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The Social Identity Approach to Leadership: The Case of Alberta

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Political Science

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Abstract

The study of political leadership within the discipline of the political science has recently grown into a large, complex, and insightful literature. However, the extensive number of concepts, theories, and frameworks developed by international leadership scholars have been underutilized when it comes to developing further understanding of political leadership in the Canadian context. This thesis attempts to address this gap by focusing on the process by which individuals are selected to be leaders. I utilize social psychology and Identity Leadership Theory to theorize that leaders are successful to the extent that they are able to cohere with broader group processes by articulating group characteristics, establishing individual prototypicality, and entrenching their policy agenda in pre-existing collective identities and understandings. The study develops and examines a concise causal relationship and hypotheses through a case study of the Albertan provincial context. This comprises analyses of two premiers, William Aberhart and Peter Lougheed, that utilize a set of primary communicative sources to examine the substantive components of their successful leadership appeal. Overall, this thesis's findings suggest that these leaders were successful despite not meeting the expectations of the analysis's hypotheses. Consequently, it is concluded that Identity Leadership Theory is not an accurate or useful means by which to understand political leadership in Canada.

Keywords

Political Leadership, Canada, Political Psychology, Social Identity Theory, Identity Leadership Theory, Alberta, Political Culture, William Aberhart, Peter Lougheed.

Summary for Lay Audience

This thesis explores the process by which political leaders are able to articulate successful electoral appeals through a case study of the initial election of two premiers in the province of Alberta, William Aberhart and Peter Lougheed. Through an engagement with conceptual and theoretical questions pertaining to leadership, it utilizes Identity Leadership Theory (ILP) to develop a theory of leadership success. The theory argues that leaders, in seeking to gain a position of authority over a group, are successful to the extent that they are able to base their appeal on the tendencies of that group's psychological processes. In particular, leaders find their influence and success in their ability to direct the direction of those processes to the extent that, by providing answers to the deeper questions of "who we are" and "what we should do", they are able to legitimize their leadership and policy agenda through their group membership. This theory is operationalized into a concise causal framework, and this thesis establishes a set of two hypotheses to be examined in the two case studies of Alberta. Overall, it is found that both leaders were successful despite not meeting the expectations of the hypotheses. Consequently, this thesis concludes that Identity Leadership Theory (ILP) is not an analytically useful way to understand political leadership in Canada.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1 Introduction

In his foundational 1978 work *Leadership*, the political scientist James MacGregor Burns (p.2) lamented that ““we know all too much about our leaders, we know far too little about leadership.” Burns was expressing a certain foreboding to the discipline of political science of the time. In emphasizing the influence of broader institutional, social, and economic forces, the discipline had overlooked the importance of political leadership itself as a unique, independent, and influential factor in determining political outcomes.

In the years that followed Burns’ call for a greater place for leadership in political science, the literature was expanded considerably. Today, its study comprises a complex, dense, and dynamic field of analysis within the broader discipline. As a general scholarly literature, it has provided insights into a wide variety of political phenomena and the particular dynamics of specific institutional contexts (Rhodes and ‘t Hart 2014; Hernandez et al. 2011; Uhl-Bien et al. 2014).

Notably absent, however, is the study of political leadership in the Canadian context, a field that remains underdeveloped and underutilized. This is an unfortunate state of affairs. Given the particularly prominent place that individual Canadian political leaders have in both formal institutions and public life more broadly, the study thereof is especially useful in increasing scholarly understanding of both specific Canadian political phenomena and the concept of political leadership more generally. Nevertheless, many of the concepts, frameworks, and theories that have been developed by leadership scholars elsewhere have not been utilized to better understand Canadian contexts, particularly when it comes to political processes on a subnational level.

This thesis aims to contribute to the broader scholarly project towards closing this gap in understanding, partly by applying concepts and theories developed elsewhere within a Canadian context. It focuses on one important aspect of Canadian political leadership, guided by the following main research question: how can the researcher understand why certain individuals are successfully elected political leaders in Canada? While political

leaders predominately impact political outcomes through the power made available to them by their role in institutions, they are initially required to gain the support of the community which they seek to lead in order to attain public office. This process of aspiring for power in Canada is also predominately done in a context of keen democratic competition as, given the electoral process, a significant number of individuals seek after the same position. The primary question of leadership in this thesis, then, is to understand why it is that certain individuals are endowed with this authority over others.

Through a detailed engagement with the conceptual and explanatory leadership literatures, this thesis utilizes Identity Leadership Theory (ILT) to explore a potential answer to this research question. As originally articulated by Haslam et al. (2020) in *The New Psychology of Leadership*, ILT draws upon the insights of social psychology to theorize that the success of political leaders can be explained on account of the way their appeal to voters takes advantage of broader psychological group processes. Put more precisely, the theory holds that group memberships will be formed, defined, and internalized by individuals, thereby affecting the way they perceive and evaluate themselves and their environments. Leaders find their success in drawing upon and amending pre-existing group understandings to legitimize their personal leadership and so mobilize support for their policy agenda. This is done, first, by a leader's capacity to position themselves as a "prototypical group member" (Haslam et al. 2020, p.82) and second, by their ability to communicate and work towards a policy agenda that coheres with the group's experiences, needs, history and self-understanding at the time they seek to govern. Therefore, when translated into concise statements guiding the study's research methodology, the ILT theoretical foundation supporting this analysis posits two specific hypotheses:

- H1: If an aspiring leader is most effective at conveying themselves as a prototypical member, understood through the way they articulate the group's category prototypes as determined by a meta-contrast ratio, they will then be seen as a legitimate source of authority.
- H2: if a leader develops and communicates a salient understanding of the group identity and future course of action that is consistent with their prototypicality

while also drawing upon broader and pre-existing characteristics of the group understanding (the principle of readiness), they are then more likely to be endowed with formal leadership.

Support for these hypotheses are subsequently examined in two case studies focused on the initial leadership phase of two successful provincial premiers in the province of Alberta: William Aberhart, who served from 1935 to 1943, and Peter Lougheed who was in office from 1971 to 1985. In each case, a collection of primary sources that represent each leader's oral and written communications are analyzed in light of the hypothesized relationships so as to determine if their success in attaining formal leadership can be accounted for through specific appeals to group identity. As discussed in more detail below, the cases are located in Canada, a country whose politics are shaped by the influence of first ministers. Moreover, the province of Alberta was selected partly owing to the unique and clear group identity shared by its citizens. So, the two case studies of long-serving and successful premiers offer excellent terrain in which to examine how leaders appeal to a group's identity in order to mobilize the support necessary to lead. However, the textual analysis finds that both leaders successfully attained leadership positions early in their careers without much evidence of appealing to the identity of Albertans. In light of the absence of supporting evidence for the hypothesized relationships, the study indicates that Identity Leadership Theory is not a helpful explanatory framework for explaining how successful leaders gain the leadership. In light of this fact, the thesis concludes that while the particular theory applied here is unsupported, the findings nevertheless contribute to the study of political leadership in Canada by reporting the lack of empirical basis for this popular, new approach to understanding leadership.

1.1 Chapters at a Glance

Each chapter of this thesis is dedicated to addressing one or more of the components of its overall analysis. Chapter Two establishes this thesis within the broader literature on political leadership. It consists of a general literature review of the study of leadership, develops a workable conceptualization of leaders and the leadership process, and discusses a series of frameworks that have been developed to explain the research

question of why certain individuals become leaders. Chapter Three presents a detailed articulation of the theoretical framework of Identity Leadership Theory, discussing its fundamental assumptions derived from the field of social psychology and the way these have been applied on the context of leadership. From here, the discussion draws upon this broad theoretical framework to support the specific research methodology employed in this study. In this section I outline the general causal relationship, present the two core hypotheses, and discuss key case selection considerations and how the content of leaders' appeals is established empirically.

Chapter Four is comprised of a review of the broader Albertan context which shaped how leaders must direct their appeals. By drawing upon scholarly characterizations of the province's culture, the province is analyzed through a social identity lens to reveal some salient themes that make up the broader Albertan group identity, including a romantic settler image, collective economic reliance on one export commodity, an individualistic and freedom-based culture, and a common skepticism towards the interference of outside actors. This comprises the broader and pre-existing characteristics of the group understanding in which the leaders are expected to base their appeals to citizens.

Chapter Five and Six investigates the two core hypotheses in the respective case studies of William Aberhart and Peter Lougheed. Each study is presented in four sections. First, a brief portrait of the leader, the basis of their aspirational leadership, and the components of their policy agenda is provided. Second, a summary of the broader economic, social, and political context surrounding their election is communicated, with attention directed to the means by which this victory can be interpreted through the broader group identity theorized in the previous chapter. Third, the chapter briefly considers conventional and popular approaches to the leader's success to gain further insights into additional factors that conditioned their success. Finally, both leaders' activities as aspirational leaders will be analyzed to determine if there is any evidence in support of the two hypotheses. Overall, while the findings with respect to the second hypothesis are mixed, the first hypothesis is found to be unsupported.

Chapter Seven concludes the study by providing a summary of its contents, in addition discussing the implications of the findings reported here. Overall, while the ILT theory was not successful in its application to these two cases, the study contributes to broader scholarly attempts to better understand political leadership in Canada through demonstrating the theory's insufficiencies and limitations.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2 Introduction

The study of political leadership comprises a wide, dense, and complex literature that remains difficult to properly categorize in a concise and comprehensive form.

Nevertheless, it can be characterized by two broad claims. It, first, assumes that the concept can be analyzed and accounted for in a relatively systematic and predictable way. And, second, it holds that leadership ‘matters’ and is relevant to understanding political outcomes. This applies to the structures of the broader executive institutions themselves but, more profoundly, this approach suggests that the researcher ought to look at the role as practiced by individual office holders to develop a full comprehension of this political phenomenon.

The approach serves to illuminate the workings of both broader political topics and the dynamics of specific organizational contexts (Rhodes and ‘t Hart 2014; Hernandez et al. 2011; Uhl-Bien et al. 2014). It has, however, remained relatively underdeveloped and underutilized in Canadian political science outside of structural or formal-legal analysis. While Canadian political research has developed a coherent understanding of the formal role played by its first ministers (Hockin 1971; Savoie 1999; Bakvis 2001; White 2005; Stewart and Stewart 2007; Dyck 1995; Dunn 2016), it has been less effective in understanding the way the broader parameters of these leadership positions are understood and used by individual office holders to influence specific political outcomes. It also, more problematically, has provided little systematic analysis of the question of how this particular leadership is initially formed and constituted. In effect, Canadian political science lacks a precise and effective causal mechanism to account for why some aspiring leaders are more successful at gaining and maintaining support than others.

This literature review provides a brief overview of the central conceptual claims and findings of the broader political leadership literature and within Canada specifically. This chapter aims to argue why this is a worthwhile field of study within Canadian political science. Through an engagement with the literature, ‘Leadership’ here is

understood as the exercise of disproportionate authority over the direction of an organization or social group. It will be argued that this is located in social legitimacy, in which an individual is endowed with the authority to both issue directives and reasonably assume they will be followed. The primary question of leadership for Canadian political science, then, is to understand why it is that certain individuals are endowed with this authority, especially given the fact that – assuming that high political office is significantly sought after – they beat other individuals vying for that same power.

The remainder of this literature review examines a set of approaches that have been developed to address this question, identifying three loose frameworks: the attributional, the transactional, and the contextual. In reviewing each, the paper will settle on the latter, particularly the social identity approach, as a useful theoretical framework to account for the way leadership is constituted within Canadian public life.

2.1 The Study of Political Leadership: An Overview

Leadership, in the words of George Akerlof (2009, p.xiv) is a “subject older than Plato and as current than Barack Obama.” It has been a constant spot for normative and analytical introspection, preoccupying a perennial place in the history of thought.¹ Several leaders have been extensively studied as individuals, and they are largely assumed to be an important aspect of understanding what accounts for one outcome occurring over another.² ‘Bad’ or ‘a lack of’ leadership tends to be blamed for negative political events, and contemporary leaders are often given personal credit for positive trends. Historical examples abound; one could look at the contrast between Neville Chamberlin and Winston Churchill, the presidential leadership of George Washington,

¹ Leadership is, for instance, a concern for Plato (1991, 1961), Confucius (Chan and Chan 2014), and the Old Testament (Pyschny and Schulz 2018). It can be found in the ancient historical work of Thucydides (Nichols 2017), Plutarch (Jacobs 2017) and Herodotus (2020), while also motivating the early ‘manuals’ of leadership by Cicero (2013), Sun Tzu (2019), Machiavelli (1998), and Castiglione (1976). It can be traced through the progress of more modern political thought, particularly regarding the way it fits into broader governmental structures and processes such as Montesquieu’s Balance of Powers (1989), Hobbes’ authoritarianism (1994), Rousseau’s ‘Great Legislator’ (2004), and Nietzsche’s *ubermensch* (1974)

² Napoleon Bonaparte, for instance, is estimated to be the subject of well over 40,000 books.

Abraham Lincoln, and FDR (compared to figures like James Buchanan, Andrew Johnson, and Herbert Hoover), or – to use a Canadian example - the impact of Pierre Elliot Trudeau’s personal philosophy on Canada’s constitutional framework and the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Nevertheless, social scientists frequently lament the fact that, in the words of Burns (1978, p.2), “we know all too much about our leaders, we know far too little about leadership.” “Leadership” as a broad, but precise analytical concept is notoriously difficult to grasp comprehensively; central to its study is a set of important conceptual and empirical questions that remain understudied: what leadership is, the impact it has on politics, and how it can be understood in the context of other causal factors. There has been, until recently, a general historical neglect of the topic in the mainstream of the modern discipline of political science (‘t Hart and Rhodes 2014). Here, leadership was relegated to the place of a relatively minor and irrelevant component of a much broader force, such as the power relationships of economic conditions (Thompson 1980; Harvey 2006; Jessop 2008), the predictable utility-maximizing determinants of individual behavior (Downs 1957; Green and Shapiro 1994; Mueller 2003), or the institutional ‘logic’ of a given context and the way it conditioned action (Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol 1985; March and Olsen 1989; Hall and Taylor 1996). Leadership, therefore, lacked sustained and rigorous analysis in political science as a unique, independent, and influential factor in the causal processes that lead to specific political outcomes. Normatively, the discipline’s theorists tended to minimize the impact of leadership by their emphasis on the dictates of the social contract, objective policy making structures, and broad moral values (Rawls 1973; Nozick 1974; Walzer 1983; Foucault 1991; Pettit 1997; How 2003).

But, in recent years, this general neglect has changed. Concerns pertaining to leadership, both normative and analytical, have inspired an incredibly large, vast, and dense literature that seeps through an array of disciplines including, among others, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and organization studies. Increasingly, the broad term of ‘leadership’ can refer to a large set of separate sub-areas, composed of a diverse set of ideas, theories, and approaches that continue to become more sophisticated and

specialized. In their *Oxford Handbook of Political Leadership*, for instance, editors R.A.W Rhodes and Paul 't Hart (2014) identify eleven distinct 'traditions and disciplines' in addition to ten 'analytical and methodological approaches' to the concept.³ Indeed, this disciplinary and conceptual diversity has led many, such as James MacGregor Burns (2003, p.9) to consider leadership "a master discipline" that "illuminates some of the toughest problems of human needs and social change."

An immense degree of effort has been put into developing generalizable frameworks and typologies to understand the way leadership works, including leadership styles and their fit in certain institutional and social contexts (Stogdill and Coons 1957; Mann 1964; Fiedler 1976; Burns 1978; Lord, Fati, and De Vader 1984; Bass 1985; Hogg 2001; Denison, Hooijberg and Quinn 1995; Bono and Judge 2004; see also Hernandez et al. 2011 for a review). A similar emphasis has been directed to followers, engaging with the ways they come to support and interact with particular individual leaders (Shamir 2007; Fairhurst and Uhl-Bien 2012; DeRue and Ashford 2010; see also Uhl-Bien et al. 2014 for a review).⁴

The same can be said about the broader dynamics of specific political contexts. The American Presidency, for instance, has been extensively studied, producing a well-developed understanding of the opportunities and constraints of the office, in addition to a systemic understanding of the way its office holders have used that role to impact political outcomes (Neustadt 1960; Barber 1972; Skowronek 1993; Greenstein 2009).

³ The "traditions and disciplines" consist of Western Political Thought, Theory of Democratic Leadership, Confucianism, Feminism, Political Science, Public Administration, Political Psychology, Psychoanalytic Theories, Social Psychology, Rational Choice, and Anthropology. The "analytical and methodological approaches" consist of Institutional Analysis, Contextual Analysis, Decision Analysis, Social-Constructionist Analysis, Rhetorical and Performative Analysis, Experimental Analysis, Observational Analysis, At-A-Distance Analysis, Biographical Analysis, Personality Profiling Analysis.

⁴ It can also be said that leadership has been, to some extent, incorporated into most topics that concern political scientists. In particular, this includes the role leadership plays in the direction of developing states (Linz and Stephan 1978; O'Brien 2010; Rotberg 2012), moments of crisis (Boin et al 2005; Lebow 1981; de Clercy and Ferguson 2016), international cooperation (Young 1991) ethnic conflict (Read and Shapiro 2004), electoral outcomes (Garzia 2013; Aarts, Blais, and Schmitt 2011), and the success of certain policies over others (Byman and Pollack 2001).

Although less developed, the same could be said of Prime Ministers in Westminster systems, particularly the United Kingdom and Australia (Walter and Strangio 2007; Weller 1985; Bennister 2012; Strangio, 't Hart, and Walter 2013).

But what is meant by “leadership” in these studies? It is important that at the current state of our discussion we develop a more precise of understanding of what is meant by leadership in this broader literature. That, before analyzing the role in plays within the Canadian political context, one needs to know what it is they are looking for. There continues to be little consensus on what precisely leadership is as a measurable concept – Rost’s (1991, p.7) study found as many as 221 definitions in the literature. Political leadership, at first glance, appears to be synonymous with the positions of power individuals occupy within institutional structures. First ministers are “leaders” of their given political context by the fact that they have been elected to fill an office with formal-legal powers that allow them to influence the direction their respective governments take. This, therefore, expresses one major conceptualization of leadership: the idea that it is a *capacity* or possession of a “special sense of power” (Burns 1978, p. 8) to direct the actions of other people or the activities of a broader organization (Stogdill 1953; Bass 1985; Lord and Maher 1991). It is in this way that Blondel (1987, p.3) defines leadership as “the power exercised by one or a few individuals to direct members of the nation towards action” and to, as put by McFarland (1969, p.10), make “things happen that would not otherwise happen.”

But this overlooks the fact that leadership is not synonymous with formal position or status. It may be the case that the “official” leader of a given context is in fact ineffectual and irrelevant, as suggested by Gardner’s (1990) observation that “We have all occasionally encountered top persons who couldn’t lead a squad of seven-year olds to the ice cream counter.” Real, impactful power could instead come from elsewhere, whether from an official ‘subordinate’ or someone outside of the formal-legal structure entirely.⁵ The “power behind the throne”, for instance, is a common concept, and strong

⁵ This can be approached in a broader theoretical way, in the sense that officeholders take direction from broader, more nefarious interests – an example could include the Marxist elite theories of Gramsci.

personalities can continue to dominate their coalitions after leaving political office.⁶ For this reason, several leadership scholars – particularly those in the field or organization studies – have attempted to make a distinction between ‘leaders’ and ‘managers’, the latter of which simply perform routine and administrative roles (Zaleznik 1992).⁷

Instead, it is necessary to include the fact that leadership is also comprised of a sense of social legitimacy. This is evident in the fact that, while formal-legal authority and resources are useful to influence outcomes, there are figures who command authority from what seems to be sheer personality and the voluntary submission of followers. These are what Tucker (1981) labels as ‘non-constituted’ leaders, who unlike ‘constituted’ leaders do not derive their power from institutional structures, but instead from a more abstract sense of social and moral rightfulness. Leaders, in these cases, are endowed with the authority to direct the behavior of some sort of worthwhile cause, whether this means social justice (Mahatma Ghandi, Martin Luther King Jr.) or the wellbeing of a given community or nation. In many cases, these figures can use their preexisting sense of leadership to gain formal-legal authority by mobilizing successful governing coalitions.⁸

Alternatively, it can include generalizable concepts, such as ‘political machines’ like New York’s Tammany Hall. Or one can look at specific examples: Deng Xiaoping’s informal position as the ‘paramount’ leader of China or Cardinal Richelieu’s relationship to Louis XIII. The contemporary US is particularly perceptive to the influence of Presidential advisors such as Edward M. House, Henry Kissinger, Karl Rove, Dick Cheney, and Steve Bannon

⁶ Several executive leaders, although restricted by term limits, could still possess the power necessary to direct the actions taken by their successors. This could apply to Vladimir Putin’s relationship to Dmitry Medvedev, or the informal control of former charismatic American governors, such as Huey Long’s control of the Louisiana government from the Senate or Alabama Governor George Wallace’s decision to have his wife run as a surrogate candidate when faced with term limits.

⁷ Joseph Nye, for instance, (2008, p.30) suggests that leadership acts as something that could be gained or utilized, but not guaranteed, from these positions: it “is like having a fishing license, it does not guarantee you will catch any fish”. This is evident through comparisons of the different ways US Presidents interpreted their roles, such as Calvin Coolidge’s voluntary aloofness from domestic policy (Shlaes 2013) compared to Franklin Roosevelt’s work to push an aggressive policy agenda through Congress (Alter 2006).

⁸ See, for instance, the case of Nelson Mandela’s dramatic rise from prisoner to President, the electrician Lech Walesa’s emergence as the leader of the Solidarity movement in Poland, or even Adolf Hitler’s gradual accumulation of power.

In evaluating leaders who successfully gain formal-legal positions of authority, it is difficult to determine the moment a “non-constituted leader” becomes a “constituted one”. All aspiring executives must in some way be the former. That is, they must establish themselves as leaders or authorities to justify their endowment with institutional power, including among their own political organizations (in nomination and leadership-selection races) and the broader public in general elections. This, similarly, must also be maintained overtime. It is common for leaders to be removed, whether by party revolt or electoral defeat, when they lose this sense of legitimacy.⁹

Leadership, then, is primarily sourced from the fact that the individual who is the leader is seen as having a “particular right” (Janda 1960, p.355) to prescribe behavior patterns that they can expect others to *voluntarily* follow. In other words, leadership is primarily a matter of the legitimacy that certain individuals have over others to direct their actions. This includes, but does not exclusively contain, the legality accorded to formal-legal institutions – leaders must also have a source of legitimacy as individuals. This was an insight initially made by Max Weber (1968) through his concept of *herrschaft* (‘authority’) as the component of leadership that distinguishes it from pure power-wielding. Here, the latter is characterized by the assumption that their commands will be followed by a “certain minimum of voluntary submission.” To Weber (1968, p.8), this is formed and constituted through the notion of ‘charisma’, defined as the “quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities.” In this way, an individual becomes a leader by virtue of an individual characteristic that sets them apart from others, thereby legitimizing their ability to exercise authority over them. Nevertheless, it is also necessary that the individual distinctiveness is also recognized by and endowed upon that individual by followers on account of them meeting some sort of need. Exactly where the two meet is unclear, and

⁹ This could include figures like Kevin Rudd and Margaret Thatcher who were deposed by their own parliamentary caucus. Alternatively, it is also possible for leaders, despite being able to remain in office, are unable to render the support necessary to do anything meaningful. Out-going Presidents, as previously mentioned, are the best example of this.

work on Weber's intention remains complex and contested.¹⁰ He also gives no real precise answer in the way of a causal mechanism to account for why particular individuals over others are specifically seen as charismatic. Nevertheless, it does serve a useful conceptual starting point by which the source of individual authority can be understood.

It is also on the basis of this insight that we can identify a second component of leadership: in that it is the *process* in which the leader takes a sense of initiative or creative control over outcomes, in that they are in the position to clarify, communicate, and “provide solutions to common problems or offering ideas about how to accomplish collective purposes and mobilizing the energies of others to follow these courses of action” (Keohane 2010, p.23; Burns 1978; Gardner 1995; Tucker 1995; Nye 2008). Different scholars conceptualize the exact details of this process differently, but four broad functions can be identified. First, leaders provide a necessary *framework* or sense-making function to a context. This can include identifying the ongoing needs of a given group, envisioning a set of goals or direction they ought to follow, or potentially clarifying a specific problem the group faces at the time – including answering the question of what is causing it and the way things should instead be. Second, leaders provide solutions, whether understood as the best way to meet a given need, satisfy a goal, or solve a problem.

The remainder of leadership involves the process of implementing the course they have set forward. This includes, third, “formulating a plan of action” (Tucker 1981) to accomplish that goal. This could involve planning significant public movements and demonstrations, the decision to pursue a specific political office, or support of a certain piece of legislation. Finally, leaders *execute*, mobilizing the resources at their disposal to achieve their goals or solutions. This is, for effective and impactful leadership, essential. This is because, while capable of communicating moving visions that can get them

¹⁰ Given his influence, Weber appears in practically every major work that attempts to conceptualize leadership. But for focused, extended discussions of Weber see Eisenstadt 1968; Reicher, Haslam, and Hopkins 2005.

elected, several executives struggle to implement their broad goals in power, given either institutional resistance or the fact that they have not been translated into concrete, practical steps.

As suggested by Gardner (1990, p.15), this process is always done by the “process of persuasion or example.” Leaders, in executing these functions, must always, first, successfully communicate that their given program is the right and legitimate option and, second, maintain their position as the individual with the legitimate authority to make these pronouncements. Followers must be satisfied, knowing that their needs are being met or at the very least pursued; other actors must be coopted into plans of action; and potential challengers and other opponents must be managed. Leaders, in the words of Schumpeter (1942, p.265), are subject to “the necessity of acting with some people, of getting along with others, of neutralizing still others and of secluding the rest.”

This function, and its source in social legitimacy, is a useful component of Canadian political science because – as argued by leadership analysts - leaders provide a unique, independent, and influential causal variable that impacts outcomes; that, in understanding why certain outcomes occur over others, researchers have to account, alongside much broader social, economic, and political forces, for the specific actions taken by particular sources of authority within a given institutional structure predominately, but not exclusively, including the place of specific individual personalities and leadership styles (Caryle 1993; Weber 1968; Hook 1945; Burns, 1978, 2003; Greenstein 1971; Tucker 1995). Thus, in the study of American Presidency for example, this includes Neustadt’s (1960) argument that political outcomes are contingent on the individual President’s ability to win over the support of other political actors, whether through political skills – Eisenhower’s ‘hidden-handed’ diplomacy, Lyndon Johnson’s legislative prowess – or by projecting public support, such as in the case of Franklin Roosevelt’s, John F. Kennedy’s and Ronald Reagan’s communication skills. This, to Barber, also includes their individual emotional and psychological wellbeing, particularly impacting the effectiveness of Richard Nixon, Bill Clinton, and Donald Trump (Woodward 2018).

In other words, leadership analysis contrasts with other broad theoretical frameworks in that it takes a controversial stance on the nature of human agency, suggesting that the particularities of individual style, personality, ability, and action have an independent impact not directly attributable to broader, more objective, forces whether social, economic, cultural, or physical. Leadership analysis, therefore, draws a line in the sand against semi-determinist approaches that continue to maintain influence in the social sciences, whether that means the dialectical materialism of Marxism, the objectivity of rational choice, or the rigid structure of institutionalism. It suggests that leadership does in fact ‘matter’ and ought to be studied alongside these other variables.

However, the particulars of this causal claim – that leaders are not tightly bound by their circumstances and can singlehandedly effect change - are weighty and complex, entailing that they continue to be debated within the literature to an extent that is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss fully (Masciulli, Mikhail, and Knight 2009). Whereas traditional leadership theories, as most famously asserted by Carlyle’s (1993) Great Man Theory, suggested that individual leaders were fully independent causal forces, the contemporary literature operates on a loose ‘interactionist’ consensus which suggests that the dynamic of leadership resides in the way that individual leaders *interact* with broader contextual and institutional forces to produce political outcomes (Fiedler 1976; Rejai and Philips 1983, 1998; Bass and Bass 2008). Leadership, then, must be understood within a set of constraints and opportunities that, to some extent, condition their actions. This could include the constraints of the political institutions themselves, whether formal-legal or more so pertaining to conventions and norms (Helms 2005; Rhodes et al. 2009; Bennister 2012); it could mean the contextual condition the leader is forced to govern in, such as administrative resources, the state of the economy, moments of crisis, and governing paradigms (‘t Hart 2014; Boin et al. 2005; Skowronek 1993); or it could refer to the interdependent web of actors a leader must maneuver: followers, citizens, political elites, interest groups, and outside actors (Keohane 2010; Bass and Riggio 2006; Dowding and McLeay 2011; Strangio, ‘t Hart, and Walter 2013).

Thus, in approaching the question of to what extent leadership determines events or is determined by events, the leadership literature suggests the answer lies somewhere

in the middle. That, while there exist broader processes and contextual conditions at play, leaders can shape the particularities of the way they develop (Bass 1985). Nevertheless, some analysts hold on to the claim that given a historical openness and a particular set of attributes – “outstanding capacities of intelligence, will, and character” as once put by Hooke (1945, p.8) – leaders can produce a unique historical influence independent of the broader conditions that determined the preexisting developmental path. Leadership, therefore, is relevant to the extent that it reflects a relative contingency to political outcomes; that while broader social, economic, and institutional forces may entail a likely or predictable scenario leadership can, to varying degrees, shape the specific outcome in reality. Here, political leadership scholars emphasize the way political processes are often marked by openness, ambiguousness, and novelty, entailing that there are no self-evidently ‘correct’ courses of action (Greenstein 1971; Gains 2014; Burns 2003). Leaders are impactful because they are – by definition - the ones in a unique and powerful position to make an impact; to formulate, articulate, and implement a specific course of action moving forward.

Nevertheless, in pursuing this function, leaders are necessarily dependent on the initiative and wellbeing of others, particularly followers. They must first be – in a competitive environment of ideas and aspiring authorities – in some sense ‘selected’ by the broader public as the individual to whom the broader group will listen to. This complex dynamic in which leaders are just as dependent on followers as they are on them is commonly referred to the ‘Burns paradox’ (Burns 1978), and points to a compelling conceptual and empirical question: how are specific individuals selected to be leaders? Why are some leaders more successful in gaining and maintaining this support more than others? The answer to this question is important and impactful, suggesting that there is a relatively systematic and predictable way specific individuals become, and can act as, leaders. The literature offers a diverse set of approaches and theories to this question, all of which will be comprehensively discussed in turn. This literature review, however, will now review the state of political leadership research in Canada, identifying an important gap in collective understanding.

2.2 Political Leadership in Canadian Political Science

Within Canadian political science, leadership retains an important but undeveloped status. Scholars have long recognized the fact that leaders occupy a prominent place in Canadian political institutions, thereby producing an extensive literature on the role of the prime minister in government institutions (Hockin 1971; Savoie 1999; Bakvis 2001; White 2005), the nature of leadership conventions (Courtney 1995; LeDuc 2001; Cross and Blais 2012; Pilet and Cross 2014), the influence leaders have over their parties (Clokic 1945; Perlin 1980; Courtney 1995), and the importance of leaders in determining election outcomes (Siegfried 1907; Bittner 2011, 2018; Aarts et al. 2011). Normatively, scholars have long been preoccupied with the question of whether the Prime Minister of Canada is a ‘friendly dictator’ who possesses too much power in federal governance (Simpson 2001; Savoie 1999).

The broader institutional parameters of first ministerial leadership in Canada are well understood. Granatstein and Hillmer (1999), for instance, find that a prime minister’s ‘effectiveness’ is contingent on a coherent national vision, adaptability, and the proper management of other actors, including their cabinet, caucus, and party. Overall, a loose consensus argues that given Canada’s regional diversity and tensions, the federal practice of brokerage politics “creates a vacuum that leadership might fill” (Johnston 2002, p.159) to determine a necessary vision, program, or agenda to an administration (Clarke et al. 1991; Johnston 2002; Carty 2015). Here, “realities created a need for the leader as broker rather than as visionary or hero” (Mancuso, Price and Wasaberg 1994, p.10), entailing that Prime Ministers are evaluated on the basis of their ability to reduce conflict and maintain national unity (Azzi and Hillmer 2013). Several scholars have also noted the increasing ‘personalization’ of politics and the importance on the leader’s own personal ‘brand’ in justifying government policy (Karvonen 2010; Marland 2016; Lalancette and Raynauld 2019).

This also applies to the literature on the provinces, which often involve applications of inferences made at the federal level to their context. Provincial premiers are just as, if not more, powerful as their federal counterparts, and there is a modest amount of work that looks at the same role provincial leaders play in the policy-making

and electoral process (Bernier et al. 2005, Stewart and Archer 2000; Stewart and Stewart 2007; Dyck 1995; Dunn 2016; White 2005; Lewis 2012; Thomas and Lewis 2019). Although less developed, the same type of inferences have been made into the broader ‘playbooks’ of effective provincial leadership – including Atlantic Canada’s emphasis on traditionalism and patronage (Stewart and Stewart 2007; Diepeeven 2018); Quebec’s national self-determination (McRoberts 1988); Ontario and Manitoba’s expectation of competent, pragmatic governance (Collier and Malloy 2017; Wesley 2011), Saskatchewan’s communitarianism (Leeson 2001); Alberta’s populism (Tupper and Gibbins 1992); and British Columbia’s ideological contestation (Carty 1996).

This work, however, remains relatively limited to more objective formal-legal structures and processes. Political leadership, understood as the contingent nature and impact of particular “persons who, by virtue of occupying a particular public position, engage in activities that attract the support of citizens who permit them to make decisions on their behalf” (Mancuso, Price, and Wasaberg 1994, p.6) remains underdeveloped, as “Canadian scholars have tended to avoid the subject” (Pal and Taras 1988). This is especially the case for the provinces, as the discipline’s understanding of leadership at this level suffers from the additional problem of a general neglect of provincial topics in general. While the constitutional debates of the 1970s and 1980s ensured a “high tide” (Wesley 2015) of research on the provinces, this had largely petered out by the mid-1990s. The provinces were perceived as either parallel to the federal level or too parochial entailing that, by the time of Dunn’s (2001, p.441) critique, “the literature in some areas is now so dated that any generalizations are becoming dangerous.” However, in recent years, this has changed. Scholars not only recognize that provinces have become increasingly relevant political actors, but that their relative formal-legal similarity presents an opportunity for “laboratories of comparative analysis” (Wesley 2015).

There are some Canadian political leaders, both federally and provincially, that are exceptions to this general rule. William Lyon Mackenzie King, regarded as the paragon of the brokerage model, is one of the most well-studied figures in Canadian history (Courtney 1976; Whitaker 1978; Henderson 1998). Canadians in some ways continue to be enamored with the leadership of Pierre Elliot Trudeau, leading to work on

the charismatic appeal of ‘Trudeaumania’ (Litt 2018; Wright 2016) and his own individual impact on Canada’s development, particularly in terms of its constitution (English 2009; Smiley 1987; Laforest 1995). John Diefenbaker’s tenure has been studied as a case study of the failure to properly manage cabinet and caucus (Newman 1989). Interest in Mulroney has grown in recent years, much of which draws attention to the direct impact of his specific personality and leadership style (Malloy 2010; Blake 2007; Hampson 2018). Stephen Harper’s strict control of government policy and communications has also been well-noted, in addition to his early attempts to implement an agenda of institutional reform (Jeffrey 2015).

Provincially, this includes Joey Smallwood’s – ‘the last Father of Confederation’ - personal role in Newfoundland’s entry into Confederation, followed by his semi-authoritarian leadership as Premier (Marland and Kirby 2016). National preoccupation with Quebec’s place in Confederation has led to interest in Rene Levesque’s leadership over the sovereigntist movement (Fraser 1984). In the West, significant attention has historically been given to the leadership of the third-party movements that took power (Laycock 1990; Kendle 1979; Rolph 1950; Irving 1959); of these, Tommy Douglas is given considerable credit for Canada’s publicly funded healthcare system (Marchildon 2016; Johnson 2004). Several premiers heavily involved in the ‘mega constitutional politics’ of the 1980s and 1990s – Peter Lougheed, Bill Davis, Clyde Wells among others – feature significantly in analyses of the period (Russell 2004; Wood 1985).

Nevertheless, this work – especially when compared to cases like the US Presidency – remains predominantly empirical, narrow, and erratic, lacking sustained and systematic analysis of political leadership itself as a unique and important causal force. Only a small subset of research in Canadian political science utilizes and attempts to apply the broader political leadership literature developed elsewhere (Courtney 1976; Brown et al. 1988; de Clercy 2005; Harasymiw 2014; Malloy 2010; Broschek 2018; Azzi and Hilmer 2013; Mancuso, Price, and Wasaberg 1994; Pal and Taras 1988). In effect, this means that while a significant amount of inferences have been made about political leadership in Canada, they often surmount to vague stereotypes. It is true, for instance, to note that individuals can become successful leaders if they are ‘accommodative’

(Granatstein and Hilmer 1991) – but this alone does not tell the political scientist much. What makes a leader accommodative, or how are they perceived to be so? How do leaders utilize this trait or perception to gain positions of power and influence political outcomes? There, in effect, needs to be more precise and measurable causal mechanisms to link these processes together.

The absence of this type of research can be attributed to the discipline's general methodological deemphasis of leadership; that while Canadian political leaders “may act out important dramas” within institutions or policy-developing processes, “they are not seen as setting the stage or even inventing the major themes in the plot” (Pal and Taras 1988, p.7). Canadian political science continues to emphasize broader economic, institutional, and social processes as determining political outcomes, skewing most analyses towards the direction that the same factors condition leadership (Cairns 1977; Pal and Taras 1988). That, to put it more precisely, the outputs of leadership, whether in terms of style or policy outcomes, are – with broader forces considered – inevitable and in some sense predetermined. This renders the study of specific leaders – their style, their policy preferences, the basis of their support – idiosyncratic at best, and far from key to understanding the causal relationships that characterize Canadian political life.

The highly influential school of political economy, for instance, suggests that political outcomes are the product of the incentives and power relations within Canada's export commodity economy (Innis 1930; Watkins 1963; Richards and Pratt 1979; Laxer 1989). Political authority is predominately the purview of economic elites, who will direct political outcomes that line up with their own interests. For the Canadian context, this generally meant the continual expansion of resource extraction, developing a ‘semi-colonial’ dynamic between the central Canadian ‘core’ (where manufacturing, capital, and profits accumulate) and its ‘peripheries’ (the areas that work to extract resources) that continues to characterize tensions within Canadian federalism (Innis 1930; Laxer 1989).

Leadership analysis has also been deemphasized by a historic preoccupation with the place of institutions in Canadian political life (Smith 2005). Here, an assortment of approaches shares the assumption that institutions, however conceived, are independent

variables that – through a set of constraints and opportunities – shape the actions taken by political actors. This includes foundational and ongoing work on the consequences of the formal-legal institutions themselves, whether parliamentary government, federalism, the electoral system, or the constitution (Mallory 1971; Cairns 1977; Simeon 1990; Savoie 1999; Manfredi 2001; Rocher 2019). Alternatively, a more contemporary foursome of ‘new institutionalisms’ provides an alternative set of conditions. Rational-choice institutionalism suggests that political outcomes are based on the way institutions structure the strategy of utility-maximizing actors. To this, historical institutionalism adds a temporal dimension: theorizing that political actors follow the direction of long-term path dependencies. For both, political leaders tend to factor in only as a component of the case being studied; their behavior a product of these broader processes (Flanagan 1998; Godbout and Hoyland 2011; Broschek 2012).

As the third framework, sociological institutionalism points to the power of abstract cultural institutions, arguing that actors act according to ‘logics of social appropriateness’ that enforce accepted norms, values, expectations, and the roles that are prescribed to individuals (Basta 2020). Finally, discursive institutionalism emphasizes the way political outcomes are shaped by the accepted conventions of communicative discourse (Schmidt 2008; Alcantara 2013).

For these more recent institutionalisms, analysis of political leadership tends to coalesce around the broad rubric of political culture (Elkins and Simeon 1979; Stewart 2002; Wiseman 2007; Wesley 2011). The concept, while incredibly contested (Cochrane and Perrela 2012), loosely refers to the common assumptions, attitudes, values, and norms of a political society forming the political views of its members, affecting the components of its institutions, and determining its general style of politics. For Canadian researchers, the central use of the approach lies in its claim that each of the provinces (or ‘regions’) form their own separate ‘cultures’ that uniquely impact the way political actors behave.

These political cultures are historical constructs, shaped by an interrelated set of factors such as a shared history, socio-demographic factors, economic conditions, and the

constraint provided by formal-legal institutions. Yet, at some point their frameworks coalesced: acting not as responses made by actors to events but constituting a broader milieu – “something like the air we breathe” (Wiseman 2007, p.13) – that shapes and conditions the *a priori* political understanding of the individuals that belong to it. For leadership, this is relevant in so far as it structures public understandings, informing expectations for the way leaders are supposed to act. Wesley (2011), for instance, argues that provincial political cultures form a discursive “code” that leaders must evoke to be successful.

More than the other approaches considered, political culture provides an unclear place for political leadership. If, on the one hand, we consider political culture to be transmitted through a broader entrenched, socialization process, leadership provides little independent impact once we consider the way that the individual leaders themselves are products of this same process. Yet, alternatively, political culture could be conceived as something contingent. Wesley (2011, p.12), for instance, suggests that election campaigns can be treated as “rituals that offer dominant political actors the opportunity to renew their communities’ core values every four years” in that aspiring leaders draw upon conventional concepts to legitimize their authority and bolster support. This view puts more of an emphasis on leadership, especially given how broad these cultural codes are and the way specific leaders have interpreted them differently. This is further recognized by Wiseman (1988, p.178), who notes that while “to be successful, political parties must advantageously lever the distinctive symbols and characteristic vocabularies of their province” they still have direction in the way they decide to “affirm their autonomy, assert their authority, and embed their status in the minds of the populace.” If anything, this suggests that political culture acts as one of the contextual variables with which leaders must necessarily interact.

But, to Wesley’s (2011) own admittance, this does not get to the central mechanism of leadership. It provides little insight to the question of why (given that all aspiring individuals draw upon these codes) individual leaders can gain the popularity necessary to gain and maintain the legitimate authority necessary to exercise leadership. What emerges from this review, then, is a clear gap in the literature: there exists little

systematic knowledge of the way specific Canadian leaders manage to gain and maintain their legitimate authority, in addition to the way it is utilized to affect political outcomes.

2.3 How Do Canadian Political Leaders Gain Authority?

How then do we work to overcome this lack of understanding? A proper understanding of Canadian political leadership requires grounding in precise and measurable analytical frameworks. For this, the leadership literature offers a diverse set of approaches that here will be categorized within three groups – attributional accounts, transactional accounts, and contextual accounts. These constitute different ways to conceive of the causal relationship, emphasizing certain causal variables over others and proposing different hypotheses. They also each aspire for near universal application, rendering that – given the fact that many of have been developed elsewhere – the following section finds it necessary to review each framework broadly in addition to analyzing its fit to the Canadian context in particular. In the next sections I review the three groups of approaches toward illustrating how they can be used to inform research on how Canadian leaders gain authority.

2.3.1 Attributional Accounts

Attributional accounts, in analyzing and attempting to explain outcomes pertaining to leadership, suggest that results are contingent on the characteristics of the individual themselves. They assume that the leader as a political actor is in some sense unique, possessing a set of attributes or characteristics that make them more likely to gain positions of authority over others - the sense of a ‘special something’ that sets them apart in their ability to influence and direct. Put more precisely for our purposes, it hypothesizes that if an individual possesses a set of characteristics or attributes conducive to effective leadership, they are then more likely to gain positions of first ministerial authority.

This is the original approach to leadership, tracing back to the earliest accounts (Plato 1991). But it was from the 1940s onward that scientific effort was made on the part of researchers to understand what that ‘special something’ was. The personalities, motives, and capacities of leaders were thereby extracted and measured; generalizable

inferences and statements were sought after, pertaining to what sort of people became leaders, how they operated, and what made them successfully influence outcomes (Stogdill 1948; Jenkins 1947; Kahn and Katz 1953; Stogdill and Coons 1957; Mann 1959).

Another strand of research engaged in psychoanalytical attempts to develop generations pertaining to the personality psychology of leaders, based on Harold Laswell's (1962, p.38) assertion that there was a clear "political personality or type." This body of work operated backwards and speculatively: observing semi-regular behavioral patterns, determining an explanation for that behavior, and attempting to find its psychological source in that person's experience (Greenstein 1971), entailing that childhood socialization and development provided key explanatory value in understanding who become leaders. Overall, the pattern that emerges are broken homes, particularly in the individual's relationship with their parents. Several prominent leaders have been noted to have lost at least one of their parents at an early age (Csikszatmihalyi 1993; Simonton 1994). Alternatively, future leaders could express devotion to one (typically overprotective) parent, whilst abhorring the other – whether through the product of abuse, a domineering attitude, personal rejection, or estrangement (Ochse 1990).

This, as a result, produced the necessary set of psychological concepts, tendencies and self-understandings that made individuals more likely to be leaders, such as the need to compensate for childhood trauma, to demonstrate one's worth, to be accepted, or the need to dominate (Berrington 1974). Thus, in George and George's (1964) influential analysis of Woodrow Wilson, for instance, it is suggested that his relationship to his father – a demanding yet emotional distant authority figure – accounts for Wilson's ambition to achieve 'great deeds in comparison' as a political leader, in addition to his inflexibility in accomplishing those ends. Similarly, to use a Canadian example, Esbrey (1980) suggests that William Lyon Mackenzie King's early childhood, particularly the death of his doting mother, explains both his need for spiritualism and heroic social leadership. Much of this work takes on a negative tone, equally concerned with the way such psychological factors can lead to destructive leadership. Thus, many leaders of

destructive political movements have been diagnosed with a range of clinical disorders (Bion 1961; Waite 1977; Halperin 1983).

Psychobiological research of leaders, however, has been dealt considerable criticism in that it relies on a set of untestable and unfalsifiable precepts, arrived at by speculation. Overall, its reliance on a vague set of psychoanalytical concepts means that any number of psychological conditions and causal mechanisms can be extrapolated from an individual's life. Recently, attempts have been made to ground psychological inferences in genetic factors, but this has had difficulty finding generalizations of the individuals that are more likely to become political leaders (Arvey et al. 2006).

Trait theory also met little success. In his review of the trait literature, Stogdill (1948) was able to conclude that five general traits – capacity (intelligence, awareness), achievement, responsibility (dependability, initiative), participation (activity, sociability) and status (socio-economic status, popularity) – are in some way linked to leadership. However, in terms of predicting the individuals that became leaders, these proved to be quite limited. There was no clear magic bullet, no clear 'special something' that leaders had that others did not: "no single trait or group of characteristics has been isolated which sets off the leader from the member of his group" (Jenkins 1947, p.74). "Leadership" said Stogdill (1948), "is not a matter of passive status, or the mere possession of some combination of traits."

Instead, it became clear that these traits were largely contingent on broader contextual factors or, more precisely, the way they interacted within a given setting. Popular leaders in one scenario can be rejected in others, pointing to the need to consider the way the attributes of given individuals 'fit' into the circumstance they seek to command authority over.¹¹ This, therefore, led to a set of 'contingency approaches' that suggested leaders and their contexts must necessarily line up to some extent, including

¹¹ Winston Churchill's loss in the 1945 UK Election is perhaps the most-famous example of this phenomenon. Generally, it is explained through the British electorate's perception that Churchill – a brash, intemperate, and stubborn personality – was not as well suited to the needs of post-war Britain as he was to wartime.

the specific needs, interests, and ideas of followers (see Fiedler and House 1994). This, in many cases, effectively flipped the nature of the causal relationship: suggesting that contexts determine the sort of individuals that become leaders. Here, those who gain positions of authority do so because of “situational favorableness” (Fiedler 1964); in effect, being the right person at the right time.

Acknowledging the importance of contextual factors, however, doesn't necessarily entail the fact that the Canadian leader themselves cannot still be considered the main causal variable of the dynamic. Attributive theory responded with the ‘neo-trait approach’ (Kirkpatrick and Locke 1991; Bono and Judge 2004; Judge et al. 2002) arguing that individual attributes comprise necessary ‘preconditions’ to successful leadership, given their link to important mechanisms that make them both more effective and appealing to potential followers. Work drawing on the Big Five personality traits, for instance, argues that conscientiousness, extraversion, openness, and emotional stability are associated with leadership (Bass 2008; Hollander 1985; Judge et al. 2002). Some findings of this approach present something of a physical determinism, in the fact that one's attractiveness (Eagly et al. 1991; Senior 2018) and height (Nye 2010) correlate with leadership. Other findings, however, suggest that the individuals who genuinely want to be leaders will become leaders, indicating that one's ‘powerful tendency’ (Heymann 2008, p.141), understood as an innate need for dominance, combined with assertiveness, confidence, and ambition is necessary to attain positions of authority and devoted followings (House 1977; Conger and Kanungo 1987; Blais and Pruyers 2017; Allen and Cutts 2018). Some scholars also suggest that a willingness to engage in Machiavellianism – understood as putting ends above means – to also be useful (Deluga 2001; Bailey 1988).

Nevertheless, there is an assumption here that one must possess a set of objective, fixed, and measurable traits in order to be truly effective. This includes, first, an innate degree of mental wellness and stability. While leaders need to have a strong need for power, they require an internal capacity for restraint (Franson, Haslam, Steffens and Boen 2020; McClelland and Burnham 2000). Additionally, leaders can be explained on the basis of their contextual intelligence. They must, in other words, both understand

what is required of them in a given situation and be capable of taking advantage of trends to accomplish their given goals for political outcomes (Mayo and Nohria 2005; Kingdon 2003). As a result, one's personal willingness to be flexible and adapt to what the situation requires is a predictor of leadership (de Hoogh et al. 2004; Oreg and Berson 2015; Phaneuf et al. 2016; Denison, Hooijberg and Quinn 1995). The vast majority of this work, however, has emphasized the importance of emotional intelligence or, more precisely, the individual's ability to know and meet their follower's set of needs (Goleman 1998; Salovey and Sluykier 1997; Prati et al. 2003; Greenstein 2009; Antonakis 2003). This therefore continues to produce a growing set of typologies directed to understanding how particular needs are met by receptive leaders, including Distributed leadership (Spillane 2005), Respectful leadership (Van Quaquebeke and Eckloff 2010), and Inclusive leadership (Hollander 2008). A final, most recent, strand of the attributive approach emphasizes the innate moral and ethical standing of individuals as the source of their legitimacy in making authoritative pronouncements (Messick and Bazerman 1996; Brown, Trevino, and Harrison 2005; Kane 2001).

But these approaches do not solve the central problem: that "while studies might find a certain trait to be significant, there always seemed to be considerable evidence that failed to confirm that trait's importance" (Bryman 1996, p. 45). There are, in effect, exceptions to every rule. These given capacities may entail different mechanisms in different contexts, to the point that a useful trait in one situation could be detrimental in another. Agreeableness (McClelland and Burnham 2000) for instance, may be useful in situations that involve a diverse set of interests and norms that provide significant de facto influence of subordinates. This seems to be expressed through the brokerage model that Canadian political leaders are said to have to work through. However, in situations of crisis – particularly involving violence or conflict – such a trait could be detrimental, due to the fact that it interferes with both the leaders decisiveness in pushing a path forward (despite contrary viewpoints within a government caucus) and effectively fighting sworn enemies. It would not be true to suggest that leaders like Rene Levesque and Pierre Elliot Trudeau attained their positions of authority because they were the most agreeable of their peers. Such points to the reality that too much of any trait may in fact be a bad thing (Antonakis and Day 2018). Agreeableness can lead to a bleeding heart; clarity of vision

can lead to stubbornness. Different combinations of traits may also ensure different outcomes in terms of behavior, to the point that a relatively 'positive' trait could be cancelled out (Kerr and Jermier 1978).

Effectively, to maintain the position of individual traits as a key causal variable, the theorist is required to expand the definitions of these traits to the point that they are both conceptually meaningless and empirically imprecise, distracting from focus on what main mechanism underlies leadership success. If, for instance, it is said that leaders must be broadly receptive to the novel needs of the followers, the researcher cannot be content with merely concluding that individuals are successful because of this trait. Instead, it begs the question of what these needs are and how they factor into the relationship. And, if anything, it would appear that the needs themselves – more precisely, whether they are met – to be far more causally consequential than the individual meeting them. Haslam et al. (2020, p.10) add to this by identifying the potential circularity of emphasizing broad traits. Here, in making a causal claim, it suggests that “the reason X is an effective leader is because they have psychological characteristics that lead them to engage in effective leadership behavior”; the main question, left unanswered, is what makes that given characteristic objectively conducive to effective leadership.

Thus, attributive accounts, in some sense, identify a necessary condition to successful leadership: that the aspiring leader must in some sense be 'good'. The problem, however, resides in the contingency of that factor: there is no one clear and measurable 'good' that a leader must have *a priori* to any interaction with followers. Leaders themselves also cannot be treated as an objective set of traits. They do not have the characteristics of a static, immutable, and independent causal variable necessary for analytical precise, measurable, and generalizable inferences (Turner, Reynolds, Haslam, and Veenstra 2006; Fischer, Dietz, and Antonakis 2017). Leaders themselves are people: complex, contingent personalities that can change over time and place. Supposed traits necessary for successful leadership can grow stronger or weaker over time, and each leader always has “some toxic chinks” (Lipman-Blumen 2005, p.6). For this reason, attributive accounts as considered are not a useful framework for understanding political leadership in Canada.

Instead, it is necessary to incorporate the fact that leaders are intensely reliant on other actors. Attributional accounts put too much emphasis on the leader as the key power broker of the relationship, in that they assume a given individual with a necessary set of traits will inevitably be able to dominate others. This is at the very least conceptually imprecise and – at worst – normatively problematic.¹² Instead, any account of leadership must take into consideration the fact that the dynamic is still, in many ways, established on the initiative and with the on-going consent of followers or the governed. It becomes necessary to incorporate their own reasons, justifications, and motivations for selecting certain leaders over others. In effect, it becomes imperative to conclude that, in some way, leadership success is contingent on the degree to which leaders ‘fit’ into a given context, particularly the follower’s sense of who a leader ought to be and what they ought to do. The difficulty, however, comes from having to determine precisely what this fit is.

2.3.2 Transactional Accounts

Transactional accounts argue that leadership is the product of an interactive, mutually beneficial process. Leaders are endowed with their legitimate authority precisely because it is recognized by followers to be within their best interest. In this way, the *strength* of that exchange can be understood as the independent variable: leadership popularity, and by extension leadership success and influence, is contingent on the degree to which leaders are able to provide ‘goods’ to their followers (‘t Hart and Uhr 2008). Put as a hypothesis, it argues that if an individual effectively meets and satisfies the demands of followers better than their challengers, then they will gain and maintain the support of followers to express legitimate authority.

Transactional accounts theorize that leadership – understood here as the endowment of disproportionate authority to one individual - can be effectively conceptualized as a public good or utility. More precisely, it is seen as necessary for a

¹² It only takes a few logical steps to conclude that leadership is therefore the purview of a small elite that is set apart from the rest of the community. Followers, given their innate inferiority and natural position as the ruled, have little ability to challenge their leaders, making the latter unaccountable and above criticism.

given group to accomplish a set of tasks or solve a problem (Steiner 1972; Heifetz 1994). It is in this sense that, “to understand leadership at its most basic level” Keohane (2010, p.18) prompts one to “consider a group of individuals otherwise unconnected with each other who want to accomplish some common purpose.” This has long been recognized as a necessary component of political life by political theorists (Plato 1990; Hobbes 1994; Dahl and Neubeaur 1968). In the liberal tradition to which Canada belongs, it is emphasized that individual and collective needs – such as security and freedom but also industry and material wealth – are only possible with the coercive authority of the sovereign.

The need for individual initiative and authority is similarly emphasized in the politics and public policy of modern democratic states. Michels (1911) emphasized the ‘mechanical and technical impossibility of direct government of masses’ suggesting that through an ‘iron law of oligarchy’ the direction of organizations will always fall into the control of a small group of elites. Similarly, ‘t Hart and Uhr (2008, p.3) note that several necessary elements of policy-making “are not performed spontaneously by a polity’s public institutions, organizations and routines” necessitating the need for political leadership “in order for a polity to govern itself effectively and democratically.” In Canada, this is most emphasized within the context of federalism. Provincial Premiers are often expected to advocate for the interests of their polity at the expense of the rest of the country, leading to conflicts over jurisdictions. Most recently, this is placed in the context of a growing interconnectedness between governments; that, to address the particularly pressing policy problems of the day, leadership that crosses jurisdictional borders is necessary

Thus, when it comes to selecting leaders in a democratic and political context, citizens evaluate potential and contemporary leaders on the degree which they provide a given set of goods or meet needs. To most explanatory frameworks in the political leadership literature, this is understood in one of two ways: either from the perspective of rational utility-maximization or some sort of psychological process. The first predominately relies on the broader conceptual assumptions of conventional rational choice theory (Frolich, Oppenheimer, and Young 1971; Flannagan 1998). Leaders and

followers are drawn together out of some sort of objective mutual enrichment: leaders get benefits from office (whether understood as the power, the prestige, or the material benefits) and followers have their needs met. Of these, the economy is an influential, and well-studied example. Research suggests that political leaders are evaluated based on ensuring good economic and material conditions. (see Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2019)

Several frameworks emphasize the rationality to lie primarily in the broader conditions of the interaction. Thus, for instance, leader-member exchange (LMX) emphasizes an overall sense of ‘quality’ to the transaction, suggesting that challengers who demonstrate a more beneficial interaction will be successful in replacing incumbents (Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995). Similarly, Equity theory (Walster, Walster, and Berscheid 1978) suggests that leaders lose their ability to govern once the outcomes are perceived to be inequitable, producing a sense of tension or equilibrium that will be balanced, such as with a new leader.

However, in applying this perspective to political leadership in Canada, there are two central problems. First, as is the case with most rational choice theory, one needs to define the precise set of ‘needs’ or ‘utilities’ that followers have in mind when they assess potential leaders. Leadership scholars of this approach, particularly drawn from broader organization studies, suggest that one look at the leaders’ role in properly articulating, working towards, and incorporating followers into accomplishing the organization’s overarching goal or purpose (Avolio, Kahai and Dodge 2000; Hersey and Blanchard 1982). But this cannot be said about politics. It is, as mentioned before, incredibly contingent, complex, and open-ended. Citizens will not only always disagree on *what* sets of problems or needs ought to be prioritized, but *how* they ought to be accomplished. These concepts of ‘goods’ and ‘utilities’ are also significantly elastic, to the point in which – without a precise definition – each and every behavior can be conceptualized as utility-maximizing (Bruins, Ng and Platow 1995). Citizens hold weak, frequently changing opinions on given policy issues and the supposed needs that must be met (Stimson 2004). These problems become more paramount once we attempt to understand these needs in the context of leadership competition: what makes one aspiring leader more likely to be successful than their opponent? Is it their ability to *better* meet

the needs of their constituents? Or is it their ability to meet the needs of *more* constituents?

The second problem with this approach comes from the fact that it seems to neglect the primary claim and nuance of leadership literature: that leaders have a unique ability for persuasion and transformation. That rather than simply meet the needs of followers, they have the ability to influence, direct, and ultimately change them (Hook 1945; Greenstein 1971; Tucker 1995). Hollander (1958) suggests, in a way to address this issue, that this transformative power is to be understood as something that comes once a leader meets needs. Here, the claim is that in meeting needs, leaders are granted ‘idiosyncrasy credits’, understood as a sort of political capital that allow them to legitimately impose their personal impact on political outcomes. Alternatively, needs-meeting can be conceptualized as a primary communications-based mechanism. Some frameworks, such as expectancy and path-goal theory, emphasize the rationality of the transaction to lie in the certainty provided by leaders (Vroom 1964; House 1971; House and Mitchell 1974). That, in seeking to gain support, leaders are successful to the extent that they can communicate the fact that their prescribed course of action is the most rational way to meet a given set of goals. This, therefore, on the surface seems to give the leader incredible power to determine what the prescribed courses of action are: the key is found in being able to persuade others that these best meet their needs. But, again, these views do not go far enough in recognizing the fact that, when it comes to conceptualizing a precise and measurable set of needs a leader must meet, the leader has an immense amount of potential power in determining what those are.

Take, for instance, the ‘objective’ issue of economic growth. While it may be broadly stated that leaders must meet some sort of condition for material or economic wellbeing, successful leaders are able to motivate followers from their own interpretations of what the problem precisely is and the way it should be fixed. This is even though it may be non-rational. More problematically, these leaders beat the alternatives, many of which – it could be argued – were in fact objectively better at addressing the problem of economic growth. This could include each of the reform movements that influenced governments in Western Canada during the 1930s. While

each grappled with the same economic problem, they proposed drastically different understandings of the central problem and its necessary fix (Laycock 1990). Of these, the leaders of Social Credit – a economic theory demonstrated to not only be arcane but impossible to implement by a provincial government – was able to gain and expresses authority (Finkel 1989).

A shift towards understanding leadership as meeting psychological needs may help to address this issue. Here, it could be noted that leadership is in fact a decidedly irrational phenomenon, and contingent on the ability of aspiring leader to tap into much more emotional needs or tendencies. Early advocates of this psychological approach therefore emphasize an innate human propensity to follow, driven by innate needs for authority, order, meaning, and structure (Hoffer 1951; Fromm 1941; Burger 2009) - what Frank (1939, p.343) called “the security of a firm and coercive program in which they can, by obedience and submission, find their place in life.” Fromm (1941), for instance, argued that individual freedom can be a burden from its capacity to inspire a sense of isolation, uncertainty, and aimlessness. There is thus always an innate human temptation to “escape from freedom” and submit to the direction of an authority.

Leadership success, therefore, can be said to be contingent on the basis to which it meets needs of meaning. This is evident through the framework of “spiritual leadership” which emphasizes individual needs for calling and making a difference (Fry 2003). But one could point to other human needs. Leaders can be successful to extent that they provide certainty to novel and fear-inducing situations (Nisbet 1950; Cohen et al. 2004; Popper 2001), or in their ability to address the need for social inclusion and fears of social death (Baumeister and Tice 1991).

But this suffers from many of its own issues. It, first, is analytically imprecise: it is unclear, given all these factors, the way a specific need can be isolated from the rest to be the one that constitutes leader support. And, second, it seems to reach back to the attributive accounts previously discussed; that, given their emotional and irrational needs, followers are relatively defenseless against charismatic leaders that provide meaning. As a result, it runs into similar problems. It tells the researcher that a sense of meaning is an

important part of the follow-leader relationship, but it does not – on its own – tell us what makes one appeal to meaning more compelling than another. If anything, it indicates that meaning is a broad preexisting condition, deeply contingent on the context. Fromm's (1941) discussion of the 'escape from freedom', for instance, is in many ways a deeply historical phenomenon - born out of the decline of religion and the social anomie of a recently industrialized West.

Needs, therefore, constitute a status similar to the individual leader themselves: they have to in some sense be, or at least perceived as being, met. Canadian leaders will not be successful unless they are perceived to contributing what is "for the best" of their community. The problem, however, comes from the fact that these are vague and broad – anything can be construed as a need. Instead, it becomes necessary to engage with this question of the broader ways followers perceive their leaders – what makes an individual more so perceived to be the legitimate source of authority? The person who not only meets needs, but the person that expresses the privilege to persuasively articulate what those needs themselves are.

2.3.3 Contextual Accounts

As the third broad framework, contextual accounts argue that the legitimacy of individual Canadian leaders is derived from the way an individual "fits" into the broader context. To put it more precisely, leadership popularity is not contingent on the extent to which a leader meets an objective need, but the subjective way a leader is *perceived* as good and effective. This is done by meeting some sort of broader set of expectations, whether psychological, cultural, or historical, that shapes – *a priori* – agent expectations of *who leaders ought to be*. Put as a hypothesis: if an individual meets a broader criterion (however defined), they will gain and maintain the legitimacy to direct political outcomes.

Outside of broader structural factors, this is among the most popular ways to account for the success of political leaders in Canada. Aspiring premiers of Ontario, for instance, have historically been said to be successful when they are able to conform to expectations of "adequate leadership", particularly from maintaining an "equitable

balance between the principal interests of the provinces” (Wilson 1975, p.233). Thus, the leaders of the PC dynasty – particularly Leslie Frost, John Robarts, and Bill Davis – were successful to the extent that they were able to convey competent and prudent leadership of this kind. The Premiers of Alberta, in contrast, are believed to be successful on the basis to which they conform to an expectation of a “selfless superhero” that fights on behalf of the province’s essential interests, typically expressing itself in brash, populist leaders that wage highly politicized conflicts with the Federal government (Tupper and Gibbins 1992).

This general approach exists in the broader literature as Implicit Leadership Theory, suggesting that citizens have pre-existing notions of what a leader ought to be, how they ought to act, and what sort of goals they ought to pursue (Eden and Leviathan 1975; Lord, Foti, and de Vader 1984; Lord, Day, Zaccaro, Avolio, and Eagly 2017). In this way, citizens will evaluate incumbent and aspiring leaders on the basis of their preexisting categories or prototypes - what Schyns and Meindl (1990) label as their “philosophies of leadership”. Thus, Lord and Maher (1991, p.132), for example, state that “someone wanting peace, having strong convictions, being charismatic, and a good administrator, would be labelled as a leader.”

But the problem with Implicit Leadership Theory is its emphasis on fixed, immutable conceptions among the public of how a leader ought to act (Lord, Foti, and de Vader 1984). The general framework seems to predetermine leadership or, more precisely, attribute the success of certain individuals over others to the broader structural factor it posits. It is also empirically inaccurate. Currently, as it stands in Canadian political science, the broad characterizations of leadership expectations in the provinces do not hold water when applied to reality. In Ontario, the electoral instability of the 1990s, the election of an NDP government, and the occasional success of populists such as Mike Harris and Doug Ford (Budd 2020), seems to render the success of political leaders more complex. Similarly, in Alberta, while Premiers have loosely conformed to this role, it says little about the fact that it has been applied in vastly different ways by individual leaders – one could contrast William Aberhart, Ernest Manning, Peter

Lougheed, and Ralph Klein – to maintain success despite different leadership styles and policy goals.

This problem of rigidity is a general problem of several contextual approaches, which all seem to either conceptualize an understanding of leadership success that is too rigid, or one that predetermines individual success on the part of broader structural forces. This includes, for instance, post-structuralism's emphasis on the 'power/knowledge' regimes that are deeply interwoven into society, to the extent that it conditions leaders with prescribed ideal type behaviors and dramaturgical selves (Collingson 2006). Instead, it becomes necessary to engage in the way pre-conceptions of leaders are constituted in a way that allows them a relative fluidity; determining the individuals that are endowed with authority, but in such a way that does not strictly predetermine success. Leaders should still be able to shape and manipulate the broader context to their liking, thereby meriting a focus on leadership as a causal variable in and of itself.

Thus, the idea of leadership expectations as the product of a broader linguistic and discursive process holds promise, as shown by the significant amount of analysis in this area that continues to grow (Fairhurst and Uhl-Bien 2012; DeCanio 2005). Here, the idea is that the contextual conditions that determine the success of leaders lies in the micro-dynamics of communication in interpersonal interactions, including both by the followers and the leaders themselves. This includes the broader contextual conditions, such as what Mazlish (1976, p.10) calls the "psychic repository" of "recurrent themes, ideals, values, fantasies, imagery, symbols, myths, and legends" that constitute 'language games' between agents."

However, discursive analysis – while useful – concerns itself with only one aspect of the leader-follow dynamic. Instead, it seems useful to incorporate the way leadership is formed in a much more elemental level of political behavior and self-understanding; to recognize the fact that the follower-leader dynamic is an interaction that changes both sides, producing a novel form of political self-understanding. This is a task met by the *social identity approach*, which places it's understanding of leadership in the

fundamentals of individual psychology (Turner et al. 1987; Platow, Mills, and Morrison 2000; Richer and Hopkins 2001; Hoggs 2001; Haslam et al. 2020). It works on the assumption that there is an inherent group interpretation of political reality, involving the shared use of the same schema of interpretation which persists by being constantly confirmed by the defining acts of others (Berger and Lickmann 1967; Schanck 1975). Group membership, according to this view, is a necessity of the “looking glass self”; (Cooley 1902): individuals become themselves through the recognition of how they appear to others - consciousness of the self is a consequence of reflections given off by other minds

Thus, leadership is understood through the sense in which the leader and their followers belong to the same social group or, put another way, are bound by the same self-understanding. Leadership success is therefore contingent on the degree to which the aspiring individual can identify themselves as a member of that group and claim their agenda to be in their best interest. Yet, this does not entail determinism: the view holds that leaders play a vital role in the perpetual definition and application of this group identity, thus making their success both highly contingent and uniquely impactful. As will be detailed in the following chapter, the social identity approach provides a useful causal mechanism to account for why certain individuals gain leadership positions in Canada.

Chapter 3 – Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

3 Introduction

As demonstrated by our discussion thus far, political leadership in Canada must be understood in a framework that considers the full scope of the process. In doing so, this thesis can most effectively answer its central research question pertaining to the way specific individuals are endowed with leadership over others. Leadership is, as developed in this thesis, predicted on the undertaking by which a set of followers endow a particular individual with the legitimate authority to disproportionately affect political outcomes. Or, to be more case-specific, the power given by the formal-legal position of first ministers. This is necessarily a two-step process; that, while leaders impact political outcomes through the authority provided by formal-legal institutions, they must gain the legitimacy necessary to exercise authority *prior* to their attainment, as such is necessary in order to be endowed with that position. It must consider that while the contingent behavior of individual leaders is relevant, their success is also highly dependent on the needs, understandings, and values of those they seek to lead in addition to the broader context to which this relationship is constituted. A proper analysis of leadership must account for the fact that while leaders are in some sense determined by broader contextual forces, individuals can have significant causal impact in directing policy outcomes.

In this chapter, Identity Leadership Theory (ILT) – also known as the social identity approach – is presented as a framework through which political leadership can be approached and understood (Haslam et al. 2020). It draws upon the insights of social psychology to suggest, overall, that the process of leadership lies within the dynamic of group processes. More precisely, the way that group membership is formed, defined, and internalized by individual members; the capacity and process by which individuals come to understand themselves through the prism of a broader social identity. To this view, the true importance of leadership is the way individual leaders draw upon pre-existing group understandings to work towards novel policy programs and group characteristics. This is done, first, by a leader's place as "prototypical group members" (Haslam et al. 2020,

p.82) and, second, by their ability to communicate and work towards a policy agenda that coheres with the group's experiences, needs, history and self-understanding at the time they seek to govern.

This chapter provides an extensive overview of Identity Leadership Theory's theoretical framework, assumptions, and set of established hypotheses. It begins by discussing the main theoretical assumptions as developed in social psychology, before reviewing the school of psychological research – social identity and self-categorization theory – that are the source of its specific set of causal claims. The core research question is presented and discussed as well. From here, the chapter translates the theoretical approach and the research question into a set of testable hypotheses that will support the study's effort to understand political leadership in Canada. We now turn to explore the identity leadership approach.

3.1 Foundation: Drawing upon Social Psychology

The key assumption made on the part of the identity leadership approach is that political leadership can be understood within the context of a *group process*. Groups are not merely a collection of relatively independent individuals, nor something akin to a “hive mind” that subsumes individual identity. Rather, the collective forms a unique cognitive framework: that individuals, in developing a special association with others, are in turn impacted and changed through the way that the nature of that relationship is internalized. As a result, it follows that their subsequent political choices will be contingent to some degree on the nature of the group itself, including on the question of leadership.

This broad claim that group processes provide unique contributions to individual cognition is the dominant approach and framework within contemporary social psychology (Brewer 1991; DeLamater and Collett 2019). Nevertheless, it is the product of a dense and contentious historical preoccupation with the nature of the “group mind”. The field, fully considered, is dense, complex, and well over a century old, rendering it far beyond the scope of this thesis – itself a work of political science – to cover it comprehensively. Instead, this section will provide a brief overview of the major insights

of the field that are relevant to our narrow interest in leadership and Identity Leadership Theory.

Social psychology's first wave of theorists – particularly LeBon (1947), Freud (1921), and McDougall (1921) – emphasized the way that group formation was comprised of a “deindividuation” process by which individuals diffuse their personal responsibility and identity into the broader collective.¹³ These were contrasted by a set of individualistic approaches, particularly that of Floyd Allport (1924, 1962; see also Pepitone 1981; Greenwood 2000), which argued that groups are nothing more than the interaction of independent individuals that cooperate to achieve collective goals. Group exchanges are to be understood as a relatively straightforward stimuli-response relationship, with the individual's core psychology and set of interests in no way changed by the experience.¹⁴

The foundations of identity leadership are derived from a third emergent framework, broadly known as “interactionalism” (Turner 1987). As compared with the previous two approaches, interactionalism takes something of a middle position. It holds that while individuals are not subsumed into broader identity of the group, they are nonetheless fundamentally shaped by them; that while actors retain their individuality, the “group concept was needed precisely to explain the nature of individuals” (Turner 1987, p.13). In effect, the behavior of agents cannot be fully accounted for without incorporating the way they have been influenced by their membership within a particular culture, social group, and institutional structure. Muzafer Sherif (1936, 1967), for instance, developed the *Gestalt* approach to social psychology, emphasizing the way that the individual parts of a collective concept were necessarily interdependent and functionally determined by the broader ‘configuration’ of the process. For individuals,

¹³ In drawing upon this work, for instance, Hoffer (1951) suggests that collective political movements are joined for the purposes of “self-renunciation”; to recognize one's powerlessness as an individual and to find a renewed sense of control and meaning by subsuming one's identity into a broader mission.

¹⁴ Though not equivalent, individualist approaches in psychology share much in common with the rational choice approach that became popular throughout the social sciences. Both assume that individual preferences are objective, fixed, and exogenous to a given social context.

the social group – through customs, rules, standards, values, and other criteria of conduct - provides a “stable anchorage” (Turner 1987, p.13); a frame of reference by which individuals can evaluate and compare stimuli in a systematic way. In effect, through individuals coming to adopt and follow these frameworks, they become entrenched, developing into something akin to a status quo “common-sense” that is taken for granted. Similar conceptions were made in, for instance, Solomon Asch’s (1952) notion of an individual’s “mutually shared psychological field” and Kurt Lewin’s (1935) idea of the “life space”.

Thus, the approach argues that groups are relevant in so far as they are responsible for *socially produced but psychologically internalized* cognitive concepts that shape individual self-understanding and action. In essence, it is through the group – and the sense of social confirmation it provides - that the individual gains a full and systematic means by which to identify themselves, perceive cognitive stimuli, and devise a course of action. This was further demonstrated by the same researchers through a set of influential experiments.¹⁵ Sherif (1936 p.3), for instance, clearly demonstrated that individual responses to uncertain phenomena are dependent on a “shared frame of reference” to perceive and evaluate what one is observing. By relying on others, individuals internalize the social norms regarding how to understand roughly similar phenomena, even though the objective reality of that norm may be questionable. Similarly, Turner (1987, p.22) argues that Asch’s Social Conformity Experiments demonstrate that individuals will anticipate the fact they will agree with others regarding how to judge novel stimuli. If not, uncertainty emerges as a “social product of disagreement” because individuals more often come to doubt *their own* cognitive capacity rather than that of the group, thus producing eventual conformity.

But what leads people to form and attach themselves to the groups that they do? Why, for instance, do individuals come to see themselves as belonging to a national community that may or may not be affiliated with a state? While group formation is

¹⁵ Empirical evidence of this basic claim of social psychology is incredibly vast, and far from the range of this thesis to cover fully. For further detail see Turner 1987.

understood to be the product of an inherent individual psychological need for a social reference point, the exact parameters of that eventual identification were considered to be contingent on other individual-level factors linked to interdependence: mutual attraction, similarity in attitudes, common fate, shared threat, or the advancement of personal interests (see Turner 1987, p.19-41; Festinger 1950; Lott and Lott 1965; Shaw 1976; Davis, Laughlin, and Komorita 1976; Morrison 1999). However, social identity begins by rejecting the impact of these factors in influencing the parameters of group formation (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Turner 1987; Haslam et al. 2020).

3.1.1 The Social Identity Approach to Social Psychology

The social identity approach, which developed as a particular school of social psychology, forms the more specific foundation for Identity Leadership Theory. The product of decades of continuing research, it provides the baseline inferences pertaining to the way groups are formed, the way they impact individual orientation, and the conditions that shape both their characteristics and salience to members. The approach is broken down into two separate theories: social identity and self-categorization. In sharing the same theoretical assumptions, they are best characterized as two ongoing directions of research.¹⁶

The first and foremost claim of this approach is that individuals, regardless of any other condition, have an innate tendency to form group-level identities with those they share proximity. This was established through Henri Tajfel's (Tajfel 1970; Tajfel, Flament, Billig, and Bundy 1971) 'minimal group studies' in which, in an experimental setting, participants were separated into groups in a way that directly sought to test causal variables linked to interdependence. In effect, participants were shown to form group identities based on trivial differences. And, as also further shown in several subsequent studies, many of the factors considered necessary for the formation of group identity mentioned were *outcomes* of the process: after groups were formed, participants

¹⁶ The fact that a broad approach is named after one of two theories that it comprises strikes this author as odd and confusing. Nonetheless, in reviewing the literature, the name remains a near-universal and entrenched means to refer to the framework.

consistently expressed higher levels of similarity, favourability, and commitment with respect to members of their group rather than other participants in the experiment (Billig and Tajfel 1973; Doise et al. 1972; Locksley, Ortiz, and Hepburn 1980; Turner, Sachdev, and Hogg 1983; Platow et al. 2003). The subjects consistently demonstrated a commitment to their group's collective goals and awarded more points to members of their in-group than to participants in other collectives (Tajfel 1970; Tajfel, Flament, Billig, and Bundy 1971).

Building on this insight, social identity theorists found that groups will come to define their distinguishing characteristics and social standing (Tajfel 1972; Rosch 1978; Tversky and Gati 1978; Turner and Oaks 1986). This, according to Tajfel and Turner (1979), is guided by a need for positive distinctiveness: groups will try to differentiate themselves from out-groups along the dimensions they value.

For most social identity scholars, this claim directed them to delve into questions pertaining to the root of group antagonisms, particularly the dynamics between positively and negatively defined groups in given societal conflicts (Ellemers 1993; Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 1999; Haslam 2001; Reicher and Hopkins 2001). It, in effect, became increasingly concerned with the relationships *between* groups, rather than the dynamics *within* groups. Social identity theory as developed here is, therefore, limited for our purposes of leadership. It is underdeveloped in terms of outlining the particularly individual cognitive process by which a group identity is formed and comes to shape *individual* action (Turner 1987; Haslam et al. 2020). Thus, social identity theory does not provide enough room nor detail to fully develop a theoretical understanding of the role played by leaders, particularly the process by which positions are attained by some individuals over others.

Here, self-categorization theory was developed as an alternative stream of research that works to overcome social identity theory's limitations. Of this, John C. Turner's (1987) *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory* remains the central work of the framework. Overall, it utilizes the findings of the original minimal group studies to argue that group identification is *internalized* by individual members in a

way that shapes their own personal identity, understanding of phenomena, and motivations (Turner 1987; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, and McGarty 1994). In effect, individuals come to interact with the external world in a way that is influenced by their group membership: they rely on the group's broader frame of reference to make sense of novel stimuli, they incorporate their personal objectives to cohere with broader group goals, and they use group cues to develop a set of values in addition to an understanding of who they are themselves. Turner (1987, p. 51) labels this the process of "depersonalization" by which they are *redefined* as a representative of that group.

These findings have two important consequences. First, as Turner (1987, p.21) states, "Social identity is the cognitive mechanism which makes group behavior possible." By coming to incorporate themselves within a broader, collective goal, depersonalization makes it possible for agents to participate in collective action not directly attributable to their own self-interest. It is because of this that people risk their lives in wars, engage in aggressive forms of civil disobedience, participate in civil processes, and rally behind leaders in times of crisis. Second, through a process of 'self-stereotyping' (Turner 1987, p.57), individuals come to adopt the broader characteristics and attributes of the group to the point that they resemble, in their own view, a *psychological representation* of the group to which they claim fidelity. If, for instance, a group comes to value a particular virtue highly, we should see the same preoccupation reflected in the lives of individual members.

While the characteristics of a group are complex and multifaced, self-categorization approaches emphasize – if only for analytical precision – that there are a handful of "category prototypes" that the group uses as the particular means by which to define themselves as a separate entity (Turner 1987; Oakes, Haslam, and Turner 1994; Haslam et al. 2010). To put it another way, it is the core set of characteristics that *make them who they are*. If, for instance, a person comes to identify themselves as a member of a very conservative religious congregation that characterizes itself through its hardline anti-abortion views, they will come to define themselves as "I have hardline anti-abortion views" and, over time, actually adopt such positions. The use of salience of category prototypes can also change over time and context. For example, the rapid rise to

prominence of issues related to same-sex marriage in the 2010s could make the group's opposition to this policy a more important characteristic of who they are.

But what shapes the nature and salience of these group affiliations? Every person holds multiple overlapping and intersecting identities that help to frame their understanding of themselves, their place in the world, and what actions to take, such as their identity within a family, their workplace, their religious orientation, their town, and their country. Group identity, to reiterate a previous point, is first a product of shared proximity (Tajfel 1970); that, should individuals find themselves in a shared circumstance or environment, they are likely to form some sort of collective understanding that applies to that context. Consequently, a group identification of some sort will be formed whenever there is some element of discernable coexistence: this could include, for instance, identities on the basis of a geographically-defined political units (whether federal, provincial, or municipal), an occupation (as in the case of labour unions), or a shared linguistic or cultural expression (such as with the case of Quebec).

In determining the specific characteristics and salience of that identity, self-categorization theory emphasizes two key contextual factors. First, is the notion of the 'fit' between the group, its characteristics, and the broader context. (Turner 1987; Haslam et al. 2020). As initially developed by social identity theory, it suggests that the group will define itself in a way that lets it positively distinguish itself from out-groups. Put more precisely, self-categorization theory contributes the principle of "meta-contrast ratio": that a group categorization will be salient if the differences between the in-group and out-group are *greater* than the differences *within* that group as it is understood (Turner 1987). In this way, then, the particular social identity evoked can change with context.

To use an example, this helps to explain how citizens of federal states can maintain more than one identity concurrently, including sub-state identities that frequently clash with each other while also, when the time permits, effectively be overcome for broader, national interests. The principle also accounts for why some – but not all - provincial identities continue to play a role within intrafederal institutions. For

instance, inhabitants of a province like Ontario - while often possessing a provincial group identity during interfederal disputes – do not often apply it as a means by which to approach political developments at an intrafederal level (see Collier and Malloy 2017, p.135). This is because, within intrafederal institutions, the differences *between* Ontario and the rest of Canada are not greater than the differences *within* the province.¹⁷ This contrasts with the place of Quebec, where the key markers of its provincial identity – namely, the practice of a unique francophone culture – is just as salient within federal institutions because there is a clear point of difference between Quebecers and the rest of Canada.

Here, it is important to note that the broader the social category the more it will rely on a higher “level of abstraction” to define itself. (Turner 1986). Thus, while social categorization between two very small groups of people will tend to draw contrasts based on very specific personal attributes, notions of a broader group - such as a nation - will rely on much more vague characteristics and values. This, as a result, makes them much more contingent, open-ended, and manipulable. It is the reason why, for instance, each political party claims to speak on behalf of Canadians and align with their core values despite offering different policy programs and visions.

In addition to the condition of fit, the second contextual factor of self-categorization theory is that the salience and particular characteristics of these group identities are contingent on the principle of “perceiver readiness or availability” (Oakes et al. 1994). That is, that the present demand reflects people’s social histories and prior expectations, goals, and theories. In effect, if a social identity – and the specific way it is understood – has a more extensive and salient history it will be more likely to be relevant for present and future circumstances. Long-established notions of identity are not only easier to conjure up for a given circumstance but are more secure in that they contribute

¹⁷ Another way to interpret this, consistent with self-categorization theory’s framework, is that federal Canadian identity is synonymous with that of Ontario. This is a claim that has historically been made by regional reform movements, particularly from the West. It claims what Braid and Sharpe (1992, p.5) describe as “the smug belief of Ontario politicians that they speak for all English Canada and that Ontarians truly care about the nation, while others are self-centered regionalists.”

to a greater enduring sense of self (Haslam et al. 2020). This is not to say that novel group identities can not emerge or be formed given a suitable ‘fit’ to a given context. Several Canadian provincial identities for instance, were only formed following the creation of jurisdictional borders that worked to condition their inhabitant’s sense of shared proximity. Rather, it is that members – even when faced with novel stimuli – are more likely to fall back on pre-existing categories of understanding to comprehend the situation. In observing an act of federal encroachment, for instance, a member of Western Canada is far more likely to view it cynically given the historical negativity associated with this behavior (see Tupper and Gibbins 1992, p.67). When faced with novel, ambiguous, and uncertain circumstances, pre-existing means of evaluation developed by the group are both easier, given their availability, and more credible given the social confirmation associated with them. The alternative, a novel way to understand and evaluate the situation – although not impossible – is far less likely because it not only requires more cognitive effort but lacks the same degree of credibility and coherence to one’s social identity.

Here, it should be emphasized that the principle of perceiver availability does not entail that all individuals will form the same precise means by which to evaluate novel political phenomena. Rather, group identities are relevant in so far as they shape the broader position and cognitive framework by which individuals evaluate stimuli and determine their actions. Given the fact that individuals are still different in terms of their personal characteristics, it is still possible that members will disagree on the specifics, particularly regarding the course of action they ought to take. In this way, the process of group-identity articulation is never fully complete. Rather, groups are required to constantly reinterpret and rearticulate the nature of their identity as contexts change over time, including the all-important questions of “who we are” and “what we should do”. The point here is to emphasize that groups will rely on their collective pre-existing understandings and history to guide them through this process. Identity leadership theory suggests that leaders, in legitimizing their personal authority, are the ones who utilize and direct these group mechanisms to gain support for their devised plan of action. It is on this main point that the social identity approach can be applied to the topic of leadership.

3.2 Applying the Social Identity Approach to Leadership

The social identity approach has been applied to a wide variety of political contexts. It has been historically concerned with providing explanations for the ways group identities are formed and impact political outcomes, such as the expressive approach to partisanship, the salience of regional identities, ethnic conflict, and genocide (Reicher and Hopkins 2001; Schwartz, Luyckx and Vignoles 2011; West and Iyengar 2020). This approach has always in some sense incorporated leadership. For example, political psychologists have engaged in probing the ways that leaders can exploit these group identities and processes to maximize their own power. This includes, for instance, the phenomenon of scapegoats as a means for leaders to both avoid personal responsibility and mobilize collective action around their professed ends (Reicher, Haslam, and Rath 2008). Nevertheless, the use of the theory to develop analytically concise frameworks for understanding political leadership *itself* is relatively novel. Among a mere handful of scholars who have followed this novel approach are S. Alexander Haslam, Stephen D. Reicher, and Michael J. Platow. They are disciplinary leaders; and, more than anything, their *New Psychology of Leadership* (2020) serves as a cornerstone of this emerging field of work.

The use of this psychological framework also remains underdeveloped within the discipline of political science. This is because, in addition to the general lack of leadership research, the discipline's dominant use of political psychology is individualist, focused on the perceptions of individuals as relatively objective and independent entities (Huddy, Sears, and Levy 2013). Consequently, it is underdeveloped in analyzing the way that group processes condition and impact both the individual's perceptions and their subsequent actions.

Under the framework developed by Haslam et al. (2020), leaders are considered important because they provide a key role in "articulating the nature of group identity and its implications for action in context" (Haslam et al., p.54). In effect, the impact of leaders comes through their ability to personally *direct* this group process in the way they see fit. Leaders, first, help to define the attributes of the group through their role as authority figures. And, second, leaders develop, articulate, and mobilize this group

identity to legitimize their own personal leadership and also their policy agenda. Gardner (1995, p.50), for instance, suggests that leaders “fashion stories” which “address the most essential questions”: those that “continue to endure throughout one’s conscious existence – issues of self, identity, group membership, past and future, good and evil.” This act of articulation and definition-giving, the view holds, is expressed by every successful leader. But how can we understand the process that leads to one particular individual having more success than the other in gaining supporting and impacting political outcomes? The identity leadership approach holds that the researcher can account for why some aspirants successfully gain authority through the way leaders entrench and legitimize their personal authority within this group process.

First and foremost, this starts from the leader establishing their personal legitimacy as a source of authority. That is, a sense that they *personally* are in the position to clarify and advance the needs of the group; that they are “one of us” - a member of the ‘in-group’ that they hope to have authority over. To be more precise, aspiring leaders are successful to the extent that they can appear as “prototypical group members” that appear “to embody the group identity” (Haslam et al. 2020, p.78). This is done through what Haslam et al. (2020, p.82) – drawing upon the notion of the meta-contrast ratio - label as the “relative influence gradient”; that is, the degree to which the qualities, attributes, and behaviors of leaders emphasize their similarity with followers while simultaneously distinguishing themselves from outsiders. Such is necessary for aspiring leaders to gain the legitimacy necessary to be endowed with the authority to direct the self-understanding and direction that the group will take. A significant body of evidence suggests that several of the characteristics of successful leadership, such as trustworthiness, fairness, and charisma, follow from having this primary condition met (Giessner and Knippenberg 2008; van Dijke and de Cremer 2008; Platow et al. 2006). Similarly, experimental evidence suggests that leaders, should they meet the primary condition of leadership prototypicality, are endowed with considerable leeway to impact policy outcomes (McGarty et al. 1992; van Knippenberg, Lossie, and Wilkie 1994; Hogg 2001).

This notion of “prototypicality” is predominately linked to the broader social context of the group. It is strongly connected to the way the group develops its broader category prototypes. Haslam et al. (2020, p.85-87), for instance, demonstrate this principle through a simple model in which a centrist group – understood in this scenario as the ‘in-group’ of interest – is flanked by distinct right-wing and left-wing out-groups. Should both right and left be relatively equal in size and influence, the category prototype and the individual seen as most prototypical will emerge from a position close to the center, as it is in defining themselves on the basis of that characteristic that the centrist group’s internal differences are less than the differences between them and both the left-wing and right-wing outgroups. In contrast, should the out-group be predominately right-wing, prototypicality would move to the left alongside with the strength of the latter as, given the same principle of meta-contrast ratio, it is the best means by which the group can be distinguished. This general process is held to play out in broader, more complex political contexts.

However, despite the influence of these broader contextual forces, leaders have the ability to shape the precise meaning of “prototypical” at a given time. Social identity theory includes the view that, first, political contexts are abstract and ambiguous (Haslam et al. 2020). In many cases, it is unclear precisely who the ‘out-group’ is and on what basis difference is to be drawn between them and the in-group. This view then implies that social identities and the way the leader themselves are perceived is fluid and manipulable. This fluidity is most evident in periods of great shock, upheaval, and turmoil. Take, for instance, the various “options” available to the Canadian public during the Great Depression that began in 1929. While the established, mainline parties (the Liberals and the Conservatives) generally held to the status quo, several novel political movements provided divergent approaches. The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), for instance, advocated for the total reform of the capitalist system, rendering central Canadian industrial interests to be the ‘out-group’ that was to be overcome. The Social Credit party, on the other hand, suggested that the Depression’s solution lay in a “community directed” economy, characterized primarily by nationalizing key banking and finance mechanisms. For this group an international cabal of financiers was depicted

as the “out-group” that conflicted with the interests and economic well being of Canadians.

Furthermore, leader prototypicality is also not synonymous with individual averageness or typicality. Rather, ‘to be prototypical is to be exceptional in being fully representative’ of the group’s shared values and beliefs (Haslam et al., 2011, p. 155). Leaders can be unique, atypical, or different *prima facie* as compared to the group over whom they seek power. What matters is that such leaders are able to link those characteristics to an emergent identity of the group, connected to both their personal legitimacy as leaders and their specific policy agenda. Overall, in constructing their personal legitimacy as prototypical members, leaders have a significant degree of creativity to reorient a group identity around their leadership. This, as discussed, is constituted by the degree to which this satisfies the principle of meta-contrast ratio.

However, leaders must also base their appeal on the principle of perceiver readiness. Leaders must craft their message and policy agenda in a way that reflects the group’s identity as it exists historically and at the point in time. As put by Gardner (1995, p.15): “stories need enough background, detail, and texture so that an audience member can travel comfortably with their contours.” While it is, in theory, possible for leaders to create identities “out of scratch” — it is, given the principle of perceiver readiness, *far more likely* that leaders will be successful if they evoke identities that have grounding in the group’s social history. In this way, successful leadership is, as put by Haslam et al. (2020, p.153) based on “being able to root one’s account of who we are and what we should do in a common stock of cultural knowledge about the group.” For instance, the past constitutes a “symbolic reserve” that leaders can utilize to give sense to a situation, legitimize action, and design futures (Reicher 1993).

In drawing upon pre-existing collective understandings, Haslam et al. (2020) emphasize two important functions provided by leaders to legitimize their personal policy agendas. First, through a process of “concretization”, leaders turn abstract ideas into concrete instances (Haslam et al. 2020, p.176; see also Moscovici and Farr 1984). This is to say that leaders legitimize their policy programs by framing them as the manifestation

of the broader, more abstract quality the group believes about itself. The second activity of “anchoring” refers to the means by which the leader legitimizes their policy program as part of some pre-existing and well-understood component of the group’s identity. Here, the leader has an opportunity to formulate their policy preferences as coherent with the group’s characteristic, thereby legitimizing it as the best course moving forward.

In summary, then, social identity theory holds that successful leadership appeals, understood as the sort that result in the conferring of legitimate formal-legal authority, can be accounted for through the way they take advantage of the group process of the public they seek to lead. This is comprised, first, of successfully positioning oneself as a prototypical group member and, second, articulating a policy program or course of action that is consistent with the pre-existing understanding and history the group has about itself. It is in these aspects that the broad analytical frameworks of social identity and identity leadership theory can be utilized to articulate a precise theoretical framework and research methodology for this thesis’s particular analysis.

3.3 Theoretical Framework: Answering the Research Question

Having reviewed the broader theories of social identity and identity leadership, the remainder of this chapter will focus on translating these into a specific and concise framework by which to analyze and account for the research question. This section outlines a specific conceptualization of the leadership process, establishes a theory of its causal mechanisms, and posits a set of hypotheses about the way certain individuals become successful. These will then be operationalized into a research methodology in the following section.

Overall, in fully considering the social identity approach and its application to leadership, I posit that the main research question – why leaders are able to gain their positions of formal leadership – can be answered through the following causal mechanism: it is the extent to which individuals can communicate that they are a prototypical member of the group who, through their personal leadership, offer compelling answers to the group’s understanding of itself, the surrounding world, and the

actions it should take moving forward. If this condition is met, individuals should be endowed with the legitimacy necessary for formal-legal leadership.

As discussed in the previous chapter, individual leaders and the broader group are inextricably linked. Nevertheless, for the sake of a coherent and operational causal process, an analyst must emphasize one over the other. That is to say that they must consider leadership as either a concept conditioned by groups or as a role actively shaped and sought after by individuals. This study will select the latter. In my model, it is assumed that individual leaders largely fashion their own policy agenda and individual aspiration for leadership, quite deliberately positioning themselves according to group categories to gain their authority.

The first and foremost claim of social identity theory is that the process of leadership operates in the context of broader group processes (Haslam et al. 2020). Nevertheless, despite this emphasis, most theorists within this approach make no effort to define the concept (Haslam et al. 2020). This may be due to the broadness of the concept as articulated within social identity theory, as any collection of individuals in some sort of shared proximity have the potential to become a group. Here, a full articulation and definition of the concept is beyond the scope of this thesis. Thus, for current purposes, I define a group as a cohesive collective of individuals, as conditioned by the shared proximity or institutional structure of their formal-legal leadership, that structures the individual's physical orientation and self-understanding. Here, "shared proximity" within this model is comprised of the institutional borders of the formal leader position of interest.

From here, the process of leadership is defined in this study as the means by which individuals seek to gain the group-based legitimacy necessary to support their own formal leadership and policy agenda. I will, as has been developed throughout this thesis, understand political leadership as the process by which certain individuals come to legitimately exercise disproportionate authority over a given group or context. This is predominately constituted by the force of formal-legal positions within institutional structures of the state. I will refer to these individuals with the ability to

disproportionately direct government activity as *formal leaders*. However, to attain these positions of *formal* authority, individuals must already possess some degree of personal legitimacy as leaders, as it is on account of this prior quality that individuals are conferred with institutional power. I will label these individuals – those who seek formal positions by building upon their own personal legitimacy and attaining public office – as *aspiring leaders*.

The point here is to emphasize that while, according to my theoretical approach, aspiring leaders do not have the legitimacy necessary to exercise disproportionate influence over outcomes, it is on account of what an individual does as an aspiring leader that determines whether they will *become* a formal leader.¹⁸ Put another way, aspiring leaders work to develop and build the legitimacy necessary for successful leadership that is not conferred upon them or made useable until they are selected as formal leaders. It is via this conferment – attained predominately through democratic elections – that one moves from an aspirational leader to a formal one.

While one must be an effective aspirational leader to become a formal one, another aspect of this analysis is that not all aspirational leaders become formal leaders. Instead, for any given formal-legal position of leadership, there are a number of aspirational leaders who compete for a position. In this way, the ultimate victor of this competition – including both electoral challengers and incumbents – is the individual that successfully built a greater degree of legitimacy than their competitors.

In determining which individual is ultimately successful, I will posit two overlapping, but nonetheless analytical separate, conditions. These will comprise two hypotheses that comprise the main expectations of the following analysis. First, the success of aspiring leaders in becoming formal leaders can be predicted on the basis of individual prototypicality: that if an individual effectively conveys themselves as a

¹⁸ This does not preclude the fact that individuals without formal-legal positions cannot be influential in impacting future outcomes. Several frameworks, such as Tucker's distinction between "constituted" and "non-constituted" make it central to their understanding. Rather, my decision to deny aspiring leaders a sense of power in this regard is for the sake of analytical clarity.

prototypical member, understood through the way they articulate the group's category prototypes as determined by a meta-contrast ratio, they are then more likely to gain the legitimacy necessary for leadership.

Consequently, prototypicality comprises the primary *necessary* condition for successful formal leadership. However, in my view it is not a *sufficient* condition to attain formal leadership. We can expect that all aspiring leaders will attempt to convey themselves as prototypical. Instead, leaders must also connect their prototypicality with a compelling message - that their being "one of us" contains within itself an answer to the group of "who they are" and "what they should do". I propose that if a leader develops and communicates a salient understanding of the group identity and future course of action that utilizes the criteria of readiness, they are then more likely to both achieve leadership positions and impact political outcomes.

To meet this condition, a leader will draw upon a group's social history, understood as their pre-existing expectations, goals, and perspectives of themselves and the world around them, to add merit to their policy program. Put more precisely, their policy agenda will be communicated to be the rational and legitimate product of these underlying group understandings and assumptions. This should be done through the twin processes of concretization and anchoring. In particular, we should expect that the leader's own prototypicality - what their standing as a representative says about the group - to be an important anchor.

Overall, then, I will theorize this process of an aspiring leader making a successful appeal for formal leadership as a two-step process. In reality, this likely occurs simultaneously; that, at the same time a leader is attempting to establish their prototypicality, they are also articulating a course of action. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this theoretical analysis, this can be understood temporarily. First, aspiring leaders articulate a set of group characteristics and establish themselves as prototypical members on the basis of that articulation as it is from being seen as "one of us" that the leader then has the legitimacy to articulate a course of action for the group. Second, this is then used to articulate a substantive definition of identity in which, through a process

of concretization and anchoring, the leader utilizes group processes to gain support for their specific policy agenda. Put together, this results in the particular individual successfully attaining a position of formal leadership.

Thus, it is on the basis of these two main conditions that identity leadership theory can be utilized to answer this thesis's research question, accounting for why specific aspiring leaders are selected over their competitors as the formal leader. It is contingent on their (1) ability to articulate group characteristics and present themselves as a prototypical group member, and (2) link it to a broader articulation of the group's identity in a way that satisfies the principle of readiness. Formulated into a research design, this entails that we can, in answering our research, posit the two main hypotheses.

- H1: If an aspiring leader is most effective at conveying themselves as a prototypical member, understood through the way they articulate the group's category prototypes as determined by a meta-contrast ratio, they will then be seen as a legitimate source of authority.
- H2: if a leader develops and communicates a salient understanding of the group identity and future course of action that is consistent with their prototypicality while also drawing upon broader and pre-existing characteristics of the group understanding (the principle of readiness), they are then more likely to be endowed with formal leadership.

From here, the remainder of this chapter will outline a research methodology by which these operational components can be operationalized and effectively tested.

3.4 Research Method

This section operationalizes the theoretical framework discussed previously into a concise research methodology that structures the analysis conducted in the remainder of this thesis. Below I summarize the specific causal mechanism, including the dependent and independent variables, before turning to the way it will be observed and measured. From here, it outlines a series of case studies as the specific research design that will comprise the proceeding analysis.

As discussed, the causal process this thesis seeks to analyze is how specific individuals successfully attain positions of formal-legal leadership. Consequently, the *dependent variable* is the degree to which the individual gains the support necessary to be successfully conferred with a position of formal authority. This thesis is concerned with the binary outcome of whether or not the individual attains the level of support that is sufficient to attain formal positions, particularly in the way they receive more support than other competitors.

This outcome of support is contingent on the actions taken by the individual who seeks after the formal position. Given that the theoretical framework places significant emphasis on the leader's ability to articulate a set of group characteristics, this will be operationalized as a discursive process. Consequently, the substantive components of the communications, both written and oral, made by leaders to persuade the group to support their leadership is understood here as the *independent variable* of this process. Here, it is important to emphasize that while broader contextual conditions, such as the understandings, values and interests of the group in question, are relevant in the way that they condition and shape the options available to individuals, they are not understood here to provide a direct and measurable causal impact outside of the individual in question.

The causal mechanism that links the two together, as theorized, is the psychological response of the individual group members themselves: that, in effect, a leader's message will appeal to their innate tendency to support in-group members and prioritize more salient articulations of the group to which they belong. This is theorized to occur in a two-stage process, comprising the two main hypotheses this analysis will examine. First, an aspiring leader will first establish prototypicality in accordance with a specific set of group characteristics they articulate in their communications. Second, based on their legitimacy as a member of the group, they will articulate a policy agenda that acts as a concretization of the pre-existing and abstract understandings the group has about itself.

In operationalizing this process, it is initially evident that it cannot be observed directly within the scope of this thesis. Rather, it can only be inferred from a correlation; that, in the case to be studied, the successful individual ought to be demonstrably prototypical and articulative of a salient, corresponding message. In this way, this analysis will be comprised of an observation of the independent variable – the substantive content of the communication leaders make towards the group - to determine whether they satisfy the conditions necessary to meet the hypotheses that have been posited.

In observing these aspects of leaders, we should expect their appeal – understood here as rhetorical – to satisfy a set of conditions. First, we should expect that the leader will establish themselves as a prototypical group member. Here, prototypicality will be measured on account of the meta-contrast ratio: a leader, in their appeal, must emphasize their similarity with followers while simultaneously distinguishing themselves from outsiders. But, given the individual's creativity in establishing their own prototypicality, we should see a novel, substantive articulation of the group's characteristics on the part of the leader. Namely, leaders must demonstrably communicate in their full appeal a discernable “out-group” and a set of category prototypes that distinguish the group they seek to lead. From here, as discussed in the second hypothesis, we should expect this established prototypicality to then lead to an appeal by the aspiring leader that, in addition to being coherent with the individual's prototypicality, draws upon pre-existing and broader means by which the group understands and makes value evaluations of political phenomena. We should see that the policy agenda is legitimized through and communicated as a fulfillment of these broader values. From here, in completing this causal process, we should expect to find that the aspiring individual that meets these conditions is supported by followers and so successfully endowed with a formal leadership position. On this finding, we can conclude that the hypotheses appear to be a causally plausible explanation to the research question.

This causal model aims to focus on the key elements that drive the leader-follower relationship. At the same time, it is possible that the null hypothesis will be supported. For example, if an aspiring political leader is found to be successful and also does not meet the conditions discussed above, or alternatively is unsuccessful despite

meeting them, we can conclude that this approach does not serve as a useful causal mechanism for understanding leadership.

This relationship will be examined through the observation and analysis of primary sources that contain attempts made by the leader studied to communicate, whether in speech or writing, explicit references to both an articulation of that group's main characteristics, and the broader assumptions, understandings, solutions, and values that attempt to convey their leadership and policy agenda as consistent with the group's understanding. This is not to say that qualitative statistical methods are not possible; social identity scholars have in fact developed typologies by which to determine the group's characteristics and what precisely constitutes prototypicality (Steffens et al. 2014). Rather, it is because this method of analysis is more appropriate for the scope of this thesis and the causal relationship as I have theorized it. First, given the significant creativity I have granted to individual aspiring leaders, the task of properly and evaluating concepts like prototypicality is both empirically and conceptually limiting. At worst, it would impose a rigid structure of prototypicality that would predetermine which aspiring leaders are successful, a framework this thesis has strongly argued against.

A second consideration is the fact that the causal framework is highly context specific. A large-scale, statistical analysis seems to lead the researcher away from the intricacies and nuances of a particular social group. Instead, it becomes necessary to fully analyze the details of the case to understand leadership and to make any inferences with confidence. Finally, there are practical considerations. This thesis, given its status as a component of a Master of Arts program, is unable to gather the amount of resources – both financial and temporal – that would be required to collect the data necessary for a precise and comprehensive analysis of the causal mechanism developed in this chapter.

Here, the analysis will draw upon a series of empirical and descriptive materials that is relevant to the group itself and the individual in a position of aspiring leadership. It is important to, first, draw upon an assortment of materials to construct the broader aspects of the group and the general shape of its politics through a social identity lens. Utilizing pre-existing scholarly work on the context's political culture, this analysis will

discuss the literature through a social identity lens in order to arrive at the broader values, understandings, and behaviors that comprise the group identity.

From here, the analysis will utilize a series of biographical, empirical, and journalistic materials to construct a brief sketch of the leader's individual attributes, their own policy preferences, and the means by which they became aspiring leaders. A set of primary sources composed of communications made by these leaders to the public will then be used to form the data evaluated to determine the ways in which this set of characteristics and policy preferences were communicated to satisfy the hypothesized conditions of successful leadership. For hypothesis one, we should demonstrably observe, through an analysis of the individual's rhetoric, an appeal that effectively emphasizes a similarity shared among members of the political community while simultaneously acting as a means by which they can be distinguished from others. We should see a discernable and repeated set of characteristics communicated by the leader, in addition to a discernable "outgroup" that they are contrasted from. For hypothesis two, we should see that this appeal, in addition to forming prototypicality, is justified by the way it is anchored to these broad, empirically demonstrated aspects of the group's collective understanding and communicated as a concretization thereof.

This thesis will utilize the comparative method of research design, consisting of a set of case studies of individual leaders in one context over time (Lijphart 1975). In selecting cases, the project utilizes the "most different systems design" in which the dependent variable is roughly the same despite different values for the independent variable (Seawright and Gerring 2008). Consequently, the case studies attempt to consist of two different individuals that despite variance both successfully attained formal leadership positions. In each, regardless of these specific individual and policy differences, we should observe draw upon the same broad group characteristics and understandings to establish their own prototypicality and legitimize their policy agenda.

The value of this research design is twofold. First, by studying a series of leaders in one context over time, this analysis can better isolate the causal mechanism. While comparing two or more contexts provides benefits in the way of generalizability and

external validity, it comes at the cost of precision; that, given the abstract and broad quality of the concepts used, it may make the course of determining and identifying the important contextual variables more complex and confusing. Instead, by focusing on one context, the researcher can better isolate the set of group understandings that are entrenched and relevant to each of the leaders studied. Second, by consisting of a “thick” study of case studies it effectively accommodates the ways in which, as theorized, leaders are in independent and creative positions. By confining the analysis to one context, it can more compressively parse a pre-existing group understanding and the way individual leaders utilize it to legitimize their authority.

Given this thesis’s stated interest in Canadian political leadership, this analysis focuses on the province of Alberta as the context to be studied. Canadian political scientists have long recognized that politics as practiced federally and in each of the provinces comprise different “worlds” with separate political cultures, policy interests, and party structures (Elkins and Simeon 1980). The choice to select a provincial, rather than federal, context is because of the fact that the gap on leadership in the provinces is much wider, entailing both a greater need for research and a larger contribution of the part of this thesis. A province also provides far greater comparative potential for future research: that the findings of this thesis, when incorporated into the broader literature of Canadian political leadership, can be applied to develop understandings of leadership in other provincial contexts, helping to bolster much broader generalizations and sub disciplinary understandings.

Of all the Canadian provinces, the selection of Alberta is based on the way it exemplifies the variables of interest. Alberta is regarded as both a very leader-centric political culture (See Tupper and Gibbins 1992) and expressive of a particularly salient and distinctive provincial group identity (Tupper and Gibbins 1992). While consequential, there is no – at least prior to the discovery of oil in 1947 – discernable distinguishing characteristics when compared to other Western provinces. In this way, then, unlike a province with a clear and relatively rigid source of group identity – such as with language in the case of Quebec – Alberta is a useful context to consider the way a broader province-wide identity is constructed, shaped, and utilized to advance conflicting

political goals, including the direction of specific individual leaders and the legitimacy of their policy agendas.

Within Alberta, this analysis focuses on two distinctive leaders: William Aberhart, first elected in 1935, and Peter Lougheed, first elected in 1971. Each leader was successfully elected to a position of formal leadership, despite differences in leadership styles, ideologies, and the pressing public policy problems of the time. Each leader, this analysis will investigate, may have been able to convey themselves as a ‘prototypical group member’ and incorporate their policy agenda into the pre-existing collective understanding of Albertans as a provincial group, providing clarity to the questions of “who we are” and “what we should do”.

The following analysis is leader centric, as each chapter proceeds from a consideration of the individual themselves to the broader context. First, relying on biographical material, each case study begins with an examination of the individual themselves – their attributes, personality, ideology, policy preferences, leadership style, and desire for seeking a position of authority – up until the point that they began directly seeking out the Premier’s office. From here, the case study will consider the broader context to which this personal aspiration is constituted, in addition to considering scholarly attempts to determine broader factors that conditioned their individual success. Finally, these case studies will investigate a set of primary sources to determine if the leader can be observed to meet the expectations of the two posited hypotheses.

But, before analyzing the personality, policy, and success of these leaders, it is necessary to establish the broader contextual factors that comprise the Alberta provincial identity. This, within Canadian political science, is a well-developed conception: that, although scholars disagree on what precisely causes Alberta to be the way it is, there is a consensus that there exists a unique identity and political culture in the province. This will be reviewed and interpreted through a social identity framework. It will be made clear that the following comprises the pre-existing self-understanding with which Albertan leaders must cohere.

Chapter 4 – Alberta Through a Social Identity Lens

4 Introduction

In the last chapter, identity leadership theory was discussed and employed as a useful way to examine leadership and the way it is constituted (Haslam et al. 2020). Overall, this theory holds that the individuals endowed with formal leadership are those who best contribute to group processes, in that they provide legitimate answers to the questions of “who we are” and “what to do” as conditioned by member prototypicality and the salience their message brings to the understandings the group already has about itself. Given the importance of these broader contextual conditions, it is necessary that – before proceeding to the specific case studies – an overview of the pre-existing components of the Albertan political identity is presented. It is important to understand the wider, more abstract characteristics of a group identity to properly analyze the way they are utilized, articulated, and manipulated by individual leaders to advance policy agendas.

This chapter discusses the broader Albertan context and its implications for first ministerial leadership through a social identity lens, drawing upon three main aspects that have been developed within mainstream Canadian political science – Alberta’s economic conditions, its sense of Western alienation, and its broader conservative political culture. The goal here is to outline the larger set of societal values and self-understandings within which an aspiring leader is expected to fit in order to be endowed with formal leadership. Overall, as will be outlined in what follows, it is argued that Alberta’s group identity was formulated around the province’s early experience as a settler society interpreted through a particular individualist lens. This, combined with the province’s economic reliance on export commodities, produced a collective cognitive framework oriented around the goals of prosperity, fairness, freedom, and the rejection of an interfering outside agent. This will comprise the pre-existing framework that successful leaders will be expected to base their appeals in.

4.1 The Process of Group Identity Formation

As discussed in the last chapter, social identity theory holds that group identity formation is the product of a set of individuals who – in sharing some aspect of their experience – develop a collective understanding of themselves and the world around them (Haslam et al. 2020). The influence and impact of this collective understanding come from the ways in which it is internalized by members to impact their own perspectives, motivations, and behaviors. Here, as previously outlined, the notion of “Albertans” is posited as no more than the group identity formed to align with the province itself. The creation of Alberta in 1905 produced a geographic entity as well as a political one, because provinces in the Canadian federation are endowed with much capacity to act unilaterally within the parameters of the constitution. In this way, Albertan group identity is conditioned by and predominantly directed towards the province’s political institutions, including individuals that both reside within its jurisdiction and can contribute to its processes. In contexts where provincial political processes are relevant, such as the selection of a Premier, individuals are likely to invoke their identity as a pre-existing conception of an “Albertan” to make sense of the situation and devise the best course of action moving forward.

But how can this analysis, through a social identity lens, identify the main components of the Albertan group identity a leader is expected to draw upon? The theoretical literature suggests that the top priority of group identities is the need for self-definition and distinction (Haslam et al. 2020). That, to put it more precisely, people need better clarification as to who they are and what makes them that way. As a result, people prioritize and come to characterize themselves by a series of “category prototypes”. As discussed last chapter, these are derived from the extent to which they have a high meta-contrast ratio: characteristics that are both a source of similarity between in-group members and a means by which to emphasize differences from others. These category prototypes, in forming a set of understandings individuals then come to hold about themselves and others, come to comprise the conceptual framework by which members make judgements about novel phenomena and decide what course of action to take moving forward.

This, as mentioned in the last chapter, is a historically bound but fluid process. Group identities begin to form the moment the group itself is established and these identities develop in accordance with the conditions of that time. From here, these broad collective understandings are imparted to new members, forming the general basis of the way citizens understand themselves, perceive political developments, and behave. Nevertheless, this is open to significant adjustment over time. Given ongoing change in context, groups are required to constantly reinterpret and rearticulate the nature of their identity in order to arrive at a clear and practical understanding of who they are in order to determine how to behave. Nevertheless, the point here is to emphasize that groups will rely on their collective pre-existing understandings and history to guide them through this process. Consequently, while individuals are unlikely to consciously contradict or repudiate the preexisting understanding, a change in context or needs may adjust the actual meaning of those understandings in all but name. For social identity theorists, the process is bound by the criteria of “fit”: a group understanding must always be consistent with empirical reality and the needs of the moment, whilst properly distinguishing itself from others (Haslam et al. 2020).

Identity leadership theory suggests that leaders, in seeking to legitimize their personal authority, are an important force in directing these group mechanisms to a precise self-understanding and devised plan of action. Nevertheless, in understanding provincial leadership in Alberta, it is necessary to consider the broader group identity that the province’s citizens have formed, and the way it impacts and influences how people perceive political phenomenon and make policy choices. Consequently, the next section will outline the broader parameters by which first ministerial leadership is constituted and operates in the province, relying on scholarly characterizations. This will comprise the main contextual and thematical components that will then be interpreted through a social identity lens. Attention will be directed to the way Alberta’s initial group identity formed out of its early conditions and needs, tracing the way it was molded and mended by subsequent generations to match the needs of the time. Overall, it will be argued that these are the broad set of pre-existing, group understandings an aspiring leader must appeal to in order to legitimize their authority and policy agenda, and so generate public support.

4.2 The Provincial Politics of Alberta

This chapter holds that social identity theory can best explain the process behind this broader appeal in a way that accounts for the success of specific leaders over others. Overall, it argues that aspiring premiers have found success by basing their appeals, both personal and policy, in the understandings, expectations, and needs of the broader Albertan group identity. This section discusses the set of themes that scholars have developed to characterize the nature of the values, stances, and behaviors of Albertans – economic reliance on a small set of resource exports, western alienation, and the existence of a populist, conservative culture – that condition the factors leaders must incorporate into their appeals in order to successfully attain formal-legal leadership. Overall, the first two characteristics will be found to be for the most empirically accurate, but conceptually incomplete in fully accounting for leadership success. But, in contrast, the third – while certainly resembling a dominant political force – is often at odds with Albertan behavior. It will, instead, be interpreted not so much as a coherent political ideology as a broader, more abstract component of the Albertan group identity that interprets political phenomenon through a particular individualistic, pro-freedom lens. Consequently, these three components will be reinterpreted through a social identity lens, forming the basis of a theoretical sketch of the broader group understandings we can expect to see successful leaders base their appeals in.

4.2.1 Consequences of Resource Reliant Economy

The first well-noted characteristic of Alberta is its economic structure. More precisely, the fact that its overall prosperity is reliant on the global profitableness of a select set of export-based commodities (Macpherson 1952; Mansell and Percy 1990; Adkin 2016). Over time, this has referred to cattle ranching, mining, wheat farming, and, following the 1947 discovery of oil, the petroleum industry.¹⁹ The key characteristic all have shared is

¹⁹ This forms something of a historical trajectory in which one resource was replaced with the other. Thus, while Alberta as part of the Northwest territory developed significant ranching and coal industries it had, by

that their revenue is dependent on the state of the resource's international market. Historically, they have been subject to constant "boom and bust" cycles in which periods of significant prosperity are followed by inevitable crashes, as the demand or price of the resource in question drops – thereby rendering economic security largely beyond the control of individual Albertans (Mansell and Percy 1990).

For Albertan provincial politics and leadership, this is relevant in so far as it forms a common interest and set of problems: that, given its primary impact on their livelihoods, citizens are primarily concerned with both the success of these industries and also, more abstractly, seeking out the means by which to get out of their common economic predicament (Young 1978; Dacks 1986; Tupper 1992). In this way, then, leaders are successful to the extent that they are both able to ensure the relative success of these industries whilst also implementing some solution to the predicament. Thus, each successful premier can be understood via how they sought both economic growth and some degree of broader structural change to ensure more control over economic security. The initial success of Social Credit, for instance, can be attached to the party's message of monetary reform as a way to transition the people of the province out of the economic destitution of the Great Depression. In this case, the party articulated a coherent cause to this problem in that it was the product of exploitation by a broader class of financiers and bankers based in central Canada and elsewhere (Finkel 1989). This common economic predicament accounts for Peter Lougheed's struggle over provincial resource control and his government's push toward greater economic diversification (Hustak 1979; Wood 1985). Furthermore, the priority placed on economic growth also provides a reason for why both Ernest Manning and Ralph Klein emphasized *laissez-faire* economics, concerned primarily with the removal of government intervention as the key to economic success (Lisac 1995).

But for this chapter's purpose, the problem with this common reliance on one economically unstable commodity is that while it provides a necessary condition to

the first world war, developed into a primarily agricultural economy. From here, the discovery of oil led to another economic focus. In all of these cases, shifts in economic focus did not produce diversification.

successful leadership in Alberta, it does not – on its own – provide a reason for why one *particular* appeal or solution was successful over others. As demonstrated, each leader framed the problem separately and posited a different set of solutions. Here, several approaches would refer back to a broad Marxist or political economy analysis, suggesting that the success of certain appeals over others can be equated with the interests of the dominant owner class and their interests (Macpherson 1964; Richards and Pratt 1979; Melynk 1993); That, in the words of Melnyk (1993, p.34), successful leaders are the “personification of a class which wishes to rule the state according to its own interests.” It is in this way, for instance, that Macpherson (1964) interpreted the success of Social Credit as the expression of the agrarian petite bourgeoisie’s desires for radical economic change, but in a way that did not challenge their property rights. Similarly, the transfer of power from Social Credit to the Progressive Conservatives was the inevitable result of the eclipse of rural power and its replacement by an urban, more cosmopolitan elite rooted in the petroleum industry (Richards and Pratt 1979).

But while political economic explanations help to provide a more precise framework, it nevertheless does little to address the fundamental question of why specific options were more successful than others, especially given the fact that the successful movements were not necessarily in the economic elite’s best interest. It is still the case, for instance, that in supporting Social Credit the petite bourgeoisie of Alberta embraced a vague, untested, and objectively incoherent doctrine (Finkel 1989). The explanatory framework is also inconsistent with many of the highly interventionist policies of the Lougheed government, including its significant increase of royalty revenue (Hustak 1979). Instead, it becomes necessary to add, on top of this common economic characteristic of the province, other factors: the element of western alienation, and the existence of a broader conservative culture.

4.2.2 Western Alienation

The next characteristic of Alberta politics discussed here is a widespread feeling of discontent towards the rest of the Canadian political institutions, particularly the federal government. This comprises a broader construct of “western alienation,” defined by the eminent analyst Roger Gibbins as a “sense of political, economic, and to a lesser extent,

cultural estrangement from the heartland of Canada” (Gibbins 1979).²⁰ This is a well-studied aspect of Canadian political science; indeed, next to the question of Quebec nationalism, it is historically the greatest regional question of the Canadian political community.²¹ It is well beyond the scope of this chapter to review this paradigm and its associated literature fully.²² Here, only a few general, overlapping understandings relevant to Alberta and this thesis will be considered.

Descriptions of western alienation emphasize either economic or more formal-legal origins. The former understands the disposition to be the direct product of the province’s economic position, interpreted as the product of a broader system of economic subordination: what Macpherson (1953) labelled a “quasi-colonial structure”. The point here is to emphasize that Alberta – alongside the other prairie provinces – was formed for the purposes of resource extraction which, in being utilized by Central Canadian manufactures, would bring business elites economic and material wellbeing (Conway 2014; Berdahl and Gibbins 2014).²³ This, to political economists, entails a skewed power relationship between the Central Canadian “center” and the Western “hinterland”: Central Canadian manufacturers not only control a disproportionate amount of Federal power, but will use it in a way that always furthers their economic interests (Watkins 1963; Richards and Pratt 1979; Laxer 1989). When applied to Alberta, this means further resource

²⁰ A source of contention – far beyond the scope and focus of this thesis to weigh into – is whether the concept should comprise all “Western provinces” (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia) or is really just concentrated in Alberta. For the remainder of this chapter, I will use the conventional parlance of the “West” but only in the way that it concerns Alberta in particular.

²¹ This is to say that, as with the question of managing Quebec nationalism, Canadian elites (understood as politicians, academics, and intellectuals) have been concerned with the question of how to accommodate the West’s distinct set of interests. This in part characterized the period of mega constitutional politics, reaching a particularly pressing point when the Western-concentrated Reform Party emerged on the message that the “West wants In”. Although this is said to have reach something of a truce from the electoral success of the amalgamated Conservative party (led by a former Reform leader), it has recently resurged within the context of environmental politics.

²² Western alienation will comprise a significant portion of any comprehensive work on Canadian politics or government. But for a more focused, comprehensive look please see Berdahl and Gibbins 2014.

²³ For more on this broader political economy or staples approach please refer back to the discussion in the Canadian literature review section of this thesis.

extraction operated in a way that ensures the predominate wealth of the resources is directed to Central Canada.

This is relevant to the way Albertan politics is constituted by the way it is reflected within the historical experience of “a long history of national economic policy that...is believed to have failed to reflect Western Canadian interests and aspirations” (Berdahl and Gibbins 2014). From the point at which the region was settled, there was a protracted struggle over jurisdiction, control, and independence between the Federal government and regional political agents (Janigan 2012; Rennie 2004). And, in being endowed with full provincehood in 1905, Alberta was – unlike the original entrants of Confederation - initially denied jurisdiction over its natural resources.²⁴ Given the revenues available to governments at the time, the province’s early lack of an ability to extract revenue ensured that were unable to fully finance the services necessary for their citizens, including the infrastructure for a rapidly growing population (Janigan 2012).

But just as important was the way initial federal economic policy impacted the early, day-to-day economic experiences of Alberta’s workers and farmers. Through the National Policy, a move designed to generate manufacturing and financial capital in Central Canada, they were required to pay higher tariffs and freight rates, thereby disadvantaging their contribution to the world market (Stevenson 2012). This was particularly stark during the inevitable “bust” periods, such as the Great Depression. Here, despite falling global prices and livelihoods, these broader financial and economic structures remained in place; farmers were still required to pay expenses, including meeting their credit interest payments (Finkel 1989). Although the 1947 discovery of oil brought about a rush of post-war prosperity, this sense of exploitation was renewed through further jurisdictional disputes with the federal government over both the control of resources and the direction of the revenue extracted from them. Of this, the 1982

²⁴ Arguably the creation of Alberta *itself* is the product of federal interests in the region. There was little to justify the creation of multiple provinces apart from preventing the region of having too much power. Most of the original political actors of the region – such as Frederick Haultain, the Premier of the original territory – would have liked the area to have become one large province rather than two (See Janigan 2012).

National Energy Policy – which sought to distribute the monetary value derived from oil away from Alberta and to Eastern Canada – stands as the perennial symbol of the federal economic interference of that era (Wood 1985).

The second major emphasis of western alienation is the widespread belief that the federal government is unresponsive to Albertan interests on account of more formal-legal factors, particularly the nature of Canadian intrafederal institutions (Lawson 2005). When it comes to the majoritarian electoral system for the House of Commons, the significant population of Central Canada (understood as Ontario and Quebec) in comparison to Alberta and the western provinces makes it possible to form a majority government *without* the support of the West. The same, however, cannot be said for the opposite. For any party to form government, and thereby gain the power to impact policy outcomes, it needs the support of either Quebec or Ontario, if not both. In this way, should these two interests clash it seems likely that most parties and their governments would opt to support central Canada. This is supported by aspects of the province's historical experience, as it is another way to read into the federal policies that have economically disadvantaged the West. An early example, for instance, is the Liberal party's support of free trade and the removal of the National Policy in the 1911 election (Janigan 2012). While this produced support from the West, the way it went against Central economic interests delivered Ontario, and the election itself, to the Conservatives (Conway 2014).

What this produced, overall, is a common aversion to the status quo of how Canadian federalism and representative institutions are constituted and practiced, expressing itself in a popular support of reform at various moments in Canadian electoral history. Alberta has, at least in the individuals it elects to Parliament, commonly advocated some degree of change – whether this is in regard to the nature of party discipline in the House of Commons, the electoral system, or the composition of the Senate. This is not to suggest that Alberta does not support mainline parties; in fact, several administrations, both Liberal and Conservative, have gained electoral support from the province. Rather, it is to say that are common moments in which the mainline parties come to be seen unresponsive, apathetic, or contrary to the needs of the province, producing a shift of support to novel options. In 1921, for instance, the west's economic

concerns prompted the province's voters to move its support of the federal Union government to the Progressive Party. This was also evident in the 1993 Federal election when the upstart Reform party, campaigning on a slogan of the "west wants in", was able to win 22 of the Alberta's 26 seats at the time (Tupper and Gibbins 1992).

Overall, then, the claim of this framework is that Western alienation, although it has economic and political conditions, now represents a broader, more culturally bound orientation marking Albertans and their politics; that, regardless of the objective value of the action, Albertans will habitually approach federal initiatives with skepticism, caution, and a fear that Ottawa does not have the province's best interests at heart (Gibbins 1979; Wiseman 2007; Wesley 2011). In this way, western alienation conditions the success of political leadership by incentivizing premiers to take on confrontational, even adversarial positions toward the federal government to demonstrate their advocacy for Albertan interests. Here, they must also offer a "way out" of this economic and institutional subordination however conceived.

Consequently, the salience of Western Alienation provides additional clarity into understanding the process by which specific Alberta leaders are selected. That, in advancing a common set of economic interests, leaders must do so in a way that coheres with the broader disaffection directed towards central Canadian institutions. Nevertheless, this is still too vague for the main question of this thesis. Aspiring leaders have all articulated different understandings of concept, including the precise cause, the identity of the exploiters, and the solution. Here, while many confronted the federal government as the primary outsider, others have insinuated a broader force at work. It is unclear, at this point, what determines which of these precise articulations is successful at a given moment in time.

The inadequacy of Western Alienation in providing an answer to why certain leaders are selected over others is especially stark given the fact that economic conditions and western alienation do not properly distinguish Alberta from other provincial identities in Canada. Saskatchewan, for instance, was created in the same year as Alberta and – at least until Alberta's economic shift to petroleum production – shared a similar

set of economic characteristics and interests.²⁵ The province, similarly, shares in the same broader feeling of western alienation, supporting many of the same federally based reform parties alongside Alberta (Berdhal and Gibbins 2014). Nevertheless, each developed two discernably separate political traditions as Saskatchewan, in addition to producing a socially democratic oriented political culture, has a stable and well-structured party system, resulting in a routine exchange of power between two parties (Wiseman 2007). Consequently, it is necessary to consider the final component of Albertan provincial politics: the salience of a widespread and near hegemonic conservative political culture.

4.2.3 Conservative Political Culture

The final characteristic of Albertan political culture is that citizens approach politics from a small ‘c’ conservative or right-wing ideological bent, whether in terms of values, rhetoric, or policy preferences (Harrison and Laxer 1995; Pickup et al. 2004; Wiseman 2007; Wesley 2011). While a full discussion of the nuances of Albertan political ideology is beyond the scope of this thesis, the provincial orientation tends to be characterized by a set of overlapping terms, concepts and emphases, including “conservative”, “individualistic”, “populist”, “anti-socialistic” and “freedom”. As argued by Wesley (2011, p.56) it is characterized by more populist and anti-establishmentarian appeals to “personal responsibility, free enterprise, private-sector development, entrepreneurship, a strong work ethic, the evils of socialism, and the protection of individual rights and liberties.”²⁶

This, to scholars, is sourced from Alberta’s initial origins as the “last best west”: a place which, in being unoccupied and unexploited by Europeans, was believed to have

²⁵ Given the attention that has been given to the differences between Saskatchewan and Alberta, several scholars have argued that there are subtle, but consequential differences between the two. For reference please refer to Lipset 1950, Thomas 1980, Smith 1991, Wiseman 2007.

²⁶ Populism, itself another highly contentious and complex political ideology, is also commonly used to characterize Alberta’s politics. As with conservatism, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss comprehensively. Instead, it will be used in so far as it refers to direct, grassroots, and anti-elitist leadership appeals.

held the promise of new beginnings and economic potential for new settlers (Wiseman 2007).²⁷ For Central Canadians, the region was seen as a place of untapped material resources that – in being extracted and transported to global markets – would enlarge Canada’s interests, comprising an essential component of early attempts at both Canadian nation-building and economic development - a “cornerstone of the Confederation project” (Conway 2014). Thus, from its origins, Alberta was the product of “eastern-controlled, resource-driven expansionist enterprises, translated into eastern desires and then projected onto Western spaces” (West 2004, p.34). For the province’s original non-indigenous settlers, then, this undeveloped space offered the possibility of a new beginning and the potential of prosperity; a “promised land...in which all material wants would be provided and where moral and civic virtues would be perfected” (Wardhaugh 2000, p.8).²⁸ It is believed, therefore, that the frontier of Alberta was and continues to be not only a challenge but a social leveler: it is through independence, grit, and self-reliance, not tradition, authority or hierarchy, that individuals are capable of building success. Put another way, “the notions of starting afresh on the frontier and struggling to survive unleashed a bias against entrenched power, inherited privilege and the haughty attitudes that went with them” (Takach 2010, p.64). Here, the individual is placed front and center as the primary unit of society as it through their own self-reliance – with a particular bent towards contrarianism - that they can bring prosperity to themselves and their community. As a result, Alberta’s conservatism is particularly populist in nature, based around notions of fairness, grassroots support, and an emphasis on the “wisdom of ordinary people” (Banack 2021, p.8).

To most political culture theorists, the development within Alberta of a distinct “conservative tradition” marked it apart from the other prairie provinces at an early stage.

²⁷ In reality, of course, the region was not empty but occupied by a significant number of Indigenous peoples. However, the myth seems entrenched to the extent that – until at least very recently – they were not taken seriously as part of the story of Alberta and its people.

²⁸ An emphasis of this argument is that while other parts of the West – namely Manitoba and Saskatchewan – also contained this sense of economic prosperity and a “new beginning”, Alberta was the *last* to be settled. Consequently, Alberta not only remained underdeveloped longer, but it never lost an association with the idea of the “mythical West”.

It, for instance, is claimed to comprise a source of difference from Saskatchewan which, despite sharing a similar set of initial economic and historical conditions, came to approach them from a more collectivist stance (Wiseman 2007; Wesley 2011). As discussed in chapter one of this thesis, the exact origin of and process behind this broader culture is controversial.²⁹ Indeed, the historical portrait of the province's initial settlement presented here could be used to describe the histories of the other western provinces, contributing to a broader problem of what precisely makes Alberta different. In this regard, most comprehensive analyses of Alberta's political culture tend to conceptualize it as the culmination of structural factors, formative events, economic staples, and early settlement patterns (Wiseman 2007). Nevertheless, the specific factor of early settlement, particularly Alberta's large influx of American settlers, stands as the most empirically substantiated difference between Alberta and the rest of the western provinces. Here, in being a large portion of the province's early population, the claim suggests that they were influential in injecting a more American sense of individualism, freedom, and conservatism that did not exist to the same degree in Manitoba or Saskatchewan.

Consequently, the claim here is that this sense of conservatism has come to take on the force of a broader construct that conditions the way Albertans initially approach and evaluate political phenomena (Wiseman 2007). It, in being formed, is imparted to future members through socialization, is embedded in institutions, and transmitted over time by the rhetoric of political elites (Wesley 2011). Consequently, leaders are incentivized to shape their appeals in a way that corresponds to the broader assumptions, values, and rhetoric devices within the culture. Thus, in addition to addressing the previously discussed Albertan economic needs and sense of western alienation, leaders must do so in a way that is consistent with broader conservative values.

In particular, once this conservative framework was incorporated together with the economic and political problems of the province, it produced a unique framework by which the province's broader predicament was understood. In effect, they become issues

²⁹ Please see pages 5-6 in Chapter 2.

relating to *interference* by a dominating outside “other” (Barrie 2006, p.14); the “perception”, as argued by Mansell (1997, p.61) that “the main threats come from the outside than from within the province.” It is only once this power is removed, with power and freedom given to the people, that the province’s interests can be met. In this way, for instance, Wesley (2011, p.55) argues that all successful Premiers abide by a “code of freedom” in which their policy programs are justified as being favorable to enabling individual initiative, connected to the will and common sense of the people, and critical of an outside, interventionist actor.

However, in presenting this broad portrait, the reality is more complex. Evidence, for instance, suggests that Albertans tend to support high levels of government spending and interventions to address issues related to poverty, the environment, and discrimination (Stewart and Sayers 2013; see also Smith 1992; Ellis 2019). The cities of Calgary and Edmonton – which together comprise over half of the province’s population – are among the most young, progressive, diverse, and secular cities in North America. In fact, it has been argued that Albertans are better understood on account of their community solidarity, as they – among other Canadians – are not only more likely to identify with their local community more than other Canadians but engage in more forms of volunteerism and grassroots civic participation (Pickup et al. 2004). Consequently, Albertans have significant conformist tendencies, expressed by their appeals to traditional religious values, the province’s history of censorship, and their willingness to defer authority and direction to political leaders (Epp and Whiteson 2001; Grekul 2009; Marchildon 2016).

For this reason, a singular emphasis on Alberta’s conservatism - while historically dominant - neglects the degree to which alternative political visions have impacted the province, both historically and contemporarily. This broader culture, at least as it has been expressed electorally, did not emerge until the shift of Social Credit to the right in the early 1940s. In reality, the province was initially governed by Liberal administrations. Nevertheless, with the initial moment of populist backlash that occurred in 1921, it demonstrated that the momentum of the province’s politics was decidedly left-wing. In gaining the support of agricultural communities, the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA)

became the first home grown political party to govern the province, committing to a process of direct-democracy and a broader social democratic basis to policy (Young 1978; Rennie 2004). While the administration would become more moderate in power, the party membership behind it would always contain radical elements (Laycock 1990). Similarly, urban areas were affected by a powerful and active labor movement (Finkel 2012). Of note were the radical politics of coal miner associations, providing a foothold for Communist organization within Alberta for several decades (Jacques 2018). With the onset of the Depression, several of these forces coalesced into the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), formed in Calgary on the promise to radically alter the capitalist economic system and expand the role of government. Even here, William Aberhart's initial appeal for leadership and first term as Premier incorporated, especially in terms of social and education, a policy agenda that can be labelled as social democratic (Finkel 1989). More recently, attention could also be directed to the large grassroots organizations advocating more post-materialist values, whether in the name of feminism, anti-racism, indigenous sovereignty, sexual rights, or environmentalism. By sheer numbers and activity, these remain among the largest grassroots organizations in Canada (Harrison and Laxer 1995; Long 1997; Warner 2002; Harder 2003).

Given this level of diversity, it is necessary to note how, despite drawing upon a broad conservative rhetoric, the degree to which several 'conservative' administrations differ. There have been, on the one hand, very ideological administrations such as Ralph Klein's neoliberal project of leaner government and privatization (Lisac 1995). Yet, at the same time, the Progressive Conservative party has been fluid in its actual policy commitments, at times forming very centrist, perhaps even left-leaning administrations (Vivone 2009). This includes how, despite belonging to the same party and utilizing the same rhetoric as Klein – Lougheed's administration was highly technocratic and interventionist in the economy (Hustak 1979; Wesley 2011). Consequently, if truly interrogated on a substantive level, this conception of Alberta's "conservative" political culture loses its analytical precision and explanatory power when it comes to electoral outcomes. Even Ernest Manning, while basing his administration in a rhetoric of anti-socialism, limited government, and free enterprise, presided over the largest public expenditures of any provincial government at that time (Barr 1974). Indeed, Harrison

(1995, p.13) goes so far as to criticize the government for building a “larger, more integrated, pervasive, impenetrable and centralized state” whilst engaged in a limited government rhetoric.

Additionally, and most importantly, is the 2015 rejection of the governing provincial Progressive Conservatives in favor of an NDP administration under the leadership of Rachel Notley. This is especially problematic given the fact that, even if the NDP’s success is understood on account of Progressive Conservative failures, the party won despite the fact that the Wildrose party offered a more populist, conservative alternative (Sayers and Stewart 2013). Consequently, this election result would seem to suggest that Alberta’s broader conservative culture, if not fictitious, is no longer as salient as it once was. This is the argument made, for instance, by Sharpe and Braid (2016) in the way they hold that Notley’s victory is indicative of a broader shift in the province’s culture to more progressive-based values. Nevertheless, this is brought into question by the subsequent defeat of Notley in the proceeding provincial election of 2019 at the hands of the then recently formed United Conservative Party under the leadership of Jason Kenney.³⁰

In effect, then, the existence of a broader conservative culture no longer stands on its own legs as a precise and necessary component of a successful leadership appeal. This, however, should not discount the fact that since at least the time of Ernest Manning “conservatism”, however understood and applied, has been the dominant political force. It is clear, as demonstrated in scholarly works, that successful leaders have gained success by entrenching their rhetoric in an abstract set of terms oriented around individualism, fairness, prosperity, and criticisms of an interfering outsider (Wiseman 2007; Wesley 2011). It is also shown, despite their more nuanced support for certain policies, in the broad values Albertans have themselves expressed. Albertan group

³⁰ The UCP, it should be mentioned, was formed following the 2017 merger of the Progressive Conservative party of Alberta and the Wildrose party of Alberta, which held a more populist, right-wing policy agenda. A significant argument that was made in favour of the merger concerned the fact that the NDP’s election was the consequence of the two splitting right-wing and right-of-centre voters.

solidarity remains “bordered on a brand of liberalitarianism, with a unique collective streak” (Banack 2021, p.12). While it is said to be egalitarian, practical, and accommodative, being a member of the in-group is contingent on one’s willingness to be hard working and, for the most part, self-reliant (Banack 2021). And, although formed as an early collective response to a more rural way of life it has – as argued by several authors – survived despite the increasingly urban character of the population. To Gibbins (1979, p.164), these “attitudinal features” remain, left with a “nostalgic image of the beliefs and values of an earlier agrarian society that has been transformed almost beyond recognition.” In effect, despite the fact that political activities in Alberta may be classified as collectivist, citizens engage in them – and therefore source successful leadership appeals – in the belief that they do so as a collection of individuals advocating for greater individual fairness, freedom and economic prosperity.

Consequently, I will argue that it becomes necessary at this point to shift away from conservatism as a homogenous, coherent ideology framework to it being the predominant, though not exclusive, expression of a much broader and abstract group-level means by which Albertans understand themselves, evaluate phenomena, and see themselves within a provincial context. It is from this group-based function that the broader outlook both finds its origin and is perpetuated by political elites over time. This is to say that while a leader can be creative in implementing a particular policy agenda or ideological bent to their government, it must be done in a way that is consistent with the broader, and highly abstract framework characterized by an emphasis on individualism, freedom, prosperity, fairness, and a foreboding towards some common “other” that interferes in economic and political structures. In this way, the success of “conservative” leaders is contingent not so much on the degree to which they are ideologically consistent with conservatism, but rather the way they have appealed to broader Albertan values according to a particularly conservative concretization.

Under this framework, Notley’s success can be broadly understood through how, given flaws in the presentation of the PC’s and Wildrose, she associated her leadership with these broader aspects, establishing the NDP as a credible alternative. Ultimately, as will be articulated in greater detail below, it is the role of the leader to concretize this

abstract set of values, concepts, and themes into one particular leadership appeal and policy agenda.

To summarize, these three overlapping themes – economic conditions, western alienation, and a broader group emphasis on individual freedom and prosperity – comprise the broad conceptual aspects of Albertan provincial politics. It is evident that, in forming a successful leadership appeal, aspiring leaders are incentivized to draw upon these factors. Consequently, they will comprise the main set of components to the Albertan group identity, as interpreted through a social identity lens.

4.3 Alberta Through a Social Identity Lens

Social Identity theory, as mentioned in the previous chapter, suggests that leaders are successful to the extent that their appeals draw upon a group identity, comprised of a legitimate articulation of who the group is and what they should do that is derived from the pre-existing components that the group has already established about itself. In this way, a successful leadership appeal is not just in meeting the society's values, ideology, or policy stance but by making it cohere with the broader policy program they seek to advance. The following comprises a descriptive sketch that, while derived from an empirical discussion and set of psychological processes, remains theoretical and abstract in its reasoning and scope. While it remains too broad and simplistic to explain or predict a specific ideological or policy outcome, we should observe that it comprises the means by which a leader portrays themselves as a prototypical member and legitimizes their particular policy agenda.

First, it is evident that the main origin of the Albertan group identity, apart from the existence of the province itself, is its members formative experience in a newly settled community oriented to the economic purpose of resource extraction. Most of the province's population came from elsewhere, and many of these migrants shared a similar motivation to "start fresh" and seek the potential of prosperity. This comprised the main means by which Albertans were able to distinguish themselves from others, particularly the more populated, established, and traditional places from which they came. Consequently, the abstract identity of a settler or pioneer comprises the first element of

the collective category prototype. Here, my contention is that this almost romantic emphasis on the “last best frontier”, including its associated themes of prosperity and fairness, remains an important component of the way that Albertans as a group perceive themselves and the political events around them.

Of course, this broader framework is not necessarily empirically precise: Alberta was never the fair and egalitarian society this cognitive framework suggests that it was or is. Particularly evident is the way that it completely excludes indigenous people from the broader narrative it communicates. Instead, the emphasis here is that, given that most non-indigenous Albertan settlers arrived in the mindset of establishing a new livelihood and the potential of prosperity, it was an effective means by which the community could establish a province-based identity on the basis of similarity. From here, this became how citizens came to evaluate the ends and means of their provincial political institutions. This impacted the present and future, as it influenced the collective decision-making process regarding what path of action the province ought to take. But it also redefined the past. To use a term from last chapter, the past constitutes a “symbolic reserve” that is utilized to legitimize present activity (Haslam 2020). In this way, in being evaluated and reinterpreted through a group lens, historical events and processes can become simplified and romanticized within the broader group cognitive framework. Consequently, a basis of similarity, once derived from an empirical component of the province, comes to feed into Alberta’s self-cognition as a reoccurring cycle that continues to impact the way members interpret and respond to political phenomena.

From here, it is clear that this broad settler image came to be further interpreted and idealized through a particular individualist lens, that which imagined the quintessential Albertan settler as a person of strength, ruggedness, and self-reliance. This is evident, for instance, in the way Van Herk (2001), in her popular history of Alberta, arrives at the term “maverick” as evocative of the way the province’s citizens see themselves. Here, Alberta is not only “distinct” from the rest of Canada, but – as argued by Takach (2010, p.3) - expressive of a unique set of “reoccurring values that remain associated with Alberta – whether in truth, mythology, or both...opportunity, self-reliance, independence, immigration, riches, industry, and fairness.” Historically, this is

represented through symbols of early Albertan “mavericks” – the frontiersman, the rancher, the cowboy, the farmer. Today, it is conferred on more urban entrepreneurs, with the settler condition reinterpreted “by its bearers as the absence of government, reduced taxes, fewer regulations and survival of the fittest on the open (both continental and global) range” (Friesen 1999, p.185).

Here, it can be argued that the prominence of early American settlers, combined with this settler image, was the original cause of this individualist emphasis.³¹ However, social identity theory can be utilized to suggest that the particularly individualist emphasis of Albertan group understanding served as a further means by which residents distinguished themselves from others. It could be the case, for instance, that Alberta’s emphasis on a more rugged individualism contrasts with the more traditionalist Toryism that was prominent in Central and Eastern Canada (Wiseman 2007). It is also possible that this became influential because of the way it contrasted sharply with the more collectivist and social democratic political culture that developed in the neighboring Saskatchewan (Wiseman 2007). In this way, Alberta’s individualist category prototype emerged to further distinguish Alberta as a distinct provincial community that was not synonymous with other prairie communities. Albertan individualism became preeminent because it was the main means by which Alberta could be distinguished from Saskatchewan, a province that had the same general demographic history, populist political movements, and economic interests.

This, it should be emphasized, does not entail the success of one particular ideological or policy agenda over another, nor does it necessitate the fact that all members of the society will share the exact same political preferences. Rather, social identity theory, as it has been theorized here, suggests that the aspiring leader who is endowed with leadership is the one that most effectively utilizes these abstract group-

³¹ It is also worthwhile stating the influence Americans continue to have on the Alberta’s politics, such as their representation in the province’s early reform movements (see Wiseman 2011 for details) and as the petroleum industry’s early investors and executives.

level understandings. Here, the point is to say that their own leadership and policy agenda acts as the concretization, reflected to meet the needs of the current moment.

Nevertheless, given this category prototype of individually directed strength and prosperity, it is important to incorporate the way it was contradicted by physical, economic, and political realities. That, in effect, the fact that economic prosperity and group influence was dependent on a broader set of national and continental forces. In this way, an important element of Albertan identity formed around an entrenched feeling of alienation or grievance, contributing to a sense that something was wrong and needed to change for the province to fully meet its needs and interests. This developed on a particular path in which, given the fact that Albertans believed themselves to be capable individuals, the problem could not lie internally within the group itself. Rather, the problematic position of Albertans was the product of exploitation, the interference of some malicious “outsider”. This, therefore, formed the collective understanding – as once put by Morton (1950, p.viii) - that “their region was one with a great potential future if the hand of the outside exploiter could only be removed.” Here, Central Canada became the main “outsider” to which this resentment was directed as, given Alberta’s understanding of itself as a novel, settler society, it became an easy outgroup by which the latter could be contrasted from.

Overall, then, this portrait of the Albertan group identity and its understandings present the factors that condition the way specific aspiring leaders are selected over others. First, it provides the elements by which a leader can convey themselves as a prototypical group member. Here, they must – in their person – emphasize the abstract group understanding based in the notion of rugged, self-reliant settlers in a way that contrasts themselves from the outgroup which, in this case, typically means Central Canada. By doing this, they personify an abstract image of a “typical Albertan” in a way that is synonymous with the characteristics and needs of the current moment. From here, they must articulate a message that, in being consistent with their person, utilizes these aspects of Albertan group identity to articulate who the group is and what they ought to do. Should these conditions be met, we should expect these leaders to maintain power for a substantial amount of time, in that they are able to mobilize the support of citizens on

the basis of this broader group principle. As will be outlined in the following chapters, this thesis will analyze successful two leaders to determine if they attained leadership on account of their ability to base their appeal in their presence as a prototypical member, while drawing upon the Albertan social identity.

First, William Aberhart, the preacher and prophet of Social Credit, emerged as an aspiring leader at the time of the Great Depression (Finkel 1989; Elliot 1987). As a primarily agricultural society, the province had by this point become accustomed to a boom and bust economic cycle in addition to a broader system of economic subordination to outside, eastern financial interests. Here, the earlier success of the United Farmers of Alberta in getting provincially elected had acted as the initial rejection by the Alberta public of an outside foreign agent in the name of greater regional prosperity. Nevertheless, the Great Depression entailed an overwhelming and unprecedented level of destitution, including an incumbent leadership of the province seemingly incapable of articulating a salient path forward. If both the theoretical framework and sketch of Albertan group identity is correct, we should expect to demonstrably observe that Aberhart, first, established his prototypicality by emphasizing a similarity with followers on the basis on these broader characteristics Albertans define themselves. He should also have demonstrably communicated a discernable “out-group” that further distinguish the group he sought to lead. Second, upon establishing his individual prototypicality, Aberhart should find success by framing his policy program of Social Credit as the concretization of these broader group emphases on individualism, fairness, prosperity, and cynicism towards outside interference.

Next, Peter Lougheed, in becoming leader of the Progressive Conservatives, was able to defeat the 36 year dynasty of Social Credit by articulating a policy agenda better suited to the needs of a more diverse, urban, and industrialized Alberta (Hustak 1979; Bell 1993). As with Aberhart, we should expect Lougheed to establish his prototypicality and legitimize his policy agenda on the same set of broad characteristics, understandings, and values by which Albertans define themselves and evaluate political phenomenon.

Chapter 5 – William Aberhart and Social Credit, 1935

5 Introduction

William “Bible Bill” Aberhart, leader of the Social Credit movement and Premier from 1935 to 1943, ranks among the most studied provincial political leaders (see for examples Macpherson 1953; Irving 1959; Elliot and Miller 1987; Finkel 1989; Bell 1993; Stingel 2000; Banack 2016). Scholars have been puzzled by the way in which this preacher and school principal without prior political experience was swept into power on the esoteric monetary doctrine espoused by the Social Credit Party. Aberhart, as an aspiring leader, was selected above his competitors to be endowed with the formal leadership of the Alberta premiership. The question to consider is why did this happen?

This chapter seeks to determine whether Aberhart’s success can be accounted for through identity leadership theory. In particular, it will utilize aspects of Aberhart’s leadership appeal to determine if support can be found for two hypothesized relationships: that, first, Aberhart established himself and based his appeal in his being a prototypical member of the Albertan group identity and, second, the he framed his policy agenda as the concretization of a coherent set of Albertan group understandings and values. In this regard, this chapter comprises the following elements. First, it briefly discusses the career of William Aberhart, the basis of his aspirational leadership, and the components of his policy agenda. Second, it provides a brief sketch of the broader economic, social, and political context surrounding Aberhart’s election in 1935. Third, it considers the scholarly frameworks that have been developed to understand Social Credit’s success. Finally, Aberhart’s activities as an aspirational leader are analyzed in light of the two core hypotheses.

Overall, in analyzing the characteristics of Aberhart’s leadership appeal, this chapter concludes that identity leadership theory as developed in this thesis lacks explanatory value in accounting for the particular success of Premier Aberhart. More precisely, while I locate support for hypothesis two in this case study, with respect to hypotheses one there is little evidence that Aberhart effectively conveyed himself as a prototypical group member. We now turn to consider this unusual politician.

5.1 The Leader and The Appeal: William Aberhart and Social Credit

This section provides an overview of William Aberhart, notes his aspirations for formal political leadership, and summarizes the characteristics of the policy agenda he advocated for. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a comprehensive and nuanced picture of Aberhart's personality in addition to the complexities of Social Credit as a broad school of economic analysis. Instead, aspects of this unusual politician and the Social Credit doctrine more broadly are discussed in so far as they are necessary to fully analyze the way his leadership appeal came to be structured, performed, and articulated.

Prior to the Great Depression, William Aberhart apparently had no plans to become a political leader. Born and raised in Southern Ontario, Aberhart – like many of his eventual followers – had emigrated to Alberta as an adult seeking after a new livelihood (Elliot and Miller 1987, p.23). In Aberhart's case, it was an offer to be the principal of Crescent View High School in Calgary, an occupation he would perform until his election as Premier (Elliot 2004, p.127). However, the majority of Aberhart's passion, energy, and attention was directed to his religious activities. By the time of the stock market crash in 1929, he had built a following as a lay preacher at the Westbourne Baptist Church. He espoused "born again" Christian fundamentalism and near-obsession with end-time prophesy (Banack 2016, p.116). He was also responsible for the organization of the Calgary Prophetic Bible Conference which was held every Sunday for "the purpose of discussing the fundamental doctrine of the Word" and involved addressing large public audiences (Finkel 1989, p.29). Beginning in 1925, the conference began radio broadcasts of Aberhart's sermons, establishing himself as a major broadcast figure. By the time of his entry politics his radio sermons were reaching 300,000 people (Mann 1955, p.22). Finally, Aberhart had also managed to find the time to open the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute, a fundamentalist seminary where – in addition to his work as a principle and preacher – he served as dean (Elliot and Miller 1987, p.80).

Consequently, it is hard to discern any long-established motivations for seeking political leadership on the part of Aberhart. Instead, by all indicators, his focus was entirely directed to his broader religious mission which, given his emphasis on

premillennialism, tended to downplay the value of devout Christians becoming involved in political movements.³² Nevertheless, in reviewing his religious activity, Aberhart's proclivities towards leadership are evident. Within organizations, he repeatedly displayed authoritarian tendencies as expressed by a personal need for control and centralized decision-making around his own person (Elliot and Miller 1987). At the same time, however, Aberhart's efforts were assisted by his workaholicism, demonstrated organizational ability, and his effective oratorical skills as a preacher (Finkel 1989).

Elements of Aberhart's work as a religious leader also suggest a personal awareness of how to convey an attractive persona to gain support from his audience. Though it is far too presumptive to insinuate that Aberhart consciously knew the conditions of a successful leader appeal, his writings indicate he was a seasoned professional. For instance, in a series of pastoral leadership manuals, he admonished seminarians to convey a "magnetic personality" consisting of "personal attributes which draw people to the speaker and incline them to sympathize with or rally around him" (cited in Day 1990, p.3). Aberhart further suggests that a "mechanical or unconscious response" can be derived from the audience from, first, the fact that the "proposed course of action is shown to be in harmony with the [audience's] instinctive and acquired tendencies" and, second, that the speaker in their "general attractiveness and particular earnestness" brings "his whole personal influence to bear on the audience" (cited in Day 1990, p.4).

More than anything, it appears that Aberhart's initial foray into provincial politics was motivated by a genuine desire to ensure a better living standard for Albertans. His biographers often suggest that it was the destitution of the Great Depression that aroused his sympathy and resolve to do something to address the province's problems, pointing to a particular moment when one of Aberhart's students resorted to suicide (Elliot and

³² For this reason, a significant degree of research on Aberhart has attempted to discern whether his theology and political ideology were consistent with each other, falling into discernable camps on both sides (see Mann 1955; Irving 1959; Elliot 1978; Banack 2016). This, including the nuanced theological and intellectual discussion it requires, is far beyond the scope of this thesis to cover fully. As a result, it will not seek to determine the extent to which Aberhart's religious thought was connected to his political ideology.

Miller 1987; Elliot 2004). The means by which concluded that the Social Credit Party was the solution to the province's problems, rather than any other political alternative circulating at the time, is considered by several scholars to be a matter of coincidence. In particular, it is believed to have been introduced to Aberhart by one of his educational colleagues at a particularly salient moment (Elliot and Miller 1987; Elliot 2004; Finkel 1989).

The phrase "social credit" refers to an economic theory developed by a British military engineer, Major C.H Douglas. As summarized by Irving it was a "a monetary theory which both 'explains' the inner workings of the capitalistic financial system and offers a remedy for its unsatisfactory functioning in periods of depression" (1959, p.6). Overall, its main claim is that modern industrial capitalism had failed to provide sufficient purchasing power to producers, making capitalist economies both inefficient and prone to suffering from economic depressions (Elliot and Miller 1987). In advancing this view Douglas relied on his "A + B" theorem which concluded that given the fact that the sales price for products included the cost of labor, the raw materials, interest charges, profit and other expenses, workers – who only received the pay equivalent to the cost for their labor – could not afford all of the products they made (Finkel 1989). Consequently, Douglas argued, funds to make up the difference – enacted through state-issued individual credit – would produce a more efficient economic system, ensure greater material prosperity, and prevent the cycle of depression (Elliot and Miller 1987).

In understanding Douglas's ideology it is important to emphasize that this framework was not comprised of a wholesale attack on the notion of free enterprise itself. Rather, it is comprised of the claim that capitalist economics *as practiced* at the time failed to properly utilize industrialization's full potential in creating material prosperity and individual freedom. Douglas directed most of his criticism towards the exploitative behavior of financial interests that selfishly keep the current system in place (Finkel 1989). As a result, he advocated for a system in which, rather than through a process of

democratic legitimacy, Social Credit was to be largely enacted by a body of “experts” (Wesley 2011).³³

Social Credit ideas, although a British import, had become established among Albertans by the mid-1920s. Indeed, by the point of Aberhart’s political entry, the idea had been popular within among prominent members of the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) and a small, but dedicated association of intellectuals dedicated to advancing Douglas’s ideas (Finkel 1989). Nevertheless, it was Aberhart who was responsible for the movement’s popular appeal with his promise that each resident would receive a monthly twenty-five-dollar stipend by the government of Alberta (Finkel 1989, p. 30).

It is unclear the extent to which Aberhart understood, or knew how to implement, the theory as it had been articulated by Douglas. Indeed, throughout his leadership appeal, he never coherently and cohesively articulated the way the social dividend would work, or the means by which it would be implemented, suggesting instead that this would be determined by experts once the party was in power (Elliot and Miller 1987). This entailed the main source of criticism directed towards Aberhart by his contemporaries and still maintained by contemporary scholars (Macpherson 1953; Irving 1959; Finkel 1989; Elliot and Miller 1987; Stingel 2001). First, Douglas’s broader economic analysis that justified Social Credit policies continues to be widely regarded to be highly flawed and inherently fallacious (Stingel 2001). Second, given Canada’s federal structure, the province was in no position to legally enact Social Credit policies, leading Douglas himself to disparage Aberhart’s efforts on a provincial level as pointless (Elliot and Miller 1987, p.141). Nevertheless, it is important to include other elements of Aberhart’s broader policy agenda, particularly the unique ideological components he himself introduced. As observed by Finkel (1989), he departed from the more right-wing Douglas in his rhetorical emphasis on class division, the state’s ultimate authority over the market, state regulation of pricing, and limiting the incomes of the rich.

³³ This was also indicative of a more paranoid, conspiratorial side to Douglas’s thought. Increasingly, he would come to place more and more emphasis on a broader international Jewish conspiracy, infecting the movement with an entrenched element of anti-semitism (Stingel 2000).

For the most part, Aberhart's activities in advancing the cause of Social Credit were informal and based on policy. In effect, he first approached the movement in his capacity as a religious figure, incorporating social credit ideas into his radio broadcasts and building an infrastructure of study groups through his social network at the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute (Elliot and Miller 1987; Bell 1993). More and more of his activities became dedicated to furthering the growth of the movement, including regular speaking tours throughout the province and the production of policy memorandums. Quite remarkably, he continued to work as a full-time principal, delivered weekly sermons, and administered over the bible institute throughout this period.

Aberhart's biographers conclude that forming a new political party to contest the next election was not his original plan. Rather, he initially believed that Social Credit's policies could be enacted by any of the province's existing political parties, particularly the United Farmers of Alberta, after a concentrated effort at lobbying and increasing public support (Elliot and Miller 1987). It was only upon being rebuffed on multiple occasions that in late 1934 Aberhart's movement channeled its energies towards electoral contestation by formal registering as Alberta Social Credit, adopting a constitution, and deciding to run candidates. Apart from the plan to enact the Social Credit monetary system, the party's platform included a wide range of other policies including the elimination of borrowing from outside the province, legislation for the relief of debtors, securing new export markets, lowering freight rates, assistance for drought areas, and revising the system of grading produce (Elliot and Miller 1987, p.195). The organization was, on paper, a fully democratic and grassroots organization in which authority was vested in a representative central council. Formally, the party had no leader (Finkel 1989). Nevertheless, in practice it was clear that Aberhart controlled the party in an authoritarian manner. As the face and main source of support for the party, he controlled the party's policy program and personally selected its candidates (Elliot 2004).

Ultimately, then, regardless of the movement's novelty and the insurmountable problem of fiscal jurisdiction, the support it gained in the 1935 election was overwhelming. Receiving just over 54% of the popular vote, the party won 56 of the 63 seats in the legislature (Rennie 2004). Aberhart, in disavowing his leadership and

partisanship, had in fact not actually run for any seat. Nevertheless, it was immediately apparent who would lead the government as Premier, prompting Aberhart to immediately be acclaimed in a by-election (Elliot and Miller 1987).

How then does this analysis account for Aberhart's success as a party leader? The unique aspects surrounding this case – his lack of political experience, his religiosity, his novel and somewhat odd policy agenda – has preoccupied the minds of several generations of scholars. In the next section we turn to determine if Aberhart's success can be helpfully understood through the lens of identity leadership theory. However, before doing so, it is first necessary to concisely discuss the broader political, economic, and social context of the province at the time. This not only provides the details for the specific society that elected Aberhart, but – in order to properly evaluate the usefulness of social identity theory – it forms an important basis on which to assess Aberhart's prototypicality and group-based appeals.

5.2 The Context: Alberta of the Great Depression

In understanding the broader context of Aberhart's successful exercise of political leadership, it is first and foremost helpful to consider Alberta's experience with the Great Depression. The essential part of his proposed policy agenda was the way in which social credit ideology was communicated as the means to solve the problems related to the province's economic destitution. Consequently, this section discusses the specific context of depression-era Alberta, with particular attention given to the way the context's broader economic, political, and social problems were interpreted in light of the broader group portrait articulated in the previous chapter. Overall, this section will overview the way in which Alberta's economic position, set of grievances against Ottawa, and broader individualist settler image created a moment of significant crisis.

In this period, Alberta can be described as a recently settled, predominately rural, and highly religious society that was economically reliant on agricultural exports. It was an environment of relative novelty and population growth, as people from other parts of Canada and the world continued to arrive in the province to start a new life. In this way, the population of approximately 150,000 people in 1905 grew to over 770,000 people by

1931 (Rennie 2004). This rapid growth entailed significant provincial government expenditures that, in addition to amassing substantial debt, spent profusely on the infrastructure necessary for rapidly growing communities (Rennie 2004). Data from this period reflects the degree to which agricultural exports dominated Alberta's economy. Given that there were 100,000 farms in a population of Alberta's size, just under half of the province's population were directly employed by agricultural production (Stingel 2000). The remaining non-agricultural labor was predominately generated by, and worked in accordance with, this sector. Overall, less than a quarter of the population worked in the service, commercial, and financial sectors (Finkel 1989).

Alberta's economic wellbeing was therefore orientated around one common extractive economic process. Land, manufacturing, and product-based assets were purchased from Eastern sources. Following this, agricultural product would be grown, extracted, and then transported by rail to continental and international markets. The problem was the degree to which "one common denominator among the settlers was that they were not masters of their own fate" (Young, 1978, p.1). On the one hand, the profit of agricultural exports was reliant on the unpredictable demand of foreign grain markets which, while producing definite "boom" periods, inevitably led to "busts". While this impacted agricultural producers directly, it was also felt by workers in other sectors. It was common, for instance, for homes purchased at inflated prices in boom periods to quickly decline in value, leading owners to make payments high above the property's mortgage principle (Stingel 2000). There was also the unmanageable nature of the environment itself. Starting in 1916, a multi-year drought in the south east of the province prompted the largest farm abandonment in Canadian history, resulting in the desertion of several small towns (Rennie 2004).

But, most importantly, was the way that economic and financial power was maintained by Eastern-controlled interests. Given that most Albertans of the time were recent settlers, a large proportion of the population took loans from Eastern-based financial institutions to purchase their homes and property (Elliot and Miller 1987). This was particularly the case for agricultural producers, to whom what seemed like an exploitative relationship occurred on a yearly cycle. Given that their profits followed

from the harvest, prior to the start of the season farmers were often required to borrow to pay for product and manufacturing equipment, which – given Canadian-US tariffs, were more expensive. And, in selling their product, farmers were required to pay an array of expenses to the grain dealers and railway transportation. Nevertheless, the point was that, regardless of the broader forces that negatively impacted Albertans, the central Canadian forces remained constant and in place despite bust periods. Tariffs on manufacturing equipment and other products went on, and railway freight rates remained the same despite the fact that the agricultural exports themselves generated less revenue (Conway 2014). In particular, debt and interest payments became the “crop that never fails” (Stingel 2000, p.9).

In the Great Depression these aspects hit a breaking point, as the rapid decline in global grain markets entailed overwhelming economic destitution (Finkel 1989). Before turning to a discussion of this condition, it is important to also provide an overview of the way the province’s feelings of grievance towards central Canada and support for reform movements developed. Alberta was created in 1905 only after a protracted struggle between provincial politicians and the federal government in which the former, regardless of their partisan affiliations, banded together for greater provincial control (Janigan 2012). Following this, a series of scandals in the 1910s ingrained the sense that the mainline provincial parties were “eastern-controlled” (Pal 1992; Rennie 2004; Barrie 2006). For this reason, the political energy of the province had been directed to novel, reform-based movements. The first of these, the Non-Partisan League (NPL), emerged in 1917 on the policy program of non-partisan “business government” and public ownership of farm machinery manufacturing, railways, coal mines, packing houses, insurance companies, and banks (Finkel 1989). But it was the United Farmers of Alberta’s (UFA) landslide victory in 1921 that acted as the period’s culmination of anti-Eastern resentment. The party, under three Premiers, would maintain a hold on power until 1935 (Rennie 2004).

In 1921, the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA), which originated as a farmer advocacy organization, entered electoral politics on the promise to eschew traditional forms of party and parliamentary administration, advocating instead for “group

government” and direct democracy (Pal 1992). Nevertheless, over time – particularly under the Premiership of John Brownlee (1925-1934) – the party eventually conformed to traditional forms of parliamentary structure and centralized administration, and, in terms of policy, became an inherently prudent, cautious, and somewhat reactionary government (Rennie 2004).

In this way, the Great Depression, with these entrenched feelings considered, served as a moment of collective crisis: that, as interpreted through a social identity lens, we find that Albertans as a group were deeply unsatisfied and unsure of what to do. First, there was the economic fallout. By 1933, the profit of the province’s agricultural products was only slightly above a third of what it had been in 1927, prompting a 92% decline in the agricultural economy throughout the prairies that left many destitute (Stingel 2000, p.8). In the cities of Calgary and Edmonton 14% of residents were on some form of relief (Finkel 1989, p.17). Second, already accustomed to directing grievances to the federal government and other central Canadian institutions, Albertans found that the broader political and economic system to which they were subject had made things worse by continuing to charge tariffs, freight rates, and loan payments. Third, was a provincial government that, rather than articulating a path forward, appeared to be aloof and reactionary. As put by Foster (2004, p.99), Albertans “suddenly found themselves searching for legitimate leadership at the same time as they faced the most drastic commodity price collapse in Canadian history.” Aspects of this, it should be mentioned, were part of the broader problem with public debt that the government had to deal with. Nevertheless, certain actions worked to challenge the United Farmer’s legitimacy. In particular. Brownlee’s Premiership would be embroiled in allegations of having had an affair with a minor (Foster 2004).

The general uncertainty of the period was reflected in a sense of general restlessness and momentum that had been gained by a set of reform-based movements. The years leading up to 1935 had seen several protests, strikes, and other demonstrations by workers and groups of destitute Albertans (Finkel 1989, 2012). The CCF had been formed in 1932, and the Canadian Communist Party had garnered a larger, more activist membership (Jacques 2018). Nevertheless, as discussed, it was William Aberhart that

was ultimately successful in gaining the leadership of the province in 1935. Given that the broader context has been covered, this analysis can now turn to analyzing the basis for Aberhart's success. In the next section it is useful to incorporate the descriptive work that has already been performed to understand the substantive aspects of his appeal.

5.3 Traditional Accounts of Aberhart's Success

What was it about Aberhart's leadership appeal that made him successful? Here, the relative uniqueness of his leadership and policy agenda has produced a large, dense, and contentious literature that attempts to understand the nature of his authority. This has been in part developed in tandem with additional scholarly efforts to label the social credit movement, focused on determining whether it is best understood as a form of reactionist conservatism (Macpherson 1953), a semi-fascist cult of personality (Irving 1959), a left-wing quasi-social gospel (Finkel 1989), or a fundamentalist religious crusade (Mann 1959). While it is beyond this chapter to comprehensively evaluate and take sides on each of these theories, they provide an important set of variables relevant to his success. Overall, they point to the fact that Aberhart's success cannot be understood without three essential factors: economic destitution caused by the Depression, the religiosity of the movement, and his objective skills in leadership and organization.

First, it is self-evident that the economic doctrine of the Social Credit Party was for most Albertans effective in making sense of the broader economic destitution of the province, and offering a solution to it (Elliot and Miller 1987; Finkel 1989; Rennie 2004). Scholars note how Social Credit additionally played into a broader disaffection with laissez faire capitalism and a well-developed culture of grievance towards central Canadian institutions (Finkel 1989). Nevertheless, in understanding the specific success of Social Credit over other reform movements, Macpherson (1964) was the first to suggest that Social Credit is best understood as the reactionary revolt of the province's "independent commodity producers" to the "quasi-colonial" economic structure they found themselves in. Social Credit was appealing because of its promise of limited change; that while it addressed the broader structures of economic of exploitation it would retain private property rights (Macpherson 1964).

A problem with Macpherson's analysis, however, is that he overemphasizes the size and electoral impact of the independent commodity producer demographic. Instead, as demonstrated by subsequent analysis (McCormick 1980; Bell 1993), Social Credit received as much support from wage laborers. In this way, support – rather than being confined to one economic group – was correlated to overall income and class status (Bell 1993). Consequently, Social Credit is better understood as a cross-class movement which, in being comprised predominately of workers, farmers, and some small business owners, is understood through the appeal that it held to individuals that were particularly affected by the economic reversal of the Great Depression (Finkel 1989). The more working-class appeal of the movement also accounts for why Social Credit's biggest opposition within the province came from the urban bourgeoisie elite (Elliot and Miller 1987).

The second factor relevant to the success of the appeal of William Aberhart and Social Credit is its religious aspect. As discussed, Aberhart based much of his early political activities upon his work as a religious leader, incorporating Social Credit ideas into his Sunday sermons and radio programs (Elliot and Miller 1987). It was for this reason that, up until his election in 1935, he continued to entrench his political policy arguments within a religious framework of understanding and justification (Banack 2016). In articulating the impact of religion in Aberhart's appeal, early scholars tended to be disparaging in their analysis, suggesting that Social Credit constituted a fanatical religious crusade structured around mob psychology (Macpherson 1953; Mann 1955; Irving 1959). These depictions are, for the most part, exaggerations that overlook both the diversity of Christian traditions within Alberta and the considerable religious backlash received by Aberhart, often splitting entire congregations into one of two sides (Finkel 1989; Elliot and Miller 1987). It is also important to emphasize both the broader importance of religion in all prairie societies at this time and the degree to which Christian themes were incorporated into the appeals of other aspiring political leaders (Banack 2016; Marchildon 2016). Nevertheless, both economic and religious explanations for Aberhart's success beg the question of what made him particularly successful as a leader. It is unclear why the Social Credit Party was selected above its other competitors, such as the CCF, that appealed to precisely the same set of economic

problems. Also, unestablished is what made Aberhart's religious appeal – one of many in a very Christian society – particularly salient.

The final relevant factor is the impact of Aberhart's skills at leadership and organization, in addition to the political miscalculations of competitors, in providing the Social Credit party with a clear advantage. These components of Aberhart's work as an aspiring leader cannot be discounted or ignored; it most certainly helped that Aberhart had a pre-existing following as a religious leader, was a precocious personality, an incredibly capable communicator, and a hard-working organizer. Nevertheless, as discussed earlier in this thesis, leadership conferment – understood here as a recognition – is not contingent on the individual's attributes. Rather, a proper causal mechanism needs to demonstrate the process by which Aberhart's broader leadership appeal, including his economic solution, religiosity, and personal attributes, was specifically recognized by Albertans as the most legitimate option. Consequently, the remainder of this chapter will interpret these characteristics of Aberhart's appeal through a social identity lens, evaluating not only its accuracy but its analytical ability in addressing the study's broader research question.

5.4 Aberhart Through a Social Identity Lens

This section applies the broader theoretical inferences of identity leadership theory to the Aberhart case through examining two hypotheses to determine its usefulness as a framework for leadership. As discussed earlier in this study, identity leadership theory holds that the researcher can understand and account for the success of leaders through the way they base their appeal in group processes (Haslam et al. 2020). More precisely, this occurs in two stages: First, aspiring leaders establish themselves as prototypical members to gain the legitimacy necessary to articulate a course of action for the group. Second, this is used to articulate a substantive definition of identity in which, through a process of concretization and anchoring, the leader utilizes group processes to gain support for their specific policy agenda. The remainder of this chapter analyzes and evaluate these hypotheses in light of the case of William Aberhart, and then offers some conclusions that pertain to the overall usefulness of the approach in explaining this case.

Methodologically, this analysis will rely on a set of primary sources of Aberhart's rhetoric and communication from the time of his testimony to the Legislature of Alberta on March 19th, 1934 to his election as Premier on August 22nd, 1935. These dates are selected because, as argued by his biographers (David And Elliot, p.138), it was after the testimony that Aberhart fully decided to organize Social Credit into a novel political party. The specific materials analyzed include the following. First, this analysis will utilize *The Douglass System of Social Credit: Evidence Taken by the Agricultural Committee to the Alberta Legislature*, an account of Social Credit's hearing before the legislature that was later written and published by Aberhart in mid-1934. Another written source included will be the *Social Credit Manuel* which, in being written by Aberhart, acted as the de facto Social Credit policy platform in 1935. Finally, this analysis will utilize transcripts from a series of Aberhart's campaign radio broadcasts in 1935 for two reasons: first, it allowed Aberhart to directly address a significant portion of the population and, second, unlike his in-person speeches, their original audio has been captured and transcribed for posterity.³⁴ Here, I have also included Aberhart's "Man from Mars" series which, in being broadcast over the radio during Aberhart's normal timeslot, involved the use of a fictitious "Man from Mars" who, in being played by an actor, would make observations of Albertan society and act as an additional means by which Aberhart could articulate characteristics of the Albertan group identity.³⁵

Throughout his life and especially in this period, Aberhart was an intensely prolific speaker and writer, making it beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of Aberhart's entire discursive appeal. This analysis is also limited by barriers of access to a substantial amount of material pertaining to Aberhart's communicative activities from this period. While the Provincial Archives of

³⁴ These radio excerpts were found in the Walter Norman Smith Papers at the Glenbow-Alberta Institute. These have been made available online through the University of Calgary.

³⁵ The complete original transcript used for these broadcasts has been lost. The best copies currently available are a handwritten copy completed by Iris Miller in 1954 and are physically available through the Iris Miller collection at the Glenbow-Alberta Institute. Given my inability to access the full physical copy document in Edmonton, I have relied on the extensive passages of the document used in Elliot and Miller's biography of Aberhart as the source of my excerpts in this analysis.

Alberta holds physical copies and audio tape recordings of many of Aberhart's speeches, issues related to travel, finance resources, and time have rendered their use in this analysis unfeasible. Additionally, in being undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic, this research was also restricted by further limitations on interprovincial travel and reduced staffing levels in public archives and libraries. Nevertheless, by selecting a portion of Aberhart's broader corpus this analysis is still capable of demonstrating broader themes in Aberhart's rhetoric. Put more specifically, this is enough material to determine whether or not Aberhart, in making his appeal for formal leadership, drew on the broader Albertan group identity.

5.4.1 Hypothesis One: Individual Prototypicality

The first hypothesis of this analysis states: *If an aspiring leader is most effective at conveying themselves as a prototypical member, understood through the way they articulate the group's category prototypes as determined by a meta-contrast ratio, they will then be seen as a legitimate source of authority.* If this is accurate, the proceeding analysis ought to demonstrate this process of prototypicality conveyance in four discernable stages.

First, Aberhart should be observed to consistently address and direct his rhetoric towards a specific and discernable group. Given his aspiration for provincial leadership, this should be some variant on the broader notion of "Albertan." Second, Aberhart should then proceed to articulate a set of discernable characteristics of that group that act as means by which to emphasize their similarities. Given the theoretical framework that has been developed in this analysis, Aberhart is assumed to have considerable creativity in determining what those characteristics are in addition to the specific way by which he articulates it. Nevertheless, they should find grounding in the broader aspects of the Albertan context that provide a salient means by which to emphasize a source of similarity, such as the common economic experience or historic experience of alienation. From here, Aberhart should then thirdly identify a discernable "out-group" that is characterized in a way that distinguishes them from the identity of Albertans that he constructs, further emphasizing Albertans' similarities with each other and distinctions from others. Finally, on the basis of this defined and articulated set of characteristics,

Aberhart should convey himself as prototypical by explicitly referring to the fact that he exemplifies the set of characteristics he has articulated.

As mentioned above in the theoretical framework chapter, this methodological framework simplifies the identity articulation process. In reality, it is likely that all these components operate simultaneously and with considerable overlap rather than sequentially. Nevertheless, in examining Aberhart's communications as leader we should be able to extrapolate separate and discernible elements of each.

When it comes to the first stage of the process, it is clear that Aberhart directs his appeal to a consistent notion of the "people of Alberta." For instance, *The Social Credit Manuel* introduces Social Credit as the subject that has "pressed itself upon the consciousness of the people of this province" (Aberhart 1935, p.8). The same document goes on to state that the platform "provides the bare necessities of life to every bona fide citizen of the Province, and forever frees our loyal citizens from the dread of poverty" (Aberhart 1935, p.12).

In examining the second stage of the process, the material I have analyzed demonstrates that Aberhart articulates a specific conceptualization of who the "people of Alberta" are by emphasizing two main characteristics. First, they are defined by their common, collective experience of suffering. Aberhart's speeches and written memorandum are full of images of stark suffering on the part of farmers and other workers and blaming a set of circumstances largely beyond their control. For instance, on a radio broadcast from November 27, 1934, the Man from Mars observes to Aberhart that "I find that many of your people are suffering from poverty and starvation. Even little children cry for the food and clothing that your government ordered destroyed. But their parents cannot buy the goods because they have no money" (Aberhart, Man from Mars Broadcast, 27 November 1934). Similarly, in a broadcast on April 28th, 1935, Aberhart depicts the picture of a woman and two children who had "such a worn-out looking face. Hope was gone...the two little ones were half sobbing and half crying at her knee and she hadn't anything to give them" (Aberhart, Campaign Broadcast, April 28th 1935). Throughout these examples, Aberhart is focused above all on the fact that this was not the

necessary state of affairs, that there was “poverty in the midst of plenty.” An example includes the question he asked in a 1934 statement before the provincial legislature:

Let us remember that our province is potentially a land of plenty. None of our citizens should be suffering from want or privation. The granaries are full and goods are piled high in the storehouses. We have an abundance of foodstuffs that are being wasted, or wantonly destroyed. Why then should many of our people be in dire need, in suffering from worry, from privation, and from hopelessness? (Aberhart 1934, p.11).

It was on the basis of this broad economic group condition that Aberhart both attacks the incumbent administration and positions his particular policy agenda as the right solution. Consequently, the Social Credit Manuel articulates the fundamental premise and goal of the policy program as the principle that “no bona fide citizen, man, women, or child, shall be allowed to suffer for lack of the bare necessities of food, clothing, and shelter, in the midst of plenty or abundance” (Aberhart 1935, p.8). Here, the lack of support for Social Credit by incumbent governments and political elites is decried as being a product of the pejorative “traditional type of mind...which fears to try anything that has not been proven by actual experience to be well founded” (Aberhart 1935, p.61).

The second major characteristic that Aberhart used to define Albertans was their overall moral and religious superiority. Here, there is an assumption that the province’s improvement is largely on account of the intelligence, strength, and initiative of the people. In concluding one November 13th Man from Mars broadcast, for instance, he admonishes his listeners to rise above their predicament and forge a path forward: “surely every citizen of Alberta should have enough common, ordinary horse-sense to know that there is no need to starve in a full hay padlock...he invariably goes to the core of the matter and there raises his standard living. We can if we will” (Aberhart, Man from Mars Broadcast, November 13 1934). This was further interpreted through a particularly religious lens, in which Aberhart prompts Albertans to support Social Credit on the basis of their Christian values, arguing that Social Credit was “applied, practical Christianity” (Aberhart, Campaign Broadcast, 3 May 1935). His sermons and radio broadcasts came to interpret more and more Bible stories and passages as consistent with Social Credit. In a

broadcast on April 30th, 1935, for instance, he draws upon Christ's parable of the ten pounds in Luke 19 to not only describe the economic mechanism behind social credit but insinuate that Christ himself was supportive of the economic theory (Aberhart, Campaign Broadcast, 30 April 1935). Similarly, in a Easter broadcast of April 19th, 1935, he compares his political movement to the resurrection of Christ: "The Easter message is a message of hope. There is deliverance. There is salvation. God can and will work even a miracle to bring his people into a place of joy and prosperity. Is that not a message for all believers of Social Credit" (Aberhart, Campaign Broadcast, 19 April 1935).

From here, an examination of this qualitative material also demonstrates the third process in Aberhart's identification of financial interests as a discernable out-group that, in addition to supplying a specific explanation for the group-based suffering, provided the group with the means to further clarify who they were by distinguishing themselves from others. Here, Aberhart emphasizes the degree to which this out-group not only does not experience the same degree of suffering, but are the active origin of Albertan's trial. There is, first, his specific and repeated identification of the "Fifty Big Shots of Canada" to describe the elitism of the country's main economic and political institutions (Aberhart, Campaign Broadcast, 11 August 1935). Their particular crime was the way in which they selfishly manipulated and controlled Alberta's wealth for their own material gain (Aberhart 1935, p. 13-14). Nevertheless, there remained a broader, more sinister force in the "financial power" and their "diabolical, slanderous, vicious style of propaganda work" (Aberhart, Campaign Broadcast, 11 August 1935).

Aberhart continually pointed out the degree in which, in comparison to the morally forthright Albertan, eastern-based financiers lacked virtue. In one speech, for instance, Aberhart labelled all political elites as "fornicators, grafters, and reprobates" (Aberhart, Campaign Broadcast, 24 March 1935). But these personal attacks more often manifested themselves in a particularly Christian framework. In a broadcast, for instance, Aberhart writes that although God has provided for all of the province's needs "the selfish, greedy, ungodly worshipers of the golden god and their henchmen have stolen the bounties", adding that "these grafters, these men who have confiscated the power are depriving people from their very living, starving them to death" (Aberhart, Campaign

Broadcast, 21 April 1935). In another he suggests that their principles are “like those of the man who betrayed Christ. Gold was his god and millions have suffered because of it” (Aberhart, Campaign Broadcast, 9 April 1935). Aberhart also insinuates that financial elites are co-conspirators with the devil (Aberhart, Campaign Broadcast, 24 February 1935).

Overall, then, it is evident that Aberhart articulated a clear picture and concept of the Albertan group identity comprised of a collective experience of suffering and the characteristic of moral and religious virtue. In identifying the out group of financial interests, Aberhart assisted in providing a further means by which the group could clarify its distinctions from a specified opponent. From here, this analysis can now expect that this articulated group identity will comprise Aberhart’s legitimacy as an aspiring leader in that he will be presented as prototypical of this common set of characteristics.

However, when Aberhart himself is considered, it is difficult to determine what aspect of his experience, personal characteristics, or rhetoric makes him prototypical. This is particularly the case for his articulation of the Albertan group that is primarily comprised of a common experience of suffering. While his speeches do convey the fact that he himself experienced the suffering, potentially to a greater degree, as both an educator and pastoral leader, it is unclear regarding what aspect of Aberhart’s leadership conveyed him as *particularly evocative* of the group’s sense of suffering in a way that directly contrasted with the out-group he designed. Although not incredibly wealthy, Aberhart was by all indicators financial stable and, at least in his personal life, relatively isolated from the worst impacts of the Depression (David and Elliot 1987). He, for instance, did not directly experience the loss of a livelihood while simultaneously meeting interest payments. He had no real relationship, positive or negative, to the financial interests he decried.

Alternatively, Aberhart’s prototypicality on the basis of his religious rhetoric has more merit. It could be claimed that Aberhart’s legitimacy in this regard was derived from his proven track-record, personal following, and integrity as a committed religious leader. And, similarly, the particularly direct language he utilized helped to draw

attention to the anti-elitist elements of his policy program. Nevertheless, this is insufficient for two main reasons. First, it seems unlikely that, given the importance of Albertan's broader economic experience to Social Credit's electoral appeal, Aberhart was able to establish his prototypicality without incorporating the characteristic of a collective experience of suffering. Second, a broad and vague appeal to Christian values, regardless of the particular tone of this case, does not distinguish Aberhart's appeal in the same way that the reference to exploitation does. In the context of the time, a religious leader aspiring towards political office who used broad Christian rhetoric was in many ways the norm of the prairies during this period – other examples could include the social gospel articulated by Henry Wise Wood and the United Farmers of Alberta in 1921 and Premier John Brownlee's Methodism.

Consequently, given that this analysis was unable to find the evidence necessary to demonstrate Aberhart's prototypicality within the confines of the methodology used here I conclude there is no support for the hypothesized relationship as expressed in hypothesis one. More specifically, while it is evident that part of Aberhart's appeal was linked to an articulation of Albertan group characteristics, there is little to demonstrate that Aberhart was able to present himself as a prototypical member in a way that would account for his particular selection as a formal leader. We now turn to an analysis of the second hypothesis.

5.4.2 Hypothesis Two: Concretization

The second hypothesis of this analysis states that: *if a leader develops and communicates a salient understanding of the group identity and future course of action that is consistent with their prototypicality while also drawing upon broader and pre-existing characteristics of the group understanding (the principle of readiness), they are then more likely to be endowed with formal leadership.* In examining the second hypothesis, we should expect to see two broad methods of communication taken by Aberhart.

First, we should expect to demonstrate that, in communicating his policy agenda, Aberhart draws upon the broader and pre-existing means by which the Albertan group identity processes, understands, and makes evaluations of political phenomena. As

theorized, Aberhart has considerable creativity in determining the particular and specific means by which these broad, abstract attempts are utilized to justify his policy agenda. Nevertheless, this hypothesis suggests that he is required to utilize them in order to mount a successful leadership appeal. Second, we should expect to observe that Aberhart conveys his policy agenda as the concretization of this particular articulation of this broader group understanding. Here, his policy agenda should be portrayed as not only consistent with the broader understanding but communicated as the most legitimate course of action to be taken forward.

As discussed in the previous section, there is clear evidence that Aberhart's appeal was rooted in his articulation of the Albertan group as characterized by its members' common experience of suffering at the hands of an inefficient economic system and an exploitative class of elites. His social credit policy agenda was presented as the solution to this predicament: by changing the monetary system, social dividends would not only ensure a greater economic system but challenge the power of these broader financial forces (Finkel 1989). To what extent was this rhetorically entrenched within broader, more abstract pre-existing aspects of Albertan group understanding?

This broader group understanding of Alberta was articulated in detail in Chapter 4. Overall, it was claimed to interpret its overall characterization and goal as a settler community established for the purposes of economic prosperity. Given the early impact of American settlers, this came to be understood through a particular individualist and pro-freedom lens. Nevertheless, the economic and realities of the province, particularly its economic precarity and dominance by central Canadian interests, resulted in a particular group-level framework that was prone to be suspicious of intervening, foreign outsiders.

This analysis will isolate three factors. These are both simplifications and purely conceptual labels; the reality is both far more complex and full of overlap. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this analysis, we should expect to observe their use in a way that is empirically discernable. Therefore, the following analysis will be organized by concentrated discussions of three themes.

First, we should expect to observe that Aberhart includes rhetorical appeals to the broader, abstract goal of economic prosperity, in addition to a particular articulation of the romantic image of the “Last Best West” and the enterprising settler. From here, his policy agenda should be communicated as the most legitimate means by which the province can achieve economic prosperity in a way that is fulfilling of this settler image.

Second, we should expect to observe that Aberhart includes rhetorical emphasis on the values of individualism, self-reliance, and freedom. From here, we should observe him communicate his policy agenda as being not only consistent with these values, but conducive towards maximizing it.

Third, we should expect to observe that Aberhart consistently references the negative impact of intervening foreign outsiders, with particular attention directed to the fact that their behavior is largely to blame for Alberta’s problems. From here, we should observe that Aberhart communicates his policy agenda as the means by which to remove that power and instill a greater degree of power in the hands of Albertans themselves.

Methodologically, this analysis will rely on the same communicative materials that will be read and observed so as to determine if consistent discursive appeals to these three themes can be extracted.

First, the emphasis on the province’s potential for material prosperity is demonstrably an aspect of Aberhart’s leadership appeal. As discussed, the central claim of Social Credit more broadly is that modern industrialization had created more than enough to ensure material prosperity. It was only the current economic system, particularly as it was manipulated by self-interested financiers, that produced “poverty in the midst of plenty” (Aberhart 1935, p.2). Particularly revealing is the way that, rather than draw upon Douglas’s focus on industrial production, Aberhart identified the province’s abundance of natural resources as the key to Alberta’s prosperity, as it in this area that God “has poured out from his rich storehouse of heaven upon mankind” (Aberhart, Campaign Broadcast, 21 April 1935).

Here, certain elements of Aberhart's rhetoric conjure the images of the province's history of settlement. In the *Social Credit Manual* for instance, Aberhart (1935, p.4) considers Albertan control over natural resources to be the "cultural heritage" of the province's people given the "pioneering work of our forefathers" in settling and developing the region's economic potential. Aberhart's appeal also contains specific allusions to the romantic "last best west" image of the province. While his appeal is universal in its outlook and aspirations, Aberhart suggests that Alberta is the originator and leader of this much broader political and religious movement: "we trust that there will sweep over this province and over this western land such a wave of reverence...I am persuaded myself that it is only by the grace and power of God that our people shall be delivered from the awful conditions that threaten us" (Aberhart, Campaign Broadcast, March 19, 1935).

But to what extent did Aberhart base his appeal as a concretization of the individualist and freedom-based Albertan interpretation posited in this thesis? This, as discussed previously, is a highly controversial element of Aberhart's broader policy agenda. Scholars continue to debate the degree to which his movement is better understood as socialistic, conservative, or quasi-fascist (Macpherson 1953; Irving 1959; Finkel 1989). Clearly, Aberhart and his movement drew upon language from each, but I do nonetheless want to argue that this appeal was more oriented as a concretization of a more individual-oriented group understanding that prioritized values pertaining to freedom and self-reliance.

This is evidenced by the fact that, despite advocating for a policy program of a highly interventionist government, Aberhart consistently stressed that his objectives were conducive to individual freedom and enterprise. In describing the broader "cultural heritage" of the province's natural resources, for instance, he argues that its main strength resides in the way "it gives the individual and opportunity to develop his individuality" (Aberhart 1935, p.13). Here, the implementation of Social Credit for the purposes of poverty alleviation is justified in the way that it actually increases freedom, as put in one July broadcast: "this provision of the bare necessities of life will give the individual an

economic freedom that he has never known before and must of necessity therefore give him a chance for self-development” (Aberhart, 12 July 1935).

It is also important to draw attention to how Aberhart distinguished himself and his movement from socialism. While both posited the claim that the contemporary citizen was in a position of exploitation by financial elites, he claims that whereas the latter believes that the “State is supreme and the individual must sacrifice all his rights or privileges for the welfare of the State as a whole”, Social Credit “makes the individual supreme” (Aberhart 1935, p. 57). To this, he further adds that “individual enterprise must be encouraged in every way possible”, entailing the breakup of monopolies and the decentralization of power to maximize individual freedom (Aberhart 1935, p.14).

Finally, as discussed, the third characteristic posits that Albertan group understanding has a broader tendency to approach, evaluate, and frame the province’s problems through the lens of a foreign, intervening actor. From an observation of the material used in this analysis, it is evident that this theme comprises an essential part of Aberhart’s policy agenda. As demonstrated in this chapter, the activities of financial elites are consistently blamed as being the primary source of Alberta’s problems (Aberhart 1935, p. 13-14; Aberhart, Campaign Broadcast, 21 April 1935; 11 August 1935; 19 March 1935). And, here, Social Credit is legitimized as the means to both remove that power and return control to the “people of Alberta”. In the *Social Credit Manuel*, for instance, Aberhart (1935, p.13-14) argues that “the great wealth of our natural resources” is “being selfishly manipulated and controlled by one or more men known as the “Fifty Big Shots of Canada.” Here, he suggests that Social Credit as a policy program recognizes that this wealth “is the property of the individuals who are bona fide citizens of our province, and should never be allowed to go entirely to the control of any small group of men.”

To conclude, this section of the chapter sought to apply the second hypothesis to the case of William Aberhart’s early leadership of the Social Credit movement. It was hypothesized that Aberhart’s success at attaining formal leadership was the result of his ability to convey his leadership and policy agenda as both consistent with the broader and

pre-existing component of the Albertan group understanding in addition to acting as its concretization so as to legitimize it as the best course of action. From this basis I articulated three specific characteristics would mark the leaders public appeals: an emphasis on economic prosperity linked to an abstract image of the Albertan settler; the importance given to individualism, free enterprise, and freedom; and calls to remove the influence of an outside interfering agent.

When the results of the analysis of Aberhart's communications are considered, the second hypothesis is sufficiently supported. Most characteristics – including the emphasis on economic prosperity, the value placed on individual freedom, the need to remove outside control, and a particularly moral attack on outside interference – all comprise aspects of Aberhart's appeals, including the fact that his policy agenda is communicated as the best means by which to advance them. With these findings reported, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the usefulness of the broader identity leadership framework, as below.

5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter attempted to understand the particular success of William Aberhart's 1935 appeal for leadership through a social identity lens. This was undertaken by utilizing a collection of written and oral communications that were analyzed to locate evidence in support of the two main hypotheses guiding this study. The first hypothesis proposed that William Aberhart based the initial legitimacy of his appeal in his being prototypical of an articulated set of characteristics that distinguish the Albertan group. In the data considered here it is evident that, although Aberhart's appeal included articulations of the characteristics of Albertan group, there is no indication that he was able to establish himself as a prototypical group member. With respect to the second hypothesis, the evidence supports the expectation that Aberhart legitimized his policy agenda through the way it was consistent with broader and pre-existing understandings of the Albertan group identity. Aberhart was found to communicate in ways that reflected the hypothesized elements of the Albertan group identity.

Overall, in evaluating the usefulness of social identity theory to understand how political leaders are able to mobilize support, this approach lacks explanatory power with respect to this case study. Instead, the analysis seems to suggest that Aberhart was successful in attaining formal leadership despite the fact that he did not aim to establish himself as a prototypical member of the Albertan group identity. Given this, the second stage of this process, while found to be accurate, is rendered empirically imprecise. Without the metric of prototypicality, this alone does not provide an answer to question of why Aberhart's particular use of these broader aspects of the Albertan group understanding were successful. Furthermore, it provides little precise detail on the degree to which a leader successfully appeals to broader group-based understandings. Instead, the main characteristics of Albertan identity formulated in this analysis are broad, abstract, and vague, entailing that they can be mended so far as to argue that an incredibly wide assortment of leaders, both successful and unsuccessful, satisfy the hypothesis.

In being elected to provincial office, Aberhart would go on to deal with the limitations of implanting Social Credit policy within the province. Although he did retain the support of a significant degree of the public, winning another majority in 1940, he was never able to incorporate his goals in this regard, as every attempt at legislation was disallowed by the Federal government (David and Elliot 1987). This didn't entail that his administration was a total failure; his work as Premier did leave an admirable record in productive reforms in education, labor, and social policy (Finkel 1989). Nevertheless, by the time of his death by heart attack in 1943, Aberhart had grown increasingly unfocused, paranoid, and authoritarian in his leadership. He was succeeded by his protégé Ernest Manning who, in discarding the party's monetary policies, was able to retain a twenty-five-year hold on power by administrating over a middle-of-the road conservative regime that relied on anti-socialism, laissez faire capitalism, and traditional religious values (Barr 1974; Wesley 2011).

Peter Lougheed, the subject of this thesis's next case study, was able to articulate a successful leadership appeal with the provincial Progressive Conservatives in 1971 (Hustak 1979). In analyzing the components of his appeal as theorized by social identity theory, we should expect to see that Lougheed, in addition to establishing his

prototypicality of the Albertan group identity, will come to articulate and base his policy program in the same set of broader principles as Aberhart.

Chapter 6 – Peter Lougheed and the Progressive Conservatives, 1971

6 Introduction

Peter Lougheed, leader of the Alberta Progressive Conservatives and premier from 1971 to 1985, is notable for the way he took over a moribund political party and led it to defeat a thirty-five year Social Credit dynasty (Hustak 1979; Wood 1985; Tupper 2004). At the time of his first bid for power he was portrayed by the media as the representative of an emergent Alberta that was younger, urban, cosmopolitan, and more assertive of its place within Canadian federalism (Bell 1993; Richards and Pratt 1979; Palmer and Palmer 1976). This image stood in sharp contrast to the established Social Credit party which at this point was associated with a rural, religious and traditional Alberta.

As with last chapter's case study of William Aberhart's leadership, this chapter seeks to determine whether Lougheed's success can be explained through identity leadership theory as it has been developed in this analysis (Haslam et al. 2020). As in the last case, here I analyze the components of Lougheed's initial leadership appeal in 1971 to determine if there is support for the two core hypotheses. Applied to this premier, hypothesis one posits that if he based his appeal in his own individual prototypicality of an articulated group identity he will then have a basis of legitimate authority. The second hypothesis holds that if Lougheed framed his policy agenda as the concretization of a coherent set of pre-existing Albertan group understandings and values he will then be more likely to receive support. This chapter follows the previous one in its basic structure. First, it provides a brief portrait of Peter Lougheed, the basis of his aspirational leadership, and the components of his policy agenda. Second, it provides a summary of the broader economic, social, and political context surrounding Lougheed's election in 1971. Here, particular attention is directed to the means by which his victory can be interpreted through the broader group identity theorized in the previous chapter. Third, this chapter will briefly consider conventional and popular approaches to Lougheed's success. Finally, Lougheed's activities as an aspirational leader will be analyzed to determine if there is any evidence in support of the two hypotheses. Overall, I conclude that identity leadership theory as applied in this thesis lacks explanatory value in

accounting for the particular success of Peter Lougheed. More precisely, Lougheed was able to successfully gain his leadership position despite no demonstrable evidence that he based his appeal in being prototypical of an articulated group identity.

6.1 The Leader and The Appeal: Peter Lougheed and the Progressive Conservative Party

This section provides an overview of Peter Lougheed, his aspirations for formal political leadership, and the characteristics of the policy agenda he advocated for. Overall, in Lougheed's case, these aspects are far less studied than those of Premier Aberhart, consisting of a few outdated biographies and brief historical profiles (see Hustak 1979; Wood 1985; Tupper 2004). Nevertheless, from the material available, this analysis can construct a cohesive picture of Lougheed's background and broader political agenda in becoming an aspiring leader.

Lougheed was born in 1928 to a settled and distinguished Calgary family. His grandfather, James Peter Lougheed, was a successful Conservative Senator and federal cabinet member. And, while his family suffered financially from the Great Depression, he grew up in a position of relative normalcy, luxury, and comfort. Beyond this, his "upbringing and early life experiences were unexceptional" (Tupper 2004, p.205). Attending the University of Alberta and the Masters of Business Administration program at Harvard, Lougheed expressed his desire to live a "life of many paths" with work in both public and private sectors (Tupper 2004, p.206). As such, his early career included work for Gulf Oil in Oklahoma, a series of executive positions at the Mannix Corporation, and the establishment of his own law practice.

Nevertheless, in reviewing his pre-political life, Tupper (2004, p.206) writes that there are no "obvious clues about the source of his ambitions or his strong desire to make his mark." Here, some biographers have posited the claim that he was motivated by the goal of reestablishing the social and economic esteem of his family name (Hustak 1979). Others, however, point out that there appears no explicit proof or admittance of that motivation on Lougheed's part (Wood 1985; Tupper 2004). Instead, in retrospective interviews, Lougheed has referred to his ingrained value of public service, a vague and

almost cliché motivation that – even if true – does not advance this analysis any further in attempting to understand his broader motivations (Wood 1985; Tupper 2004).

Lougheed’s biographers suggest that he had made the decision to run for political office by the early 1960s and that, although loosely considering himself a Tory, the particular path to the leadership of the provincial Progressive Conservative party was motivated by pragmatic calculation (Hustak 1979). By this point, Lougheed had neither any political experience nor any involvement with partisan activism. To him, running federally as an MP promised he would spend several years in Parliament’s backbenches, a job that he believed to be dull, inconvenient, and lacking in accomplishment. Provincial leadership, in contrast, provided the opposite: a chance to take a position of authority over an administration’s entire organization, tone, and policy agenda (Hustak 1979).

As argued by his biographers and repeated in many of his interviews, Lougheed arrived in office with a broader public policy agenda. Commonly referred to as a “province-building” vision, his agenda envisioned greater control and involvement on the part of the provincial government within Albertan society and Canadian federalism more broadly (Hustak 1979; Wood 1985; Tupper 2004). Internally, Lougheed believed that the province should take greater advantage of the wealth generated by oil extraction to fund both ambitious government initiatives within Albertan society in addition to encouraging economic diversification. The latter was seen as a means by which to buttress Alberta society against its historical reliance on boom and bust cycles, giving province greater control over its economic future (Tupper 2004). However, this sense of greater control and initiative on the part of the provincial government also entailed a change in broader Canadian federalism, in that Alberta – as the prime owner of these resources – ought to have more resource control, particularly in terms of supply, royalty, trade, and the direction of revenue. Attached to this was a broader vision of a more assertive and confident province; in Lougheed’s own words, he wanted Alberta to be not just a “junior partner” in Confederation but a “leader” (Tupper 2004, p.206).

When Lougheed ran for the party’s leadership in 1965, the provincial Progressive Conservative party of Alberta was a political force close to irrelevancy; its chances of

success amounted to “absolutely nothing” according to Hustak’s (1979, p.65) description. Although forming the official opposition to the province’s early Liberal administrations after 1905, since the time of the UFA it failed to gain more than a foothold in the legislature.³⁶ Consequently, by the time of Lougheed’s election as leader, the party had virtually no membership, organization, or financial resources to utilize. The party, then, was to Lougheed little more than a “blank slate” from which he could mount an appeal for the formal leadership of the province (Tupper 2004).

Consequently, then, Lougheed’s early efforts were directed to building the broader organizational and financial structure of the party. Expecting a PC victory to be accomplished only after several elections, Lougheed focused on conveying his party not so much as a radical departure, but as a competent and legitimate alternative to the incumbent Social Credit administration. Priority was placed on recruiting competent candidates, avoiding personal attacks on partisan opponents, and developing sound policy pronouncements (Hustak 1979; Wood 1985; Tupper 2004). In 1967, his first election, he along with five other PC candidates were elected to the legislature. His role as leader of the Official Opposition further helped to establish his presence and that of his party (Tupper 2004), providing an important platform from which Lougheed could both criticize the government and increase his name recognition. Here, Lougheed and his caucus deliberately positioned themselves as a “government in waiting”, writing and introducing their own legislation (Hustak 1979).

In 1971, Lougheed and the Progressive Conservative’s campaign was comprised of elements of the leader’s broader policy vision and more specific “bread and butter” considerations. Put together through the campaign slogan of “NOW!”, the Progressive Conservatives promised economic diversification, a review of the province’s oil royalty system, a provincial bill of rights, more open government, expanded Medicare, a revamped auto insurance regime, and greater support for rural communities among other

³⁶ For instance, between 1940 and 1952, the party won no seats in the legislature. This changed somewhat in the 1950s as the party gained a total of three seats in 1955. Nevertheless, by 1963, the last election before Lougheed took over the leadership, the party was again reduced to nothing.

policies (Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta 1971). This proved to be incredibly successful as, in contrast his own expectations, Lougheed was elected Premier; the PC's, with about 46% of the popular vote, won 49 of the Legislature's 71 seats (Tupper 2004).

As with the previous case study, this chapter aims to ascertain whether Lougheed's success can be understood through identity leadership theory. Nevertheless, before doing so, I will discuss the broader political, economic, and social context of the province at the time, in addition to the main scholarly efforts to explain Lougheed's success. This section provides insight into the Albertan population that elected Lougheed, forming an important basis of the prototypicality and group-based appeal this analysis expects him to articulate.

6.2 The Context: The "New Alberta"

In seeking to understand Lougheed's appeal for leadership, this section provides an overview of the broader economic, social, and cultural change that had occurred in Alberta since the time, coming to form a different set of problems, concerns, and aspirations on the part of the province's population. From the time of Aberhart to Lougheed's first election in 1967, Alberta had undergone substantial economic, social, and culture change. Overall, the 1947 discovery of oil in Leduc had set the province on a trajectory of unprecedented industrialization and economic growth (Conway 2004). The petroleum industry, rather than agriculture, had become the main export-based extractive commodity on the postwar era on which the population relied upon for economic wellbeing (Tupper and Gibbins 1992).

This had important consequences for the demographic characteristics of Alberta. First, the province's rate of immigration and population grew drastically, entailing that an area of approximately 790,000 residents in 1941 had grown to just under 1.5 million by 1971 (Palmer and Palmer 1971). These new residents contributed to a broader migration to the cities, leading to an increasingly urbanized and cosmopolitan population. By the 1970s, just under half of the province lived in cities, professed less religious belief, were more educated, and held a higher standard of life (Bell 1993). In effect, the traditional

Alberta that had supported Aberhart – predominately rural, highly religious, and orientated around agricultural industries – had been replaced by a secular, younger, and more educated urban society, comprised in particular by a novel middle class whose livelihoods were oriented around the commercial, manufacturing, and service industries that had been generated by the petroleum industry (Richards and Pratt 1979).

Throughout these changes, Social Credit under the leadership of Ernest Manning had maintained a tight control over the government of the province. As briefly discussed last chapter, Manning had, in succeeding Aberhart as premier in 1943, quickly discarded the party's attachment to monetary reform in favor of a "middle-of-the-road regime with a slight reformist tinge" (Barr 1974, p.56). Up until the time of Manning's retirement in 1968, the government can be best described as loosely social conservative, characterized by a rhetorical commitment to free enterprise, individual freedom, traditional religious values, and anti-socialism (Wesley 2011).

This was an effective and appropriate method of administration for the time. Here, the government's efforts at avoiding regulation, encouraging international investment, and lowering the costs of business had ensured a period of consistent prosperity and economic growth (Finkel 1989). Nevertheless, the revenue derived from oil royalties allowed the government to spend generously on infrastructure, healthcare, education, and other social programs while maintaining the lowest tax rates in Canada (Finkel 1989). In effect, given both economic security and a relatively generous social safety net, Albertans were no longer as compelled to turn to radical and reform-based movements as they had once been.

Nevertheless, by the time of Lougheed's emergence as leader of the Progressive Conservatives, there were indications that Social Credit's dominance was beginning to weaken. Outside of a general complacency, the party was widely regarded to have remained tethered to its now-dated origins in a rural and religious Alberta, making it unable to properly grasp and address the aspirations of the province's urban residents (Palmer and Palmer 1971; Tupper 2004). Also evident was a shift in the broader tone within Canadian federalism towards the end of 1960s. That while Manning's "isolationist

boosterism” (Wesley 2011, p.81) may have suited Canada of the 1950s , the rise of Quebec nationalism, official bilingualism, and the beginnings of the era of ‘mega constitutional politics’ produced, in the administration of the Trudeau Liberals, a far more assertive Federal government with a greater willingness to interfere within areas of provincial jurisdiction (Raymaker 2017).

Given that the broader context has been covered, this analysis can now turn to analyzing the basis for Lougheed’s success. This chapter, as discussed, is primarily interested in determining the usefulness of a social identity lens. Nevertheless, before engaging in that endeavor it is useful to address the scholarly work that has already sought to understand the substantive aspects of his appeal. In engaging with this literature, this analysis can get a better picture of the factors that demonstrably contributed to Lougheed’s success.

6.3 Traditional Accounts of Lougheed’s Success

What factors account for Lougheed’s success in garnering support for his leadership? Here, the mainstream scholarly work on this question tends to be positioned around one broad question: how much of Lougheed’s defeat of Social Credit was the product of an inevitable historic process linked to the seismic economic, demographic, and social changes that had taken place in Albertan society? Richard and Pratt (1979, p.148) write that “Lougheed's victory and the abrupt termination of the Social Credit dynasty represented an inevitable, albeit considerably delayed, response of the electoral system to rapid population growth, urbanization, and secularization.” This, as it is emphasized by Palmer and Palmer (1971, p.123), “was not primarily based on superior campaigning or on issues” but the fact that Social Credit, “a rural, small town, and lower middle-class movement, had little chance of surviving in a society which was not only increasingly urban and middle class but was also one in which urban values had penetrated rural areas.”

Nevertheless, exactly how it is that the Conservatives under Lougheed, rather than any other political choice, were the option to which power shifted depends on the specific analysis. One broad approach, for instance, updates Macpherson’s (1963) argument to

suggest that the success of Lougheed marked the eclipse of Social Credit's independent commodity producer base and the transfer of power to a new dominant economic group, whether this is understood to be the interests of petroleum producers or a notion of the secular, urban-based "middle class" (Richards and Pratt 1979; Tupper 2004). The point here is to emphasize that, rather than the escape from a 'semi-colonial' capitalist system, this new class were shaped by a novel self-confidence that favored a more assertive provincial government and greater local control over resources (Thomas 1980). This framework, nevertheless, shares the precise same set of issues with Macpherson's historic framework in that it overemphasizes the share of the population this class comprised at the time (Bell 1993). This explanation is also not consistent with the actual election results from the period. In reality, Social Credit always had a significant degree of support in cities to the extent that, even up until 1967, the party was in fact more popular in these areas than the Progressive Conservatives (Bell 1993).

The other main approach taken by scholars is to examine the degree to which Lougheed's appeal was comprised of a necessary mix of change and continuity. This view holds that in addition to his particular fit to the needs and aspirations of the moment, Lougheed's appeal was entrenched in the broader conservative rhetoric of both the Social Credit tradition and Alberta's political culture more broadly (Hustak 1979; Wiseman 2007; Wesley 2011). This is to say that Lougheed's success resides not so much in his ability to articulate a totally novel policy agenda, but the fact that he conveyed himself as a credible alternative to the specific rhetoric and policy agenda of Social Credit. The provincial Liberal party was too closely linked to federal political institutions to be palatable, and Albertans were too accustomed to an anti-socialist mantra to support the NDP (Wesley 2011; Takach 2010). Of course, this explanation rests on the claim that the ideological and rhetorical framework of Social Credit (particularly that of Manning) and Lougheed were roughly the same, a claim disputed by some analysts (see Wesley 2011).

Nevertheless, the main problem with this broader emphasis on historical inevitability is that it does not provide a useful answer as to why Lougheed's specific ideology, rhetoric, or policy agenda was particularly successful rather than any other appeal that had been made around that time. First, it could be disputed that the success

had to be conservative in outlook. As discussed in previous chapters, the province did and continued to have left-wing elements in its politics (Young 1978). The Liberals also had a solid base of support throughout the 1950s and 1960s that, in popular vote share, was roughly similar to that of the PCs (Rennie 2004). Another important questions also concerns why this had this not been achieved by pre-Lougheed party leaders, particularly in light of the fact that several of the factors attributed to predetermining his success – secularization, urbanization, and the growth of petroleum – had by this point already begun to coalesce.

Consequently, then, a second approach is to emphasize the significant contingency of the moment. Bell (1993,p.471), for instance, emphasizes the fact that even by the late 1960s Social Credit was still popular, entailing that “there was no reason to expect that Lougheed’s efforts to unseat the government would be any more successful than the attempts made by others since 1940.” Until his retirement, Manning, labelled by Lougheed himself as “a colossus”, was still – barring “cataclysmic province-wide changes” – widely regarded as electorally unbeatable (Tupper 2004, p.206). Lougheed, in fact, did not believe that he would win the 1971 election at the time (Tupper 2004, p.209).

Instead, they suggest that Lougheed’s success was due to the specific variables of the time. In particular, there was the contrast between the leadership of Lougheed and of Henry Strom (Bell 1993). Overall, the claim here is that, since succeeding Manning in 1968, Strom had failed to convey an effective leadership image and overall direction of his government, leaving the electorate open to the persuasive appeal of a novel, optimistic, and charismatic leader. In this way, scholars have all been very willing to describe the failure of Strom’s leadership (Palmer 1971; Barr 1974; Bell 1993; Tupper 2004). But it also important to include the errors made during the campaign itself. Here, Social Credit not only lacked a strong local organizational impact, but made strategic mistakes – most notably the decision to not utilize the increasingly relevant medium of television (Barr 1974).

Social Credit's mistakes are contrasted with Lougheed's individual abilities at leadership, organization, and campaigning, ranging from the specific to the vague and trivial. One could emphasize his skills at party organization, candidate recruitment, and policy development, particularly in regard to the way in which it conveyed the Progressive Conservatives as a credible, legitimate, and safe alternative (Tupper 2004). This, includes, for instance, Lougheed's successful use of television, and his ability to present himself as a "Kennedy-type" leader of the time (Hustak 1979). It can also mean broader personality traits – his charisma and confidence. Nevertheless, we are still left with the broader question of how precisely Lougheed was capable of becoming associated with these attributes in a way that made him particularly successful at gaining leadership. Consequently, the remainder of this chapter will interpret these characteristics of Lougheed's appeal through a social identity lens, with attention to evaluating its accuracy and analytical ability to answer this question.

6.4 Lougheed Through a Social Identity Lens

This section applies the broader theoretical inferences of identity leadership theory to the Lougheed case by examining two hypotheses to determine its usefulness as a framework for understanding the exercise of leadership. As discussed above, identity leadership theory holds that the researcher can understand and account for the success of leaders through studying the way they base their appeal in group processes (Haslam et al. 2020). More precisely, this occurs in two stages: First, aspiring leaders establish themselves as prototypical members to gain the legitimacy necessary to articulate a course of action for the group. Second, this legitimacy then is used to articulate a substantive definition of identity in which, through a process of concretization and anchoring, the leader utilizes group processes to gain support for their specific policy agenda. We now turn to considering the hypotheses as they apply to the Lougheed case.

Methodologically, this analysis will rely on a set of primary sources of Lougheed's rhetoric and communication from the moment he became Leader of the Opposition on May 23rd, 1967 to his election as Premier of Alberta on August 31st, 1971. This will consist of three main pillars: The Progressive Conservative Party's 1971 policy platform, Lougheed's statements in the Legislative Assembly during the period, and an

assortment of additional public speeches derived from secondary sources. Unlike Aberhart's prolific number of written pieces and recorded speeches, the quantitative data available for this case is much more limited. First, as with Aberhart, although a significant amount of physical material is available at the Provincial Archives of Alberta, access was limited by the same temporal, travel, and financial concerns. Second, Lougheed gave far fewer public speeches than Aberhart and, of those that have been recorded, the majority have been found in journalistic reports and secondary sources that contain only quotes or broad themes. Throughout this period, Lougheed's biographies and additional secondary sources emphasize the fact that, rather than give high-profile speeches to large crowds (the kind that would be remembered and recorded in detail), the majority of Lougheed's activities as an aspiring leader were comprised of tours of the province, informal remarks to small assemblies of people, organizational planning, and policy development (Hustak 1979; Wood 1985; Tupper 2004).

An additional limitation to the material available is also due to the fact that while Lougheed was highly active in his legislative role, the debates of that time were not consistently recorded in a provincial Hansard. Instead, this analysis relies on material gathered from the Alberta Legislative Library Scrapbook Hansard that, while detailed, provides an incomplete account of the body's proceedings.³⁷ Nevertheless, the availability of the party's concise and detailed policy platform does provide more insight into this case than was possible for the first one. Here, biographical, and historical evidence suggests that, while not the sole author, Lougheed was highly involved in its formulation, entailing that this can be understood as a component of his own personal appeal (Hustak 1979). It is on the basis of this qualitative material that this section can now proceed to focused tests of the formal hypotheses of this study.³⁸

³⁷ Given the fact that the legislature lacked a Hansard, the Scrapbook Hansard is the product of the historical collection of newspaper clippings and speech transcripts collected by the legislature's library staff over time in order to retain a record of what transpired in the Assembly.

³⁸ The text used comes from the collection of political texts made available at www.poltext.org by The Center for Public Policy Analysis (CAPP) from Laval University, with the financial support of the *Fonds de recherche du Québec – société et culture* (FRQSC).

6.4.1 Hypothesis One: Individual Prototypicality

The first hypothesis guiding this analysis states: *If an aspiring leader is most effective at conveying themselves as a prototypical member, understood through the way they articulate the group's category prototypes as determined by a meta-contrast ratio, they will then be seen as a legitimate source of authority.* If this is accurate, the proceeding analysis ought to demonstrate this process of prototypicality conveyance in four discernable stages.

First, Lougheed should be observed to consistently address and direct his rhetoric towards a specific and discernable group. Given his aspiration for provincial leadership, this should be some variant on the broader notion of “Albertan”. Second, Lougheed should then proceed to articulate a set of discernable characteristics of that group that act as means by which to emphasize their similarities with each other. Given the theoretical framework that supports this analysis, Lougheed is assumed to have considerable creativity in determining what those characteristics are in addition to the specific way by which he articulates it. Nevertheless, these characteristics should find grounding in the broader aspects of the Albertan context that provide a salient means by which to emphasize a source of similarity, such as the common economic experience or a shared experience of alienation. Lougheed should then thirdly identify a discernable “out-group” that is characterized in a way that distinguishes them from the identity of Albertans that he constructs, further emphasizing Albertans’ similarities with each other and distinctions from other out-groups like central Canadians, for example. Finally, on the basis of this defined and articulated set of characteristics, Lougheed should convey himself as prototypical by explicitly referring to the fact that he exemplifies the set of characteristics he has articulated.

As mentioned above in the theoretical framework chapter, this methodological framework simplifies the identity articulation process. In reality, it is likely that all these components operate simultaneously and with considerable overlap rather than sequentially. Nevertheless, in analyzing Lougheed’s communications as leader we should be able to extrapolate separate and discernible elements of each.

When it comes to the first stage of the process, it is first clear that Lougheed's appeal is explicitly directed to a broader concept of "the people of Alberta" as the main group from which he seeks to gain support from. This is clearly evident in the PC's party 1971 election platform. His appeal communicates a vision of a "government responsible to the people" or, as put in a latter section, "government as a service to people" (Alberta Progressive Conservative Party 1971, p.3). The precise same construct is also employed in Lougheed's legislative speeches. His 1971 response to the Speech from the Throne, for instance, contains the exact same phrases: "to be responsive to people" (Lougheed 1971, p.29). Finally, immediate firsthand reporting of other legislative activities indicate Lougheed's frequent appeal to the notion of a broader "Alberta interest" in his speeches, arguing that the incumbent Social Credit government had failed to properly advance this interest (Bell 1969, 1971; Frank 1969; Edmonton Journal 1969).

In examining the second stage of the prototypical group process, the qualitative data I analyzed shows little explicit, substantive, and consistent effort on the part of Lougheed to base his policy agenda within a specific articulation of the characteristics of the Albertan group. The Progressive Conservative policy platform, first, remains highly technocratic and issues-based in outlook. It is primarily characterized by an objective justification of its policy initiatives, first outlining a set of "challenges" in the policy area, proposing a set of "new directions", and providing a concise justification (Alberta Progressive Conservative Party 1971). Furthermore, rather than appealing to Albertans as one broad group, the document splits the population into groups of differing interests.³⁹

This general lack of discursive effort to articulate a group identity is further evident in Lougheed's legislative and public speeches. Overall, Lougheed consistently labels himself as the leader of the "alternative government of Alberta" and defends policy promises on account of their pragmatic usefulness to an immediate Albertan "interest" (Lougheed 1971, p.2). In acting as Leader of the Opposition, the material observed here

³⁹ This includes "the farmer", "the senior citizen", "the young Albertan", "the women of Alberta", "the Native People", "The Citizens of Smaller Centres", "The Citizens of Metropolitan Centres", among others.

indicates that he criticized the incumbent government not so much in accordance with its lack of coherence with a set of values or abstract needs correlated to a group identity, but the fact that it does not effectively meet its objective policy purpose, whether economic growth, public health, efficiency, or government accessibility. In his response to the 1969-1970 provincial budget, for instance, Lougheed attacked the government's poor allocation of borrowed funds (Edmonton Journal 1969b). In further speeches regarding education and healthcare he attacked the government not so much in terms of a common group identity but rather owing to its inability to remedy bureaucratic inefficiency (Demarino 1968; Edmonton Journal 1968).

To this broader technocratic nature of Lougheed's appeal, one exception may reside in the fact that Lougheed's discursive material has a consistent future-orientated tone that expresses a degree of confidence and attention to the province's political potential. As reported by Hustak (1979, p.131), for instance, he emphasized in a campaign speech that in his party "our emphasis is on the future, our determination is never to be complacent." Similarly, in interactions with the rest of Canada, the 1971 PC platform prioritizes its ambition to "bring Albertans into the mainstream of Canadian political life – performing a role of national leadership" and ensuring "equity and fairness in arrangements between both levels of government" (Alberta Progressive Conservative Party 1971, p.62). It is based on not fully advancing or in failing to live up to this vision that Lougheed frequently criticizes the government, particularly in the area of negotiations with the federal government (Bell 1969).

To some extent, this is attributed as a characteristic of the Albertan people themselves, such as in Lougheed's response to the 1971 Speech from the Throne in which he states a "confidence" that the "talents and resources are here in the province...[so that it] can grow and have the society that we all want" (Lougheed 1971, p.29). Nevertheless, there is little else to further articulate the degree to which this is a social or personal characteristic of the Albertan population. Rather, it is presented as a necessary fix to a much broader policy problem that the province faces. Within the context of the speech, this statement of confidence is entrenched in stated concerns about an "uncertain future" that is suggested by "existing trends and historical influences"

pertaining to economic growth and social ills outlined throughout the statement (Lougheed 1971, p.30).

Next, in evaluating the third step in the process, it is initially clear that Lougheed's campaign communications put significant emphasis on greater provincial leadership, resource control, and assertiveness. The 1971 Progressive Conservative Campaign platform, for instance, pledges that a "National Oil Policy is not subject to the whims of Eastern Canadian political interests" (Alberta Progressive Conservative Party 1971, p.64). Nevertheless, this analysis cannot identify, in the years surrounding Lougheed's initial leadership appeal in 1971, an explicit attempt to define a discernable out-group with which he can distinguish the Albertan group identity. In effect, while eastern Canada and the federal government are isolated as separate interests, little about Lougheed's initial appeal for leadership attempts to articulate a set of characteristics that act as a means by which they can be contrasted with, and so differentiated from, Albertans.

Consequently, given that this analysis does not find any evidence Lougheed aimed to establish prototypicality, within the confines of the methodology used here I conclude there is no support for the hypothesized relationship as expressed in hypothesis one. In fact I found Lougheed was successful in attaining formal leadership despite the fact that he did not attempt to articulate a set of key characteristics of the Alberta group and base his legitimacy in his prototypicality of that identity. This is an interesting and useful finding, for it suggests Lougheed mobilized support for his leadership via other pathways involving policy articulation rather than identity appeals. We now turn to an analysis of the second hypothesis.

6.4.2 Hypothesis Two: Concretization

The second hypothesis guiding this analysis states: *if a leader develops and communicates a salient understanding of the group identity and future course of action that is consistent with their prototypicality while also drawing upon broader and pre-existing characteristics of the group understanding (the principle of readiness), they are then more likely to be endowed with formal leadership.* In examining the second

hypothesis within the context of Lougheed's leadership, we should expect to see two broad methods of communication taken up by this politician.

First, we should expect that, in communicating his agenda, Lougheed drew upon the broader and pre-existing means by which the Albertan group identity processes, understands, and makes evaluations of political phenomena. As a politician with much agency, theoretically Lougheed possesses considerable creativity in determining the particular and specific means by which these broad, abstract attempts are utilized to justify his policy agenda. Nevertheless, this hypothesis suggests that he is required to utilize them in order to mount a successful leadership appeal. They are necessary elements to his leadership, in other words. The second broad method of communication we should expect to observe is that Lougheed conveyed his policy agenda as the concretization of this particular articulation of this broader group understanding. This is to say his policy agenda should be portrayed as not only consistent with the broader Albertan group understanding but communicated as the most legitimate course of action to be taken forward.

This broader group understanding of Alberta was articulated in Chapter Four. In summary, the group understanding centered on the province's identity as a settler community established for the purposes of economic prosperity. Given the early impact of American settlers, this came to be understood through a particular individualist and pro-freedom lens. Nevertheless, the economic and realities of the province, particularly its economic precarity and dominance by central Canadian interests, resulted in a particular group-level framework that was prone to be suspicious of the interventions of foreign actors.

As with the last chapter's case study of Aberhart, this analysis isolates three factors. Of course, these are both simplifications and purely conceptual labels; reality is far more complex. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this analysis, we should expect to observe their use in a way that is empirically discernable. Therefore, the following analysis will be organized by concentrated discussions of three themes:

First, we should expect to observe that Lougheed includes rhetorical appeals to the broader, abstract goal of economic prosperity, in addition to a particular articulation of the romantic image of the “Last Best West” and the enterprising settler. From here, his particular policy agenda should be communicated as the most legitimate means by which the province can achieve economic prosperity in a way that is fulfilling of this settler image.

Second, we should expect to observe that Lougheed includes rhetorical emphasis on the values of individualism, self-reliance, and freedom. From here, we should observe him communicate his policy agenda as being not only consistent with these values, but conducive towards maximizing it.

Third, we should expect to observe that Lougheed consistently references the negative impact of intervening foreign outsiders, with particular attention directed to the fact that their behavior is largely to blame for Alberta’s problems. From here, we should observe that Lougheed communicates his policy agenda as the means by which to remove that power and instill a greater degree of power in the hands of Albertans.

Methodologically, this analysis will rely on the same collection of communications: the 1971 Progressive Conservative platform, Lougheed’s legislative statements, and his campaign speeches. I read these carefully to determine if consistent discursive appeals to these three themes can be extracted.

First, it is evident that Lougheed places his leadership appeal in a broader emphasis on the province’s potential for greater economic prosperity. In this way, the 1971 Progressive Conservative party platform commits to “move to a new stage of Alberta economic growth” (Alberta Progressive Conservative Party 1971, p.64). Here, the platform puts an equal amount of emphasis on the importance of agricultural and petroleum production. Agriculture, for instance, is recognized as “the basic industry of the province and that the general prosperity is significantly dependent on it” (Alberta Progressive Conservative Party 1971, p.3). This general emphasis on economic growth is further evident in Lougheed’s legislative speeches that draw attention to the need for “expanded opportunity for Albertans to participate in Alberta enterprises” and “create

sufficient opportunities to offset the forecasted continuance of unemployment” (Lougheed 1971, p.30). Both the 1971 Progressive Conservative platform and Lougheed’s legislative speeches present a wide array of policies directed to a more “vigorous” government that will “fully utilize provincial government expenditures and tax policies to create job opportunities for Albertans” while simultaneously pursuing a “much more diversified economy, less reliant upon the oil and gas industry (Alberta Progressive Conservative Party 1971, p.66).

Nevertheless, from the qualitative material observed here, Lougheed does not entrench his appeals to greater economic and material prosperity in any broader allusion to Alberta’s potential as the “last best west,” nor is there any romanticization of Albertans’ self-reliant, capable, and rugged nature as the region’s settlers. Instead, economic growth is handled in technocratic fashion, covered only as an objective policy problem. Consequently, in evaluating the first theme, we find that while Lougheed prioritizes the goal of economic prosperity in his leader appeal this is not explicitly conveyed in a way that demonstrably connects to other elements of the Albertan group understanding.

Proceeding to the second theme, this analysis finds considerable rhetorical emphasis within Lougheed’s appeal regarding the value of individual enterprise and freedom. This seems to be constituted of two overlapping types, one which sees individual freedom, expression, and control as an inherent moral value, and the other which sees free-enterprise as conducive towards economic growth. When it comes to the first, Lougheed seemingly begins by creating a fearsome picture. As he states in one legislative speech, “As a Progressive Conservative the concept of individual freedom rates as number one on our list of priorities”; nevertheless, a cited set of trends regarding bureaucratic government growth and an overall social decline in privacy paints a “a forecasted decline - I can't think of anything perhaps as disturbing - in individual freedom” (Lougheed 1971, p.27).

Consequently, individual rights take on a particularly prescient and significant place in the PC’s 1971 policy platform, which pledges to “ensure that an individual citizen is

entitled to live a private life, free from...intrusion upon his seclusion or solitude or into his private affairs” (Alberta Progressive Conservative Party 1971, p.5). This is seen to be concretized by the commitment that a Alberta Bill of Rights that “takes precedence over every other Statute” will be the first bill introduced by a newly elected Lougheed administration (Lougheed 1971, p. 29). This is also used to justify a group of policies that, rather than create “ingrown and autocratic bureaucracy”, promises an “open”, “responsive”, and “citizen involved” government that provides “protection against the unjustified actions of the provincial government” (Alberta Progressive Conservative Party 1971, p.40).

In addition to the emphasis given on individual rights as a value, Lougheed’s appeal is also entrenched in the broader assumption that a greater emphasis on individual freedom, self-reliance and free enterprise will create greater economic growth and better public institutions. For this reason, the 1971 Progressive Conservative party platform presents the overall promise to create a “government climate favorable to free-enterprise and – with increased opportunities for individual Albertans their own economic destiny” (Alberta Progressive Conservative Party 1971, p. 3). This is also evident in Lougheed’s social policies. In a legislative speech he suggests the introduction of a guaranteed minimum income as an alternative to the province’s welfare regime given its larger role for individual decision-making and discretion (Lougheed 1971, p. 26); when discussing education he mentions that the party would pursue “an analysis of the possibility of leasing school buildings from private industry” (Alberta Progressive Conservative Party, p.30). Nevertheless, the aspects of Lougheed’s appeal that would entail greater government involvement and oversight are communicated as necessary actions to increase freedom. As stated by Lougheed in one of his campaign speeches, “we stand for free enterprise – not socialism. We also stand for social reform and individual rights – not big government control” (cited in Hustak 1979, p.132). Overall, in analyzing the qualitative material as it pertains to this second thing, we have demonstrably observed the fact that Lougheed’s appeal not only conveys an assumption of the utility of individual freedom, but makes the maximization thereof a cornerstone of his policy appeal.

Finally, as discussed, the third characteristic posits that Albertan group understanding has a broader tendency to approach, evaluate, and frame the province's problems through the lens of a foreign, intervening actor. Historically, although not exclusively, this has been associated with Central Canada or the Federal government. For this reason, it suggests that Lougheed is incentivized to not only identify this actor but communicate his policy agenda as the means by which to remove their influence. In observing the material that comprises this analysis, this to some extent comprises an important component of Lougheed's leadership appeal. For example, The 1971 Progressive Conservative platform identifies "Eastern Canadian political interests" as having too much control over the direction of Albertan economic and political decision-making. (Alberta Progressive Conservative Party 1971, p. 62). Consequently, it suggests that an overall growth in the involvement of the provincial government, in both internal affairs and the direction of the Canadian political economy more broadly, is the means by which to "bring Albertans into the mainstream of Canadian public life" and "assure equity and fairness in arrangements between both levels of government" (Alberta Progressive Conservative Party 1971, p.62). Within the context of internal Alberta politics, this includes a policy commitment to "give high priority to provincial government programs which assist in providing cash income for the average Alberta farmer" (Alberta Progressive Conservative Party 1971, p.7), to institute a "shift in jurisdiction from the federal to the provincial governments...in the field of adult training and retaining" (Lougheed 1971, p.26), and create a source of local finance power by transferring government expenditures into industrial and small-business development funds (Lougheed 1971, p.28). Externally, this includes a promise to exert a more "assertive" relationship to the federal government that includes an additional transfer of expenditures to the department of intergovernmental affairs. In the context of the Petroleum industry, for instance, Lougheed pledges to "refuse to accept a position that in this vital Alberta industry the Federal government can negotiate agreements without consultation and concurrence by the elected representatives of the people of Alberta" (Alberta Progressive Conservative Party 1971, p.63).

Overall, then, this analysis can conclude that the third broad theme considered comprises a component of Lougheed's appeal, entailing a moment in which he based his

policy agenda as the best means by which to remove outside interference and entrench greater direct control by Albertans themselves. Nevertheless, it should be stated that Lougheed's appeal as observed in this analysis contains no elaboration on why Federal involvement in Albertan public policy is negative, nor is there an attempt to infer coercive or sinister intentions on the part of the institutions themselves.

To conclude, this section of the chapter sought to apply the second hypothesis to the case of Peter Lougheed's leadership in his early years as head of the Progressive Conservatives. It was hypothesized that Lougheed's success at attaining formal leadership was the result of his ability to convey his leadership and policy agenda as both consistent with the broader and pre-existing component of the Albertan group understanding in addition to acting as its concretization so as to legitimize it as the best course of action. From this basis I articulated three specific characteristics would mark the leader's public appeals: an emphasis on economic prosperity linked to an abstract image of the Albertan settler; the importance given to individualism, free enterprise, and freedom; and calls to remove the influence of an outside interfering agent.

When the results of the analysis of Lougheed's communications are considered, support for the second hypothesis is found to be mixed and somewhat inconclusive. On the one hand, several aspects of these characteristics – such as the emphasis on economic prosperity, the value placed on individual freedom, and the need to remove federal control – all comprise aspects of Lougheed's appeals, including the fact that his policy agenda is communicated as the best means by which to advance them. Nevertheless, there are other elements of these stated characteristics – such as the utilization of a settler image and an emphasis on the morally negative aspects of outside federal interference – that are simply not present in the communications under study here. With these findings reported, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the usefulness of the broader identity leadership framework, as below.

6.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter attempted to understand the particular success of Peter Lougheed's 1971 appeal for leadership through a social identity lens. This was

undertaken by utilizing a collection of written and oral communications that comprised the material analyzed to locate evidence in support of the two main hypotheses guiding this study. The first hypothesis proposed that Peter Lougheed based the initial legitimacy of his appeal in his being prototypical of an articulated set of characteristics that distinguish the Albertan group. In the data considered here there is no indication that Lougheed attempted to base an aspect of his appeal in this group process. With respect to the second hypothesis, that Lougheed then legitimized his policy agenda through the way it was consistent with broader and pre-existing understandings of the Albertan group identity, the evidence was mixed. Lougheed was found to communicate in ways that reflected most, but not all, of the hypothesized elements of the Albertan group identity. So there is only partial support reported here for the second hypothesis.

Overall, in evaluating the usefulness of social identity theory to understand how political leaders are able to mobilize support, this approach lacks explanatory power with respect to this case study. Instead, the analysis seems to suggest that Lougheed was successful in attaining formal leadership despite the fact that he did not aim to establish himself as a prototypical member of the Albertan group identity. As with the Aberhart case study, the second stage of this process, while found to be accurate, is rendered empirically imprecise. Without the metric of prototypicality, this alone does not provide an answer to question of why Lougheed's particular use of these broader aspects of the Albertan group understanding were successful.

This study has several limitations. The chapter's analysis is a limited, small-scale effort to understand whether social identity theory is useful for explaining how political leaders mobilize support. It is by no means a comprehensive look at the leadership of Peter Lougheed through a social identity lens. Future research, for instance, could analyze the degree to which Lougheed's use of group processes may have come later in his official tenure. Nevertheless, within the material covered in the span of this chapter, and in view of the limited evidence I uncovered in support of the two hypothesized relationships, I conclude that Lougheed appears to have attained the office of premier and exercised leadership over Albertans without comprehensively entrenching his leadership in broader group processes. While these finding do not suggest that identity leadership

does not provide a means by which leaders could further gain support, these results raise questions as to the degree to which establishing oneself within the group is a necessary component of every successful leadership appeal. With this second case study being completed, this thesis will not turn to its overall conclusions.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion

How can political leadership in Canada be better approached and understood? This thesis has attempted to provide a modest contribution to the broader understanding of political leadership in Canada, drawing upon outside literatures to examine the question of how specific leaders are able to communicate successful leadership appeals. Overall, while the specific theoretical framework that comprises this analysis was found to be ineffective in accounting for the success of certain leaders, the thesis nevertheless contributes to broader understanding.

The literature review began by making a key set of conceptual claims. Leadership was understood as the means by which an individual is endowed by others with the legitimate authority to disproportionately affect political outcomes. As an important and worthwhile area of study, this process of personal legitimacy and action – rather than merely the formal-legal structures of executive political institutions – was held to possess a significant impact over political outcomes. In effect, then, rather than broader contextual factors, individual leaders were granted considerable power in shaping the conditions surrounding their authority, particularly regarding the nature of the appeal, policy agenda, and the needs and preferences of followers. With these established, it reviewed and considered an array of approaches developed within the political leadership literature, categorizing each into one of three frameworks – attributional, transactional, and contextual accounts.

Here, Identity Leadership Theory (ILT) – a broader approach derived from social psychology – was posited as a useful theoretical framework, holding that the success of certain leadership appeals over others can be explained on account of the way that they utilize group psychological processes (Haslam et al. 2020). It theorized that individuals, in aspiring towards a position of formal leadership, will communicate that they are a prototypical member of the group who, through their personal leadership, offer compelling answers to the group's understanding of itself, the surrounding world, and the actions it should take moving forward. This, in accordance with the conceptual claims made throughout the thesis, was primarily understood to be the product of an individual's discursive discretion: a successful appeal is not based on objective personal

characteristics, but the way the leader, in communicating with the group they seek to lead, utilizes aspects of their personal characteristics, experiences, and policy agendas as particularly evocative of group-level understandings. Formulated into a research design, it established the hypotheses that, first, the successful leader should demonstrably base their appeal in their own individual prototypicality of an articulated group identity and, second, frame their policy agenda as the concretization of a coherent set of pre-existing group understandings and values.

This causal relationship was tested through a set of two qualitative case studies of two Alberta Premiers: William Aberhart and Peter Lougheed. This method was justified by its strengths in providing the researcher with a more detailed, “thick” analysis of the context studied. The choice of Alberta was selected both for its supposed leader-based culture and the widely accepted notion of its broader political culture. In proceeding to an analysis of the province’s political, economic, and cultural factors through a social identity lens, it was determined that the Albertan group identity is comprised of a key set of dominant themes: that, in effect, its formative years as a settler society reliant on export commodities has produced an individualist collective cognitive framework oriented around the goals of prosperity, fairness, freedom, and the rejection of an interfering outside agent.

In examining this through the studies of each Premier, it was demonstrated that this theory and its set of hypotheses are not supported by the empirical evidence. Rather, it was observed that, while the findings of the second hypothesis were mixed, both leaders were successful even though there is no evidence to suggest either effectively established themselves as prototypical members.

Given the general tone and perception of politics in Alberta, this is a surprising finding. Throughout scholarly, journalistic, and popular depictions of the province, Premiers are widely considered to benefit from explicitly identarian appeals to justify their authority and policy agenda in office. Once in power, for instance, Lougheed would counter the federal government on resource policies by positioning himself as the “selfless superhero” of the Albertan people by his charged language in First Ministers

conferences, his direct television addresses to the public, and his rhetorical division of the Alberta population into the province's loyal "doers" and contrarian "knockers" (Tupper and Gibbins 1992). Also evident is the much broader series of symbolic actions or statements that have always been annual routines for all leaders, the most predominant of which is the Calgary Stampede and its expectation that all provincial and federal leaders exhibit their Stenson's and plaid shirts.

How then are these findings to be understood, both from the vantage point of Alberta and political leadership more broadly? The main implications of these findings appear to demonstrate that while appeals to identity are certainly an aspect of leadership, it does not comprise a core or essential part of the broader process of gaining and exercising authority over a given group. Put more specifically to this thesis's purposes, it does not provide a factor that can explain or account for the success of certain leaders over others. Nevertheless, the question remains as to what degree identity-based appeals remain relevant and important; that, perhaps although not a sufficient condition to a successful leader appeal, the use of some discursive allusion to the "people" one seeks to lead is a necessary condition for authority. In this way, future research in this area can direct its attention to better understanding the ways in which these group-based appeals are formed and expressed to legitimize individual leadership, policy change, and collective movements.

This is particularly the case once one considers the limitations of this analysis. Although it has demonstrated the fact that a social identity framework cannot, at least on its own, account for a successful leader appeal, it covers only a minor aspect of the way in which the general process of group-based appeals impact leaders and the leadership process. Within Alberta, for instance, it is still worthwhile to engage in the ways group-based appeals were utilized by Premiers throughout their time in power to legitimize specific policy agendas, in addition to the way that other aspiring leaders used these appeals unsuccessfully. Alberta is also only one province among many - the way in which these concepts operate in other Canadian contexts remains to be seen, particularly in regard to the potential for more comparative research.

Although this theoretical framework and corresponding set of hypotheses were unsuccessful in providing an explanation for successful leader appeals, this thesis was nevertheless successful in its broader purpose. As outlined in the introduction, this thesis noted that its main goal was to provide a contribution to the much broader scholarly effort to better understand Canadian political leadership itself, particularly by drawing upon concepts, theories, and frameworks developed by the international political leadership literature. Overall, it has contributed to broader disciplinary understanding by demonstrating the very problematic empirical limitations of Identity Leadership Theory as a sufficient condition for leadership, preventing future researchers from embarking upon this fruitless path of inquiry. Instead, future scholarly attention in Canada can be directed to further exploring untested aspects of the broader political leadership literature and their applicability to the Canadian context.

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