Understanding Political Leadership

The Leadership Capital Approach

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DOI:10.1093/oso/9780198783848.003.0001

Abstract and Keywords

This introductory chapter sets out the conceptual and methodological rationale for the book. The chapter reviews the field and places this new approach within the context of current leadership research. The Leadership Capital Index (LCI) builds on advances in understanding of how to track and assess political leadership. It offers the concept of "leadership capital," as an aggregate of authority that reaches across the traditional divide between structure and agency through a flexible analytical tool. The LCI offers a comprehensive yet parsimonious and easily applicable ten-point matrix to examine leadership authority over time and in different political contexts. The chapter sets out how this tool is utilized in the examination of the eleven-country case studies to better understand and explain the "puzzles" of contemporary political leadership.

Keywords: leadership capital, LCI, political leadership, leader-follower relations, authority claims, reputation, performance

Bringing Leadership Back Into the Study of Politics and Governance

The relationship between politics, governance, and leadership is a complex one that political science has long grappled with. Yet, after decades of relative neglect, the study of political leadership is currently flourishing. Major new publications have emerged to consolidate and energize research in the area (Blondel and Thiebault 2010; Helms 2012a; Kane and Patapan 2012, 2014; Foley 2013a; Strangio et al. 2013; Rhodes and 't Hart 2014; Brown 2014). Increasing

attention is now being paid to the rise, impact, and fall of senior political office-holders and political science and other related disciplines have sought to measure and theorize about political leadership in order to predict (or at least explain) the success and failure of party leaders, heads of government, mayors, governors, or leadership teams at the apex of government (Rhodes and 't Hart 2014, p.15). At its heart is a key puzzle of political leadership: how it affects, and is affected by, the contexts in which it occurs. The growing interest has now reached across disciplines from the social sciences and beyond, from political scientists to psychologists and anthropologists to linguists (Teles 2015). By adding a new conceptual and innovative methodological approach to the field, this volume will complement the renaissance of interest in political leadership.

The Leadership Capital Index (LCI) builds on recent advances in understanding how to track and assess political leadership. It offers the concept of "leadership capital," as an aggregate of the authority a particular leader can be said to **(p. 2)** possess, and it reaches across the traditional divide between structure and agency by offering a versatile analytical tool (Bennister et al. 2015). The LCI offers a comprehensive yet parsimonious and easily applicable ten-point matrix to examine leadership authority in and over time and in different political contexts. By utilizing this tool in the examination of a series of case studies across different political systems, we seek to demonstrate how the LCI helps to raise and address pertinent questions about contemporary political leadership.

Conceptualizing, measuring, and assessing the leadership exercised by political office-holders presents complex analytical challenges. Political scientists, mainly in the United States, tried to do so in the mid-twentieth century. Whilst it was relatively easy to amass data on the demographic backgrounds, careers, ideological, and to some extent personal characteristics of office-holders, tying them meaningfully to the conceptually elusive notion of "leadership" proved far more difficult. The pioneering efforts of scholars such as Fred Greenstein, Alexander George, James David Barber, and Margaret Hermann were all but abandoned when the momentum in political science shifted away from behavioralism to neo-institutionalism, rational choice, and social constructivism. The once rich well of studies began to run dry in the 1990s.

This changed in the first decade of the new millennium. The study of political leadership is currently experiencing a renaissance. It has been energized by a flurry of monographs, collaborative volumes, and anthologies (e.g., Kane et al. 2009; Masciulli et al. 2009; Blondel and Thiebault 2010; Aarts et al. 2011; Bennister 2012; Helms 2012a; Cross and Blais 2012; 't Hart and Uhr 2011; Kane and Patapan 2012, 2014; Foley, 2013a; Strangio et al. 2013; Brown 2014; Rhodes and 't Hart 2014; 't Hart 2014a; Cross and Pilet 2015; Dowding and Dumont 2015; Elgie 2015; Storey et al. 2016). In the new wave of studies—which also feature important contributions from sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, communication scholars, and linguists (Rhodes and 't Hart

2014; Teles 2015)—researchers have sought to analyze the careers, leadership styles, and political impacts of public office-holders, but also of individuals not holding any formal public office but nevertheless manage to exercise political leadership functions (such as social movement leaders and celebrity activists; see DeCesara 2013; 't Hart and Tindall 2009).

The study of political leadership has moved both *inward* to a deeper understanding of leaders and *outward* to gain a clearer grasp of the interactions, institutions, and contexts that can enable or limit a leader. It has become more focused on the personal skills and resources that a leader possesses and can deploy (Rhodes and 't Hart 2014). This has since extended to psychological insight into leaders, involving experiments, psychometric tests, and a range of means to better understand the thought processes and traits of leaders— exploring the age-old question of whether successful and unsuccessful leaders have particular traits or are simply "lucky."

 (p.3) Other research has explored the salience of historical context and structures around the leader. Moving *outward* from the person as the office-holder implies a shift of focus towards the institutional settings, contexts and situations that shape the issues, relationships, and the rules of the game that office-holders face ('t Hart 2014b; Kellerman 2016). Skowronek (1993), for example, is now seen as a milestone in understanding the ebb and flow of political regimes and the accompanying niches for political leadership that these regime dynamics present ('t Hart 2011; Laing and McCaffrie 2013). Likewise, researchers have resumed the study of leadership as a relationship between leaders and their constituencies: the "dynamic interplay of wants, needs, motives, values, and capacities of both would-be leaders and their potential followers" (Burns 2003, p.16). Some leader-constituent relationships are characterized by fierce, unconditional, and enduring loyalty. In the case of charismatic leadership, constituents become fully formed followers whose loyalty is unconditional, indeed "blind" (Davis and Gardner 2012; Avolio and Yammarino 2013) and thus risky (Padilla et al. 2007). In democratic politics, however, leader-follower relationships tend to be much more transactional, contingent, and ephemeral (Burns 1978; Brett 2009; Reicher et al. 2014). When leaders need to constantly persuade constituencies to keep them engaged, supportive, or at least acquiescent, it becomes essential to understand the architecture of what Nye (2008) has called "soft power"—the power to persuade. This puzzle has led to valuable work into leadership as a performance, as a process of claims-making in which bodies, rhetoric, narratives and dramaturgy all play a pivotal part (Sinclair 2007; Gaffney 2014; Uhr 2014).

At the frontiers of the field, there is growing recognition that an interactionist approach in which personal, institutional, and contextual factors are integrated is perhaps the most promising way forward (Elgie 2015). The central construct presented in this volume, the Leadership Capital Index (LCI), builds on these

advances. The promise of the LCI is that it offers a rich yet parsimonious and easily applicable ten-point matrix to systematically ascertain and interpret the level of public (rather than formal) authority and support a leader can be said to enjoy at a particular point in time. At the heart of this enterprise lies a three-fold puzzle: How are warrants to lead created and sustained? How do the individuals that seek and obtain them use them? And what policy and political impacts do they achieve? Political capital, we argue, is the *sine qua non* of the exercise of political leadership. If, as Ronald Heifetz (1994) has famously argued, the essence of exercising leadership is about disappointing people at a rate they can stand rather than merely about office-holding, it by definition involves the spending of political capital. Exercising political leadership as defined by Heifetz can take many forms, for example, raising issues a society has long preferred not to see, proposing policy reforms that go against many vested interests, putting future prosperity above current hip-pocket **(p.4)** nerves in tax policy, making a clear-cut choice in a moral dilemma, or holding firm under great pressure to budge in a crisis.

In each of these instances, the leader who engages in it "spends" and puts their "stock" of authority and support at risk. United States president Lyndon Johnson arm-twisting Congress to put into effect civil rights legislation; Tony Blair taking the United Kingdom into the invasion of Iraq; Angela Merkel committing Germany (and, perhaps unwittingly, thereby the European continent) to a generous reception of refugees from the complex emergencies escalating in the Middle East and Northern Africa: all have "spent capital" to forge public policy they believed in. In doing so, they went against political expediency. They risked disappointing too many, too powerful, people too fast and too deeply. Johnson, for example, understood this perfectly. After making his big speech in Congress on the eve of the signing of the Civil Rights Act, he stepped down from the rostrum and observed "there goes the South for a generation" (for the Democratic Party) (Tushnet 2015, p.223). They were the prophetic words of a man who understood the political calculus of leadership like few others before or since.

In other words, each of these political office-holders risked the very foundation of their own claim to office—their political or what we call leadership capital—by exercising leadership (see also Vis 2010). In this study, we are interested in how office-holders acquire, consolidate, risk, and lose such capital. An LCI analysis can be applied to a particular office-holder or, in a comparison of multiple office-holders, both in time and over time. It allows the analyst to both raise and answer puzzles about their careers, their leadership, and their legacy. In this introductory chapter we describe its development and methodology and articulate the ideas that underpin it.

Conceptualizing Leadership Capital

Those in leadership positions are continually seeking to build leadership capital; a form of political credit that can be accumulated in office and serve to sustain leadership through good and bad times. Leadership capital can be the product of a combination of "competence, integrity and capacities for leadership" (Renshon 2000, p.200). Yet it is not so much an attribute of an individual leader as a warrant granted to leaders by their constituents, peers, and the larger public. It is about how others see and evaluate political office-holders performing leadership (or, indeed, *not* performing leadership work, Heifetz and Laurie 1997). Leadership capital can thus be accumulated, diminished, and even fully depleted, depending on how these appreciations evolve over time. Such appreciations are shaped by leader performances, but equally **(p.5)** by their audiences' needs, moods, and values, which in turn are products of cultures, institutions, and circumstances.

The notion of political capital stems, as Jentges notes in this volume (see Chapter 14), from Bourdieu. However, contemporary vernacular uses of the term draw on an analogy from the world of finance: politicians are said to gain, invest, lose or even squander the "credit" gifted to them by the sum of their constituencies and stakeholders. In examining the political capital of George W. Bush, Schier (2009, p.5) defined it as a combination of formal and informal power, a mix of "party support of the president in Congress, public approval of the president's conduct of his job, the president's electoral margin and patronage appointment."

The LCI moves beyond this heuristic approach to offer a more concrete and systematic set of measures. Political capital is associated with bonds of networks, relations, and trust that are inherited, hoarded, cultivated, and—as we argued—risked. Leadership capital derives from stakeholders forming impressions of the values, skills, and characters of political office-holders and other public leaders, and conferring authority upon them. This then creates a balance of opportunities and constraints for them in taking up their roles and exercising political leadership (Renshon 2000). Leadership capital is thus best not seen as a personal attribute of a leader, but rather as a socially granted zone (or zones) in which they can exercise leadership. John Kane (2001), for example, has tied a leader's capital to the establishment of a moral authority, examining how leaders (such as Abraham Lincoln or Charles de Gaulle) built and wielded their capital to advance their political causes. The point of the LCI exercise is that it may generate a more nuanced picture of a leader's "license to operate," both in time and over time, than the common job approval and poll ratings can do.

The LCI probes the idea that the state of a leader's capital stock can be tracked systematically. It takes the form of a combined assessment tool and interpretive framework, which specifies both the sources and observable impacts of

leadership capital. It allows analysts to ask questions about the political authorization and efficacy of leaders that go beyond the day-to-day chatter about ups and downs in their popularity, and to offer systematic (but always contestable) answers to those questions enabling the researcher to present a trajectory of leadership capital over time, based on more than the vagaries of popularity.

We offer a new approach to understanding how and why political leaders emerge, endure and are eclipsed. It helps us understand why some leave a big legacy and others do not. We all know the fortunes of politicians evolve constantly—the ubiquitous and relentless polling that we have today tracks things like popularity, job approval, and the electoral prospects of leaders on an ongoing basis. But there is not much depth and texture to our current **(p.6)** understanding of how and why exactly the political fortunes of leaders wax and wane. In identifying the cases for this edited book, contributors were asked to articulate specific puzzles posed by the actions and political trajectories of particular office-holders or sets of office-holders. What happens to their leadership capital when they move from campaigning to governing? What happens when they are called upon to react to the inevitable events that history throws at them? How did they survive in office? Why did some survive for so long, while others' careers were cut short so fast? Why did some manage to achieve much in office, whereas others left a smaller imprint? It is questions such as these that well-constructed LCI applications can help address.

We experiment with the uses to which this novel tool—we first conceived of it in 2013 and published about it in 2014/5 ('t Hart 2014a; Bennister et al. 2015)—can be put. We seek to demonstrate how it can inform the comparative study of political leadership by:

> a. Extending our knowledge beyond conventional opinion polling and uni-dimensional measures of leader popularity.
> b. Offering a new framework that bridges the traditional divide between leader- centric/personal and contextual/situational approaches to understand how three key attributes of political leadership—skills, relationships and reputation—interact to enhance or diminish the level of support a political leader enjoys.
> c. Comparing leadership episodes and tenures of office-holders within— and potentially across—political systems to better understand their political fortunes and legacies.

Developing the LCI

Studying political leadership through the lens of leadership capital presumes that it is the dynamic interplay between individual capabilities and contextual conditions that shapes leaders' ability to act and control their own legacies (Hargrove 1998, p.199; Hargrove and Owens 2002; 't Hart 2011; Laing and

McCaffrie 2013). Most indicators require rating by the analyst or, preferably, an expert panel; some indicators can be applied by consulting publicly available election, polling, and attitude survey data. Notable frameworks include Greenstein's (2010) competencies for Unites States presidents or Bulpitt's (1986) statecraft theory of political leadership. As with the "natural rate of governability," some are context-dependent (Bulpitt 1986; Buller and James 2012). We asked each contributor to the volume to be particularly mindful of the contextual aspect of the case(s) under investigation when choosing analytical timeframes.

(p.7) Sources of Leadership Capital: Skills, Relations, and Reputation

The LCI was anchored in three presumed sources of leadership capital: skills; relations; and reputation. In order to bridge these areas, the LCI offers a mixed methods framework to capture a broad measure of leadership capital, which is rooted in Bourdieu's original ideas. These three areas unite the synergetic, symbolic, and concrete aspects of power, which encompasses both actual abilities and relations bound by context. Sometimes capital is "symbolic power… an aggregate reflection of other capital forms possessed by powerful institutions and actors (meta-capital)" while "elsewhere…it becomes something to be accumulated" (Davis and Seymour 2010, p.741). It is in part self-reinforcing (or self-destructing) as "authority…comes in part from the effect that it produces" (Bourdieu 2005, p.39).

The first broad area encompasses the personal *skills* of the leader, from their ability to communicate and manage to psychological questions of emotional empathy or stability. The second concerns *relations* or sources of support for the leadership, from their senior allies or opponents in proximity to the party (within a legislature or outside of it) to supporters within the electorate and the media (Helms 2012a). The third strand concerns the *reputation* or achievement of the leader and how reputation and achievement (whether in terms of policy achievement or electoral strength) can strengthen or weaken a leader over time.

The tool was designed around a set of key theoretical and practical criteria that helped shape the design of the LCI:

1. That it encompass the major sources of leadership authority as commonly understood, incorporating both individual, relational, and institutional factors.
2. That it contain sufficient flexibility and usability for application across different political contexts and not be unduly tied to a particular type of political system or office.
3. That it combine theoretical validity with relative parsimony, and rely on relatively easily accessible or obtainable data.

Methodology

The LCI takes a mixed methods approach: it blends two types of measures by merging five "hard" empirical measures based on largely quantitative data with five more "soft" or interpretive assessments based on expert opinion. The mixed method approach not only allowed a wide degree of reach, but offered the flexibility to analyze what is a dynamic and ever shifting area, revealing **(p.8)** what qualitative or quantitative approaches may not be able to do alone. It also required methodological trade-offs, such as between ease of use and comprehensiveness and, second, between the measurements at the "harder" end of the empirical spectrum (often polling) and h "soft" interpretive (often expert) assessment (see Greenstein 2010). Mixed methods continue to be utilized as an emerging approach or paradigm (Bergman 2010; Hesse-Biber and Johnson 2013). It is not without difficulties, as Read and Marsh (2002) in particular point out, as it contains a requirement for a clear lead between the two types. It was decided that the LCI would be primarily driven by the "hard" measures impacting on the "soft."

The LCI is not a panacea for the protracted challenges of measuring something as complex and contingent as political leadership. It involves trade-offs in two key areas. Firstly, difficulties remain over, for example, precision. Polling data can convey the electorates' views at any one time with some precision. But pinpointing "rises" or "declines" in some of the more intricate aspects of political leadership, such as a leader's skills or relations with the party or their parliamentary performance, may be more difficult, naturally more imprecise, and, in some instances, inescapably (inter)subjective.

Secondly, there are multiple comparative challenges. Can the LCI be applied to government and opposition leaders alike, to national and sub-national politicians, to executive and ceremonial-moral leadership, to party and grassroots leaders? To what extent do different regime contexts require different approaches to assessing leadership capital? How to iron out systemic differences? Does one LCI-format suffice to conduct cross-national comparative research? Do leadership capital analyses travel across time and across holders of the same office—as the nature of that office and the broader constitutional and political context in which is situated evolve (Skowronek, 1993)? These challenges of constructing comparisons—in a field confronted with a small number of cases but a large number of variables—may explain why leader-to-leader comparisons are still a relatively rare genre in the comparative study of political leadership (see Bennister 2012; Helms 2012a).

Assumptions and Conjectures

Conventional analysis holds that leadership capital is a finite resource and (almost) inevitably fades over time ('t Hart 2014a)—a form of necessary entropy integral to all political leadership. Following this line of thought, the evolution of leadership capital can be identified along the lines of an inverted 'U' trajectory:

leaders first acquire capital on the wings of favorable perceptions of their skills, relationships, and reputation, then peak, and eventually lose capital, as the unstoppable forces of political gravity—habituation, **(p.9)** disappointment, cynicism triggered by a leader's prolonged presence in the daily dramas of political life—eat away at their "license to operate." Their inevitable flukes, defeats, retreats, and U-turns, it is argued, erode their resources, at which point challengers may emerge whose sheer novelty to the constituents promises difference ('t Hart and Bynander 2006, p.722).

The LCI was originally developed with this idea in mind—the ticking clock of the eventually declining leadership capital (Bennister et al. 2015, p.428; Denver and Garnett 2012, p.71). It was in fact designed as a tool that opens up the opportunity for empirical testing of the long-established assertion that leadership tenures follow roughly three developmental stages: acquiring; managing; and losing leadership capital (Breslauer 2002, p.13). However, the notion of the natural trajectory of authority requires considerable qualification. First, exactly how long a leader can remain in power is an open question. Some leaders have strict term limits and others do not. The United States' two term limit contrasts with Uruguay's one five-year term (with return allowed thereafter) and Mexico's exclusionary single five-year term. In some cases, more informal or tacit rules may have an influence, as with China's apparent "two term" agreement. Nor, as seen in Russia, are constitutional rules necessarily binding or unchangeable.

Second, while in the democratic world the political life expectancies of incumbent heads of government and other senior political office-holders are not all that long, there are groups of outliers that call any "short-term" assumptions into question. This list of long- to very long-serving leaders is not extensive, but the cases make for an intriguing study of leaders who display unusually successful management of their capital—or, more subtly, the balancing act between "hoarding" (office-seeking) and "spending" (exercising) leadership capital: Franklin D. Roosevelt in the United States (1933–45), Australia's Robert Menzies (1949–66) and four-term prime minister John Howard (1996–2007), Malta's Dom Mintoff (1949–84), Sweden's Tage Erlander (1945–68), or Germany's Helmut Kohl (1982–98) (Laing and 't Hart 2011), and Canada's series of comparatively long-serving prime ministers, premiers, and party leaders (White 2006). Elsewhere in the world, leadership is far longer in average duration—as seen in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, where leaders can last decades (see Blondel in Chapter 13 of this volume). In certain systems, and to certain leaders, time may be very much a relative issue.

Third, not all political careers follow the assumed downward trajectory. Australia's John Howard built capital slowly through a succession of victories under the brief three-year terms of the Australian electoral system (Bennister 2012). Other leaders also appear to have been able to bounce back from defeat

or unpopularity. Some have managed this in office such as Germany's Helmut Kohl, re-galvanized by the fall of the Berlin Wall and reunification, or Bill Clinton, with his initial fall and subsequent rise to political dominance **(p.10)** (Helms 2016; Newman 2002; Shah et al. 2002). Others have returned to office, such as Japan's Shinzo Abe, whose second go as prime minister was much more successful than his first (Burrett 2016). Though rare, these leaders serve as warning not to *assume* a fixed pattern of rise–peak–decline. This is not necessarily the way in which political time unfolds (Skowronek 1993) or, indeed, how leaders themselves perceive it (Moon and Chen 2014; Weick and Guinote 2010).

Similarly, while the idea of leadership capital may be analogous to financial capital acquisition, with leaders "spending it" or "squandering it," there are limits to that analogy. A question remains, for example, as to whether leadership capital can be hoarded. There are also questions as to how it can be spent, as recent work on "political investments" and about the idea of "investing capital" in the long term in particular projects that may only pay far into the future, such as a peace process or a supranational project like the European Union (see Bertelli and John 2011, pp.746–8). Leaders may "invest" their stock in a particular program over a long timeframe that may not immediately, or indeed ever, see a political return. This could be an attempt to restructure the economy or society in some fundamental way or involve the reorientation of the values of a society. This could play out over a far longer period than simply a term of leadership. Here the LCI allows us to understand how leadership decisions and actions can unfold over different shorter or longer time periods and how feedback effects, benefits, or costs, as capital pay-offs may be very slow or unpredictable.

Focusing and Developing the LCI
Starting as a long list of more than twenty variables, the original LCI was eventually reduced to a less unwieldy set of ten measures. Before we present the final version, it is worth reflecting upon what was excluded, and why. We specifically struggled with four potential variables/indicators.

Prestige of office—This potential indicator concerned how the holding of a particular office could itself influence leadership capital, that is, the hard (decisions), the soft (persuasion) and symbolic (ritualized roles and expectations) powers associated with different political offices across jurisdictions and, arguably, within jurisdictions over time (see e.g. Strangio et al. 2016). As a comparative measurement this criterion appeared to bridge the gap between a symbolically or actually powerful figure and a less powerful one. Here a United States president, for example, would be likely to score higher than a prime minister, as an institutionalized political figure with an independent mandate and a clearer power base (Heffernan 2005). However, the idea of prestige became increasingly problematic as we tested it. The apparently simple

judgment **(p.11)** involved raised serious issues around possible poor fits and the difficulty of ascertaining symbolic versus actual influence. For example, in terms of the symbolic "power" of an office, a less powerful prime minister's fate is generally far more deeply tied to a legislature, but the power to influence the legislature is, as often acknowledged, far greater than a potentially gridlocked leader in a presidential system (Dowding 2013; Foley 2013b). Further discussion also centered on the question of how constant the prestige of any political office is. The trauma of Watergate left the United States presidency severely damaged for years, while the formally "weak" presidency of Italy has grown in stature during the Tangentopoli crisis since the 1990s, allowing its recent incumbents to become notable institutional players (Grimaldi 2015). Office prestige, moreover, is first and foremost an institutional characteristic, and not a reflection of the leadership capital of the office-holder.

Media frames—Another crucial ingredient in the measurement of political authority is the way in which a leader gets reported and assessed by the media, which now includes a complex hybrid of old and new media driven by diverse actors (Chadwick 2013). Their influence in creating an opinion climate in which leaders can be made or broken within the formal political arenas and processes is widely acknowledged. It has become so considerable that it has led some, if not most, politicians to adopt media values and time-frames in their belief systems and modus operandi (Helms 2012b). The original suggestion was to look across media support or opposition and measure the number of supporting or opposing newspapers or television stations to gauge the all-important media influence on (public perceptions of and narratives about) political leaders. This measure also raised more problems than it solved. The debate about the influence of the media on the electorate is ongoing and inconclusive; moreover the cause and effect relationship between leaders, electors, and the media is complex (Davis and Seymour 2010). More importantly, the traditional media is shifting away from old distinctions over print and visual mediums towards a more open, hybrid and chaotic system with a greater number of online and offline players within the "political information cycle" that would be difficult to capture (Chadwick 2013). So the idea of using either the national press or television was rather dated and would offer a one-dimensional measure of shifting and multi-faceted media landscape. Moreover, having a distinct media measure was methodologically weak, given its influence across almost all of the indicators. The indicator of trust was felt to capture the overall effect of press and opinion (also reflected in polling) in a firmer way than the simple, indeed over-simple, measuring of press attitudes.

Policy success—One simple measure of policy success initially discussed was legislative output in relation to party manifesto or coalition agreement pledges (see Thomson et al. 2012). However, this introduced a risk of **(p.12)** generating a false positive. A high level of legislative output may be no measure of actual policy change—many policies do not originate in manifestos, whereas decades of

implementation research should rob us of any illusion that what happens after a bill becomes a law is a simple and straightforward matter of putting it into practice (Hill and Hupe 2008). Nor does it provide any indication of the significance of the laws passed, a great percentage of which—at least in European Union member states—now follow on from transposition of European Union legislation or European Union treaty requirements. The measure was amended to look at the more performative aspect of political leadership that can be so crucial to success in terms of control over the legislature rather than follow the somewhat illusory certainties offered by simply counting laws passed.

Crisis—The fortunes of leaders can be intimately tied to the crises they face during their time in office. Some are overwhelmed by them; others thrive on them (Boin et al. 2016). However, crises can come in many forms and types, from slow-burning systemic faults to short, sharp shocks; from exogenously caused "Acts of God" to endogenously triggered scandals and policy fiascos. Nor is it beyond leaders to attempt to manufacture, time, or frame crises for their own advantage (Boin et al. 2009; van Esch and Swinkels 2015). Who gets to "own" the response to a crisis can also be a complex matter. In transnational crises— epidemics, financial system breakdowns, migration flows—national political leaders are part of, and significantly constrained by, a much larger response system. They cannot be "in control" even if they wanted to be—not alone, anyway. This does not mean that national constituencies will not form views about their leaders' performance in such a crisis, but it does muddy the waters of causality running from crises to leadership capital fluctuations. Similarly with scandals, there are complex challenges in assessing what constitutes a scandal, when it begins and ends, and what effects it may have had. Clinton's improved polling after the Lewinsky scandal stands as an example of the sometimes complex and counter-intuitive effects of these events on leadership (Shah et al. 2002). To avoid such complexities, we decided not to include "crisis performance" (actual or perceived) in the LCI. However, even without such an indicator, a number of these cases show how the LCI can still be used to assess capital fluctuations within and following a crisis for one or more leaders in one or more jurisdictions affected by it, to ascertain whether and how crisis performance effects on leadership capital occur.

The Leadership Capital Index: An Outline
The ten-point instrument presented in Table 1.1 below represents the most robust and clear of the set of measures that were developed through discussion **(p.13) (p.14)** and debate. The measures were developed and then tested via double blind processes in an analysis of several junctures in British prime minister Tony Blair's second term of office (Bennister et al. 2015). After several iterations of testing and adjustment, the 1–5 assessment scale was created to allow clearer assessment and comparability.

Table 1.1. The LCI of a political party leader

Criteria	Indicators	Assessment
S1	**01 Political/policy vision**	1. Completely absent
		2. Unclear/inconsistent
		3. Moderately clear/consistent
		4. Clear/consistent
		5. Very clear/consistent
S1	**02 Communicative performance**	1. Very poor
		2. Poor
		3. Average
		4. Good
		5. Very good
S2	**03 Personal poll rating relative to opposition (leader)**	1. Very low ($<-15\%$)
		2. Low (-5 to -15%)
		3. Moderate (-5% to 5%)
		4. High (5–15%)
		5. Very high ($>15\%$)
S2	**04 Longevity: time in office**	1. <1 year
		2. 1–2 years
		3. 2–3 years
		4. 3–4 years
		5. >4 years
S2	**05 (Re-)election margin for the party leadership**	1. Very small (<1% of relevant electors, i.e. caucus, party members)
		2. Small (1–5%)
		3. Moderate (5–10%)
		4. Large (10–15%)
		5. Very large ($>15\%$)
R1	**06 Party polling relative to most recent election result**	1. $<-10\%$
		2. -10% to -2.5%

Criteria	Indicators	Assessment
		3. −2.5% to 2.5%
		4. 2.5% to 10%
		5. >10%
R1	**07 Levels of public trust in leader**	1. 0–20%
		2. 20–40%
		3. 40–60%
		4. 60–80%
		5. 80–100%
R1	**08 Likelihood of credible leadership challenge within next 6 months**	1. Very low
		2. Low
		3. Moderate
		4. High
		5. Very high
R2	**09 Perceived ability to shape party's policy platform**	1. Very low
		2. Low
		3. Moderate
		4. High
		5. Very high
R2	**10 Perceived parliamentary effectiveness**	1. Very low
		2. Low
		3. Moderate
		4. High
		5. Very high

Source: **Mark Bennister, Paul 't Hart, & Ben Worthy (2015)/ Assessing the Authority of Political Office-Holders: The Leadership Capital Index,** *West European Politics*, **38:3, 417–40. http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/ 10.1080/01402382.2014.954778. Reproduced with permission by Taylor & Francis Ltd.**

Table 1.2 explains the LCI measures in more detail. For each measure, it offers definitions, the analytical intent behind those definitions, indications of sources, and finally thoughts on potential pitfalls that analysts should be aware of.

Table 1.2. Guidelines for applying the LCI

Definition	What is measured	Interpretation	Sources/Measurement	Potential pitfalls
Political/policy vision	Ability to create a persuasive set of ideas or a plan	Grand design or ideas set out in…their leadership—these may be both practical/pragmatic and more abstract	Biographies, writings, speeches	May shift over time. May be unstable or unclear and contested (e.g. "Thatcherism")
Communicative performance	Ability to argue, explain, and persuade constituents and publics when it matters most	How ably the leader explains and creates a narrative around his/her intent and/or key actions	Biographies, writings, speeches, video registrations, key interviews	Strongly in eye of beholder. Comprises the basic "skill" of speech-making to the broader "performative" ability to create and sustain a persona and a narrative
Longevity	Building of experience and power base, and on-the-job honing of skills	Time in office (as leader)	Number of months in office as party leader/chief executive	Longevity may bring success and experience but also failure. Differences exist between countries with term limits
(Re-)election margin for the party leadership	Safety of position in party and support	Extent of victory in leadership election against rival or rivals	Data on party leadership elections	May be less relevant (e.g. if long time in past)

Definition	What is measured	Interpretation	Sources/Measurement	Potential pitfalls
Party polling relative to most recent election result	Support among the electorate for the party they lead	A measure of current party fortunes which affect its leader's authority and what can be achieved	Reputable opinion surveys	Polling can only ever be a proxy
Levels of public trust in leader	Public support for the leader themselves, also linked to press coverage	Extent to which leader is (dis)trusted and respected by the public	Survey data on levels of trust	Simplicity of survey questions used.
				Variation over time and lack of data into the past
Likelihood of credible leadership challenge within next six months	Safety of leader and support within the party	Degree to which the leader is secure in their office under the rules of leader (de)selection of their political party	Media reports; declared intentions of leadership aspirants; initiation of leadership contest	Needs to be ascertained as accurately as possible, e.g. credible evidence of internal discontent and possible challenge rather than speculative commentary
Perceived ability to shape party's policy platform	The degree to which leaders are able to determine the direction and choices of their parties	Office-holders who have a demonstrated ability to take on their party and its "sacred cows" are in a better position to exercise leadership	Examples of "personal" policy success or failed, division in government over important policy	Perception based so needs to be carefully mapped and also understood in context of institutional powers

Definition	What is measured	Interpretation	Sources/Measurement	Potential pitfalls
Perceived parliamentary effectiveness	Influence over legislature —as signal of support from own party and/or cabinet, and relative strength of parliamentary opposition	Extent to which leaders are seen to have the ascendancy in parliament and are able to obtain its assent for policy proposals and its forgiveness in case of failures.	Passage or change of policy in legislature, rebellion or division, defeats or blocking of legislation.	As above, perception based so needs to be carefully mapped and also understood in context of institutional powers

The right-hand column illustrates the ambiguity of assessment: a number of the measures are potentially "double edged." For example, a leader espousing a strong "vision" may be viewed as either a good or a bad thing. Though strong vision is probably one of the core ingredients of the "romance" between followers and leaders (Meindl et al. 1985), there are also leaders whose pragmatic and level-headed approach to dealing with conflicts and crises within their parties or their governments has had a powerful appeal (Ansell and Fish 1999). Similarly, longevity in office may help leaders develop skills and knowledge, but also brings strain—a long run of political survival and success can induce hubris and erratic behavior (Owen and Davidson 2009; Owen 2012).

Other indicators are contestable. Measures of trust in a politician are frequently based on rather simplistic questions that do not reflect the complex and layered nature of public trust (Listhaug 1995; Newton 2007). However, given the fact that many longitudinal surveys and panel studies opt for such questions, these measures are relevant, but do need to be interpreted with due caution. Similarly, what parliamentary effectiveness means and the extent to which it can be achieved by a party or by government leaders may differ from system to system; and a credible standing in parliament is a key part of any leader's authority. The strength of a leadership challenge would be, by its very nature, difficult to entirely pinpoint.

Not all of these difficulties can or should be fully resolved. Users of the LCI are advised to adhere to the basic maxims of reliability in this type of empirical research: triangulating sources, conducting accuracy checks, orchestrating intersubjective reliability, for example, through double coding and the use of carefully constructed expert panels (for the latter, see Strangio et al. 2013).

Towards Comparative Capital Assessment
In the first instance, the LCI is a diagnostic tool for assessing a particular political leader's stock of authority at a given point in time, but it is as a lever for comparative analysis that the LCI offers the more interesting potential. Comparative uses of the LCI include the following: **(p.15)**

 (p.16) LCI Grid
LCI levels can be characterized and compared by using an interpretive scale. Bennister et al. (2015) name five "levels" of leadership capital that can be used to "'anchor" a particular leader's aggregate score. They are presented below in Table 1.3. It raises the question of how different levels of capital may enable or constrain an office-holder. What exactly can a low-capital leader do or not do? It also makes one wonder whether there is a "point of no return" for a leader who sees her stock of capital sink. Can a "depleted leader" survive and rebuild?

While most democratic politicians aim for high capital, some may prove adept at surviving and even effectively performing leadership work at lower levels of capital. Paul Keating, Australia's controversial prime minister during the first

half of the nineties, famously lived by his credo that leadership is not about being nice, but about being right and being strong. As Keating observed, and other leaders analyzed in this volume show, public popularity is only one source of a leader's authority, which can be acquired through other means—in the parliamentary party, in Cabinet, in cultivating collaborative relationships with peers, peak bodies, and key interest groups.

Table 1.3. Aggregating and interpreting LCI scores

Ratings	Description	Examples
0–10	Depleted capital: edge of removal or "lame duck"	Australian Labor Party leader and Prime Minister Julia Gillard (2010–13) in the nine months prior to her removal.
11–20	Low capital: "politically weakened" but still capable of some action	British PM John Major (1990–97) in face of intraparty rebellion over EU policy post the 1992 election.
21–30	Medium capital: "muddling through" in the face of significant obstacles and divisions, yet with provisional license to operate from (a small majority within) the authorizing environment	Swedish social-democratic party leader and prime minister Goran Persson Sweden (1996–2006).
31–40	High capital: "momentum" derived from robust political performance and party cohesion	Spanish social-democratic leader and prime minister Felipe Gonzalez (1982–1996), particularly in his first two terms.
41–50	Exceptional capital: "political weather maker" boosted by electoral landslide, and/or personal dominance and/or "good crises to have"	US Republican Party leader and president, George W. Bush (2001–2008) following the September 11 attacks, until a few months into the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

One Leader Across Time

A second approach is to measure a single leader's capital levels over time. Here a leader could be "spotlighted" at various points in their political career, both within and across, at different moments in the electoral cycle, or during **(p.17)** different crises that occurred during their terms in office. This could help map where and why fluctuations in leadership capital occurred, and whether these affected performance and survival. 't Hart (2014a) provides a set of ideal types

characterizing the leadership capital dynamics of particular office-holders over time that can be used as interpretive tropes for particular patterns of capital fluctuation over time:

- The *"rock-solid" leader* who enjoys enduringly high, stable capital stocks across a long tenure, seemingly unaffected by the normal upheavals of democratic politics: controversial budgets, hotly contested elections, policy failures, and political scandals. The World War Two hero turned United States president, Dwight D. Eisenhower, had an ongoing love affair with the American people ("I like Ike") which was boosted not just by his war record but his avuncular public persona, which radiated optimism and endowed him with political Teflon—the public's willingness to forgive him or blame others—when things went wrong or conflicts got ugly. The modern variant of such a "Teflon"-like quality has been applied to numerous modern leaders.
- The *"fading giant" leader*: a long-serving and once dominant leader whose once secure political capital begins a slow but inexorable slide, triggering a nasty and often protracted politics of succession. Examples include Konrad Adenauer, West Germany's first democratic Chancellor, who was able to claim the office in 1949 by selling himself as a seventy-three-year- old placeholder who could fill the slot until the first post-war democratic elections, and then managed to skillfully exploit his incumbency and hold on to office until 1963, when, at the age of 87, he finally bowed to relentless pressure from within his party to finally move on (only to start waging an extremely successful campaign to destabilize his successor, Ludwig Erhard, see 't Hart 2007).
- The *"meteoric" leader* who comes and goes quickly, experiencing a rapid and steep rise in leadership capital, but, never really managing to consolidate it, is swept along into a swift decline and deflation of their mandate to lead, and sometimes their very survival in office. Jimmy Carter was unrecognized and unknown when running for president in the primaries, a major asset in the post-Watergate climate of the era. But, once in power, he proved unable to effectively deploy his initial representational capital. Ill-received policy initiatives, weak appointments, and a lack of skill in handling Congress and foreign policy crises turned his "outsiderness" from an asset into a liability. He stood no chance at all against Reagan in the 1980 election (Graubard 2004, pp.536–7). The true meteor is one who frequently burns brightly but shortly as power challenges their skills and exposes their inexperience.
- **(p.18)** • The *"misfit" leader* whose leadership capital never really "gets off the ground" and who soldiers on with low ratings and without a credible mandate for leadership, until they are cut down.

Possible candidates include disaster-prone leaders like United States president Gerald Ford, whose capital was lost instantly following his infamous pardon for his disgraced predecessor Richard Nixon, or Irish Taoiseach Brian Cowen's seemingly unending lurch from crisis to crisis, plumbing record levels of unpopularity in his brief three-year term.

• The *"comeback" leader*, who somehow—whether through a combination of good skills and good fortune—manages the improbable: to return from the political grave. Their capital pattern is bipolar (or even multipolar): after the first inverted 'U' follows not political death but resurrection of their capital stock. Francois Mitterrand was the great comeback leader in post-war French politics. Likewise, Arkansas governor and then two-term Unites States president Bill Clinton was "the comeback kid," although Richard Nixon probably trumps him in terms of sheer variability across an even longer and even more drama-ridden political career. And Australian prime minister John Howard likened himself to "Lazarus with a triple by-pass" when reinstated as leader of the Liberal Party of Australia in 1996, having been ousted from that job in a palace coup in 1989 (Bennister 2012, p.70).

Different Holders of One Office Across Time

A third possibility is to assess an office-holder's capital against that of their predecessor(s) and/or successor(s). Controlling for institutional factors in this way, allows the analyst to interpret observed similarities and differences in leadership capital across office-holders in terms of their skills and relationships, or to assess the impact of changes in the economic, psychological and political climates faced by different office-holders. It is also possible to adopt a quasi-experimental design, and select leaders who served prior to and following an important institutional reform. For example, one can apply the LCI to New Zealand's party leaders before its mid-nineties change of electoral system (from winner takes all to mixed-member proportional representation). Likewise, one can assess leadership capital within political parties before and after they changed their selection procedures (see Cross and Blais 2012), to assess how such reforms in the rules of the political game affect leaders' political fortunes. Finally, comparative designs may also be employed to assess the strength of so-called "predecessor effects" on the political capital of successive incumbents of the same political office (Horiuchi et al. 2013). This could help us better understand the political benefits and risks of different modes of **(p.19)** leadership succession as well as of the post-succession postures of continuity or change adopted by new incumbents.

Holders of the Same Office in Different Political Systems

What does it mean to be prime minister under in a majoritarian (which tend towards single-party governments) or a consensual (with endemic multi-party coalition government) parliamentary democracy? How does prime-ministerial leadership function under different versions of (semi-) presidential systems (Elgie 2015), and in unitary versus federal polities (Wanna 2014)? Designing targeted comparisons across space and jurisdictional types can help us provide more actor-centered, behavioral accounts of these classic institutional, structural questions. This volume concentrates predominantly on elected chief executives at the national level, in the main prime these are ministers in parliamentary systems. We do, however, consider some presidential (elected and non-elected) and sub-national cases to illustrate the potential further application of the LCI.

In sum, the LCI is still being developed. We believe it has the potential to stimulate and systematize a much-needed strand of comparative research on political leadership that taps into relational rather than competency-based notions of leadership, relates behavioral to perceptual approaches, and can help us examine the effects of variations in the institutional and situational contexts that leaders face. Although still in the early stages of its development following its launch by 't Hart (2014a) and Bennister et al. (2015), the LCI has already generated further empirical work (see Helms 2016; Burrett 2016). This volume presents a series of LCI applications across a range of leaders and political systems, allowing us to assess its merits and limitations, and develop pathways for its further development.

Outline of the Volume

The bulk of this volume is devoted to empirical studies designed to articulate and answer puzzles about the authority of officeholders in a range of political systems by means of the LCI framework and the various supportive devices outlined in the previous section. The purpose of the exercise is indeed exploratory: the chapters are best understood as a series of plausibility probes, to see how the LCI framework performs as a descriptive and analytical tool. It begins with two case-study chapters that together form a study in contrasts. First, Ludger Helms and Femke van Esch analyze the "rock-solid" capital stock of German chancellor Angela Merkel. They take the story right up to the biggest political gamble of her life—her fateful *Wir schaffen das* ("We can do it") commitment to warmly receive the large numbers of refugees from the **(p.20)** Middle East and North Africa that started heading for Germany (and Western Europe) during the summer of 2015. By contrast, James Walter's study of another female prime minister, Australia's Julia Gillard (2010–3), paints a picture of a "misfit" leader who, partly by the manner in which she was seen to have usurped the role from her predecessor Kevin Rudd, found that, once in the role, the quite considerable capital she had amassed as a highly competent deputy had largely evaporated. In three tortuous years of leading a minority

government and notwithstanding considerable legislative accomplishments, she was never able to build authority in the role.

We then present three contrasting cases of individuals who experienced quite dramatic fluctuations in their leadership capital over time. Jon Johansson's chapter on United States president Lyndon Johnson shows how Johnson managed to secure a large mandate to continue a presidency that had landed into his lap, following the assassination of his predecessor John F. Kennedy, and then started spending his capital on highly ambitious and controversial ventures (the "Great Society" social programs, the Vietnam War, and, as mentioned earlier, civil rights legislation), paying the ultimate political price when things got sour in Vietnam in early 1968. András Körösényi, Péter Ondré, and András Hajdú's study of former Hungarian prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsány (2004–9) illustrates the "meteoric leader" type. His rapid rise to political power was reversed by a series of evasions, scandals, and missteps. This was made worse by the ascendancy of the supremely talented populist competitor who would become his political nemesis, Viktor Orbán. This trio of case studies is completed by Charles F. Parker's analysis of California Governor Jerry Brown's remarkable story as a perfect "comeback leader," whose two political lives at the helm of the state's government were nearly thirty years apart (1975–83, and 2011–present). It is an uplifting story, not in the least for any besieged or written-off contemporary political office-holder: a political rebirth is always on the cards.

The next four chapters contain pair-wise comparisons of government leaders in both majoritarian and consensual democracies. Mark Bennister and Ben Worthy explore the oft-heard assertion that Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair were both dominant prime ministers, and that they built this dominance on their high and solid leadership capital. The authors provide considerable nuance to that claim, showing how both leaders ran into the limits of their dominance dictated in part by considerable fluctuations of their capital stock. Jonathon Malloy compares Canadian prime ministers, Paul Martin (December 2003–February 2006) and Stephen Harper (2006–November 2015). Entering office after a protracted succession struggle with his long-serving predecessor Jean Chrétien, Martin nevertheless came in with high capital but saw it evaporate very quickly. Harper by contrast commenced office with low capital. However, after sustaining and cultivating it, he not only survived in office, but became a dominant leader.

 (p.21) The two case studies of consensual democracies raise the question as to what leadership capital means and how it is acquired in contexts where heads of government operate in multiparty coalition settings. Marij Swinkels, Sabine van Zuydam, and Femke van Esch compare the political fortunes of recent Dutch prime ministers, Jan-Peter Balkenende (2002–10) and Mark Rutte (2010–present), and do so by means of a partly re-conceptualized LCI tool, adjusted to reflect the political realities of leadership in coalition settings. Working with the original LCI tool and applying it to two non-socialist prime ministers juggling

complex coalition arrangements in Sweden, Fredrik Bynander and Pär Daléus nevertheless come up with very similar findings: prime-ministerial authority in multiparty coalition systems depends to a much larger extent on soft-power skills such as emotional intelligence (Greenstein 2010), and much less on the traditional "vision thing" and power to decide.

The next pair of chapters examine leaders faced with major exogenous shocks generating deep institutional crisis in the national economic and political system. José A. Olmeda and César Colino compare the leadership capital of Spanish prime ministers Rodríguez Zapatero (2004–11) and Mariano Rajoy (2011–present). The advent of the global financial crisis and the subsequent collapse of the Spanish economy broke Zapatero's back psychologically as well as politically. His leadership was fatally wounded, and his social-democratic party distanced itself from him. Elected to fix the crisis, conservative party veteran and former deputy prime minister Mariano Rajoy's distinctly uncharismatic leadership persona and controversial policy led, against all expectations, to a slight increase in capital–though not enough to secure a clear win in the knife-edge national election in late 2015. In contrast, Selena Grimaldi's comparative study of three successive Italian presidents during times of political crisis suggests that leadership capital is not necessarily dependent on institutional hard power, but can accrue from adroit situational leadership and the mobilization of deep-rooted moral authority.

In the concluding trio of chapters, the emphasis switches back to conceptual and methodological perspectives on the LCI construct. Jean Blondel reflects on how the LCI approach is contingent upon systemic conditions, raising a series of methodological issues and questions, before examining the limits of its applicability when examining the authority and legitimacy of leaders in African politics. Erik Jentges takes us back to the theoretical roots of the capital analogy, and explores what we can learn from Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social capital when it is transposed into an empirical tool for examining the political fortunes of political leaders. And finally, in the concluding chapter, we, as editors, draw up the balance sheet of the project as a whole: what has it yielded, what can be improved, where should the LCI endeavor go next?

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