



A P P E N D I X I

Some Observations on Method: Cases, Data, and Analysis

A Note on the Case Analyses

The core database from which these issues are developed and analyzed is a series of psychologically framed case studies of presidential campaigns in the years 1964, 1972, 1988, and 1992. Given the theoretical concerns of this study, there has been, of necessity, substantial discussion of some psychological characteristics of presidential candidates. However, the objective of these case studies is not primarily to provide detailed, “depth” psychological profiles of particular presidential candidates.

The purpose of these case studies is to illuminate the issues that arise in connection with developing a theory of character and its relationship to presidential performance. The specific psychological configurations of candidates’ characters are part, but only a part, of the processes that need to be examined in illuminating such issues. The theoretical analyses put forward in this book are not meant to be judged by how deeply they delve into the psyches of the candidates or presidents involved.

The cases were not selected because issues of psychological suitability necessarily played *the* decisive role in the campaign outcome in each case. In some cases—for example, the impact of George McGovern’s choice of Thomas Eagleton as running mate in the 1972 presidential campaign—issues of psychological suitability did not carry the decisive, causal weight of other factors in the outcome of the election. Nor was Gary Hart’s

aborted presidential bid selected for analysis because it played a decisive role in the final outcome of the 1988 presidential election.

The point here is not to prove that psychological factors always have definitive, causal importance but to begin to examine in detail some specific aspects of assessing the psychological suitability of presidential candidates. Each case was selected, therefore, because it framed, in a direct and accessible way, the conceptual, theoretical, psychological, political, and practical questions arising in the assessment of psychological suitability.¹ A brief explanation of the selection rationale for each case study follows.

There are two case studies each in the parts on assessing “mental health” and on assessing character. Before the presentation of the case studies in each part, there are two theoretical chapters that set the conceptual stage for the case studies which follow. The theoretical chapters that precede the case studies cast a wider conceptual net than the specific circumstances of the case materials. They are meant to provide a framework for analysis, and no attempt is made to reduce the former to the latter or vice versa.

The first two case studies appear in Part 2. They deal with the issue of psychological suitability from the perspective of psychological, or mental, health. The 1964 case study involves a detailed analysis of the attempt to assess the mental health of then-presidential candidate Barry Goldwater. This attempt to assess psychological suitability took the form of a questionnaire that was mailed to all members of the American Psychiatric Association, inviting them to assess the mental health of the Republican candidate. A number of psychiatrists chose to give their observations on this subject, and the results suggest some basic cautionary concerns when assessing psychological suitability.

The second case study in Part 2 deals with the unsuccessful candidacy of Thomas Eagleton in 1972. While Eagleton was a vice presidential, not a presidential, candidate, this case is selected and examined in depth because it is the first time that a candidate for such high public office was revealed to have been hospitalized for psychological problems. The Eagleton case represents an important opportunity to examine several questions of concern to us, especially (1) Is the psychological health of candidates truly something that needs to be worried about? and (2) What does the Eagleton case suggest about the structural barriers argument, which suggests that individuals with substantial problems of psychological functioning are screened out informally during their professional careers?

The second set of case studies appears in Part 3 of the book. These two were selected because they allow us to examine some important aspects of

psychological suitability and presidential performance from the standpoint of character and its analysis. The first case study, in chapter 9, deals with the unsuccessful candidacy of Gary Hart in 1988. In that nominating campaign, Hart's candidacy was derailed by revelations that he had spent the weekend with a woman whom he had met at private party while campaigning.

The second case study, in chapters 10 and 11, focuses on the 1992 presidential campaign, and in particular on the candidacy of William J. Clinton who, of course, became president. I examine Clinton as a presidential candidate in chapter 10 and as president in chapter 11. On the surface, this campaign appeared to be one in which the public demanded, and to some extent was responsible for, a lessening of overt appeals to "character issues" (in other words, character attacks). However, a close analysis of the campaign waged by all three candidates suggests that character issues were absolutely central to their election strategies and played a decisive role in the public judgments that were made. Far from signaling the demise of the character issue, I argue that the 1992 election campaign represents a watershed in the relative weight accorded character and policy in the public's electoral judgment, with the outcome not yet decided.

Political psychologists studying leadership and others who study presidents are used to focusing on those who have obtained office. Yet in four detailed case studies (chapters 5, 6, 9, and 10–11), only one candidate whom I analyze, Bill Clinton, actually became president.

Would it not have been better to examine a series of presidential campaigns, select the winner of each campaign, and then proceed to do a detailed comparison of what each election revealed about the winning candidate and how he performed in office? Such an approach would have some advantages but would also suffer from at least three serious drawbacks. First, it would make electoral success, rather than theoretical usefulness, the criterion for case selection. For example, there have been only two modern sitting presidents of whom direct questions of psychological suitability in terms of psychological health were asked. One was Richard Nixon, during the period of the Watergate crisis when his presidency began to unravel. The other was Lyndon Johnson, based on a postpresidency allegation by a former aide that he may have been clinically paranoid.

In neither case was there much case material, beyond the concern (in Nixon's case) or the allegation (in Johnson's case). Concerns or allegations alone do not make theoretically useful and informative case materials. However, in neither case would examination of the campaigns that preceded their

respective elections have cast much light on the complex issues surrounding this aspect of psychological suitability. It seemed much more theoretically useful to select the two cases where the issue was raised in a direct and documented way, as a method of exploring the intricacies of the issue.

A similar dynamic is operative in the cases selected regarding the character domain of psychological suitability. Character issues began to receive widespread public attention in the 1984 presidential campaign. To have concentrated only on successful candidates would have meant limiting the analyses to Presidents Reagan, Bush, and Clinton. In many respects, the Hart and Clinton case studies are much more instructive on the issues that surround the assessment of psychological suitability from the perspective of character. Here again, theoretical usefulness rather than electoral success seemed a better criterion. And of course, in focusing on the 1992 election, we have a case in which one of the candidates examined was electorally successful.

Second, adopting a strategy of comparing successful candidates' election campaigns with their presidential performance assumes the existence of a theory that allows such explicit comparisons. However, it is precisely that theory which this analysis is attempting to develop. Therefore, it seemed inadvisable to proceed with such a directly comparative strategy before more fully developing these areas conceptually, theoretically, and empirically.

Third, such a strategy would have made the major focus of this analysis what we learned (or did not learn) about a particular successful presidential candidate during the campaign. That is an important question, but not the only one. By looking at elected candidates, there is little chance to explore the full range of factors relevant to our concerns. Given such a focus, we cannot really explore Type I errors (ruling out on false grounds someone who would have been acceptable). Nor can we explore cases where the screening process apparently worked. Sometimes candidates such as Thomas Eagleton and Gary Hart are unsuccessful for reasons that are very important and instructive for developing a framework for the analysis of psychological suitability. Concentrating only on the electorally successful and ignoring those who tried and failed for reasons relevant to our theoretical concerns is like preparing for war by studying only victories.

A Note on Data and Analysis

The psychological analysis of psychological suitability and presidential performance is a complex undertaking. There are many ways in which it can

falter. The psychologically based analysis of leaders has been tarnished by the attempt to explain large ranges of presidential behavior by one or a few “deep” psychological mechanisms,² naïveté, and, in some cases, blatant personal bias. How can these difficulties be avoided?

The only basis for making an assessment is to be aware of these dangers and proceed in a straightforward way. This requires that the theoretical basis of one’s assessment and the steps through which the analysis proceeds be clearly stated. Such a process does not guarantee the lack of error, but it at least allows theories and analyses to be examined in a systematic way.

A major purpose of this book is to specify behavioral clusters and begin to account for them theoretically, using Greenstein’s (1969) phenomenological and dynamic levels of analysis. In this I follow the process described by the Georges (1956, 317–20) as their method of approaching Woodrow Wilson. It consists of an interplay between an immersion in the basic behavioral data, tentative exploration, and use of appropriate psychological theory. First, the analyst becomes thoroughly familiar with the basic behavioral data³ and the questions that emerge from it. Then he or she examines these data in the context of the psychological theory (or theories) that appears to best explain them. Often in that process the theory must be modified to fit the specific and complex patterns found in an individual life.

The approach employed herein is that of psychologically informed events analysis, guided by theories of presidential leadership in political psychology and comparative psychoanalytic theory. The first step consisted of gathering detailed personal and events data. To do this I depended in part on multiple, cross-checked news accounts of events; multiple, cross-checked biographical accounts; and the words of the candidates themselves.

The use of “public data” deserves some comment here. Each kind of public data is used in a specific way for a limited purpose, with recognition of each method’s advantages and limitations. For example, the news and other journalistic accounts are primarily used as documentation of the major facts concerning a particular event: a presidential candidate made a particular pledge, a particular event took place within a certain sequence of events, and so on. The accounts themselves are, for the most part, concerned with describing events and the circumstances surrounding them. This material is an important part of the attempt to use specific “contexts” and “circumstances” in a theoretically useful way. Even so, detailed knowledge of events and the circumstances surrounding them is necessarily limited, so that news accounts can be used only with appreciation and acknowledgment of their limitations.

News accounts provide at least five kinds of important information for the analyst. First, they can be used to establish the basic existence of an event, that it has taken place. Second, the nature of the event and its place in a sequence of events can often provide an analyst with important information from which he or she may begin to construct an understanding of the meaning of the event. Third, news accounts can be used to help establish some of the circumstances surrounding an event. These details, while most likely incomplete, do help to deepen appreciation of the context. Fourth, news accounts may also convey some sense of an actor's understandings of these events, as reflected in his or her public discussions or actions. Fifth, and very important, by following such accounts over time, one can use later accounts and *outcomes* to cross-check the validity of earlier accounts. Differences between earlier and later public portrayals, as well as (often, in light of) the emergence into public discourse of private information relating to the candidate, can be important data for the analyst. They can reveal elements of presidential psychology and style that analysts must take into theoretical account.

Even when cross-checked, news accounts have at least three limitations that must be kept in mind. First, reporters may report events accurately but miss important aspects of an event because those aspects were not evident at the time, or because the reporters did not have access to all that went on, or because they simply didn't appreciate the implications of what they were reporting. Second, a reporter often pieces together his or her understanding of events in the form of a "story," and this subtext can be shaped either by a reporter's attitudes and views or by decisions (strategic or unconscious) on the part of the person(s) on whom the reporter relies. Third, stories can, on occasion, simply be in error. This is a special difficulty for covering presidents, but it also occurs when covering candidates. Both presidents and candidates (and their staffs) try to put the best frame on events. For all these reasons, events data must be *one* of a number of data sources that an analyst uses.

Another important source of data for psychologically informed events and case analysis is the candidate's own stated understanding and experience of the events. Therefore, key sources of supplementary evidence to accounts of events are the transcribed words of the candidates themselves. These include unstructured (but not necessarily unrehearsed) interviews, press conferences, and other spontaneously recorded transactions that are a part of every campaign and presidency.

It is obvious that the presidential candidates involved in the events this book analyzes have private understandings or motivations that they don't reveal (and may not even be aware of). Even so, I believe it would be a mistake to discard totally as unimportant analysis of their publicly stated views and behavior, for several reasons. First, candidates' publicly stated views and behavior may be very useful in revealing, sometimes quite starkly, what they wish to convey about themselves to others. Second, the public statements and overt behavior of candidates may actually reflect what they really think and how they are approaching their attempts to shape or respond to circumstances (a point that is often overlooked in discussions of the methodology surrounding case studies). But both of these reasons bolster the key reason for making use of these data elements, namely, to uncover and assemble a pattern of behaviors with which to construct a theoretically useful framework for explanation and analysis.

Each of these sources of information has its limitations. Formal speeches are good reflections of what candidates or presidents may wish to project or may themselves wish to believe. However, they do not necessarily reflect the conflicting views that may underlie the formal presentation, nor the political or personal calculations that went into it. Similarly, unstructured interviews, while in some ways more revealing of the candidate, are often not completely spontaneous. It is a fact of political life that candidates and presidents spend much time behind the scenes considering how they should approach or respond to public issues or events. Last, the amount of uncalculated information that is reflected in the give-and-take of a question-and-answer format depends in large part on the nature of the format. General questions from supportive or for other reasons uncritical audiences allow a candidate or president more opportunity to respond in preselected ways than in a real debate.

It is likely that more complete knowledge of specific circumstances will emerge in time. Participants may write their memoirs, documentation may emerge from files, and so on. These sources may, in turn, modify an analysis tentatively based on the circumstances, understandings, and motivations involved in the actions and events as described by the original accounts. However, should these additional data sources become available, they must be considered in the light of their own strengths and limitations. Memoirs by or interviews with major actors about past events in which they were involved are shaped by those participants' memories, views, and motives. Memos, reports, and minutes may also be helpful but limited in

their usefulness. They may have been made with some particular purpose in mind; and they can be selective and may not cover important aspects of an event, either by omission or by purpose.

No single data source is beyond ambiguity or error. It is for this reason that, in the end, a researcher must rely on a confluence of evidence from several sources. It is the pattern and the density of factual elements which support it that provide the foundation for the theoretical analyses contained herein.

For these same reasons, the case studies presented here must be considered in terms of their purpose. That purpose is not to present a definitive account of the 1964, 1972, 1988, and 1992 presidential campaigns. Rather, it is to isolate and examine those dimensions of each campaign that are relevant to the issues we wish to examine. Specifically, the case studies provide a context in which to examine how issues of psychological suitability are raised and addressed in presidential campaigns, with what results, and with what implications for refining the analysis of character and presidential performance.