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Enquiries

Do voters get it right? A test of the ascription-actuality trait theory of leadership with political elites.

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Abstract

Are the traits preferred by voters also associated with success in political office? Drawing on the ascription-actuality trait theory of leadership the present study examines whether traits *ascribed* to politicians predict leadership outcomes differently to the *actual* traits they possess. We collected self-ratings of politicians' personality ($N=138$) using the NEO-PI-R (actual traits) and observer ratings of politicians' facial appearance (ascribed traits) to examine their relationship with (a) leadership emergence, measured using share of vote in election, and (b) in-role leadership effectiveness, rated anonymously by political and local authority colleagues. Facial appearance predicted leadership emergence but not effectiveness. Personality had a more nuanced relationship with leadership outcomes. Conscientiousness predicted effectiveness but not emergence, and Agreeableness revealed a trait paradox, positively predicting emergence and negatively predicting effectiveness. These findings suggest a need to understand the contested nature of political leadership and qualities required for different aspects of political roles.

Do voters get it right? A test of the ascription-actuality trait theory of leadership with political elites.

Politicians' traits appear to play an increasingly important role in political leadership (Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004; Caprara & Silvester, 2018). During the 2016 U.S. presidential election campaign, not only were candidates compared on physical characteristics, such as height and appearance (McAdams, 2016; Steafal, 2016; Visser, Book & Volk, 2016), discussion about each presidential candidate's psychological characteristics featured particularly prominently. Whereas Hillary Clinton was described as 'collected', 'experienced' and 'aloof', Donald Trump was labelled 'candid', 'strong' and 'obnoxious'. Likewise, in the 2017 British general election, voters reportedly associated the characteristics 'decisive' 'robotic' and 'intelligent' with Prime Minister Theresa May, whereas her opponent, Jeremy Corbyn, was described as 'principled' and 'dogmatic' yet 'weak' (YouGov, 2017).

A growing body of research has found that, not only do voters frequently judge political candidates on personality traits such as warmth, reliability, decisiveness, integrity and empathy (Bittner, 2014; Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004; Garzia, 2011; Pancer, Brown & Barr, 1999; Miller, Wattenberg & Malanchuk, 1986; Roets & Van Hiel, 2009), they often infer these characteristics from biological traits such as height and facial appearance, and these inferences can in turn influence how they vote (Hall, Goren, Chaiken & Todorov, 2009; Olivola & Todorov, 2010; Sorokowski, 2010; Stulp, Buunk, Verhulst & Pollett, 2013). However, far less is known about whether the psychological and biological traits favored by voters in elections are the same characteristics that impact on the effectiveness of a politician once in office. More specifically, do the voters making these judgements get it right?

The present study investigates this question by drawing on the ascription-actuality trait theory of leadership (Antonakis, 2011). This theory suggests that, although some traits lead observers to ascribe competence and infer suitability for leadership, these may not be the same as those traits that actually influence leaders' effectiveness once in role. To test this

proposal we examined the relationship between self-reported personality characteristics, provided by 138 British local politicians who completed the NEO-PI-R, observer ratings of each politician's facial appearance, and the impact of these on two leadership outcomes, namely: (1) leadership emergence measured using the share of the vote obtained by a politician obtained when elected to office, and (2) their perceived leadership effectiveness in-office assessed using anonymous performance ratings provided by the political and local authority colleagues working alongside them.

The study makes three contributions to the existing literature. First, as far as we are aware, no study has investigated leadership emergence and leadership effectiveness in the same role and with the same individuals to date. The present research addresses this lacuna by testing the ascription-actuality theory of leadership with individuals who all occupy the same leadership role (i.e. local politicians) in two situations; one demonstrating leader emergence (i.e. candidates seeking election), and a second which demonstrates leader effectiveness (i.e. performance in political office). Secondly, we examine a biological trait (i.e. facial appearance) alongside personality traits, in order to compare their relative influence on leader emergence and leader effectiveness. Thirdly, although research on the role of personality traits in politics has gained significant traction in recent years (Mondak & Halperin, 2008; Silvester, Wyatt & Randall, 2014), most studies have used at-a-distance methods where raters observe and assess politician personality using videos, transcripts of speeches, or archival documents (e.g., Tetlock, 1984; Winter, 2005). Very few researchers have captured self-report data from politicians themselves, and we address this gap by asking politicians to *self-rate* their personality using a standardized multi-item multi-trait personality questionnaire: the NEO-PI-R. In addition to these contributions we discuss the salience of traits for political roles and broader implications for democratic process, such as the need to broaden public awareness and understanding of the demands of political work, and potential

differences between the individual qualities required for political campaigning and those required when holding political office.

The Ascription-Actuality Theory of Leadership

Trait research has seen a revival of interest in the leadership literature over recent years (Zaccaro , 2012). Traits are defined as "psychological or biological characteristics that (a) are measurable, (b) vary across individuals, (c) exhibit temporal and situational stability, and (d) predict attitudes, decisions or behaviors, and consequently outcomes" (Antonakis, 2011, p. 270). Leadership researchers have focused mostly on personality traits and, in particular, the Five Factor Model of personality (Judge & Bono, 2000), but more recently interest has grown in biological traits, such as height (Stulp et al., 2013), facial appearance (Olivola & Todorov, 2010) and even voice pitch (Mayew, Parsons & Venkatachalam, 2013). Importantly, the trait theory of leadership suggests that certain individuals – due to their possession of specific traits – are both more likely to achieve leadership roles, and to succeed in them (Judge, Bono, Ilies & Gerhardt, 2002; Zaccaro, 2007).

According to the ascription-actuality trait theory of leadership (Antonakis, 2011), however, there are two routes by which traits can influence leadership emergence and effectiveness. First, observers may infer or *ascribe* traits to an individual or, secondly, an individual may *actually* possess traits that help them achieve and successfully execute a leadership role. The theory predicts that traits associated with leadership emergence may differ from those required for in-role performance, because access to leadership positions often depends on *judgements* about whether an individual possesses the requisite qualities for a leadership position, made by observers in gatekeeper roles (e.g., senior managers, recruiters or voters). Moreover, the characteristics *ascribed* by an observer to a leadership candidate can depend on their proximity to, and knowledge of, the candidate, as well as their ability to accurately infer personality and competence from observable behavior. Likewise, the validity

of such judgements will also depend on the rater's knowledge of the leadership role and the qualities it requires.

When observers are physically and socially distant from aspiring leaders and have limited opportunity to interact with, or to observe the individual in different situations, an observer is more likely to rely on implicit leadership theories about the characteristics that make someone 'leader-like', and to use these to infer suitability for a particular role (Antonakis & Atwater, 2002; Lord, Foti & De Vader, 1984; Popper, 2013). Consequently, observers risk focusing on traits that only *seem* to matter for leadership (e.g., height or attractiveness) that are 'illusory correlations', abstract construals or stereotypical proxies for leadership effectiveness (Antonakis, 2011; Trope & Liberman, 2010; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Antonakis (2011; Jacquart & Antonakis, 2015) suggests that this process can occur when there is considerable distance between followers and 'top-level' leaders in organizations, such as CEOs. In such cases followers will make inferences about the competence of CEOs using trait-based heuristic processes that rely on limited information about both the individual and the day-to-day requirements of the role.

The second route by which traits are theorized to influence leadership emergence and effectiveness involves traits that leaders *actually* possess and which afford the technical or social skills required to enhance performance in the role, achieve goals and influence others (DeRue, Nahrang, Wellman & Humphrey, 2011; Judge et al., 2002). Importantly, although in-role performance can be influenced indirectly by others' inferences about ascribed traits (e.g., gender bias: Vial, Napier & Brescoll, 2016), the ascription-actuality theory predicts that leadership effectiveness in role is likely to rely more on actual than ascribed traits (Antonakis, 2011).

Testing the ascription-actuality theory with political leaders

Politics presents a particularly good context for testing the ascription-actuality theory of leadership for several reasons. First, there is a clear separation between leadership

emergence, which in democratic contexts occurs primarily via elections, and leadership effectiveness as demonstrated by how politicians perform once in office. Secondly, elections are almost entirely reliant on the ascriptions made by voters, most of whom have little opportunity to observe candidates directly, and must therefore rely on information provided second hand via the media, campaign debates, manifestos written by political candidates or, more recently, their Twitter streams (Bhattacharya, Yang, Srinivasan & Boynton, 2016). Thirdly, the activities that candidates engage in while campaigning are often very different to the activities they must perform when representing and leading others in political office. Whereas in campaigning a candidate must convince the voters they are trustworthy, and that they understand voters' needs and are willing and able to represent them if elected, effective leadership in office is more dependent on the individual's ability to wield political skill, build alliances, negotiate compromises and engage in the 'darker arts' of politics (Silvester, 2008; Silvester & Dykes, 2007). As such, political leadership presents an opportunity to test whether ascribed and actual personality traits predict leadership emergence and leadership effectiveness, and to investigate the possibility that traits will differentially predict success in elections and in office. Furthermore, by comparing biological traits (i.e. facial appearance) as rated by observers, and self-rated personality traits from politicians, it is also possible to examine whether the characteristics that voters pay attention to in elections are the same characteristics that are associated with an individual's success in office.

Existing Research and Theory Development

In the following sections, we build on the actuality-ascription trait theory of leadership and existing empirical literature to form hypotheses about the likely differential relationships that biological (i.e. facial appearance) and psychological (i.e. personality) traits have on leadership emergence and effectiveness (see Figure 1).

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

Biological Traits (Appearance)

Discussion of trait-based *ascriptions* of leadership qualities has largely focused on biological traits such as height, gender or facial appearance, because these are especially salient when there is distance between observers and leaders (Antonakis & Eubanks, 2017; Blaker et al., 2013; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Spisak, Homan, Grabo & Van Vugt, 2012; Stulp et al., 2013). Most studies have investigated the impact of facial appearance on leadership emergence (Olivola & Todorov, 2010), with findings linking appearance to the emergence of both organizational (Bell & McLaughlin, 2006; Hosada, Stone-Romero & Coats, 2003) and political leaders (e.g., Antonakis, 2011; Antonakis & Eubanks, 2017; Johns & Shephard, 2011; Olivola & Todorov, 2010; Sussman, Petkova & Todorov, 2013; Todorov, Mandisodza, Goren & Hall, 2005).

Research has shown that when participants are shown facial images, they make judgements about the target's traits in as little as 33 milliseconds (Todorov, 2017; Todorov & Pakrashi, 2007). Moreover, when judgements have been compared to election results or hypothetical voting behavior, there is evidence that politicians' facial appearance does indeed impact political decision making. Sussman et al. (2013), for example, found the ratings of traits provided by U.S. participants based on facial images of politicians running in the 2011 Bulgarian elections was associated with hypothetical and actual votes received by each of the candidates. This effect has been replicated in research that asks children to pick a preferred Captain of a boat using photographs of actual political candidates (Antonakis & Eubanks, 2017).

The traits typically rated in studies of facial appearance include honesty, likeability, charisma, trustworthiness, aggressiveness, intelligence and competence as well as ratings of

the 'Big Five' (e.g. Olivola & Todorov, 2010; Todorov, Baron & Oosterhof, 2008; Willis & Todorov, 2006). However, research finds that two dimensions are particularly important in the judgments of politicians: likeability (i.e. warm, sympathetic, likeable) and competence (i.e. intelligence, leadership, reliability), with the latter having the strongest link with voting behavior (Olivola & Todorov, 2010). Todorov et al. (2005), for example, presented photographs of winners and runner-ups in U.S. Senate elections to participants who neither knew nor recognized the candidates, and who were then asked to make judgements about their trustworthiness, likeability and competence. They found that ascribed competence predicted the successful election winners in seventy per cent of the Senate races.

These findings clearly demonstrate the potential importance of ascribed characteristics in the emergence of political leaders, but they tell us little about whether the ascriptions are valid, or whether they also predict in-role success. This research has also tended to focus on hypothetical voting behavior rather than how people really vote during elections (e.g. Todorov et al., 2005). Likewise, evidence is less clear on the mechanism by which candidate facial appearance influences leadership emergence – does appearance merely correlate with votes, or does it impact voters' choices in real-world settings where the outcome of elections can have significant consequences for them (Atkinson, Enos & Hill, 2009)? Indeed, there is some evidence that the impact of facial appearance is reduced when voters have greater knowledge about the candidates (Ahler, Citrin, Dougal & Lenz, 2017). These findings support the notion that the more individuating information an individual has about a candidate, the less likely they are to rely on heuristics when evaluating their competence (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Ottati, Wyer, Deiger & Houston, 2002).

Despite the now considerable body of research on biological traits and leadership emergence, much less work has looked at the relationship between biological traits and leader effectiveness in-role (cf. Graham, Harvey & Puri, 2016; Olivola & Todorov, 2010; Stulp et al., 2013). One would expect facial appearance to have much less impact on effectiveness, as

those rating in-role performance are likely to have more opportunity to observe leaders and therefore behavior that contradicts heuristic assumptions. However, it is possible that facial appearance can become a self-fulfilling prophecy, and afford individuals greater power if followers or colleagues assume they embody traits such as trustworthiness and competence. Likewise, if leaders are treated differently based on their facial appearance they may come to internalize and reinforce certain characteristics and behaviors that are useful in the role, such as self-confidence (Antonakis & Eubanks, 2017). Research on CEOs suggests that the relationship between facial cues is stronger for CEO selection and awarded salary, than firm performance (Livingston & Pearce, 2009; Stoker, Garretsen & Spreeuwers, 2016). But the relationship between the facial appearance of political leaders and their actual effectiveness *in-role* has received little attention.

We theorize that, because voters lack proximity to political candidates, they are more likely to base their voting decisions on biological cues such as facial appearance, inferring characteristics such as likeability, trustworthiness and competence (see Figure 1). Although facial appearance may still bias ratings of leadership effectiveness, those who work alongside politicians may rely less on such low-information heuristics to infer traits. We would therefore expect the impact of facial appearance to have most effect on election results rather than effectiveness in political office.

H_1 Facial appearance will predict leadership emergence (H_{1a}) and ratings of leadership effectiveness (H_{1b}), but this relationship will be stronger for emergence than effectiveness (H_{1c}).

Personality Traits

Research on personality in politics has gained significant momentum in recent years (Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004; Caprara & Silvester, 2018; Dietrich, Lasley, Mondak, Remmel & Turner, 2012; Mondak & Halperin, 2008), with studies investigating a link between personality and voting behavior (Bakker, Klemmensen, Nørgaard & Schumacher, 2016;

Caprara, Schwartz, Capanna, Vecchione & Barbaranelli, 2006), political ideology (Fatke, 2016; Lewis & Bates, 2011) voters' ideal political candidates (Roets & Van Hiel, 2009), political attitudes (Jonason, 2014; Vecchione, Caprara, Schoen, Castro & Schwartz, 2012), political participation (Vecchione & Caprara, 2009) and political activism (Brandstatter & Opp, 2014; Vecchione et al., 2015). However, despite the dominance of personality research in leadership studies (Zaccarro, 2007) and substantial empirical evidence that leader personality can influence follower (Owens, Wallace & Waldman, 2015), team (Owens & Hekman, 2016) and organizational-level effectiveness (Ou, Waldman & Peterson, 2015), very few studies have examined the self-rated personality of politicians and its impact on political leadership.

Arguably, personality characteristics may be especially significant for political leaders, who operate in ambiguous, contested, political environments, yet are singularly reliant on their own ability to persuade and influence others, in order to resolve conflict, build alliances and navigate their political role successfully (Gallagher & Blackstone, 2015; Silvester 2008). Neustadt (1991), for example, argues that the constitutional power base of the U.S. presidency is so narrow that effective political leadership will be dependent on traits such as persuasiveness and self-confidence. In seeking to test this assertion, several studies found that traits such as Machiavellianism, narcissism and proactivity are important for 'presidential greatness' (Deluga, 1997; 1998; 2001; House, Spangler & Woycke, 1991; Simonton, 2006; 1988). These studies typically ask observers or historical experts to infer politicians' traits from documents, speeches or interview transcripts (e.g. House et al., 1991; Ramey, Klingler & Hollibaugh, 2016; Rubenzer, Faschingbauer, & Ones, 2000; Simonton, 2006; 1988; Winter, 2005). Although they provide useful insight, these methods can be limited in their access to politicians' more spontaneous public and private behavior. For example, it is difficult to establish the extent to which the content of documents and speeches

reflect advisors' input or broader government policies rather than the politicians' own characteristics (Haddock, 2002; Walker, 2000).

Furthermore, efforts to assess leadership effectiveness have typically used measures of presidential greatness, often employing distal ratings of general prestige, administrative achievements, legislation passed, historic impact, military action and peace initiatives (Winter, 1987; House et al., 1991). Whether the causes of these leadership outcomes can be attributed to the individual, rather than more global causes, such as economic climate. This ambiguity may be particularly problematic for studies where individuals are asked to ascribe personality traits to historical figures because leaders who are associated with positive outcomes and thus attributed, accurately or not, as effective, are more likely to be assigned prototypical leadership traits (Antonakis, 2011). Studies that employ observer ratings of 'greatness' and observer ratings of personality are therefore reliant on ascriptions. Very few studies have attempted to obtain *actual* ratings of personality from politicians themselves or actual measures of the day-to-day leadership performance of politicians. However, using role analysis and working with political parties Silvester and colleagues (e.g., Silvester & Dykes, 2007; Silvester et al., 2014) have identified more specific leadership behaviors or competences that are required to perform well in political office; these include communicating messages clearly and persuasively across different audiences, dealing with complex information, displaying conviction, articulating a vision, challenging assumptions and listening to others.

The relationship between personality and political leadership *emergence* is more ambiguous. There is evidence to suggest that politicians, and voters who align themselves with their political coalition, have congruent personalities (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Consiglio, Picconi & Zimbardo, 2003; Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004), but less is known about whether voters pay attention to, or make decisions based on, politicians' personalities. Increasing use of technology and social media during campaigns (e.g., through televised leadership debates,

and real time communication via on-line web-casts) certainly provides voters with more opportunity to listen to, and scrutinize, political candidates, yet it is still possible that traits vary in the extent they are observable. For example, planfulness or emotional stability may be more difficult for voters to assess than their sociability or likeability (Caprara et al., 2003; Colbert, Judge, Choi & Wang, 2012). The distance between voters and political candidates might also restrict opportunities for voters to decide whether a politician's traits fit with their implicit leadership theories (Antonakis & Atwater, 2002; Popper, 2013).

Importantly, politicians are not passive in their emergence as leaders and it is likely that, unlike biological traits, certain personality characteristics may afford political candidates the skills to help build their image as credible, trustworthy and competent so that followers consider them legitimate leaders (Chemers, 2000; Harms, Roberts & Wood, 2007; Judge et al., 2002). Traits associated with building rapport, effective persuasion and influence skills and trustworthiness, for example, are all likely to be especially important for gaining votes in electoral campaigns (Silvester et al., 2014). We therefore theorize that personality traits are likely to predict both effectiveness *and* emergence in politics because they provide candidates with actual skills and a propensity to behave in ways that are important for these leadership outcomes (see Figure 1).

H$_2$ Personality will predict leadership emergence (H$_{2a}$) and ratings of leadership effectiveness (H$_{2b}$)

Moreover, we theorize that the characteristics that matter to voters and are important for successful campaigning (i.e. contributing to leader emergence) may not be the same as the characteristics that predict the perceived effectiveness of political leaders once in office. Therefore, because most studies examining politician personality have adopted the 'Big Five' (Costa & McCrae, 1992) as a suitable taxonomy (Mondak & Halperin, 2008), we draw on these five domains to formulate specific hypotheses for both political leadership emergence and effectiveness. The 'Big Five' taxonomy incorporates five higher-order domains of

personality (i.e., Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness), each of which comprises six lower-order facets (30 in total).

Neuroticism. According to Lord (2007), individuals who score high on Neuroticism are more likely to experience higher levels of anxiety and depression, feelings of insecurity, and have a greater vulnerability to stress. Whereas those who score low are emotionally stable, relaxed, calm, and more able to cope with stressful situations without becoming upset. Given evidence that politicians often face, and must cope with, high levels of stress, work-life conflict and criticism (Silvester, 2012; Weinberg & Cooper, 2003), we anticipate that those demonstrating lower levels of Neuroticism are likely to perform better both during elections and once in office. Dietrich et al. (2012) found that high Neuroticism was associated with lower career ambition among U.S. legislators, and Silvester et al. (2014) found that politician's self-rated Neuroticism was negatively associated with observer ratings of their political resilience. Building on work conducted with leaders in more traditional occupations (e.g., Barrick, Mount & Judge, 2001; Judge et al., 2002) we predict that being calm and less vulnerable or reactive to stressful situations should help politicians cope with the demands of their role and thus perform better both when campaigning for election, and as representatives once elected to power. Consequently, we hypothesize that:

H₃ Neuroticism will negatively predict leadership emergence (H₃ₐ) and ratings of leadership effectiveness (H₃ᵦ).

Extraversion. Extraversion has been positively associated with leader effectiveness and emergence in traditional work contexts (Bono & Judge, 2004; Judge et al., 2002) and in their study of 119 Members of the Italian Parliament, Caprara et al. (2003) also found that politicians typically scored higher on Extraversion than members of the general public. Extraverts are sociable, talkative and assertive, so it is understandable that researchers have theorized that the trait is likely to be important for aspects of campaign work such as canvassing voters, generating support, and public speaking (Best, 2011). Research also

suggests that Extraversion is deemed important by voters when asked to describe their 'ideal' politician (Roets & Van Hiel, 2009). Yet, research investigating links between extraversion and political performance has had mixed results (Silvester et al. 2014; Simonton, 1988), and it may be that Extraversion is more important for electioneering than the day-to-day in-role responsibilities of political office. Consequently, we predict that

H$_4$ Extraversion will positively predict leadership emergence (H$_{4a}$) and ratings of leadership effectiveness (H$_{4b}$) but this relationship will be stronger for emergence than effectiveness (H$_{4c}$).

Openness. Individuals who are high on Openness are typically broad-minded, creative, intellectually curious and imaginative. However, evidence of its relevance for performance in traditional work settings is mixed. Although Barrick et al. (2001) found that the trait was not a good predictor of work performance, Judge et al. (2002) found that Openness positively predicted leadership emergence and effectiveness. Researchers have found that politicians score higher on Openness than the general public, suggesting the role may require such characteristics (Best, 2011; Caprara, Francescato, Mebane, Solace & Vecchione, 2010). Likewise Caprara et al. (2003) argue that it is a trait that all politicians should attempt to exhibit in order to help win over the electorate; though Roets and Van Hiel (2009) found that Openness was valued more by left-wing voters. Dietrich et al. (2012) also found that U.S. legislators' self-reported Openness was associated with their enjoyment of political activities like participating in committee hearings and working on legislation. Although no study has yet examined the relationship between Openness and performance in elections and political office, we hypothesize that:

H$_5$ Openness will positively predict leadership emergence (H$_{5a}$) and ratings of leadership effectiveness (H$_{5b}$)

Agreeableness. The fourth personality trait, Agreeableness, is associated with compliance, trust, altruism and cooperation. Lord (2007) reports that people who score high

on Agreeableness are more popular and less likely to antagonize others. Although research on traditional work roles has found little evidence for a significant relationship with overall work performance, Agreeableness is generally considered helpful in roles that require a significant amount of interpersonal interaction (Barrick et al., 2001). Leaders who are helpful, understanding, trustworthy and treat others sensitively are likely to be better rated by their followers (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). In political research, Roets and Van Hiel (2009) found that voters identified Agreeableness as an important trait for an 'ideal' politician; possibly because it indicates a greater willingness to build relationships with others and to listen. Indeed, Caprara et al. (2003) found that Italian MPs in their sample had higher Agreeableness than the general public. However, they suggestedthat being able to convey characteristics such as friendliness and altruism is likely to be particularly useful for politicians striving to build public support during electoral campaigns. Therefore, it may be that the trait has more specific utility for politicians during elections than politicians in office. We therefore predict that:

H_6 *Agreeableness will positively predict leadership emergence (H_{6a}) and ratings of leadership effectiveness (H_{6b}) but this relationship will be stronger for emergence than effectiveness (H_{6c}).*

Conscientiousness. Finally, Conscientiousness - one of the strongest personality predictors of performance in traditional occupations (Barrick et al., 2001) - is related to planfulness, dependability, organization and achievement striving. In political contexts, it is also considered something of a 'golden trait', with voters and researchers considering it important for political performance (Roets & Van Hiel, 2009). For example, in their analysis of the personality of past U.S. presidents, which used ratings provided by historical experts, Rubenzer et al. (2000) found that Conscientiousness was associated with judged presidential greatness and that achievement striving and competence facets being of particular relevance. More recently, Ramey et al. (2016) found that low levels of Conscientiousness in U.S.

members of Congress, as measured from the linguistic cues in their political speeches, was significantly associated with absenteeism from Congress. Similarly, Silvester et al. (2014) found that self-rated Conscientiousness predicted observer performance ratings for politicians. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H$_7$ Conscientiousness will positively predict leadership emergence (H$_{7a}$) and ratings of leadership effectiveness (H$_{7b}$)

Method

Context

The present study investigated the influence of ascribed and actual traits on leadership emergence and effectiveness among British local politicians. Although political leadership may be more complex and contested than for the leadership positions typically studied in I-O psychology or management research, we argue that political leadership provides a methodologically useful test of these concepts. To emerge as a leader, political candidates must generate political support and secure votes. Success in these tasks is likely dependent on a range of abilities, including a candidate's ability to engage voters and 'sell' a political vision, their willingness to spend time campaigning, and their skills in public speaking, developing relationships with voters, fundraising and recruiting campaign team members, working with the media, and being the face of a campaign (Morrell & Hartley, 2006; Silvester, 2012). Scholars have drawn parallels between this type of campaign work and the skills required to succeed in other types of leadership contest, such as networking, impression management and self-promotion (Inkson, 2004; Silvester & Wyatt, 2018). Likewise, there are similarities between effective leadership in organizational and political settings. Leaders in both contexts have to represent different interests, align agendas and operate in ambiguous environments (Silvester & Wyatt, 2018). In fact, Burns' (1978) original conceptualization of transformation and transactional leadership styles, widely adopted in I-O literature, was based

on the study of political leaders. These similarities suggest that leadership emergence and effectiveness in these settings are comparable.

Participants and procedure

Participants were 138 (84 male) community-based politicians from British local authorities, elected to represent the needs of constituents. Participants completed a personality assessment (NEO PI-R) as part of a government sponsored development program which aimed to develop the leadership skills of politicians identified as having strong potential to reach senior political positions in local and national government. These self-report personality assessments were then compared to each politician's electoral performance when they stood for re-election in the subsequent local authority election[1].

As part of the development program politicians were also able to take part in a 360-degree assessment process, where they requested anonymous feedback about their leadership effectiveness from multiple colleagues. These individuals were people they worked closely with, and who were able to provide them with trusted feedback on their day-to-day work in the local authority: they included local authority public servants, party workers and other politicians. In total 755 colleagues provided effectiveness ratings for politicians in this study, and the average number of colleagues providing ratings per politician was 9.47 (*SD*=6.54). Participation in the study was voluntary and all politicians and observers were asked for permission to use anonymized data for this research.

To examine the impact of politicians' appearance on leadership outcomes we recruited 526 participants through a British online recruitment tool, Prolific Academic. Participants were from the U.K (281), US and Canada (119), Central Europe (53), Eastern Europe (29), Australasia (28), Asia (5), South America (2), and African (2), seven participants did not declare their nationality. This multi-cultural data reduced the possibility

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[1] In the U.K., local elections are called at different times depending on geographical location. In this study electoral results were taken from the election that most closely followed collection of personality data.

that participants would be familiar with the politicians (Antonakis, 2011). The sample

included 292 women and 229 men (five did not disclose gender), aged between 18 and 74

(M=35.80, SD=11.60).

Measures

        Personality traits. Participants completed the U.K. version of the Revised NEO-

Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R: Costa & McCrae, 1992), which is a self-report instrument

with 240 items measuring the five major personality domains and each of their six facets.

Responses are provided on a Likert scale ranging from Strongly disagree (0) to Strongly

agree (4). Cronbach's alphas for the five domains were: Neuroticism (.83), Extraversion

(.76), Openness (.57), Agreeableness (.72) and Conscientiousness (.88).

        Facial Appearance. We obtained headshots for 135 politicians from their local

authority websites, three were unavailable. Following Todorov et al. (2005), images were

standardized in size, converted to greyscale and conspicuous backgrounds were removed and

replaced with a grey background. Participants were randomly assigned to one of five groups,

where they were asked to indicate their impression of each candidate in regards to either (1)

attractiveness (n=103), (2) likeability (n=111), (3) trustworthiness (n=105), (4) intelligence

(n=102), or (5) competence in leadership (n=105). These were derived from the key

dimensions rated in existing research (Sussman et al., 2013; Todorov et al., 2005), although

the final category was altered from general 'competence' in order to ensure it was specific to

the leadership context: participants were asked to rate 'how competent he or she (i.e. the

candidate) would be *as a leader*'. Participants were also asked if they recognized anyone in

the images, none did, as well as demographic questions. A principal components analysis was

conducted on the five conditions in order to determine whether it was appropriate to treat

these as a single dimension. This analysis suggested a two-factor structure, accounting for

85.09% of the variance. Factor one (65.00% of the variance) comprised likeability (.93),

trustworthiness (.89), and attractiveness (.75). This factor was therefore labelled 'warmth'

(α=.84) in line with the construct outlined by Cuddy, Fiske & Glick (2008) which encompasses both trustworthiness and likeability. Factor two (20.10% of the variance) was made up of intelligence (.93) and competence in leadership (.92), so following Todorov et al. (2005) was labelled 'competence' (α=.92).

 Leadership Effectiveness. Politicians' colleagues provided ratings of in-role leadership effectiveness anonymously using an online observer version of the Political Performance Questionnaire (PPQ: Silvester et al. 2014). This 21-item questionnaire was developed from a role analysis of the competencies required of politicians to perform well in their day-to-day activities, rather than one-off electoral campaigns. The questionnaire measures five dimensions: (1) resilience (5 items: α=.71), which refers to a politician's ability to cope with the demands of the role, (2) integrity (5 items: α=.75), which describes the extent to which a politician engages in secrecy, deception and political 'blood sports' – this was originally labeled 'politicking' but was reverse coded for the purposes of the present study, (3) analytical skills (4 items: α=.77), relating to their ability to understand complex information, (4) representing people (4 items: α=.74), referring to engaging with constituents, and (5) relating to others (3 items: α=.83), which describes their ability to listen to others and be approachable. Responses are measured on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) Likert scale. Example items are '*Is able to balance council, home and other areas of their work life*' (resilience), '*Actively seeks open communication and co-operation in politics*' (integrity), '*Is comfortable dealing with numbers and financial reports*' (analytical skills), '*Is courageous in campaigning on behalf of others*' (representing people), and '*Is a 'good listener*'' (relating to others).

 Leadership Emergence. We used the percentage of the vote that each politician achieved in the subsequent council ward[2] election as the measure for leadership emergence; all electoral information was sourced from the Local Elections Archive Project (Teale, 2016).

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[2]Council wards are geographical areas within the U.K. used to elect politicians to local government. In 2015, there were 9,196 electoral wards in the U.K. (Office for National Statistics, 2015).

Elections are a powerful context for testing the trait ascription route because they provide an objective and precise measure of leadership emergence that avoids several confounds often found in other organizational settings. First, unlike selectors of leaders in traditional occupational settings, the electorate is not held accountable for its decisions. Therefore, using votes as a measure of leadership emergence removes possible confounds associated with selectors' personal networks, and personal or professional obligations (Jacquart & Antonakis, 2015). Secondly, compared to the appointment of leaders, where selection decisions are usually controlled by a small number of powerful individuals (Silvester, 2008), elections ensure that decision powers remain with the many. Each rating of leadership emergence (i.e. vote) is therefore equal, which avoids potential confounds associated with power-relations among selectors. Thirdly, the outcome measure (percentage of the vote) is identical across all political candidates, and while British politics is heavily influenced by party allegiance, controlling for the effect of the party means that the measure of emergence is commensurable across all individuals in the sample. The process through which individuals emerge as leaders is also tightly controlled. In the U.K. there are strict guidelines on how politicians campaign during elections, including how much they can spend (approximately $1000 per candidate depending on size of campaign area), what the candidates can spend it on, and the duration of campaigning (usually four to six weeks: Electoral Commission, 2017).   Consequently, leadership emergence can be tested in a constant environment where it is possible to see the impact of each individual candidate.

Controls. We controlled for the percentage of the vote achieved by a candidate's political party in the council's electoral division[3] (party performance), which allowed us to calculate the individual candidate's influence on the electoral result separately from that of

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[3]The council's electoral division is the collection of wards for that area. The average number of wards in each division in 2015 was 23 (Office for National Statistics, 2015).

the political parties', both locally and nationally. Controlling for the party performance is important in relation to the U.K. system because voters can vote along party lines rather than for specific candidates (Holtz-Bacha, Langer & Merkle, 2014). This approach also provided a method for standardization, by accounting for variability in percentage share of the vote across different divisions. For example, in some divisions, a 30% share of the vote in a ward would indicate a winning majority but in other divisions could indicate the smallest share in a ward, depending on the number of candidates standing for election, and the number and popularity of parties involved. We also controlled for gender (1=male, 0=female) in our regression analyses, because previous research suggests that voters may have a preference for male candidates (Sanbonmatsu, 2002), and ratings of performance in standard occupations are often found to be gender biased (Bowen, Swim & Jacobs, 2000). Lastly, we controlled for the number of years each of our participants had spent as a local politician (experience), which might impact on leadership outcomes via increased opportunity to develop knowledge and skills due to greater experience in the role and campaigning, or voters' familiarity of the candidate[4].

Results

Means, standard deviations and correlations are presented in Table 1. Leadership effectiveness ratings provided by politicians' colleagues were aggregated because analysis was conducted at the politician level, and the intraclass correlation coefficient also suggested aggregation was appropriate (ICC=.17: Bliese, 1998). The maximum-likelihood with missing values (MLMV) estimator was used to enable analysis of the full (*N*=138) sample. Typically, relationships in this study range from small (.10) to medium effects (.30: Cohen, 1992), and

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[4]Our data did include a 20-item form of the Crowne-Marlowe social desirability scale (1960; Strahan & Gerbasi, 1972), allowing us to examine the extent politicians were attempting to manage their self-presentation. Correlation analysis indicated that this scale was not significantly related to performance outcomes and using it as a control in our regression analyses suggested that social desirability is unlikely to be responsible for the relationships we observe between traits and outcomes in this study. Given these findings and the low reliability of the scale ($\alpha = .55$) it was not included in the analyses to increase parsimony.

although modest, these effect sizes are similar to much personality research, where the

average effect size is reported to be r=.21 (Fraley & Marks, 2007).

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Test of hypotheses

Six multivariate regression models were conducted; one using facial appearance and

personality traits to predict leadership emergence and five predicting the separate dimensions

of leadership effectiveness. We used the SEM command in STATA 15 to allow the

disturbances of the six endogenous variables to be correlated, enabling a reduction in

standard error and thus increasing the efficiency of the estimation. The MLMV estimator was

used to allow analysis of the full sample (N=138). A sandwich estimator was used to provide

estimates based on robust standard errors (Antonakis, Bendahan, Jacquart & Lalive, 2010).

Indicators were averaged to create an overall index for each of the scales, which were used as

single indicators for latent variables. Using overall indexes allowed for greater parsimony,

which was suitable given the sample size and number of latent variables in the analysis, and

reasonable considering the Big Five is a well-established and supported model (Vassend &

Skrondal, 2011).

Overall indexes also allowed us to control for measurement errors using the

reliabilities of each scale (Antonakis et al., 2010). For facial appearance, the reliabilities were

obtained using Cronbach's alpha from the current data, whereas reliabilities for the

personality traits were taken from the NEO PI-R manual (Costa & MacCrae, 1992). Because

leadership emergence was a percentage of votes we estimated a fractional logit model by

transforming this variable to its logarithmic value using ln(Percentage of Votes/(1 –

Percentage of Vote) to account for its bounded nature (Baum, 2008). To determine whether

LEADER EMERGENCE AND EFFECTIVENESS IN POLITICS

there were significant differences between the influence of traits on emergence versus

effectiveness, we used Chow tests (Chow, 1960), which test the equality of coefficients

across the two outcomes. Standardized betas for the regression analyses and Chow test results

are reported in Table 2.

For appearance, the regressions show that facial warmth was a significant, but

negative, predictor of leadership emergence at the $p<.10$ level ($\beta=-.47$, $p=.055$), and facial

competence was a positive predictor ($\beta=.33$, $p=.062$), thus supporting hypothesis 1a. There

was no significant influence of facial appearance on leadership effectiveness, supporting

hypothesis 1c but not 1b. Chow tests revealed that although there was no significant

difference between facial competence as a predictor across the emergence and effectiveness

models, facial warmth was a significantly better (albeit negative) predictor of emergence

compared to effectiveness at the $p<.10$ level ($X^2=5.17$, $p=.07$), partially supporting hypothesis

1c.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

Personality was a significant predictor of emergence and effectiveness, providing

support for hypotheses 2a and 2b, although the direction of effects varied. Specifically,

Agreeableness was a positive predictor of leadership emergence ($\beta=.26$, $p<.05$), supporting

hypothesis 6a, but was a negative predictor of the leadership effectiveness dimensions

analytical skills ($\beta=-.25$, $p<.05$) and representing people ($\beta=-.22$, $p<.05$). These findings

provide support for hypothesis 6c, but not 6b, which had suggested the relationship between

Agreeableness and effectiveness would be positive rather than negative. Moreover, the Chow

test showed that the nature of this relationship across emergence and effectiveness was

significantly different ($X^2=12.39$, $p<.01$).

Conscientiousness was not a significant predictor of leadership emergence, meaning hypothesis 7a was rejected, but this trait did significantly predict the leadership effectiveness dimension resilience (β=.37, p<.05), providing support for hypothesis 7b. Although the Chow test showed no difference in how Conscientiousness predicted leadership emergence and overall leadership effectiveness, a specific Chow test examining how this trait influenced vote compared to ratings on the resilience dimension of effectiveness found that this difference was significant (X^2=5.11, p<.05). No support was found for hypotheses 3-5 relating to Neuroticism, Openness and Extraversion.

Additional Analyses

Due to the number of variables in the model and the sample size, a more parsimonious model was tested without the inclusion of gender to provide greater power. To ensure the removal of gender did not significantly impact the outcomes of the model we conducted a Wald test, and found there was no significant difference between the model outcomes with and without gender ($X^2(61) = 5.72(6)$, p=.45). Furthermore, to examine the impact on specific estimates in the model we conducted separate Hausman (1978) tests on each equation featuring gender, which are reported in Table 3, and an additional joint Hausman test across all equations ($X^2(61) = 9.66$, p=1.00). These analyses were all non-significant, indicating that removing gender does not have a significant impact on the model and doing so allows for more efficient and precise estimates.

Comparing the standardized estimates in Table 2 and 3 it can be seen that our findings are strengthened. Facial appearance (warmth: β=-.46, p<.01; competence: β=.32, p<.01) become significant at the .01, rather than .10 level when predicting leadership emergence, providing greater support for hypothesis 1a. The Chow test for warmth also shows it is now a significantly better predictor of emergence than effectiveness (X^2=10.92, p<.01), increasing support for hypothesis 1c. Our findings for personality were similar in terms of coefficient

strength and significance. This more parsimonious model therefore strengthens the findings of our study.

Discussion

This research aimed to test the ascription-actuality trait theory of leadership in a political context by examining the prediction that different traits are associated with leadership emergence and leadership effectiveness. We used two types of traits, namely observer rated facial appearance (ascribed traits), and self-rated personality (actual traits), testing their relative impact on leadership emergence and leadership effectiveness.

In support of the theory we found that ascriptions of competence for a politician, derived from their facial appearance, were positively associated with leadership emergence as measured by the share of the vote they received during election, whereas warmth was negatively related. However, neither ascriptions of competence nor warmth were associated with ratings of in-role leadership effectiveness provided by observers. These findings are similar to existing studies, which have found that competence ascriptions appear to have a greater influence on leadership emergence than factors such as likeability (Sussman et al., 2013; Todorov et al., 2005).

Certain self-rated personality traits were also associated with the leadership emergence and leadership effectiveness of politicians, although the relationships were more nuanced. Specifically, Agreeableness was positively associated with electoral performance, but negatively associated with in-role effectiveness, whereas Conscientiousness was positively associated with in-role resilience, but not associated with electoral performance.

In terms of leadership emergence, these findings suggest that, in the British political context at least, voters prefer candidates who look competent and possess higher levels of Agreeableness, but voters are less persuaded by politicians who appear warm. Although these findings might seem counterintuitive given claims that politicians must appear likeable and approachable in order to secure votes (Caprara et al., 2003; Roets & Van Hiel, 2009), it is

worth noting that in the NEO-PI-R the facet Warmth loads onto the higher order domain of Extraversion, not Agreeableness, and in this study Extraversion was not associated with leader emergence. Moreover, the higher order domain Agreeableness comprises six facets (i.e. Trust, Straightforwardness, Altruism, Compliance, Modesty and Tender-mindedness), which together encompass qualities such as authenticity, genuineness and being forthright in communication (Lord, 2007). Not only have these characteristics been shown to help business leaders instill trust and gain the confidence of others (Ferris, Treadway, Brouer & Munyon, 2012), they have also been identified as the key traits by which voters judge the suitability of political candidates for office (Ahmadian, Azarshahi & Paulhus, 2017). Our findings therefore tally with previous assertions that politicians high on Agreeableness are more likely to secure votes, because voters are attracted to candidates who appear competent, straightforward, altruistic, trustworthy and less likely to succumb to hubris (Little, Roberts, Jones & Buriss, 2007). Such qualities are likely to become progressively more pertinent, in an age where, authenticity, direct communication and avoidance of political spin is increasingly valued by members of the public (Brewer, Hoffman, Harrington, Jones & Lambe, 2014; Drake & Higgins, 2012).

Yet, equally pertinent is the question of whether voters are attracted to the same qualities that are also associated with success in office. Our results suggest that, in support of the ascription-actuality theory of leadership, ascribed traits based on facial appearance are associated with leadership emergence but not effectiveness. However, actual traits assessed using politician self-ratings of personality demonstrated more nuanced relationships with leadership emergence and effectiveness. Conscientiousness was found to be a significant positive predictor of in-role resilience as rated by individuals (i.e., political colleagues and officers) who were able to observe the day-to-day behavior of politicians performing their duties in political office. These findings correspond to previous studies which have found that Conscientiousness is important for performance in both traditional leadership positions

(Barrick et al., 2001; Judge et al., 2002), and elite political leadership roles such as holding U.S. Presidential office (Rubenzer et al., 2000; Ramey et al., 2016). However, our findings suggest a specific link between Conscientiousness and resilience, which may suggest that it has a particular impact on a politician's propensity to be organized, dependable and driven to achieve goals, and thus their capacity to cope with the competing and challenging demands of political roles (Weinberg, 2012).

Although Conscientiousness was not a predictor of leadership emergence as indicated by electoral performance, it is still possible that the trait plays a role in election settings but its importance may be subsumed by the need for politicians to appear agreeable and trustworthy. In support of the ascription-actuality trait theory, it is therefore conceivable that the distance between voters and political candidates makes it difficult for the voters to identify, and base decisions on, actual traits of political candidates that are relevant for leadership effectiveness.

Finally, of particular note is that in this study Agreeableness demonstrates a 'trait paradox' in that it is *positively* associated with leadership emergence, but *negatively* associated with leadership effectiveness. The concept of trait paradox concerns instances where a trait can be advantageous in some situations yet counterproductive or disadvantageous in others (Judge, Piccolo & Kosalka, 2009). Trait paradox in this context is pertinent to the question 'do aspiring politicians require different skills and qualities in order to get elected, than they do to perform successfully in office?' Or, put more bluntly, is it possible to possess qualities that increase the likelihood of success in an election and therefore emerge as a leader, but still perform poorly, or fail, once elected to political office?

Our findings are important, because they suggest that although voters value qualities related to Agreeableness (e.g. altruism and straightforwardness) in a political candidate, politicians high on Agreeableness are rated less effective by political colleagues and officers once elected to office. In reality, political effectiveness requires an ability to navigate a

conflicted and contested environment, balance opposing views, take difficult decisions, and build alliances (Silvester & Wyatt, 2018). Holding political office also requires an ability to challenge, oppose, fight for beliefs and win arguments, all of which may mean engaging in 'darker' more Machiavellian tactics required for success such as the ability to influence and manipulate others using flattery and deception (Deluga, 2001). Thus, individuals higher on Agreeableness with a preference for transparency, direct communication and, potentially, the avoidance of interpersonal conflict, may find it more difficult to succeed in politics once elected.

Taken together these findings provide partial support for ascription-actuality theory's prediction that, in situations like leader election, leadership emergence will rely more on judgements made by people who lack proximity to a leadership candidate. As such, they have little opportunity to observe them demonstrating requisite behavior or skills, and often comparatively little understanding of what the role entails. These distant observers must rely instead on leadership proxies, such as appearance, as well as implicit leadership theories, to infer an individual's suitability for a role using ascribed rather than actual traits.

Practical implications

Our findings indicate that politicians' traits have the potential to influence electoral outcomes beyond factors such as party allegiance and opponent strength. Yet given the increasing prevalence of candidate-centered election campaigns means that politicians' personal characteristics may become more influential than political ones (Garzia, 2011; McAllister, 2007; Rahn Aldrich Borgida & Sullivan, 1990). Not surprisingly, political parties are becoming increasingly savvy about how to present candidates as appealing, exploiting the distance and limited access that voters have to politicians.

Image consultants use headshots taken from an upwards angle to convey a candidate as more powerful (Graber, 2001), and 'image bites' (i.e. where candidates are sown but not heard in brief video clips) are used increasingly during elections to signal specific

characteristics (Schill, 2012). Likewise, campaign teams seek to portray desired personality by arranging photo opportunities of candidates with children and vulnerable groups to imply compassion, ensuring candidates are seen to wave and shake hands with supporters to convey friendliness, and the use of crowd imagery to signal Extraversion and popularity (Schill, 2009; 2012).

Manipulating public opinion in this manner has been criticized as inherently undemocratic. 'Packaged politics' has been challenged for oversimplifying and reducing political debate (Franklin, 1994), and the careful orchestration of politicians' images has been identified as a risk for voters becoming spectators rather than participants in the political process, resulting in voter apathy and cynicism (Hobbs, 2016). Yet, politicians also risk being challenged as anti-democratic or elitist if they do not engage fully with voters through social and other forms of media. Indeed, recent use of Twitter accounts suggests that social media may actually provide voters with more, not less, information about the characteristics of candidates, making them less reliant on engineered heuristic cues.

Of potentially more interest, however, is the apparent disconnect between characteristics that help individuals get elected, and those that help them to succeed in political office. Intuitively, the trait paradox observed with Agreeableness makes sense given the need for politicians to acquire and wield power, and to navigate an ambiguous, conflicted environment once in office (Silvester & Wyatt, 2018). Yet, low Agreeableness per se is unlikely to result in political effectiveness, and social influence skills may be needed to manage this paradox successfully. Political skill, a social effectiveness construct related to understanding and influencing others to achieve workplace objectives, may afford politicians the ability to successfully influence others once in office, while simultaneously presenting themselves in a way that instils trust and confidence (Ferris et al., 2007). Practically, politicians may therefore require training to develop such skills to enable them to deal with

competing groups and conflicting interests so that they can navigate their environment to both emerge as leaders and perform effectively in office.

Limitations and future research

There are several limitations to the current study. First, our measure of leadership effectiveness was based on performance ratings provided anonymously via multisource feedback by individuals who worked alongside the politicians in our sample. As such it could be argued that these ratings reflect a *perception* rather than an *objective* measure of leader effectiveness. More specifically, while follower ratings are the most commonly used method to measure leadership effectiveness, they are potentially contaminated by factors such as memory sensitivity and followers' own implicit leadership theories (Hansbrough, Lord & Schyns, 2014). Thus, while potential for bias may be lessened by greater proximity to leaders and therefore opportunity for raters to observe leaders in multiple role-relevant situations (Heilman, Martell, & Simon, 1988), it is possible that these ratings are biased by heuristic decision processes. Similarly, it is possible that facial appearance might also lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy (Antonakis & Eubanks, 2017), by influencing raters in close proximity to the leader and inflating performance ratings.

Although multisource feedback relies on observers' perceptions, there is evidence that multisource ratings correspond to objective measures of leadership effectiveness such as production, profit, revenue and sales (Conway, Lombardo & Sanders, 2001; Smither, London & Reilly, 2005). In this study we also took steps to reduce the potential for rater bias, by controlling for politicians' experience and gender (Paustian-Underdahl, Walker & Woehr, 2014), and by using multiple ratings for the same leader provided by observers with a range of perspectives (i.e. public servants, party workers and politicians) to provide a well-rounded measure of performance (Harris & Kuhnert, 2008; Hogan, Curphy & Hogan, 1994).

However, there is opportunity for future studies to further investigate these potential limitations. First, future research could use objective ratings of effectiveness, such as the

number of policies introduced by a leader, or debates won; although it can be difficult to

determine whether such outcomes derive from the efforts of an individual politician, or

political coalitions. Instead, future research may benefit from adopting forced-choice

rankings or event-level measurement to improve the validity of multiple observer ratings

(Brown, Inceoglu & Lin, 2017; Hoffman & Lord, 2013). Similarly, studies might test for the

effect of facial appearance on perceptions of effectiveness – and to whether any effect might

reduce over time as opportunity to observer leaders provides greater opportunity for

observers to collate disconfirming evidence.

A second concern is that the effectiveness of a politician requires the need to win

elections, and to do so repeatedly during their time in political office. In this study, our

participants were incumbent politicians, so although we controlled for their experience as

politicians, their previous election performance could have influenced effectiveness ratings,

and likewise, performance in the role could have affected the later vote. Therefore, although

we collected emergence and effectiveness ratings from different audiences (i.e. voters and

colleagues), in practice, the line between these criteria is ambiguous (Judge et al., 2002).

Future research might therefore consider longitudinal studies of emergence and effectiveness

to differentiate the order of effects. Likewise, political leadership emergence can also be

influenced by the characteristics of other candidates on the electoral ballot – not just by the

individual politician's traits. Although we controlled for a politician's experience and their

party's performance, future studies could examine the potential impact of competitors' traits

on the vote.

Third, in this study we used self-ratings of politicians' personality, but we know less

about whether voters surmised politicians' traits accurately, or ascribed them different

characteristics. There is evidence to suggest that others' and self-ratings of personality are

reasonably congruent (Conelly & Ones, 2010) and, somewhat intriguingly, the correlations in

this study between observer ratings of competence based on facial appearance, and

politicians' self-rated Conscientiousness, suggest there may be a 'kernel of truth' to observers' ability to infer some aspects of personality correctly (Atonakis & Eubanks, 2017).

However, Caprara, Barbarnanelli & Zimbardo (2002) suggest that voters assimilate their assessment of politicians' traits to their own self-ratings of personality when the candidate is from a preferred political party. Moreover, they found that voters have a tendency to simplify politicians' personality to those traits they think relate most to performance in office (i.e. Agreeableness and Extraversion/Energy). Their findings might explain why Agreeableness was the only personality trait to influence emergence in this study. The accuracy of personality ascriptions is also likely to depend on the extent to which cues for each trait are observable (Colbert et al., 2012), especially efforts by political candidates and their campaign teams to manipulate how they are perceived by others. Moreover, politicians who are politically skilled may be more able to hone their public image using stage-managed political theatrics to read and connect with audiences, while avoiding being perceived as dissemblers (Cronin, 2008; Ferris et al., 2007). Therefore, future research should look to measure observer and self-ratings of personality, and examine interactions between personality traits, political skill and leadership outcomes.

Fourth, there is also scope to examine personality facets to provide a finer-grained level of analysis. It is possible that facets under the same domain of personality have different relationships with leadership outcomes, for example, Extraversion's 'Warmth' and 'Gregariousness' facets may be associated with different outcomes to 'Activity' and 'Excitement-seeking'. Gallagher and Blackstone (2015), for example, find that U.S. Presidents who are rated as high on Excitement-seeking are more likely to issue high-profile executive orders that receive media attention, rather than more mundane policy-orientated orders. Adopting a pattern-orientated approach to examine relationships between facets from different domains would be particularly useful (Foti, Bray, Thompson & Allgood, 2012; Foti & Hauenstein, 2007). For example, successful campaign skills may rely on facets from

Extraversion and Agreeableness, whereas achieving power and influence once in office may require facets reflecting aspects of low Neuroticism, high Conscientiousness and low Agreeableness.

Fifthly¸while not necessarily a limitation, the present study focused on personality traits rather than cognitive traits. Previous studies using at-a-distance methods have found that cognitive complexity relates positively to performance in presidential and parliamentary contexts (Tetlock, 1984; Simonton, 2006). There is also evidence that political candidates scoring higher on a standardized critical thinking skills test performed significantly better in a British general election (Silvester & Dykes, 2007). Thus future research might explore whether different cognitive individual differences might be variously associated with leadership emergence and leadership effectiveness in politics.

Finally, our findings for facial appearance may have been influenced by the wider political context in which we collected our data. A number of studies have shown that voters prefer faces that look dominant, strong, masculine and competent in times of war, compared to ones that convey altruism or trust, which are favored during peace-time (Little, 2014; Van Vugt & Grabo, 2015). Although the data was not collected in what might be considered a time of war for the general populace (although the U.K. were engaged in military conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya), the political zeitgeist of the years following the global financial crisis has been focused firmly on bringing the reportedly unsustainable national debt under control, toughening up on public spending, and establishing a 'strong' economy (Whiteley, Clarke, Sanders & Stewart, 2013). Therefore, future research should look to replicate our findings in a range of political and economic climates.

Conclusion

This study set out to test the ascription-actuality trait theory of leadership to establish whether the traits that really matter for effective political leadership are recognised by the electorate. So, do voters get it right? Our findings suggest that they are likely to rely on

specious factors when voting, with their decisions about who to elect influenced by different traits to those that are important for political office. However, the nature of political leadership emergence and effectiveness is pluralistic and often contested, representing a power struggle between politicians who have the legitimate right of elected representatives to decide how to enact their roles, and voters who also have the right to decide how they want their leaders to perform. As such, voters get it neither wrong nor right, but hold different and equally valid perceptions of what constitutes political effectiveness.

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Figure 1

The ascription-actuality model and hypotheses
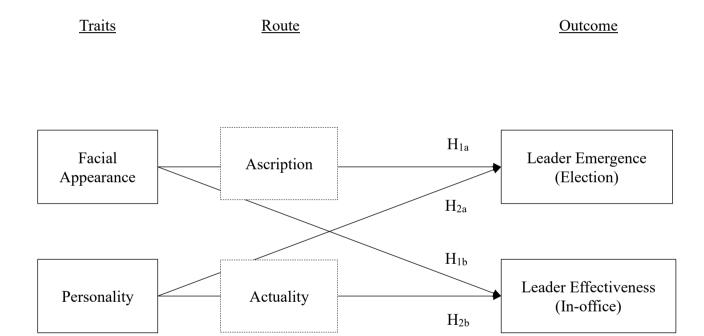
Traits   Route   Outcome

Facial Appearance

Ascription

Leader Emergence (Election)

H_{1a}

H_{2a}

Personality

Actuality

H_{1b}

H_{2b}

Leader Effectiveness (In-office)

LEADER EMERGENCE AND EFFECTIVENESS IN POLITICS

Table 1

Descriptive statistics and correlations for the study variables

		M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1	Gender[a]	0.61	.49	-														
2	Experience	4.00	3.21	.09	-													
3	Party performance	37.67	10.19	.01	.09	-												
Facial Appearance																		
4	Warmth	3.70	0.48	-.49**	-.23**	.04	-											
5	Competence	4.24	0.45	.03	.02	.04	.52**	-										
Personality																		
6	Neuroticism	12.42	3.78	-.13	.09	-.18*	.17*	-.11	-									
7	Extraversion	21.30	3.09	-.02	-.11	.01	.01	-.13	-.16†	-								
8	Openness	20.36	2.90	.04	.15†	-.10	-.06	-.03	-.01	.33**	-							
9	Agreeableness	19.68	3.06	-.21*	-.14†	-.08	.13	.00	-.06	.15†	.21*	-						
10	Conscientiousness	20.94	3.70	-.10	.04	.18*	.11	.19*	-.35**	-.08	-.11	.05	-					
Leadership Emergence																		
11	Percentage of vote	3.54	.47	-.34**	-.31**	-.01	.90**	.70**	.04	.00	-.10	.13	.13	-				
Leadership Effectiveness																		
12	Resilience	5.60	.47	.05	.11	.20*	.11	.25**	-.28**	-.04	-.10	-.06	.40**	.15	-			
13	Integrity	2.87	.52	-.14	.02	-.00	.10	.11	-.03	-.09	-.03	.12	.18†	.05	.28**	-		
14	Analytical skills	5.69	.48	.16	.15	.19*	.06	.25**	-.24*	-.02	.03	-.21*	.20*	.04	.53**	.23*	-	
15	Representing people	5.47	.47	-.12	.14	.14	.28**	.29**	-.03	.07	-.05	-.15	.13	.25**	.56**	.26**	.56**	-
16	Relating to others	5.84	.52	-.14	.09	.02	.10	.15	-.10	.00	.01	-.01	.02	.08	.36**	.56**	.44**	.60**

**p<.01, *p<.05, †p<.10,
[a](1=male, 0=female), *N*=138 using MLMV estimator

LEADER EMERGENCE AND EFFECTIVENESS IN POLITICS

Table 2

Regression analyses and Chow test results

	Leadership Emergence	Leadership Effectiveness					Emergence vs Effectiveness X^2
	% of vote	Resilience	Integrity	Analytical Skills	Representing People	Relating to Others	
Gender [a]	-.02	.18	-.21	.20	-.05	-.25	.17
Experience	.09	.18	-.01	.16	.24†	.11	
Party performance	.28**	.08	-.01	.10	.07	-.01	
Facial warmth	-.47†	.26	-.16	.26	.31	-.06	5.17†
Facial competence	.33†	.03	.18	.06	.16	.20	1.68
Neuroticism	.13	-.22	.05	-.29	-.03	-.16	3.50
Extraversion	.00	.01	-.08	-.04	.21	.01	.17
Openness	-.16	-.08	-.00	.13	-.07	.02	1.76
Agreeableness	.26*	-.06	.15	-.25*	-.22*	-.04	12.39**
Conscientiousness	.01	.37*	.20	.11	.07	-.09	.17

**p<.01, *p<.05, †p<.10,
[a](1=male, 0=female), *N*=138 using MLMV estimator, all estimates are standardized coefficients

LEADER EMERGENCE AND EFFECTIVENESS IN POLITICS

Table 3

Additional regression analyses and Chow test results

	Leadership Emergence	Leadership Effectiveness					Emergence vs Effectiveness X^2
	% of vote	Resilience	Integrity	Analytical Skills	Representing People	Relating to Others	
Experience	.09	.14	.04	.11	.25*	.16	
Party performance	.28**	.09	-.01	.11	.07	-.02	
Facial warmth	-.46**	.09	.02	.08	.34†	.17	10.92**
Facial competence	.32**	.14	.07	.17	.14	.07	2.45
Neuroticism	.13	-.21	.05	-.28	-.03	-.17	3.80
Extraversion	.00	.02	-.09	-.03	.21	-.01	.25
Openness	-.15	-.06	-.03	.15	-.09	-.01	1.83
Agreeableness	.25*	-.08	.17	-.27*	-.22*	-.02	12.55**
Conscientiousness	.01	.36*	.21	.10	.07	-.08	.11
Hausman (X^2)	1.23[a]	.85[b]	1.15[b]	1.36[b]	.08[b]	2.03[b]	

**p<.01, *p<.05, †p<.10,
N=138 using MLMV estimator. all estimates are standardized coefficients
[a]*df*=11, [b]*df*=10