems should prevent the accession to power of conflict-prone, rigid, compulsive active-negative leaders.

A third instance: Graham Little, Australia's pre-eminent leadership theorist, illuminated mainstream politics with a sophisticated model of what he called "political ensembles" linked to "political climates" that favor the success of one type of political ensemble rather than another (Little, 1985). Little drew on W.R. Bion, whose observations led him to distinguish between the tasks a group comes together to achieve ("the work group") and the tacit assumptions that determine interaction within it ("the basic assumption group") (Bion, 1961). It is the "basic assumption" rather than objective work that governs interaction, and Bion postulated three common types of group behavior – the fight-flight group (intent on fighting or fleeing from potential threats and seeking a leader adept in identifying threats and facilitating aggression or evasion); the dependency group (which "gathers to gain security from one individual on whom they depend"); and the pairing group (attuned to unity, to coming together, with symbolic focus on creative "pairing" interactions but an unrealistic, sometimes messianic vision). Little turned to mainstream politics and extrapolated from Bion to identify what he called "*strong*", "*group*" or "*inspiring*" leaders. Each leader, and each ensemble, assumes a pattern of relations between "self" and "others" characteristic of Bion's "fight-flight", "dependency" and "pairing" groups – indeed, ensembles are formed because they share a common assumption about how to address this relationship, and recognize a leader who expresses their common project.

My three examples – Lasswell, Barber and Little – by no means exhaust the field, but they do illuminate recurrent tropes in leadership studies. All engaged with the dilemma of the power-oriented personality. Little's *strong* leader, seeing self-other relations as competitive, preoccupied with threats and battles that must

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be fought, shares aspects of Barber's active-negative type. His *group* leader emphasizing shared needs, interdependence, loyalty and collective solutions has similarities with Barber's passive-positive type. Little's *inspiring* leader, believing that self and other are capable of engaging together in mutual adventure, resonates with Barber's adaptive, active-positive leader. Lasswell identifies the appetite for political work and shows how its skills are more or less people oriented; Barber alerts us to the particularities of behavior in office; Little's "ensembles" remind us that leadership success depends on a resonance with followers' needs.

LEADERS AND PUBLICS

What is the relationship between leaders and publics? Certainly leaders cannot succeed without a following. But consider the obverse: can publics exist without their leaders? Walter Lippmann raised the key issues in the 1920s. His argument then was that "the public" is a convenient myth (Lippmann, 1927/1993). Lippmann suggested that calculated intervention by elites governed the flow of information to the public in order to keep the "pictures in their heads" in line with the realities that only an expert few could properly understand (Lippmann, 1922). He challenged the "false ideal" of the "omnicompetent, sovereign citizen" coming together with others in democratic deliberation to direct public affairs. Most of us cannot be expected to have the knowledge, or even to keep track, of the complex issues that must be resolved in managing modern society. Instead, there are insiders and outsiders, and the course of public affairs is determined by accommodations between insiders who – only at elections, or when a resolution between themselves cannot be achieved – attempt to educate outsiders so as to enlist public opinion in their cause (Lippmann, 1927/1993). Furthermore, he argued "...the membership of the public is not fixed. It changes with the issue" (Lippmann, 1927/1993: 100). Lippmann saw publics as *ad hoc*, to be defined situationally and operationally simply as "those persons interested in an affair" (McClay, 1927/1993: xxvi). There will be different groups of activist insiders according to the nature of an issue. The best we might expect is "the achievement of a workable *modus vivendi* among competitive interests...a 'deep pluralism' [is] the inescapable condition [of]...modern political and economic speculation" (McClay, 1927/1993: xxxiii).

Social psychologists have since refined this scenario. The stereotypes that all social groups develop to encapsulate identities and to represent (and challenge) their circumstances are not simply given, they are collective achievements: "creative and intricately tailored constructions that demand collaborative work" (Haslam et al., 2002: 171). They cannot be simply imposed: a leader must be at one with the group's objectives. Nonetheless, they are context dependent, and the contextualizing work of leaders (Lippman's "insiders") in appealing to shared frameworks and relating these to courses of action can influence group mobilization. Stereotypes are shared tools, not just private pictures: "In a world of intergroup politics they are not just traps into which the dispossessed unwittingly

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and all-too-easily fall but carefully crafted weapons that are instrumental to their consolidated advancement" (Haslam et al., 2002: 183).

Lippmann was prescient in his scepticism about a unified public agreed upon a common purpose and his alternative postulation of a deep pluralism where the formation of many publics is generated by competition between groups. Shared explanations of the world developed collaboratively within a group, often with the catalyst of a leader's articulation of common purpose, orient its members to ideologically relevant goals. Contemporary sociologists reinforce the argument that "publics are interstitial, widely varying in scope, size and timing, and... dynamic and interactional, rather than singular, reified entities" (Emirbayer and Shelley, 1999: 156). They emphasize that publics are frequently multiple. Nancy Fraser urges the formulation of a new "critical sociology of a form of public life in which multiple but unequal publics participate" (Emirbayer and Shelley, 1999: 157–158).

The notion of multiple publics, brought to life by interaction with singular leaders, can be associated with the volatility of contemporary politics and the sheer diversity of social life. Take the Australian case. Until the mid twentieth century, the dominant settler population was relatively homogenous – over 90 percent were of British origin. Political parties could truly claim to be mass parties, aspiring to represent workers or enterprise and assuming slightly divergent forms of a common liberal culture – social liberalism (the Australian Labor Party) or individualist liberalism (the anti-Labor parties). Party leaders, and their supporters, operated in terms of relatively stable loyalties and shared assumptions: elites operated through (and were bound by) parties. People regarded political elites as relatively benign: there were high levels of trust. Appeals to "public opinion" could be made relatively plausibly. Since then, demographic change following post-war immigration, a much diversified cultural and language base, multiculturalism as official policy, and rapid economic development have undercut core cultural assumptions, the class cleavage on which party identity implicitly depended, and trust in elites. There is "a new diversity in citizen identities (for example, gender, ethnicity and environmentalism). They augment, and sometimes displace, older class-based cleavages. Australia has become a group-based community" (Marsh, 2005: 223). The fiction of a broad public is ever more difficult to sustain: it is more than ever dependent upon the ability of leaders to mobilize and to build coalitions.

Paradoxically, as the reach of the political parties has atrophied, the power of leaders has been augmented. It is now commonly argued "that prime ministers and opposition leaders have replaced many of the roles historically played by political parties in ensuring the efficient operation of the parliamentary system" (McAllister, 2004: 2). With partisan de-alignment, party leaders "stand in" for the role that parties used to play in representing issues, integrating interests and mobilizing opinion. Leadership effects on voting outcomes are now widely recognized. In government, the complexity of modern decision-making has shifted the emphasis towards charisma, authority and decision and away from collegial

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consensus. With the declining influence of party structures, the prime minister's power over political careers (and hence as the driver of party discipline and object of loyalty) has been much enhanced. Arguably, globalization plays a part: "parliamentary systems are becoming more presidential in character, style and operation, as the environments in which they operate become more uniform" (McAllister, 2004: 8). Very little now stands between leaders and the groups they reach out to move.

THE PUBLIC EMOTIONS

Another element aligns individual motives (of both leaders and followers) with group expectations and hence generates public politics: the passion that drives action. Political leaders both arouse and orchestrate emotions. Yet – with the exception of famous studies of the authoritarian personality (Adorno et al., 1950; Brewster-Smith, 1997: 159–163) – the emotional register in politics is surprisingly little studied. Little's postulation of political ensembles not only reminds us of the resonances between leaders and followers, but proposes an emotional bedrock for each of his types – controlled aggression for the strong leader, solidarity and sympathy for the group leader, and hope for the inspiring leader. His relation of ensembles to political climates urges us also to attend to the dominant currents of feeling of a period. That is, political climates will tend to favor particular leaders (and the dominance of particular ensembles) at particular times. For instance, in difficult, challenging circumstances, where aggression seems an appropriate measure, strong directive leaders may be favored (e.g. Australian Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser after the oil-crisis and economic dislocations of the mid-1970s, and Liberal Prime Minister John Howard (1996–2007) more recently in relation to concerns about terrorism and border security). Where the mood is more expansive, the temper upbeat, an inspiring leader may gain the lead (e.g. Labor Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, 1972–1975, during the last years of the post-war boom). And yet Little's own survey of the public emotions deals impressionistically with staple collective moods, and normatively with how leaders should act as our emotional representatives, not with the everyday orchestrations of anger, hope and fear that characterize most leaders' performances (Little, 2001).

Analysts of voting behavior have persuasively demonstrated leadership effects (such as perceived effectiveness, listening to reason, and sticking to principles) on outcomes (Bean and Mughan, 1989: 1165–1179; McAllister, 2003). But nothing is said about emotional appeal: such questions are not asked. Thus, what can be said about how political affect connects leaders and followers in the formation and mobilization of publics is speculative. Even so, it seems reasonable to suggest, as Alan Davies did, that:

> The individual is tied into politics by its capacity to draw deeply on his feelings and his readiness to dispense adequately robust responses; social movements take their whole

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> shape and force from their constitutive and binding affects; political leaders are like sculptors – whose medium is public emotion. It is only because people momentarily feel in common that they can for a while think alike. (Davies, 1980: 293)

Politics, with its adversarial bent, seems to channel the negative emotions. "Politics", said Henry Adams, "has always been the systematic organization of hatreds" (Davies, 1980: 304), and Lasswell nominated hatred the leading political affect. Davies, analyzing the diary records of a sample group, reported that there was no single day on which positive affects outweighed negative ones, and that three affect clusters accounted for three quarters of the total – anger and moral indignation for 33 percent, pleasure for 25 percent, and cynicism for 18 percent. "In politics we are evidently hard to please, disposed to blame… adept at finding ourselves angered, disillusioned and pained" (Davies, 1980: 310).

At the core of Lasswell's theory of political engagement is displacement: private feelings we cannot allow to surface are redirected towards and rationalized in terms of public objects. Thus, politics serves as one of the manifestations of "civilization and its discontents" – the desires we must repress as the cost of living with others, and the resulting anger and hostility that cannot be acknowledged, are given license in hardball politics (Freud, 1930/1964). How do our leaders capitalize on these passions?

PAUL KEATING – THE ENIGMA OF ARRIVAL

Back, then, to our opening instance: Paul Keating. Once described as "carrying ambition as an altar boy carries his missal" (Kelly, 1984: 31), Keating had the characteristic drive of the political personality, the man who "steers by power chances" (Davies, 1980: 5). He had all the traits of an agitator (working as a story teller to the masses), bar one: he did not appear to need the adulation of the crowd. He adopted the leading script of the day (economic reform), and turned it into a story of necessary change. When he had pushed it as far as it could go, he drew other big pictures: engagement with Asia, Aboriginal reconciliation, a republican future. He "…could sell an idea better than anybody else in the government. He painted word pictures, created images and moods at a stroke. He could turn ideas into icons, make phrases that stuck. He could cut through to the meaning and …restate it in a useful form faster than any politician of his generation" (Watson, 2002: 24).

Keating was, in many respects, the epitome of an inspirational leader as the passage from a follower quoted earlier attests: he traded in hope. And, as Little's analysis would lead us to expect, his achievements drew on productive, pairing relations with key associates, as Watson's depiction of his inner circle (and the importance of his chief of staff, Don Russell, and of his speechwriter, Watson himself) makes clear. He stimulated both frustration and affection within his inner circle. Watson summed it up:

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> ...you have to love the bastard. A lot of us used to say it, you couldn't work for him unless you did. Who else on either side of politics has such a capacity to inspire, or make you laugh as much? With who else but Keating could you develop the necessary obsession? (Watson, 2002: 565)

Yet there was a dark side: the commitment to hope was matched by ferocious aggression. He spoke both of wanting Australia to be "a co-operative, decent, nice place to live, where people have regard for one another" (Keating, 1993) and of searching for "the look of fear" in the eyes of an opponent who realizes he is done for (Little, 1997: 20). Consider his "take no prisoners" investment in political contest, and his contempt for opponents, famously epitomized in these remarks to Liberal Opposition leader, John Hewson:

> ...I want to do you slowly. There has to be a bit of sport in this for all of us....I want to see those ashen-faced performances....There will be no easy execution for you....If you think I am going to put you out of your misery quickly, you can think again. (Gordon, 1993: 208)

Seen in this context, it becomes apparent that hatred and the stimulation of fear are the emotional undercurrents of his lead affect: hope.

The mix manifest in Keating's style – an agitator's rhetorical skill, but with little need of the crowd's response; strong, but not defensive, leadership; the inconsistency in his attitudes to political work (optimism much of the time, derisory dismissal of its worth on occasion) confounding conclusions about active-positive or active-negative propensities; inspirational qualities (hope), yoked to hatred of those who represent impediments – alerts us to the limits of relying on typologies: Keating is not a "pure" type. Little analyzed Keating's qualities as the expression of a particular sort of narcissism: his ambition was matched by a pride that denied his need of anyone else. He wanted to change the world, and matched himself against his personal conception of a leader as " ...someone with exceptional personal qualities, with an exceptional quality of vision and with what can only be called political creativity". He was "intent on pushing and pulling the world into shape, forcing us to take notice of him whether we like it or not". "In Keating", concluded Little, "we had a leader who gave us the big picture, its size and splendour presumably a measure of the man who put it in place" (Little, 1997: 25). We might now, in light of Watson's more detailed study, add further to this account. The self-referential nature of Keating's approach illuminates that disengagement Watson described as "bewildered solitude...he was never more than a moment removed from his personal drama" (Watson, 2002: 30). Excitement and energy stemmed from his investment in big ideas, but (we might surmise) depression was periodically engendered by self-imposed standards so high as to be unachievable. Those who stood in the way, however, provoked a special sort of anger: the narcissistic rage that made Keating an adept in the language of hatred.

Who responded to Keating, and how? From the 1970s onwards, we have seen the emergence of what has been called a knowledge society and a knowledge

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economy (Davies, 1972), privileging the possessors of "intellectual capital". Politics has lost its edge as expert opinion (particularly in relation to economics) appears to drive policy. Old cleavages have disappeared, but new divisions have emerged between knowledge/technological elites, and "those whom knowledge politics leaves right out" (Davies, 1972: 20). The former – cosmopolitan and adept in capitalizing on change, post-materialist in their aspirations, energized by new opportunities – loved Keating. There was a rational reason for this: their interests were those most likely to be advanced by the agenda he championed. They dominated the press, shared his vision of necessary reform, applauded his ferocious demolition of those seen as impeding the future, and were animated by his readiness to entertain and to license taboo emotions (anger, even hatred) and to take risks: "down hill, one ski, no poles" as he once put it. Younger people (like the one quoted earlier in this paper) were also excited by his sense that boundaries could be broken, by the enlarged sense of possibilities he seemed to promise.

Others, however, were less engaged by the possibilities than by the damage to what they held dear. It was not only that some people were more exposed to the disruption of change (as jobs disappeared, or career structures dissolved), but also that they sensed diminishing opportunities for political traction in a policy process where "knowledge" criteria (derived from economic expertise, for instance) seemed, when they were at odds with political criteria, to have an edge. Surveys then and since have shown that there is more consistent support for old economic institutions than for the new market based and deregulated institutions advocated by Keating and subsequent elites. Peter Saunders has summarized an extensive survey of social attitudes by remarking on:

> . . . a sense of alienation and powerlessness in which a gulf has opened up between the values and priorities of ordinary Australians and those in positions of political power and influence. This general disenchantment with the political process . . . [threatens] the continued viability of the major political parties. Beneath the unspoken voice of the silent majority lies a sense of disillusionment with politics that reflects a more deeply seated frustration with the ends and means of neo-liberal economic policies . . . these concerns are widely shared in the community. . . . (Saunders, 2002: 264)

This was the "public" that would, given its opportunity, turn on Keating and punish him for his hubris, as occurred in the election of 1996.

One way to elaborate on the both the inspirational potential Keating expressed and the fear he looked to engender, and which had such differential effects on his audiences, is to look at more conventionally optimistic leaders, and at those more focused on the orchestration of fear. I turn for these purposes to Gough Whitlam as an instance of the former, and to John Howard as exemplar of the latter.

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GOUGH WHITLAM: THE LIMITS OF INSPIRATION?

Gough Whitlam was another leader who, for many, seemed to enlarge the sense of possibilities (Walter, 1980). Prodigiously talented, a gifted speaker, widely knowledgeable, intent on policy and party reform, tenacious in pursuing his goals, he was perhaps the most brilliant opposition leader Australia has seen. His chutzpah was such that in the late 1960s and early 1970s, before winning power, he appeared to be setting the agenda for national policy debate (popular memory since has tended to credit him not only with his own initiatives, but for progressive measures in fact adopted by post-Menzies Liberal Prime Ministers Holt, Gorton and McMahon).

Whitlam's accession to the prime ministership in 1972 provoked unusual expressions of euphoria. Even the conservative press lapsed into breathless mini-biographies, dubbing him "Australian of the Year". And at first the sheer pace of decision-making, as key elements of the program were pushed through cabinet, maintained the sense of excitement. Whitlam was an inspirational leader, giving expression to grievances, opening people's eyes to possibilities, and raising expectations. Yet, despite significant change achieved in his two abbreviated terms of office, Whitlam was not a good prime minister (Whitlam, 1985; Hocking and Lewis, 2003). He assumed that his "program", once adopted, would simply be implemented. His cabinet was erratic: things were pushed too fast, people were not across details, some ministers simply were not very good (and none had experience in government). Whitlam knew what he wanted for society and refused to politick about details. He was too impatient to negotiate, and would not learn the necessary political art of compromise, refusing to settle for less than he wanted. Faced with impediments, he adopted the tactic that had worked in party reform, "crash through, or crash", turning dispute about issues into a debate about his leadership: do what I want or remove me. His commitment to "the program" showed him, finally, to be peculiarly inflexible. As international economic circumstances changed, undermining big-spending, government dominated reform, Whitlam was incapable of adapting (indeed, 30 years later, in perhaps his best short account of his government, he could not concede that anything he had proposed needed reconsideration (Whitlam, 2003: 10–32).

What of the followers? Whitlam's energy and capacity attracted allies as he began his rise within the party. He developed an intensely loyal personal staff, prepared to be functionaries because Whitlam was "where the action was" and they wanted to be part of the larger enterprise. Later, expert advisers, who could fill in necessary detail, were drawn to Whitlam because he encouraged the belief that through his vision, they could put their own smaller plans into effect. At all of these levels there was evidence of "pairing" relations – with party allies, with particular advisers, with expert consultants – and more generally of the accentuation of mutuality Little described as integral to the inspirational leader. More broadly, Whitlam's willingness to take the lead and lack of self-doubt

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mobilized others, more divided in themselves, in the service of reform. Finally, he impressed himself on the public domain as a man with the answers to the frustrations engendered by years of conservative rule: the exhilarating release from indecision and the indication of new avenues for progress was initially a great cultural and political stimulus.

The difficulty posed by such inspirational leaders, though, is that such expectations are not likely to be fulfilled. We follow them because they have a singular resolve that gives us a sense of purpose. But their single-mindedness ignores complexities that might sap decision. Then we ask them to be administrators, too, to deal with people and events through established systems. Their grandeur will not be bound by such pettiness. And when sheer bad management complicates the process, and the question of leadership effectiveness – shown to be so crucial in all voting studies – comes into play, the electorate's judgement will be harsh and unforgiving (witness the electoral landslide against Whitlam in the election of 1975). We might, for a time, be engaged by the optimism and hope of such leaders, but when they fail us we are unrealistically disillusioned, forgetting their real gifts in the disappointment of our hopes. Then, the fragmentation of followings becomes apparent.

Only some would have fully committed to the leader's vision: identification with Whitlam's enterprise may have enabled them to overcome a sense of their individual limits, to gain intimations of grand potentials unobtainable in more prosaic circumstances. This minority flocked to his campaigns, meeting like-minded others and persuading themselves that they were the mainstream. For them, Whitlam has never ceased to be the great man, his defeat a measure not of personal failings but of conservative treachery and the myopia of the masses. But the Australian Labor Party (ALP), under Whitlam, did not win the 1972 election by a large margin, and succeeded in 1974 with an even slimmer majority – despite the euphoria of a minority (and, initially, of the media) the public was hedging its bets. Further, another minority, it is clear, had always detested Whitlam's imperious presumption: for them, any promise was obscured by what they saw as his arrogance; their numbers grew as the media turned on his government, focusing on the ineptitude of a handful of ministers; and Whitlam's downfall was their vindication.

JOHN HOWARD: THE ORCHESTRATION OF FEAR?

John Howard prime minister since 1996 is, with Robert Menzies and Bob Hawke, one of the most successful leaders of the post-war period. He makes a virtue of being ordinary: in fact he has accrued more authority than virtually any predecessor. He is the quintessential "strong leader".

Judith Brett has shown how Howard, scorning the intelligentsia, determinedly committed to plain speaking, fashioned an enormously powerful message that professed to speak for the "ordinary battler", and to advance the interests of "the mainstream" and a common heritage against vested interests ("elites"), internal

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division, international challenge and foreign hostility (Brett, 2003). How did he do it? He recognized four things. First, that Labor had abandoned popular nationalism in its pursuit of economic reform, and its insistence on what "we" must do to prosper in a global market. In response, Howard skillfully took over the Australian Legend, once the preserve of radicals and the ALP, insisting that there was an "essential" Australian heritage to be defended, and turned its values – the fair go, mateship – into a story of conservative individualism.

Second, he articulated what a disconsolate electorate was feeling: that Labor's reform was top down, a series of injunctions voiced by the knowledge elite with which the rest of us were to comply. Instead Howard turned the reform message from a mantra about the imperatives of the market into a story about how his changes would deliver more jobs and more choice. And he demonized the unrepresentative elites said to have captured the Labor party – he would govern "for all of us". This was at once a message of unity (he spoke for "the mainstream") and a way of marginalizing opponents.

Third, sensing that the climate of uncertainty engendered by change had generated disabling anxieties, he realized that if targeted and organized, these emotions could be mobilized to advantage. The naming of specific "elites" as the enemy of "mainstream" aspirations (and the rhetorical association of those elites with everything Howard sought to overcome) gave anxiety a target and political action an objective – the restitution of conditions in which we could be "comfortable and relaxed".

Fourth, the sheer aggression with which Paul Keating had sought to box in the coalition parties by defining issues (Australian engagement with Asia, reconciliation with the country's Indigenous people, an agenda to move to a republican form of government) in ways they could not accommodate could be turned against Labor: this was the prelude to the ruthlessness with which Howard would later, as prime minister, reverse the valencies of political discourse to disable the ALP (Brett, 2005) in, for instance, debates on immigration and asylum seekers (Marr and Wilkinson, 2004) and the "history wars" (Macintyre and Clark, 2003). Brett, no apologist for the right, argues persuasively that Howard is the most creative conservative political leader since Menzies.

Howard – who came to power arguing that he would create the conditions where people could feel "comfortable and relaxed" – was a fighter from the first: driving liberal "wets" from his party (and expunging its Deakinite social-liberal heritage); overthrowing the top echelons of the public service; turning the debate about national identity into the notoriously combative "history wars"; sweeping Labor appointees on public authorities aside; questioning the motives of leaders of the "Aboriginal industry"; insisting on the unity of the common culture against multicultural incursions; and taking the battle to those "elites" who, he said, stood in the way of social progress. Howard has a consistent vision, a fantasy of battle that underscores his self-belief: he self-identifies as a Churchillian warrior: "I am the bloke who ultimately wins the battle, and in political terms that is Churchill."

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He was the natural leader, then, to prosper from the "securitization" agenda provoked, first, as illegal immigration was construed as an attack on national sovereignty (Marr and Wilkinson, 2004), then immensely amplified by the September 11 attacks (Howard was in Washington at the time), the "war on terror" and the Iraq invasion (Garran, 2004). He was, in effect, a crisis leader who began to identify threats, articulate the need to fight, institute divisions between "them" and "us" and rally "the troops" well before international events accentuated the negatives. When they did, as Mark McKenna argues, his natural propensities could be fused with the need for combat leadership, and Howard emerged as the "wartime" leader that had, as McKenna shows, long been his fantasy ideal (McKenna, 2003: 167–200).

In his conduct of politics, Howard has been variously described as "dogged and determined"; as a "canny, controlling prime minister"; as having become so dominant in his party "he can hang on as long as he wants", "he owns the party". Guy Rundle's description of him as a ruthless, pragmatic opportunist, prepared to do whatever it takes, is an element that must be acknowledged (Rundle, 2001). But the compulsion to seek battles, to steer not just by power chances but also by crises, is not pragmatic and more than simply tactical.

We know this sort of leader: hard working, driven, controlling and moralistic. Barber's "active-negative" and Little's "strong leader" analyses have shown the underlying psychological constellation and how it fuses with political style. These are the compulsives, given to work and worry, seeing the world as threatening and order as only to be maintained by strength, inclined to dominate through moralistic rhetoric, externalizing anger and hostility onto selected enemies, refusing compromise or surrender as an admission of weakness, insisting on realism and decisive action. Preoccupied with adversary politics and warring tribes, the strong leader's message is yet one of unity in the face of those who would divide us. In Barber's (1972) terms, the active-negative leader transforms policy problems "from a matter of calculation of results to a matter of emotional loyalty to ideals . . . [His] view of reality must be accepted else the cause fall apart" (quoted in Elms, 1976: 154). And Little adds, "A good deal of moralizing is used against the foot-soldier who dares to put initiative against sheer obedience; initiative is for higher ranks, like big crimes" (Little, 1988: 18).

Barber and Little, writing long before Howard's ascension, capture the essence of his style in their typologies. Further, observers of the institutional trend towards enhanced prime ministerial power, remark that it can be ameliorated or augmented by a leader's personality (McAllister, 2004). Howard, the "bloke who wins the battle", has significantly expanded prime ministerial power. And the "securitization" of politics attendant on border protection, the Iraq invasion and the "war on terror" has been an additional accelerant.

Domestically, the battle in which Howard was engaged at the time of writing – his government's far-reaching reform of industrial relations legislation to break down patterns of collective bargaining in favor of individual "work choices" – was entirely self-generated and driven by a sense of unfinished ideological

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business rather than purely economic analysis. Its apparent initial success represented a defeat not only of the ALP's union support base, but also of old-style social liberalism. Despite support from employer bodies, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) figures on comparative economic performance did not justify deregulation, de-unionization and individual contracts as the panacea Howard promised. Public opinion, cautious at best, grew progressively more sceptical as the battle progressed and as a highly effective union campaign gained traction; Labor capitalized on this growing popular opposition. Yet the outcome could not be predicted: would Howard's tenacity win through again, or would this be the point where he finally over-reached and brought on the electoral defeat of his government? Either way, it is another instantiation of the strong leader approach: a stark differentiation of political alternatives; a means of representing leadership as about hard decisions; a reform driven by leader conviction rather than political imperative; and a battle joined by choice rather than necessity.

Think, now, of how Howard put together his "public" at both the practical and emotional levels. On many issues the government has been flexible, taken advice, and listened to opinion, demonstrating responsiveness and reason – a government doing what "you" want. But there are core ideological issues – privatization of public assets (especially the sale of the telco, Telstra), family support, user pays education, welfare reform, deregulation of the labor market (and demolition of union power), commitment to the US alliance (and the "war against terrorism") – where neither contrary evidence nor adverse public opinion will dissuade him. He is prepared to defer, to await a better climate, but he will never give up. And it is in these battles that his ways of drawing interests together and building support are marked.

First, he eschews the "tribalism" of old politics and couches his message so as to be "heard" by diverse interests: his avowed aim, to create coalitions across the "mainstream". Economic reform, for instance, appeals to the self interest of cosmopolitans (with skills, flexibility, capital to invest), but can be framed to persuade aspirational voters that opening up of choice will provide pathways out of their current less advantaged positions.

Second, he evidently calculates that there are those he can afford to "lose" – church leaders, welfare advocates, academics, small "l" liberals, indeed many of those Brett dubbed the "moral middle class" that was once the Liberal Party's core (Brett, 2003).

Third, these are represented as those marginalized elites mentioned earlier, threatening the interests of "all of us". Where Keating saw the impediment to progress lying within ourselves ["we can allow the drift" (Keating, 1996)], Howard draws on scapegoat stereotypes, affirming the "goodness" of the mainstream and displacing negative affect onto marginal "others". So he reaches down to the "battlers", refocusing their understandable anxiety about reform as an "objective" fear of malign minorities, encouraging them to mobilize behind a strong leader who will fight these special interests.

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At the emotional level, Howard tells a story of the sunny uplands where we might be comfortable and relaxed and our shared values can flower, but it is underpinned by the orchestration of fear – fear of those who would block the realization of our dreams and (from 2001) our security, sovereignty and even survival (Howard, 2004). The times have suited him – just when his "fight-flight" outlook was beginning to pall, as opinion polls turned against him in 2001, international circumstances swung in favor of "the garrison state" (Lasswell, 1935, 1941: 455–468) and Howard was handed a script that coincided precisely with his world view, a world view in accord with the political climate he faced and attuned to his skills as a conviction politician:

> A conviction politician uses his or her philosophy . . . to bind the troops together, to highlight differences with rivals to the point where their views are unthinkable . . . A Strong Leader's philosophy must be simple and reliable . . . made to strike hard and stick. The intention is not to contribute to a debate; the intention is to overcome and then marginalize contrary views out of existence. (Little, 1988: 42)

CONCLUSION

Everything considered here confirms the proposition that leaders steer by power chances: whatever the origin of their drive, there is a conviction that they can and must control the work of government, and they alone. To this enterprise, as these cases confirm, they will bring distinctive skill preferences, outlooks, strengths and weaknesses – leadership typologies can alert us to how these characteristics might play out. Nonetheless, pure types will be rare: Keating had the qualities of an inspiring leader, and a following that saw him as such, but also a facility for aggression and hatred not predicted in Little's schema; Whitlam was clearly active-positive, but – *contra* Barber – inflexible rather than adaptive; Howard neatly fits the criteria for the active-negative strong leader but with a penchant for pragmatism and opportunism that plays against type. Two points: even where leanings point in one direction, few leaders will conform to the extreme postulated by the type. And theorists themselves tend to idealize – Barber and Little promoted the active-positive, or inspiring, leaders and grouped their heroes accordingly. Yet such leaders also have their characteristic failings, as our cases show. The theories of political psychology are more useful in alerting us to questions than in providing templates for neat diagnosis.

The questions I have been interested in here are how do behavioral styles and outlooks marry with certain messages and a characteristic emotional signature, and how do publics respond? The behavioral styles I have focused on are those sometimes seen as the most dominant political personalities: following Little, the inspiring and the strong leaders – Barber would call them the adaptive (active-positive) and compulsive (active negative). I have placed Whitlam at one pole, Howard at the other and Keating somewhere between – though with many qualifications and reservations in each case. Nonetheless, the spectrum does

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alert us to their distinctive deployments of optimism, more (or less) modulated resort to aggression, and proclivities for identifying threat and stimulating fear.

We should not forget that people support leaders in the first place for entirely rational reasons: because particular policies deliver material benefits to them; because, as voting studies show, they have reached a judgement as to a leader's effectiveness, or are impressed by their economic or political performance; because plausible solutions to real problems are proposed; because of a considered judgement concerning the national interest. But we should also note the strength of feelings that leaders elicit, the congruence of outlooks between some leaders and their followers (the "ensembles" Little identifies), and the fact that each leader appears to develop an emotional signature (the emotional subtexts one comes to recognize as a pattern evident in most of their speeches) that has a broader effect on publics beyond the bounds of the ensemble. The behaviors that some followers of Whitlam and Keating saw as charisma, for instance, provoked loathing in other sectors of the population: such factors cannot be ignored.

At one level, this has been an essay on the uses of hope and fear. But the inspiration of hope and the orchestration of fear must be seen in context: hope was salient in 1972 when the electorate was ready for change, but could not be sustained when Whitlam proved incapable of adapting to unexpected circumstances; Howard's readiness to fall back on threat scenarios began to lose traction by 2001, when suddenly a more dangerous and unstable context gave his preferred mode new life. Leadership success must be understood on multiple levels. It is obvious that a leader's behavior in office, and capacity to respond to electoral demands (balancing the understandable interests of disparate groups) are significant. Less apparent, but equally telling, is the resonance between a leader's world view and emotional signature with the salient beliefs and passions of their followers, and whether the mood this creates is appropriate to the political climate of the time.

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James Walter, PhD
School of Political and Social Inquiry
Monash University, Australia
james.walter@arts.monash.edu.au

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