

Out-party bias and candidate trustworthiness – Evidence from 18 election studies

Alexander Bor* & Lasse Laustsen

Department of Political Science,

Aarhus University, Denmark

alexander.bor@ps.au.dk / ll@ps.au.dk

* Corresponding author

Draft version – Please do not circulate

Paper prepared for presentation at the WAPOR “Political Trust in Contemporary Representative Democracies” Regional Conference 2016

Abstract

It is well established in the literature that trustworthiness is one of the most important traits in candidate evaluations. However, we suggest that not all groups in the electorate rely equally on trustworthiness in forming their evaluations. Informed by evolutionary theory of leadership we propose that voters supporting another party than the one the candidate belongs to are susceptible to getting harmed or exploited. Accordingly, these out-party voters will up-regulate trustworthiness in their decision process. Conversely, in-party supporters have much less concern about leaders' trustworthiness, and therefore down-regulate trustworthiness in their opinion formation. We test this hypothesis on data from 18 surveys from 6 different countries and find overwhelming evidence in support. These findings demonstrate the importance of looking more closely at specific traits along which candidates are evaluated and think more carefully about the evolved instincts these traits may reveal. They also have relevant implications raising concerns about citizens' ability to hold politicians accountable, as partisans are reluctant to withdraw support from a leader even if they believe that he or she is untrustworthy.

Keywords:

Political trust, Candidate evaluations, Competence, Evolutionary leadership theory

Citizens' vote choices and elections of representatives for parliament constitute a core feature of representative democracies and, thus, for citizens' possible impact on policy (Schattschneider, 1960). However, a vast number of political science articles show that voting is not *only* based on voters' considerations about policy agreement with different candidates. Instead, voters to a great extent also draw on impressions and evaluations of candidates' personalities and personal characteristics when making up their minds on Election Day (e.g., Campbell et al., 1960; Miller & Miller, 1976; Kinder et al., 1980; Kinder, 1986; Stewart & Clarke, 1992; Popkin, 1994, Funk, 1996, 1997, 1999; Hayes, 2005, 2009, 2010; Clarke et al., 2004; Bishin, Stevens & Wilson, 2006). In other words, voters are attracted to or repelled from certain candidates because of their personal qualities and traits.

However, whereas scholars agree about the role played by candidate personalities the underlying psychological processes through which voters draw on trait impressions of candidates remain blurred and unresolved. That is, the reasons for some voters' attraction to one candidate while not to another remains undertheorized and underexplored. Recent work seeks to offer more nuanced answers to this question by investigating the heterogeneity of voters' candidate personality preferences across different contextual circumstances surrounding elections (e.g., Merolla & Zechmeister, 2009; Laustsen & Petersen, 2016) and across voters holding different predispositions (Barker et al. 2006; Laustsen, 2016). Here we follow this recent trend as we integrate the literature on candidate trait preferences with insights on partisan biases and evolutionary psychology.

In this paper, we investigate if voters evaluate candidates differently depending on the partisan match between the voter and the candidate. Building on well-established insights on partisan biases in political behavior and recent insights from evolutionary leadership research we

theorize that voters should value specific traits in candidates differently depending on whether they are evaluating a candidate belonging to the party they identify with (in-party candidate) or to a competing party (out-party candidate). Here we focus on the trait of trustworthiness, defined as having intentions that are likely to benefit, or at least not harm another individual. There is ample evidence that trustworthiness evaluations have a crucial role in social perception (Fiske, 2007).

We argue that because a candidate—if she wins—is granted decisive decision making authority over distribution of key resources it is generally important for voters that the candidate exhibits trustworthy and predictable decisions. However, unpredictability and untrustworthy behavior is likely to affect some voters more than others. Due to the nature of politics, benefits are more likely to target a candidate's in-party supporters while cutbacks are more likely to target groups and voters who affiliate with other parties than the candidate's. Following the same logic groups and voters affiliated with other parties than the elected official's stand to lose the most from having an untrustworthy and unpredictable candidate elected. Based on this, we generate the somewhat counter-intuitive prediction that voters will value trustworthiness as a character trait in political candidates more for out-party than for in-party candidates.

We test this prediction using all available election surveys including candidate trait ratings on trustworthiness from six different western democratic countries across the last two decades. Based on multilevel regression modeling we find support for the prediction: Trustworthiness is a stronger predictor of global candidate evaluations for out-party candidates than for in-party candidates. Importantly, we contrast this finding with the most celebrated trait in the existing candidate evaluation literature, competence, and find that competence is equally

important for evaluations of in- and out-party candidates. Implications and future directions for research in trait and candidate evaluations are discussed.

Candidate evaluations and trait preferences

Political commentators, experts and even the candidates themselves assign significant explanatory power to candidates' personalities and voters' evaluations of these personalities. These ideas are further backed up in political science research finding that there is most often a positive relationship between voters' relative evaluations of competing candidates on different character traits and their actual electoral behavior. That is, voters tend to vote for the candidate that they find more personally appealing (e.g., Campbell et al., 1960; Miller and Miller, 1976; Kinder et al., 1980; Kinder, 1986; Stewart and Clarke, 1992; Popkin, 1994; Funk, 1996, 1997, 1999; Hayes, 2005, 2009, 2010; Clarke et al., 2004; Bishin et al., 2006). Some studies have investigated, which specific character traits are important to voters. They find that most traits cluster around two dimensions; trustworthiness/warmth and competence. Both of these have substantial effects on political attitudes (see for instance Kinder et al., 1980; Funk, 1997). Yet, existing work on candidate personality very often does not differentiate between different characteristics or traits. Instead they tend to form one universal personality factor based on all available trait ratings of competing candidates leading among others Funk to state that most studies treat candidate personality "as a lump sum that (...) ultimately sum together as an impact on vote choice" (Funk, 1999: p.701; however see Markus, 1982; Kinder, 1986; Goren, 2002 for studies taking multidimensional approaches to candidate trait evaluations). In this paper we seek to meet this call for a more fine-grained perspective on the electoral role played by candidate traits. In doing so, we build on a recent trend in the candidate evaluation literature building on

insights from evolutionary leadership theory (Van Vugt & Grabo, 2015; Von Rueden & Van Vugt 2015; Laustsen & Petersen, 2015, 2016).

Adaptive followership psychology

The basic point of departure for evolutionary leadership theory is that humans evolved in small-scale societies in which leaders served as focal points for coordination among fellow group members (Von Rueden & Van Vugt 2015; Van Vugt & Ahuja 2010). That is, in order to solve different kinds of collective action problems humans evolved a set of psychological mechanisms—*an adaptive followership psychology*—for regulating leader preferences in different scenarios and under different contexts in order to align themselves with the individual best capable of solving different problems facing the group (Little et al., 2007; Van Vugt & Spisak 2008; Spisak et al. 2012; Laustsen & Petersen, 2015). Next, in order to fully understand the character and nature of contemporary human leader preferences we should think of modern leaders—among these also political candidates—as instantiations of the same social phenomenon as ancestral leaders and, as a consequence, activating the same followership psychology. Therefore, the argument goes, our evolved followership psychology influences which kind of individuals we want to grant decision-making authority to even in contemporary modern societies.

This idea of an adaptive followership psychology has given rise to novel, more specific predictions and findings. First, scholars have found that followers prefer different kinds of leaders depending on whether their group faces a conflict with another group or not. Preferences for more dominant, masculine and less trustworthy looking leaders are higher when being threatened by an out-group compared to scenarios characterized by peace and calm (Little et al.,

2007; Spisak et al. 2012; Laustsen & Petersen, 2016). Likewise, although not building directly on this evolutionary approach to leadership, Merolla & Zechmeister (2009) finds that the character trait of strong leadership is weighted more heavily among voters when they are assigned to a “terrorist threat” condition than to a “good times” condition.

Second, another branch of the evolutionary leadership theory stresses a reciprocal relationship between leaders and followers. Accordingly, leaders provide group benefits, solving collective action problems and facilitating cooperation. In return they are granted prestige and an elevated positions within group hierarchy (Boehm, 1999; Prince & Van Vugt, 2014, Van Vugt & Ahuja 2010). Consequently, leaders also have better access to different resources which they can potentially abuse to their own (and their close kin and allies’) benefits. This risk of so-called “alpha-type bullying behavior” is believed to have exerted a significant force on human followership psychology and leader preferences in general (Boehm, 1999; Van Vugt & Ahuja 2010; Von Rueden & Van Vugt, 2015; Bøggild & Petersen, 2015). Specifically, this is theorized to be (one of) the primary reasons for a general preference for egalitarianism over hierarchy and for a strong sensitivity towards leaders’ untrustworthy and self-interested behaviors (see for instance Hibbing & Alford, 2004; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002; Bøggild, 2016). Moreover it has recently been suggested that this sensitivity towards self-interest and untrustworthiness in a leader should to a significant degree depend on the follower’s position vis-a-vis the leader: If the leader represents another alliance or coalition within society than the follower’s, then the follower faces a larger risk of being the victim of a despotic and untrustworthy leader’s exploitation than when sharing the leader’s coalitional affiliation (Bøggild & Laustsen, 2016).

Outgroup bias and candidate trustworthiness

A series of studies show how humans are psychologically equipped to pick up on coalitional affiliations among unknown individuals and categorize these individuals according to their respective coalitional belonging (Kurzban et al., 2001; Pietraszewski et al. 2014; 2015). That is, according to this literature individuals store information about others' coalitional affiliation in order to know who is aligned with whom. Importantly, such shared coalitional memberships are shown to be an important predictor of positive reciprocal relationships among individuals leading to preferential treatment of individuals with shared membership (Habyarimana et al. 2007; Efferson et al. 2008). Here we theorize that the same logic will apply for leader-follower relationships. Followers will expect leaders with a shared group membership to provide benefits to them. *Vice versa*, leaders with whom they are the least affiliated with will be suspected to be harmful, unpredictable and to direct negative consequences and decisions towards them. In other words, followers and voters should fear untrustworthy leaders and candidates the most when they are most likely to fall victim of their self-interested behaviors and decisions—that is, when they are affiliated with another coalition than the leader.

One obvious and politically relevant coalitional marker in modern politics is partisanship. A long line of political science research show how partisan affiliation guides electoral behavior (e.g. Campbell et al.) and public opinion formation (e.g. Carsey & Layman, 2006; Goren, 2005; Slothuus & De Vreese, 2010). More recently, scholars have also investigated the affective and identity-based side of party affiliation providing evidence for growing dislikes of the opposing party and polarization among the two major American parties (Levendusky, 2009; Hetherington, 2015; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015). For instance, this literature finds that Americans affiliated with either the Democrats or the Republicans increasingly report that they would not like their children to marry across party lines (Iyengar et al. 2012), and that party affiliation even colors

evaluations of the physical attractiveness of an unknown individual (Nicholson et al. 2016). In other words, partisanship and party affiliation constitutes a very clear, real and experienced coalitional marker for modern voters. Building on the logic outlined above, we argue that whereas trustworthiness and predictability in candidates should generally be preferred among all voters, voters should also regulate how much they value these traits depending on whether they share a candidate's party affiliation or not. That is, depending on whether voters are on the same side of the partisan division as an elected candidate or not, they stand to lose the most from having an untrustworthy candidate elected. Just like an elected candidate is more likely to target beneficial policies at groups of voters that tend to support her (and likewise target cutbacks on voters that do not support her), unpredictable candidate behavior is more likely to have negative consequences for voters who affiliate with another party than the candidate's. From this we predict that trustworthiness will be a more important trait in out-party candidate evaluations than in in-party candidate evaluations.

Crucially, we suggest that this conditional relationship is not universal to all traits. The other most significant trait dimension, competence helps to highlight the unique features of trustworthiness. Competence refers to candidates' skills and abilities and accordingly, it has little to do with risk of getting harmed or exploited. Consequently, we have no reason to believe that competence will be weighed more by out-party than in-party voters.

The analysis

Data

To test our prediction, we rely on a unique dataset of 18 election studies from 6 countries (Australia, Denmark, Germany, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom). To the best of our

knowledge, this is the first attempt to merge all publicly available nationally representative survey data with candidate trustworthiness and competence evaluations in them. The data includes evaluations from 35,528 individuals and of 39 political candidates. As our theory is rooted in evolved psychological mechanisms, we argue that the conditional effect of trustworthiness should hold across the whole ideological spectrum. Consequently, we pool all candidate evaluations, which results in a dataset of 87,164 observations.

Given that no international surveys include candidate trait evaluation questions, these surveys were conducted independently and thus sometimes use different scales and operationalizations.

In the followings, we review the variables used and the transformations employed for merging.

Our dependent variable is a general feeling thermometer towards the candidate. In all¹ countries respondents are asked to express their feeling towards a given candidate on an 11-point-scale of liking or disliking. We rescale the variable to 0-1, to help interpretation of our effects as percentage changes.

Table 1. gives an overview of the traits variables used in our analysis. The main independent variable, trustworthiness is measured straightforwardly prompting an evaluation of trustworthiness in half of the surveys. We operationalize perceived trustworthiness with evaluations of reliability in the other half our data. Reliability and trustworthiness are semantically close and they have been shown to tap into the trustworthiness trait dimension by previous research in political science (Funk 1996) and social psychology (Goodwin, Piazza, and Rozin 2014). Competence is measured in multiple ways. In the British Election Studies, competence is explicitly addressed. In the German data, respondents are asked to what extent they believe the candidates have „sensible ideas” related to the economy. In the remaining

¹ The only exception is Australia 1993 which used the terms favorable/unfavorable instead.

countries, multiple items tap into competence, and we average over knowledgeable and inspiring in the Scandinavian countries, and knowledgeable and intelligent in Australia. There is considerable evidence that all of these traits are closely related and reliable measures of competence (Kinder et al. 1980; Abelson et al. 1982; Fiske, Cuddy, and Glick 2007; Wojciszke and Klusek 1996). The measurement of traits ranges from 4 to 11-point scales. We centre and standardise all our independent variables by subtracting the group mean and dividing by two standard deviations to provide easily interpretable, unbiased estimates.

Table 1. Operationalization of trustworthiness and competence in our models

	Trustworthiness		Competence				
	Trustw.	Reliable	Competent	Knowled.	Intelligent	Inspiring	Sensible econ ideas
Australia_1993		x		x	x		
Australia_1996		x		x	x		
Australia_1998		x		x	x		
Australia_2001	x			x	x		
Australia_2004	x			x	x		
Australia_2007	x			x	x		
Australia_2010	x			x	x		
Australia_2013	x			x	x		
Denmark_2005		x		x		x	
Denmark_2007		x		x		x	
Germany_2009	x						x
Germany_2013	x						x
Norway_2001		x		x		x	
Sweden_2002		x		x		x	
Sweden_2006		x		x		x	
Sweden_2010		x		x		x	
UK_2005	x		x				
UK_2010	x		x				

All election studies have straightforward questions tapping into partisan identification. We operationalize shared coalitional affiliation as identification with the party nominating the given candidate. In other words, our „own party” variable is 1 whenever the respondent and the

candidate belong to the same political party, and 0 otherwise. We exclude from the analysis all respondents who did not share their party affiliation. This leads to a conservative test of our hypothesis, as candidates belonging to a different party are categorised as out-party candidates even if they are close in ideology or in coalitions. Finally, we also include in the analysis three socio-economic control variables, age, gender and education (recoded as a factor with three levels).

The model

Our prediction proposes that the effects of perceived trustworthiness on candidate evaluations are conditional on the coalitional affiliation between the candidate and the respondent. Accordingly, we are investigating the interaction between the trait evaluations and group relationship. We predict that the interaction effect will be negative for trustworthiness, whereas it will be non-negative for competence.

There is an important methodological challenge stemming from the fact that there is clustering in our data. This could arise due to multiple evaluations per respondent, multiple candidates per survey, multiple surveys per country and multiple countries. Violating the assumption of independent error terms could lead to downward bias in standard errors, thus increasing the false positive error rate. To reduce bias in the test of our hypothesis, first we need to tackle clustering. We do so relying on linear multilevel modelling.

Our model 1 regresses trustworthiness, competence and own party along with the three control variables on general thermometer, allowing for varying intercepts for individual respondents (level 2 - L2 grouping variable). We do not include the interaction terms to avoid confusion from interpreting biased estimates. Model 2 is the same as Model 1, but introduces varying intercepts for country-years (i.e. individual surveys, level 3 - L3 grouping variable). Model 3 allows for

varying intercepts and varying slopes at L3. Below we show that each of these steps improve model fit considerably. Model 4 includes the interaction term and thus allows testing our hypothesis.

To test the robustness of our findings, we report three additional models. Model 5 uses candidate-years as the L3 clustering variable instead of country-year. Although we find country-years as a more convenient third-level variable for interpretation, we have no reason to believe that using candidate-years will change our results. The final two models primarily intend to demonstrate that our results are not contingent on ideology. They report the “trait – own party” - interactions for left-wing (Model 6) and for right-wing (Model 7) candidates separately.² All of these models include competence too to provide a contrast with trustworthiness.

Results

Table 2. reports the results from our seven models. Models 1-3 importantly show that both relying on a three-level multilevel model (Model 2) and allowing both intercepts and slopes to vary at L3 (Model 3) considerably improve model fit. Goodness of fit is assessed with the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), which uses the maximum value of the likelihood function and the number of estimated parameters in the model. Lower values signal a better fit.

² The British Labour Party, the Australian Labor Party, and the Social Democratic parties of Germany, Sweden, Norway and Denmark are defined as left-wing parties. The Conservative Party of Britain, the Liberal Party of Australia, the CDU in Germany, the Danish Venstre, Norwegian Conservatives and Christian Democrats, and the Moderata in Sweden are categorized as right-wing parties. We excluded the Liberal Democrats in Britain.

Table 2. Multilevel models regressing trait evaluations on feeling thermometers

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Competence	0.135*** (0.002)	0.134*** (0.002)	0.154*** (0.012)	0.155*** (0.012)	0.156*** (0.008)	0.150*** (0.014)	0.154*** (0.010)
Trustworthiness	0.289*** (0.002)	0.284*** (0.002)	0.267*** (0.015)	0.283*** (0.016)	0.263*** (0.013)	0.248*** (0.014)	0.281*** (0.017)
Own party	0.127*** (0.002)	0.133*** (0.002)	0.154*** (0.016)	0.169*** (0.016)	0.167*** (0.012)	0.163*** (0.019)	0.188*** (0.015)
Age	0.002 (0.002)	0.0001 (0.001)	-0.0002 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.0004 (0.001)	-0.016*** (0.002)	0.016*** (0.002)
Female	-0.003* (0.002)	-0.0002 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.002 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)
Education secondary	0.015*** (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)	-0.004* (0.002)	0.005** (0.002)
Education higher	-0.007*** (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)	0.003* (0.002)	0.003* (0.002)	0.004** (0.002)	0.011*** (0.003)	-0.006*** (0.003)
Competence :own party				-0.004 (0.006)	-0.008 (0.009)	-0.005 (0.010)	-0.021 (0.013)
Trustworth. : own party				-0.070*** (0.011)	-0.065*** (0.010)	-0.042*** (0.013)	-0.099*** (0.013)
Constant	0.467*** (0.002)	0.489*** (0.013)	0.479*** (0.015)	0.481*** (0.015)	0.480*** (0.014)	0.475*** (0.018)	0.486*** (0.015)
Observations	87,164	87,164	87,164	87,164	87,164	38,493	39,029
Log Likelihood	21,081.810	24,120.350	27,151.450	27,391.880	28,272.010	10,999.560	12,005.810
Akaike Inf. Crit.	-42,143.610	-48,218.690	-54,262.900	-54,717.750	-56,478.030	-21,933.120	-23,945.620

Note: * p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

Accordingly, with each new model, the AIC becomes more negative. Analysis of variance tests show that these improvements are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Model 3 also allows an initial glimpse at the impact of trait evaluations on the feeling thermometer. As our variables are centred around country-year means and divided by two standard deviations, coefficient estimates can be interpreted as the predicted percentage change in the feeling thermometer when moving from one standard deviation below the mean to one standard deviation above the mean. Model 3 demonstrates that trait evaluations

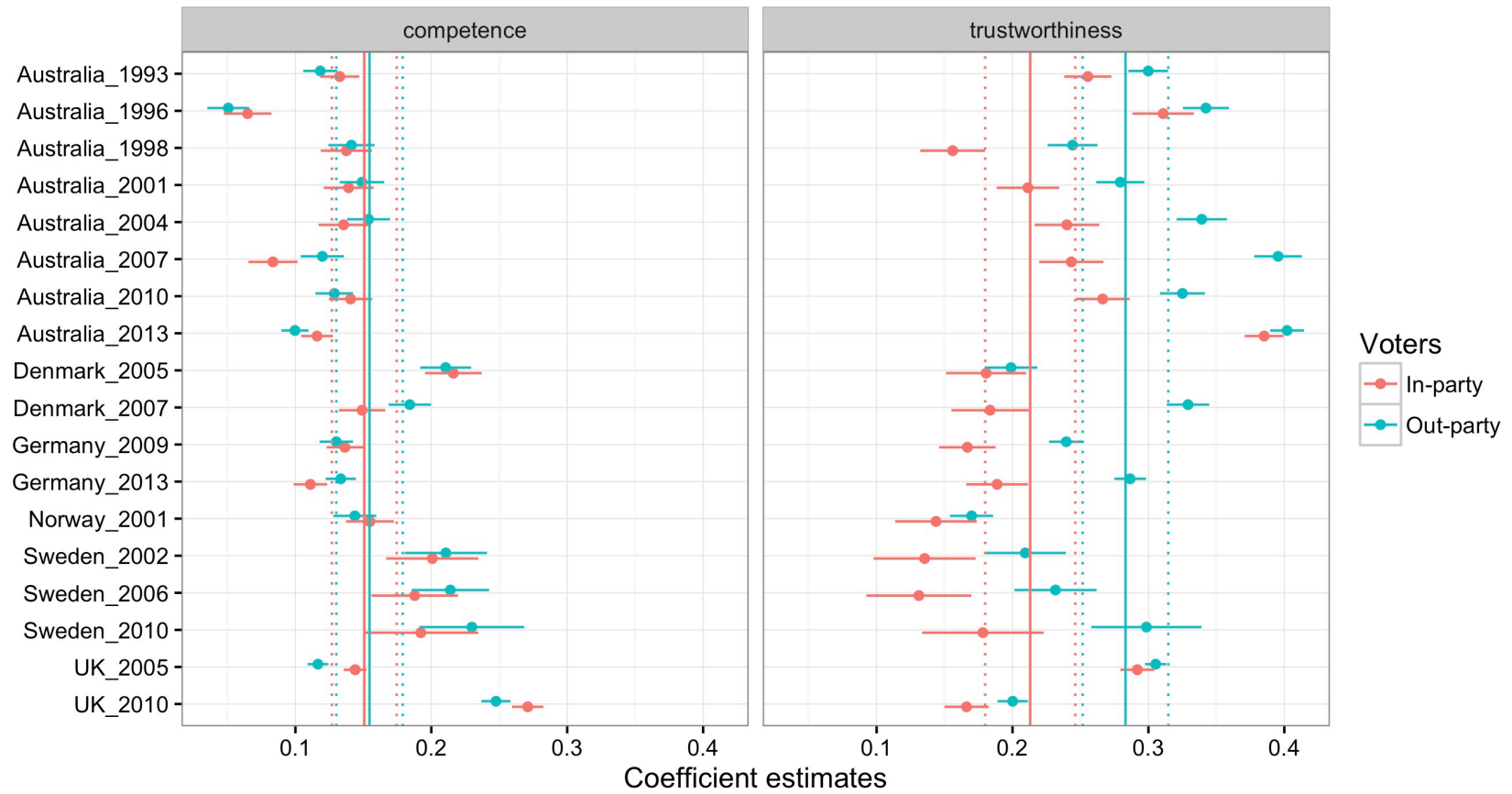
have substantial effects with a 27 and 15 percent change on average for trustworthiness and competence respectively.

Model 4 provides the crucial test of our hypothesis. First, the lower AIC demonstrates that the interactions improve the model fit. Second, the negative coefficient for trustworthiness and own party dummy provides support for our hypothesis ($t = 6.0, p < 0.001$). In line with our prediction, trustworthiness has a larger effect on the evaluations of out-party candidates (28 percent predicted change) than on evaluations of in-party candidates (21 percent predicted change). Importantly, this partisan bias seems to be unique for trustworthiness and not a general pattern for all trait evaluations. The competence – out-party interaction is not significant ($t = 0.5, n.s.$) and the effect of perceived competence on the feeling thermometer for a two standard deviation change is constantly around 15 percent. Reassuringly, Model 5 yields to essentially the same results, using candidate-year as the L3 variable instead of country-year.

Figure 1. illustrates Model 4. It depicts country-year random effects with confidence intervals estimated for both the in-party group and the out-party group. It shows that in each country the effect of trustworthiness is larger for the out-party candidates than for in-party candidates, and the difference is statistically significant in most cases (the three exceptions are Australia 2013, Denmark 2005 and Norway 2001). The effect size of the interaction ranges from 15 percentage points in Australia 2007 ($\beta_{\text{trustw_out}} = 0.395, \beta_{\text{trustw_in}} = 0.243$) to about 1 percentage point in the UK 2005 survey ($\beta_{\text{trustw_out}} = 0.305, \beta_{\text{trustw_in}} = 0.291$). There is no such clear trend for competence. In-group candidates are affected more by perceived competence than out-group candidates in some cases (e.g. UK 2005, 2010). However, there is also evidence for the contrary (e.g. Australia 2007) and the interaction is not significant in the majority of the cases. These overall trends are illustrated by the vertical lines, which show the fixed effects and their confidence intervals.

Model 6 & 7 give further support to the theory highlighting fairly universal, evolved mechanisms. They show that the effect of trustworthiness is conditional on coalitional affiliation for both left-wing and right-wing candidates, whereas the effects of competence are the same irrespective of the partisanship of the respondent and the candidate. Interestingly, our results show that in-group candidate evaluations depend on perceived trustworthiness to a similar extent (a 20 percent predicted change in the thermometer for two standard deviations change). However, there is a difference between out-party candidates' evaluations as left-wing candidates' thermometer is boosted by 25 percent for a one-unit-change in trustworthiness, whereas right-wing candidates thermometer is increased by 30 percent.

Figure 1. Fixed and country-year random effects from Model 4.



Conclusions

This paper sought to investigate if the coalitional affiliation between a political candidate and a citizen affects the role perceived trustworthiness plays in forming evaluations. We theorized that trustworthiness taps into the estimated risk being harmed by a leader and candidates are much more likely to exploit supporters of other parties. Hence we predicted that trustworthiness will be up-regulated in out-party candidate evaluation. Our analysis of a unique, large dataset of 6 countries and 39 candidates with over 87 thousand respondents provided firm evidence for our hypothesis. The effect of trustworthiness on a general feeling thermometer is about 33% larger (28% vs. 21% predicted change for two standard deviations) for out-party candidate evaluations. In this conclusion, we discuss two important implications and suggest directions for future work. The first implication of our study is that we have to take seriously the suggestions of Carolyn Funk (1999) and think more carefully about the real content of various traits along which candidates are routinely evaluated. We show how conceptualizing trustworthiness ratings as the output of an evolved instinct to monitor the risk of exploitation can lead to novel insights. Importantly, our pursuit mirrors the goals of evolutionary political psychology and offer ultimate explanations for social phenomena. Future research should continue this work and study other frequently discussed traits too, particularly competence and warmth.

The second implication concerns how revealed patterns affect the functioning of democracy. Our paper demonstrated yet another limit of citizens' ability to hold politicians accountable. Untrustworthy elected officials can be removed from office, if their own electorate withdraw their support. However, these are the same people who are least affected by signs of untrustworthiness. Meanwhile, out-party voters could be most alarmed by signs of exploitation or self-interested behaviour, however they were likely to never support the given candidate.

This paper has some important limitations. Most importantly, this is a correlational study, which could not bolster evidence for a causal relationship. Although, we believe it is remarkable that the same trend is present in 15 out of the 18 analysed elections, some alternative explanations, for example reverse causation or omitted variable bias cannot be ruled out. We also have little leverage to test the causal mechanism emphasising the importance of risk of exploitation. Finally, we use feeling thermometer as the main dependent variable of our analysis, although some other factors, particularly vote choice have more relevance. We believe most of these concerns could be effectively ameliorated with an experimental study with a broader range of dependent variables.

References

- Abelson, Robert P., Donald R. Kinder, Mark D. Peters, and Susan T. Fiske. 1982. "Affective and Semantic Components in Political Person Perception." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 42 (4): 619–30. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.42.4.619.
- Barker, David C. & Adam B. Lawrence. 2006. "Partisanship and the dynamics of "candidate centered politics" in American presidential elections." *Election Studies*, 25: 599-610.
- Bishin, Benjamin G., Daniel Stevens & Christian Wilson. 2006. "Character Counts? Honesty and Fairness in Election 2000". *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 70 (2): 235-248.
- Boehm, C. (1999). *Hierarchy in the forest: The evolution of egalitarian behavior*. Harvard University Press.
- Bøggild, T. (2016). How politicians' reelection efforts can reduce public trust, electoral support, and policy approval. *Political Psychology*

- Bøggild, T & Laustsen, L. 2016. "An intra-group perspective on leader preferences: Different risks of exploitation shape preferences for leader facial dominance". *The Leadership Quarterly*: In Press
- Bøggild, T., & Petersen, M. (2015). The evolved functions of procedural fairness: An adaptation for politics. In T. Shackelford, & R. Hansen (Eds.), *The evolution of morality* (pp. 247–276). New York: Springer.
- Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller & Donald E. Stokes. 1960. *The American voter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Carsey, Thomas M., and Geoffrey C. Layman. 2006. "Changing Sides or Changing Minds?" *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (2): 464–77.
- Clarke, Harold D., David Sanders, Marianne C. Stewart & Paul Whiteley. 2004. *Political Choice in Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Efferson, C., Lalive, R., & Fehr, E. (2008). The coevolution of cultural groups and ingroup favoritism. *Science*, 321, 1844–1849
- Fiske, Susan T., Amy J. C. Cuddy, and Peter Glick. 2007. "Universal Dimensions of Social Cognition: Warmth and Competence." *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 11 (2): 77–83. doi:10.1016/j.tics.2006.11.005.
- Funk, Carolyn L. 1996. "The Impact of Scandal on Candidate Evaluations: An Experimental Test of the Role of Candidate Traits." *Political Behavior*, 18: 1-24.
- Funk, Carolyn L. 1997. "Implications of Political Expertise in Candidate Trait Evaluation". *Political Research Quarterly*, 50 (3): 675-697.
- Funk, Carolyn L. 1999. "Bringing the candidate into models of candidate evaluation". *Journal of Politics*, 61: 700–720.

- Goodwin, Geoffrey P, Jared Piazza, and Paul Rozin. 2014. "Moral Character Predominates in Person Perception and Evaluation." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 106 (1): 148–68. doi:10.1037/a0034726.
- Goren, Paul. 2002. "Character Weakness, Partisan Bias, and Presidential Evaluation." *American Journal of Political Science*, 46(3): 627-641.
- Goren, Paul. 2005. "Party Identification and Core Political Values." *American Journal of Political Science* 49 (4): 881–96
- Habyarimana, J., Humphreys, M., Posner, D. N., & Weinstein, J. M. (2007). Why does ethnic diversity undermine public goods provision? *American Political Science Review*, 101, 709–725.
- Hayes, Danny. 2005. "Candidate Quality through a Partisan Lens: A Theory of Trait Ownership." *American Journal of Political Science*, 49 (4): 908-923.
- Hayes, Danny. 2009. "Has Television Personalized Voting Behavior?" *Political Behavior* 31, 231-260.
- Hayes, Danny. 2010. "Trait Voting in U.S. Senate Elections." *American politics Research* 38(6), 1102-1129.
- Hetherington, M. J. (2015). Why polarized trust matters. *The Forum*, 13(3), 445–458.
- Hibbing, J. R. & Alford, J. R., 2004. "Accepting Authoritative Decisions: Humans as Wary Cooperators". *American Journal of Political Science* 48(1): 62-76.
- Hibbing, J. R., & Theiss-Morse, E. (2002). *Stealth democracy: Americans' beliefs about how government should work*. Cambridge University Press
- Iyengar, S., & Westwood, S. J. (2015). Fear and loathing across party lines: New evidence on group polarization. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(3), 690–707.

- Iyengar, S., Sood, G., & Lelkes, Y. (2012). Affect, not ideology: A social identity perspective on polarization. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 76(3), 405–431.
- Kinder, Donald R. 1986. “Presidential character revisited”. In Richard R. Lau & David O. Sears (Eds.), *Political cognition* (pp. 233–255). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Kinder, Donald R., Mark D. Peters, Robert P. Abelson & Susan Fiske. 1980. ”Presidential prototypes”. *Political Behavior*, 2: 315–337.
- Kurzban, R., Tooby, J., & Cosmides, L. (2001). Can race be erased? Coalitional computation and social categorization. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 98, 15387–15392.
- Laustsen, L. 2016. “Choosing the Right Candidate: Observational and Experimental Evidence that Conservatives and Liberals Prefer Powerful and Warm Candidate Personalities, Respectively”. *Manuscript currently under review*.
- Laustsen, Lasse & Michael B. Petersen. 2015. “Does a competent leader make a good friend? Conflict, ideology and the psychologies of friendship and followership.” *Evolution and Human Behavior* 36: 286-293.
- Laustsen, L., & Petersen, M. B. (2016). Winning faces vary by ideology: How non-verbal source cues influence election and communication success in politics. *Political Communication*, 33(2), 188–211
- Levendusky, Matthew. 2009. *The Partisan Sort: How Liberals Became Democrats and Conservatives Became Republicans*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Little, Anthony C., Robert P. Burriss, Benedict C. Jones, & S. Craig Roberts. 2007. “Facial Appearance Affects Voting Decisions.” *Evolution and Human Behavior* 28: 18–27.

- Markus, Gregory B. 1982. "Political Attitudes during an Election Year: A Report on the 1980 NES Panel Study." *American Political Science Review*, 76(3): 538-560.
- Merolla, Jennifer L. & Elizabeth J. Zechmeister. 2009. "Terrorist Threat, Leadership, and the Vote: Evidence from Three Experiments." *Political Behavior* 31, 575-601.
- Miller, Arthur H. & Warren E. Miller. 1976. "Ideology in the 1972 Election: Myth or Reality-a Rejoinder." *American Political Science Review* 70(3), 832-49.
- Nicholson, S., Coe, C. M., Emory, J., Song, A. V. 2016. The Politics of Beauty: The Effects of Partisan Bias on Physical Attractiveness. *Political Behavior*, 38: 883-898.
- Pietraszewski, D., Cosmides, L., & Tooby, J. (2014). The content of our cooperation, not the color of our skin: An alliance detection system regulates categorization by coalition and race, but not sex. *PloS One*, 9, e88534. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0088534>.
- Pietraszewski, D., Curry, O., Petersen, M., Cosmides, L., & Tooby, J. (2015). Constituents of political cognition: Race, party politics, and the alliance detection system. *Cognition*, 140, 24–39.
- Price, Michael E., and Mark Van Vugt. 2014. "The Evolution of Leader-Follower Reciprocity: The Theory of Service-for-Prestige." *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 8 (363): 1–17. doi:10.3389/fnhum.2014.00363.
- Popkin, Samuel L. 1994. *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion Effects in Presidential Campaigns*, second edition. Chicago: Chicago University Press
- Slothuus, R. & De Vreese, C. H. 2010. Political Parties, Motivated Reasoning, and Issue Framing Effects. *Journal of Politics* 72(3): 630-645.

- Spisak, B.R., P.H. Dekker, M. Krüger & M.V. Vugt. 2012. "Warriors and peacekeepers: testing a biosocial implicit leadership hypothesis of intergroup relations using masculine and feminine faces". *PlosOne*, 7(1), 1–8.
- Stewart, Marianne C. & Harold D. Clarke. 1992. "The (Un)Importance of Party Leaders: Leader Images and Party Choice in the 1987 British Elections." *Journal of Politics* 54(2), 447-70.
- Van Vugt, M. & A. Ahuja. 2010. *Selected – Why Some People Lead, Others Follow and Why It Matters*. London: Profile Books
- Van Vugt, M., & Grabo, A. E. (2015). The many faces of leadership an evolutionary-psychology approach. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 24, 484–489
- Van Vugt, M. & B.R. Spisak. 2008. "Sex Differences in the Emergence of Leadership During Competitions Within and Between Groups." *Psychological Science* 19(9), 854–58.
- Von Rueden, C. & Van Vugt, M. 2015. "Leadership in small-scale societies: Some implications for theory, research, and practice." *The Leadership Quarterly* 26: 978-990.
- Wojciszke, Bogdan, and Bożena Klusek. 1996. "Moral and Competence-Related Traits in Political Perception." *Polish Psychological Bulletin* 27 (1): 319–25.