

**MAKING THEIR MARK: LEADER BRANDS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON
POLITICAL BEHAVIOR**

Emily B. Carty

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Approved by:

Pamela Johnston Conover

Graeme B. Robertson

Frank R. Baumgartner

Rahsaan Maxwell

Elizabeth Zechmeister

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ABSTRACT

Emily B. Carty: Leader Brands and their Influence on Political Behavior
(Under the direction of Pamela Johnston Conover)

What is it that makes some leaders so successful in attracting followers? Some are so effective in capturing the public's loyalty that they can win unexpected electoral victories, create new parties around themselves, and, in extreme cases, some leaders even reach legendary status. Groups of loyal followers form around these leaders, willing to sacrifice their time, effort, money, and whatever else they can to support the leader and their group. Likewise, groups of loyal opponents also form around some leaders, willing to do whatever it takes to remove them from power. Drawing on consumer and social psychology, my dissertation takes a new approach to the effect of leaders' traits on political outcomes by introducing the concepts leader brands and brand identification. By examining the content and diversity of leader brands and how they affect citizens' attitudes, identities, and behaviors in three different countries, I provide an innovative framework to better understand the relationship between political leaders and citizens. In the first chapter of this dissertation, I outline my theory of leader brands and their role in political behavior, case selection, and potential research extensions. In the second chapter of my dissertation, my co-author and I explore the factors explaining why conservatives in the United States form an attachment to Donald Trump's brand in the 2016 election and the behavioral effects of that attachment. The third chapter uses data collected on the 2015 Argentinean election to show that both anti- and pro- leader brands can attract and mobilize supporters when challengers incorporate anti-incumbent sentiments into their own brand. Finally, the last chapter presented in my dissertation uses the case of Spain to demonstrate that even in party-centric contexts, how individuals evaluate leaders' personal characteristics and the extent to which they form an attachment to a leader's brand has a significant influence on their vote choice.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCING A THEORY OF LEADER BRANDS

What is it that makes some leaders so successful in attracting followers? Some are so effective in capturing the public's loyalty that they can win unexpected electoral victories, create new parties around themselves, and, in extreme cases, some leaders even reach legendary status. Groups of loyal followers form around these leaders, willing to sacrifice their time, effort, money, and whatever else they can to support the leader and their group. Likewise, groups of loyal opponents also form around some leaders, willing to do whatever it takes to remove them from power. Drawing on consumer and social psychology, my dissertation takes a new approach to the effect of leaders' traits on political outcomes by introducing the concepts leader brands and brand identification. By examining the content and diversity of leader brands and how they affect citizens' attitudes, identities, and behaviors in three different countries, I provide an innovative framework to better understand the relationship between political leaders and citizens.

A Theory of Leader Brands

Political scientists have long maintained that leaders' traits matter to citizens, while disagreeing whether those traits have substantive consequences on different political outcomes. Generally, studies that sought to explain individual-level vote choice tended to find that perceptions of candidate or leader traits matter (Caprara and Zimbardo 2004; Caprara et al. 2007; Kelley and Mirer 1974; Kelley 1983; Stokes 1966; Rosenberg et al. 1986; Rahn et al. 1990; Bean and Mughan 1989), while those that examined the effects of candidate traits on aggregate-level election outcomes found that perceptions of those traits have a moderate effect at best (Miller and Shanks 1996; Bartels 2002; King 2002*a*). Other scholars have shown that traits can both attract people to a leader and affect how they evaluate the leader's performance (see, for example, Merolla, Ramos and Zechmeister 2007). While these theories contribute to our understanding how perceptions of a leader's personality can attract voters, their focus is on explaining behavior only in support of a leader and therefore do not provide a full picture of leader-oriented behavior. Drawing on consumer and social psychology, my dissertation

reexamines the effect of leaders' traits by exploring the concepts of leader brands, brand attachment, and brand identification.

As originally developed in marketing, a brand is a unique name and image for a product that aims to establish a differentiated and significant presence in the market. Brands provide an ideal, a vision, of a product with which people can form loyalties (AMA 1960; Keller 2003). While we typically think of brands as commercial in nature, they have been applied to politics as well, where research has primarily centered on party brands (Kavanagh 1995; Needham 2006; Smith 2009) or nation branding in the international arena (Aronczyk 2008). Some attention has been given to the relevance of branding for political leaders, but largely in reference to contributing to a party's brand (Smith 2009; Smith and French 2009; Speed, Butler and Collins 2015). While partisan and ideological organizations are able to form brands as well, these types of brands are based more on issues and abstract ideas (Poole and Rosenthal 1997; Cox and McCubbins 1993) than leader brands. Leader brands are grounded in human characteristics similar to the brands of commercial products (Smith and French 2009). Individuals form clearer and stronger opinions about people than they do about abstract concepts (Converse 1964; ?; Zaller and Feldman 1992; Hamilton and Sherman 1996; Lavine 2002; McGraw, Hasecke and Conger 2003) and are therefore likely to form stronger evaluations of leaders' brands than ideological or party brands.

When thinking about how leader brands can influence political behavior of individuals, there are various stages of assessment and connection to the brand. To begin, I conceptualize a leader's brand as the combination of the personality traits encompassed by the warmth and competence dimensions identified in the Stereotype Content Model (Cuddy et al. 2008; Fiske, Cuddy and Glick 2007; Macrae and Bodenhausen 2000). In a very straightforward process, individuals evaluate a leader's brand based on their perceptions of the brand's traits, thereby generating *brand evaluations*. Second, individuals form *brand attachments* to the brands of political figures containing traits that they both admire and perceive as similar to their own (Caprara and Zimbardo 2004; Caprara et al. 2007; Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar and Sen 2012). As such, brand attachment goes beyond a simple evaluation of traits; individuals are making a more personal appraisal by assessing the traits in comparison to their own traits and ideals. Moreover, they are taking the first step toward building a "personal" relationship with the brand that says something about, not only the politician, but who they are as well. Third, there is a social element to building leader brand relationships: individuals

develop group *brand identities* with other people who share their brand attachments. The more well-known a leader and the longer they have been in the public eye, the stronger the assessments an individual can make about the brand and has more opportunity to share their assessments and experiences with others. In this way, brands of well-known leaders, like incumbents, give birth to more socialized brand interactions, leading to brand-based social identities.

While brand identification can be positive and supportive of a leader, socialized identities can also be negative and anti-leader. Anti-brands are often conceptualized as a perceived incongruence between how an individual sees themselves and how they see the brand (Elsbach and Bhattacharya 2001; Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013), but, a richer conceptualization explains anti-brand identity formation as a product of three types of factors: experiential, symbolic identity incongruence, and ideological or moral incompatibility (Lee, Motion and Conroy 2009). While anti-brand identifications can have characteristics that are the opposite equivalent of the pro-brand counterpart, they can also have their own unique characteristics (Chatzidakis and Lee 2009). As with other social identities, brand-based identities play a key role in political behavior, affecting attitudes and mobilizing people to participate (Conover 1984, 1988; Tate 1993; Huddy 2003). Thus, by adopting the brand concept it is possible to simultaneously capture personalized and social attachments to leaders.

The development of pro– and anti– brand identities is dependent on the presence of strong leader brands. Because people have more exposure to and experience with incumbents, they are likely to be very well-known by people and therefore the most likely political figures to have strong pro– and anti-brands. Particularly strong brands should be present where the incumbent has been in power for an extended period of time (by either democratic or non-democratic means) and in contexts where a leader is particularly divisive or polemic. Where party system institutionalization and institutional limits on the executive branch are weaker, strong leader brands should be even more likely.

Overview and Contribution

My dissertation seeks to answer an increasingly pressing question in political science: *why are some leaders so successful in attracting and keeping loyal followers?*. With the occasional exception, problems of personalistic politics were traditionally associated with newer, more unstable democracies. However, in recent years this topic has become more central to our understanding

of politics in well-established democracies as well. The ‘personalization of politics’ has increased the visibility and power of individual leaders with much more prevalence than before (Karvonen 2010; McAllister 2007; Rahat and Sheafer 2007; van Aelst, Sharif and Stanyer 2012), due to the changing nature of political parties (Garzia 2011) and the weakening of traditional linkages between voters and parties (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Mair 2005), and changes in the media, particularly, the rise of television as an important source of political information (Mazzoleni 2000; Meyrowitz 1985). This has made individual leaders and the personalized connections between them and citizens likely matter more as a general rule than they did in the past, as evidenced by the surprising electoral gains of more personalistic leaders like Marine LePen in France and Donald Trump in the United States. In my dissertation, I offer the concept of ‘leader brands’ as a way to better understand these personalized relationships that form between leaders and citizens.

The central prediction of my theory is that the more individuals connect with a leader’s brand on a personal level, the more likely they are to support that leader and the more unwavering their support will be. To explore the composition and consequences of leader brands and associated identities on political behavior, I have designed and implemented original surveys in Spain, Argentina, and the United States. The diversity of context in which the data were collected helps to test the generalizability and explanatory power of my theory. In the first paper of my dissertation, my co-author, Pamela Johnston Conover, and I explore the factors explaining why conservatives in the United States form an attachment to Donald Trump’s brand in the 2016 election and the behavioral effects of that attachment. In this case we find that brand attachment helps to explain loyalty to Trump and that social identification with his brand helps to mobilize people to engage in public forms of political participation to support him. The second paper uses data collected on the 2015 Argentinean election to test the anti-brand component of my theory. Using data on Kirchner, the incumbent, and the candidates challenging her party in the election, I show that anti-brands have just as much power to predict an individual’s political behavior as pro-brands. Anti-incumbent brand sentiments can be incorporated into challenger’s brands to help them attract supporters and help to mobilize those who identify as a brand opponents to engage in political activities. Finally, the last paper presented in my dissertation uses the case of Spain to demonstrate that leader brands matter even in contexts we may not expect. Because Spain is a party-centric, ideologically grounded, and highly institutionalized political system, there should be less room for personalistic factors like

leader brands to sway individuals' political decisions and actions. Without undermining the role of traditional explanatory factors like ideology and party identification, the results from my study show that how individuals evaluate leaders' personal characteristics and the extent to which they form an attachment to a leader's brand has a significant influence on their vote choice.

Previously in political science, very little attention has been given to the branding of political leaders. There is a substantial literature on the branding of political parties and how political parties can come to be 'owners' of certain issues, but this borrows little from the consumer psychology literature and pays very little attention to individual leaders. In this way, by drawing upon conceptualizations and measurement strategies from consumer psychology, my dissertation can contribute to contentious reemerging debates in political science and to help develop a better understanding of the relationship between citizens and leaders.

Extending the Research Agenda

While survey data allows me to examine the content and consequences of leader brands, another key part of the puzzle is how these leader brands form in the first place. I hypothesize that the media plays a key role in this dynamic. Exposure to the media, both in regards to the frequency and ideological content, should be directly related to how individuals perceive leaders and therefore their leader brand attachment. I have gathered newspaper stories from four different newspapers in Spain to match with the survey data collected in order to test this hypothesis. I also have access to a dataset that I have been constructing with a team of fellow graduate students and faculty advisors (The Chapel Hill American Media Project) to test this hypothesis in the United States. This dataset consists of a wide range of political news and commentary programs on seven broadcast networks from 2000 through 2015. By using automated dictionary-based text analysis methods I can use these data to assess the content of leader brands in the media and how they map onto the way individuals in my surveys perceive leaders. The analysis of how brands develop is therefore a logical next step to pursue in this research agenda.

Another avenue I intend to pursue for further research on my theory of leader brands is to explore a broader conceptualization by incorporating elements of leaders' brands that go beyond personality traits. This may include factors such as slogans, leadership style, and broad policy

orientations. Examining how these influence perceptions of a leader's brand and how they interact with the personality component of their brand would help us to gain a more complete picture of leader brands.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCING A THEORY OF LEADER BRANDS

Emily B. Carty and Pamela Johnston Conover

“Six months into his presidency, Donald Trump’s approval ratings stand at its lowest point in CNN polling. These numbers have soured in recent months, particularly among Trump’s core supporters.” *CNN News*, August 8, 2017

“The Trump base is far bigger & stronger than ever before (despite some phony fake news polling).” *Donald J. Trump*, August 7, 2017

Currently, pollsters report that Donald Trump’s base is beginning to erode, but Trump unsurprisingly claims otherwise. Is he just “blowing smoke”? Or does he truly understand his base better than “experts”? During the 2016 election, Hillary Clinton was the odds on favorite to win. Virtually every poll predicted it. But then, too, Trump disagreed loudly and confidently. He promised his supporters a victory, and on Election Day he delivered. Afterwards, political scientists and pundits, alike, scrambled to explain his unexpected win and their failure to foresee it. Some wondered if a decisive role might have been played by factors beyond the control of the campaigns, such as fake news spread by Russian bots (Allcott and Gentzkow 2017), or F.B.I. Director James Comey’s ill-timed letter to Congress about Clinton’s emails (Silver 2017). Others blamed Clinton’s campaign strategy and messaging for the loss.

But for many, a full explanation of the 2016 election has required identifying the pivotal Trump voters and understanding what motivated their choice. This is important not only to make sense of the 2016 election results, but it remains imperative as we seek to understand exactly “who” constitutes President Trump’s base going forward – the base that he is absolutely confident remains loyal – and why Donald Trump is so appealing to them. We contribute to this effort by taking a step back and offering a different approach to thinking about a leader’s support in general, and Trump’s support in particular. Specifically, in an era of personalized politics and social media, we argue that it is useful to think about candidate/leader support in terms of “brands”: images based on candidate traits

that are the foundation of ideals around which people form loyalties (Keller 2003). And we offer a theory about candidate/leader brands. Specifically, we suggest that voters have attachments to candidates that are both personalized and social. Then, using survey data from October 2016, we explore the nature of the Trump “brand,” and test the loyalty of his followers via a survey experiment. We conclude by considering the implications of our findings for his support in the future.

Why Study Candidate Brands Now?

Two key changes in the political environment have made it conducive to the emergence of candidate “brands.” First, over the last few decades, there has been a trend toward personalization in politics that has affected electoral systems, media coverage, and candidate behavior (Rahat and Sheaffer 2007). By “personalization,” we refer to the visibility and power of individual politicians as compared to parties and institutions (Garzia 2011; McAllister 2007). The power of television, and more recently the rapid changes in mass communications have greatly contributed to this trend (Garzia 2011; McAllister 2007). Indeed, Takens et al. 2015 show that personalized media coverage primes personalized voting. But also the shifting nature of political parties (Garzia 2011) and the weakening of their connections to traditional groupings of voters may leave them vulnerable to the consequences of personalization: namely, the success of an outsider candidate like Donald Trump.

A second change in the political environment that has been crucial in fostering candidate brands is the growth of social media. For example, political candidates and incumbents, alike, are increasingly turning to Twitter to stay in touch with the public (Conway, Kenski and Wang 2013; Evans, Cardova and Sipole 2014). This is critical because social media platforms give citizens the ability to feel as though they are “interacting” with candidates: for example when they “like” on Facebook something the candidate has done, or they re-tweet one of the candidate’s tweets. Such “interaction” is important for facilitating identification with the candidate brand. So, the growth of both personalization in politics and social media in political communication has created a setting favorable for the development of strong candidate brands.

Candidate Brands – “Old Wine” in New Bottles?

Certainly, it is not new to suggest that voters care about the personality traits of candidates, and that citizens evaluate the characters of their leaders. In previous research, scholars have largely focused on how individuals evaluate the traits of political leaders and the impact this has on vote decisions (King 2002*b*). Those explaining individual-level consequences like vote choice have found that perceptions of candidate or leader traits matter (Kelley and Mirer 1974; Kelley 1983; Stokes 1966; Rosenberg et al. 1986; Rahn et al. 1990; Bean and Mughan 1989), while those who examine the effects of candidate traits on aggregate-level election outcomes have found only moderate effects at best (Miller and Shanks 1996; Bartels 2002; King 2002*a*). But these studies have focused almost exclusively on explaining the outcomes of single elections; consequently, they are theoretically ill equipped to explain why individuals develop strong loyalties to leaders that influence their attitudes and behavior both during and well after the election. What gives candidate trait evaluations their “staying power” long after a candidate has taken office and the campaign has finished?

Students of comparative politics might claim to have the answer: charisma. The ‘charismatic bonding’ literature describes the conditions under which people’s perceptions of a political leader’s personal traits lead to the formation of strong bonds with the leader. Originally elaborated by Madsen and Snow 1991, this theory posits that in times of crisis, individuals feel less secure and efficacious about their ability to survive in the unpredictable environment in which they find themselves. This, in turn, leads them to seek out a leader who they believe can handle the problems that they no longer can. For example, Madsen and Snow 1991 argue that Adolf Hitler and Juan Perón were highly charismatic leaders, though they offer little elaboration on the meaning of charisma. But others (Merolla, Ramos and Zechmeister 2007) offer a more elaborate characterization of charisma as a bundle of traits that includes: confident, caring, enthusiastic, goal-oriented, optimistic, and inspiring. Moreover, Merolla, Ramos and Zechmeister 2007 show that charisma, so defined, can both attract people to a leader, and affect how they evaluate the leaders performance. Still, this conception of charisma is too narrow in its range to account for all the leader brands that likely exist, and the theory fails to account for the psychological mechanisms of attachment and identification that explain the loyalty of citizens over time.

But political psychologists have offered an account of a mechanism that animates how citizens identify with candidate/leader traits. Specifically, Caprara and Zimbardo 2004 posit simply that voters are attracted to candidates that are similar to them, and that this holds when it comes to

personality. Thus, people are drawn to support candidates and leaders who resemble them in their personality traits. This congruency model has been most fully tested by Caprara et al. 2007, and they found that both American and Italian voters prefer candidates who have personality traits similar to their own. We build on this work in developing a theory of candidate brands that accounts for collective loyalties a task that we turn to now.

A Theory of Candidate Brands

As originally developed in marketing, a brand is a unique name and image for a product that aims to establish a differentiated and significant presence in the market. Brands provide an ideal, a vision, of a product with which people can form loyalties (AMA 1960; Keller 2003). While we typically think of brands as commercial in nature, they have been applied to politics as well, where research has primarily centered on party brands (Kavanagh 1995; Needham 2006; Smith 2009) or nation branding in the international arena (Aronczyk 2008). Some attention has been given to the relevance of branding for political leaders, but largely in reference to contributing to a party's brand (Smith 2009; Smith and French 2009; Speed, Butler and Collins 2015).

Our theory of candidate brands has four key elements. First, people develop "brand evaluations" based on their perceptions of the traits and vision encompassed by a candidate's brand. Second, voters form "brand attachments" to candidates that have brands containing traits that they both admire and that are similar to their own, thus personalizing their relationship with the candidate. Third, there is a social element to political branding: people develop group identities with other people who share their brand attachments to a candidate. And finally, the combined effects of brand attachment and brand identity generate brand loyalty over time. Thus by adapting the brand concept, we can simultaneously capture personalized and social attachments to candidates.

Candidate Brands and Evaluations

While the content of leader and party brands may overlap, brands that develop around leaders should be distinct from party brands. Party brands are based more on issues and abstract ideological ideas (Poole and Rosenthal 1997; Cox and McCubbins 1993), whereas leader brands are grounded in human characteristics similar to the branding of commercial products (Smith and French 2009).

Individuals form clearer and stronger opinions about people than they do about abstract concepts (Converse 1964; Zaller 1992; Zaller and Feldman 1992; Hamilton and Sherman 1996; Lavine 2002; McGraw, Hasecke and Conger 2003); therefore, they are likely to form stronger evaluations of leaders brands than party brands. Beyond this distinction, the actions of leaders and their parties may intentionally distinguish between party and leader brands (Needham 2005; de Landtsheer and de Vries 2015).

In specific terms, we conceptualize of a leader's brandits contentas the combination of the leader's personality traits; thus "brand evaluations" are how people assess those traits. Earlier work on candidate personality and image relied on a variety of models in specifying the traits for study (see Garzia 2013), typically emphasizing traits dealing with leadership or agency. However, in recent years, there is a growing consensus in psychology that there are two basic dimensions in person and group perception labeled as warmth and competence, or alternatively communion and agency (Cuddy et al. 2008; Fiske, Cuddy and Glick 2007; Malone and Fiske 2013). Evaluations of warmth include whether an individual is sincere, trustworthy, honest, good-natured, friendly, and kind. Competence is attributed to individuals who are perceived to be skillful, capable, intelligent, efficient, and possessing the resources and confidence to achieve their goals. Because both warmth and competence are relevant for how people evaluate others, warmth traits should be considered just as relevant in how individuals perceive leaders as their competence as a politician. Recent research (Cislak and Wojciszke 2008; Bertolotti et al. 2013) shows that both trait dimensions matter in the assessments of candidates and their behavior. But which traits are especially important for particular candidates should reflect their ideals and visions.

Brand Attachment

Drawing on both consumer and social psychology, we argue that an individuals "brand attachment" is determined by two factors: admiration of the brand personality, and self-brand similarity, or the degree to which a person shares the same traits as the brand (Caprara and Zimbardo 2004; Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar and Sen 2012). Specifically, the development of a brand attachment begins with the perception of a leader's traits. First, individuals evaluate the leader's warmth and competence in terms of specific traits representing those dimensions, resulting in their assessment

of the leader's brand. Then, they judge the degree to which they admire and share those traits. The higher their personal evaluations of and connection to those traits, the greater their attachment with the brand. Therefore, brand attachment goes beyond a simple evaluation of traits; individuals are making a more personal appraisal by assessing the traits in comparison to their own traits and ideals. Moreover, they are taking the first step toward building a "personal" relationship with the brand that says something about, not only the candidate, but who they are as well. In effect, voters, too, are now personalizing politics by personalizing their relationships with candidates.

Brand Identity

Social identities are psychological attachments to a group that become part of one's self-concept (Tajfel 1981); they play a key role in political behavior, affecting attitudes and mobilizing people to participate (Conover 1984, 1988; Tate 1993; Huddy 2003). Given that people readily form identities around political parties and ideologies (Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002; Huddy, Mason and Aaroe 2015), it is likely that they also will develop social identities as "supporters" of political leaders.

Indeed, with consumer brands, individuals form group identities based on their assessments of and attachments with brands (Schneider 2004); Apple users, for example, come to identify with other Apple users. Applying this to the concept of leader brands, brand attachment should encourage the formation of a group identity as a supporter of the leader. In particular, leaders who inspire citizens to admire and identify with them should be the most effective in creating a brand that inspires group identification and loyalty. Moreover, it is here, especially, where social media can play a critical role in fueling the development of connections between supporters that is vital to nurturing the emergence of shared identities. Thus, two types of connections develop and fuel loyalty to the leader's brand: a personal connection between the leader and the individual, and a social connection between individuals, where the common bond of supporting a leader gives them the basis for a shared social identity.

Following the literature on the consequences of social identity, identifying as a supporter of a leader brand should cause individuals to form attitudes that promote a positive image of their in-group of fellow identifiers (Conover 1988; Huddy 2003). The 'us' versus 'them' distinction coupled

with attachment to one's brand-oriented in-group should strengthen an individual's evaluations and emotions towards the leader, resulting in a higher willingness and likelihood to defend the brand group. Those with a leader brand identity should actively support that leader and his/her associated institutional entities (political party, government, etc.) through various forms of political participation, such as voting, donating time or money, or engaging in political rallies, protests, or other mobilizations.

The Trump Brand

Why were voters attracted to Donald Trump, the man? Analysts have spent months addressing this question. But most have actually focused on identifying the traits of Trump's voters, rather than Trump's appealing features. For example, MacWilliams 2016 found that authoritarianism more than race, education, or income explained support for Trump. Similarly, racial resentment was important in motivating Trump voters (Tesler 2016). Finally, Trump voters were decidedly sexist, more so than voters of all other Republican candidates except Ted Cruz (Maxwell and Shields 2016).

But what about Donald Trump would make him appealing to authoritarian, racially resentful, and sexist voters? On our account, voters are attracted to candidates that share their basic qualities suggesting that Trump, himself, manifests authoritarian (Klein 2017), racist (Berney 2017), and sexist tendencies (Tiernan 2017) – observations bandied about in the media. And Trump signaled these qualities during his campaign by, for example, strategically employing racial “dog whistles” (López 2016).

But beyond this, Trump – like all other candidates and leaders – must be evaluated along the warmth and competence dimensions. And the Trump “brand” reflects a particular configuration of traits that complement the attitudinal tendencies just discussed. In many ways, we expect Trump, with his “America First”, business leader image to project the traits of a “male warrior.” “Male Warriors” emphasize fighting enemies – such as terrorists, and illegal immigrants – over promoting families and peace, while bonding with other men to carry out the battles (Beneson and Markovits 2014). Male warriors are also attracted by strength and toughness, self-confidence, and a willingness to break the rules of society though following the rules created by the group is valued (Beneson and Markovits 2014). Thus, traits from the competence dimension should dominate the Trump brand,

while those from the warmth dimension like honesty and caring should be less important. We turn now to examine these possibilities.

Data and Methods

In order to assess the content and relevance of Trump's brand, we rely upon original individual-level survey data collected days before the 2016 United States Presidential election. Conducted using Amazon's MTurk, the sample consists of 441 respondents who identify as either independents or Republicans. We recruited people who identified as either Republican or Independent because we were interested in the dynamics among potential Trump core supporters; Respondents who later identified as Democrats were filtered out given that they should not have been in the sample in the first place.

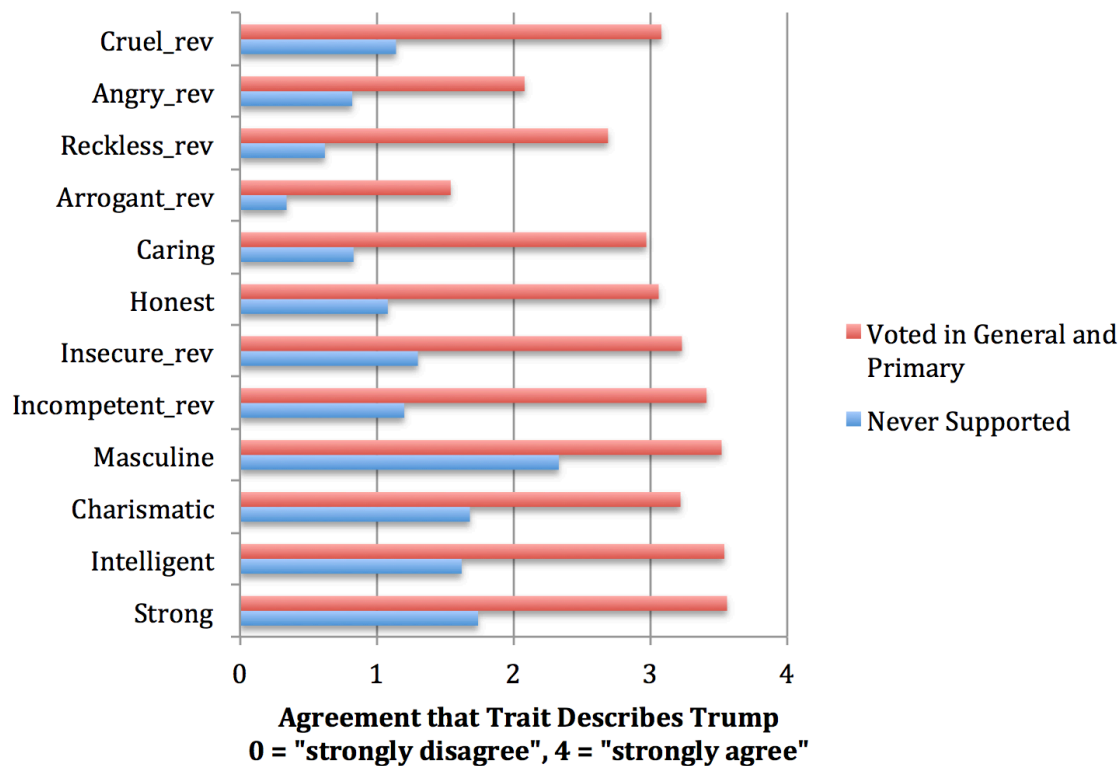
In the sections to follow, we first provide some descriptive analyses on Trump's brand evaluation. We then attempt to answer the question of what factors best explain behavioral support for Trump, going beyond simple trait evaluation to include brand attachment and group identity.

Findings

The Trump Brand – Evaluations

As elaborated above, the media has given a lot of attention to Trump's personal characteristics, but how do potential voters see him? We asked survey respondents the extent to which they agree or disagree that eleven different personality traits accurately describe Donald Trump. Figure 1 below displays how two groups of respondents at extreme levels of support, Trump's voting base supporters (those who voted for him in the general and the primary) and those who never supported him, evaluate Trump on those traits. The first six traits displayed below in Figure 1 are generally perceived as negative traits (cruel, angry, reckless, arrogant, insecure, incompetent), followed by five positive traits (caring, masculine, charismatic, intelligent, strong). Looking at the mean evaluations, a clear pattern emerges. Respondents in Trump's base evaluate him much higher on all positive traits and much lower on negative traits than those respondents who never supported him. Respondents who never supported Trump rate him very high on negative traits and very low on positive traits.

Figure 1: Mean Trait Evaluations at Extreme Levels of Support



According to the Stereotype Content Model (see, for example, Cuddy et al. 2008), for most candidates both warmth and competence should be important components for a candidate's brand; however, as elaborated above, there is reason to believe that how an individual evaluates Trump on competence traits should be more relevant than how they evaluate him on warmth traits in determining their support. While a factor analysis confirmed these two factors, individuals evaluate Trump more positively on competence traits such as strong, intelligent, and charismatic, than they do for warmth characteristics like cruel and arrogant (see Figure 2 below). This is true for individuals who never supported Trump as well as for those who voted for Trump in both the primary and the general election.

Brand Attachment and Identity

We begin by explaining evaluations of Trump's brand – his traits – and the attachments and identifications stemming from Trump's brand. We use three brand-based measures as dependent variables for the models below and use these variables as explanatory variables in subsequent sections. Using the loadings from the two-factor solution derived from factor analysis, we created a brand evaluation measure. This measure uses the factor loadings as weights for each trait and then creates an additive index of those weighted sums for the warmth and competence dimensions. Warmth and competence are then added together and standardized to 0-1. Brand attachment is the additive index of brand admiration and brand-self similarity. Group identity is measured as the additive index of two responses, the degree to which being a Trump supporter says something about yourself and identification with other Trump supporters. Both brand attachment and group identity are additive indices with the components weighted equally and standardized to 0-1.

In the following models presented in Table 1, we use demographics and attitudinal variables as predictors of brand evaluation, brand attachment, and group identity. As shown in Table 1, in this exploratory study of Republicans and Independents, the more strongly people identify with the Republican party the more likely they are to evaluate Trump's traits more positively, to be more attached to his brand defined by those traits, and to identify with other Trump supporters. In effect, these Trump loyalists are also strong Republicans.

Beyond party identity, both racial resentment and especially fears that the country is becoming "too feminine" lead to higher Trump brand evaluations, as well as brand attachment and identity. Thus media portrayals of racist and sexist strains characterizing Trump's appeal receive some support in these data. But what is important to note is that the impact of these factors on Trump's brand attachment and identity show that these factors have personal meaning as well as social power. Trump's vow to "Make America Great Again" promises a return to an America where whites dominate and traditional gender roles are once again respected. It is a vow that both resonates with what individuals feel – especially men – and that is the rallying call for a collective identity built around the Trump brand.

Finally, these data show that a preference for a "leader that breaks the rules" is one of the strongest predictors of brand attachment, and especially group identity. Thus as predicted, those seeking a strong "male warrior" value someone willing to break society's rules, and supporters of Donald Trump perceive that he has the necessary qualities – strength, intelligence, charisma, and

Table 1: Determinants of Brand Evaluation, Brand Attachment, and Group Identity

	Brand Evaluation	Brand Attachment	Group Identity
Republican	0.04** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.02)	0.13*** (0.03)
Age	0.00*** (0.00)	0.00*** (0.00)	0.00*** (0.00)
Female	0.01 (0.01)	-0.05* (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)
Education	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
Income	-0.01* (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Religiosity	-0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
Ideology	0.01+ (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.03+ (0.01)
Authoritarianism	0.03 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.04)	0.04 (0.06)
Racial Resentment	0.06* (0.03)	0.09* (0.05)	0.13* (0.06)
Country Feminine	0.08*** (0.02)	0.10** (0.04)	0.12* (0.05)
Leader Break Rules	0.07*** (0.02)	0.15*** (0.03)	0.20*** (0.04)
Constant	0.47*** (0.04)	0.15* (0.08)	-0.17+ (0.10)
N	432	432	432
R ²	0.360	0.322	0.327

+ p < 0.10, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

OLS regressions. Standard errors in parentheses

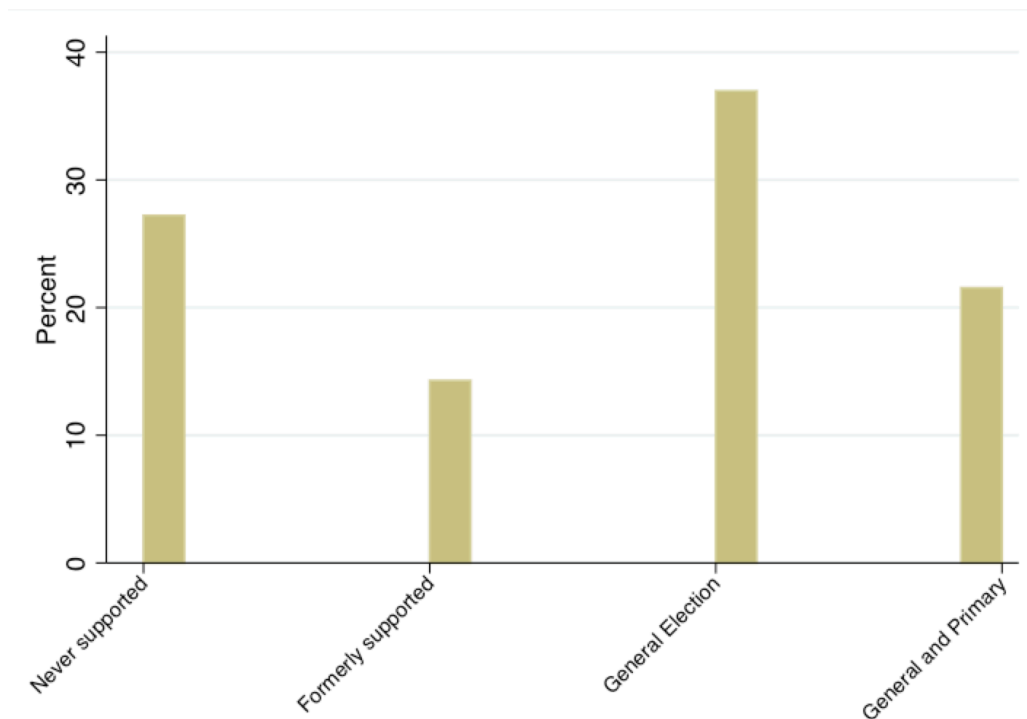
even a bit of arrogance – to effectively do just that. So, while opponents of Trump worry about the way he ignores political norms, his supporters see it as one of his biggest attractions.

Explaining Membership in the Trump “Base”

We now explore the relationship of support for Trump’s brand to membership in the Trump “base”, as defined by voting behavior. This Trump Base variable is based on respondents stated voting behavior or intended voting behavior, as this survey was conducted in the week prior to the election. Those who stated that they voted for Trump in the primary and general elections are coded as ‘3’ and are what we consider behaviorally to be the supporters in Trump’s base. Those that voted for

him in the general election are coded as ‘2’, those that once supported him but no longer do are coded as ‘1’, and those that never supported Trump as coded as ‘1’. We see in Figure 2 below the distribution of voting behavior toward Trump among this sample of Republicans and Independents. The respondents in the “Trump base” category constitute less than 25% of our sample of Republicans and Independents.

Figure 2: Distribution of “Trump Base” Variable



To what extent are brand evaluation, attachment, and identity associated with membership in Trump’s voting base? Does consideration of Trump’s brand help us better understand Trump’s voting base? To answer these questions, we model the “Trump Voting Base” variable in a series of models sequentially adding in demographics, attitudes, and then each of the brand variables. As shown in the first model in Table 2, strong Republican identifiers and older voters are significantly more likely to belong to the Trump voting base. In the second model, we add in attitudes, and find that both a preference for “a leader that breaks rules” and a concern that the country has become too feminine

are important to identifying the Trump voting base. But contrary to popular media themes, neither racial resentment nor authoritarianism proves significant in defining the Trump voting base in these data.

Table 2: Effect of Demographics, Attitudes, and Brand Variables on Trump's Base

	Model 1 Demographics	Model 2 Attitudes	Model 3 Brand Evaluation	Model 4 Brand Attachment	Model 5 Group Identity
Republican	1.35*** (0.23)	1.28*** (0.24)	1.20*** (0.25)	1.15*** (0.25)	1.08*** (0.26)
Age	0.03*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Female	-0.25 (0.19)	-0.19 (0.20)	-0.36+ (0.21)	-0.25 (0.22)	-0.28 (0.22)
Education	-0.08 (0.08)	-0.02 (0.08)	-0.05 (0.09)	-0.03 (0.09)	-0.03 (0.09)
Income	0.02 (0.06)	-0.01 (0.06)	0.12+ (0.07)	0.11+ (0.07)	0.11 (0.07)
Religiosity	0.06 (0.07)	-0.01 (0.08)	-0.03 (0.08)	-0.05 (0.08)	-0.04 (0.08)
Ideology	0.37*** (0.09)	0.19+ (0.10)	0.04 (0.11)	0.04 (0.11)	0.04 (0.11)
Authoritarianism		-0.00 (0.42)	-0.41 (0.46)	-0.31 (0.46)	-0.35 (0.47)
Racial Resentment		0.84+ (0.44)	0.37 (0.48)	0.29 (0.48)	0.21 (0.48)
Country Feminine		1.06** (0.36)	0.23 (0.39)	0.22 (0.39)	0.20 (0.39)
Leader Break Rules		1.37*** (0.31)	0.87** (0.33)	0.76* (0.34)	0.66+ (0.34)
Trump Brand Evaluation			12.85*** (1.12)	10.23*** (1.41)	8.90*** (1.48)
Trump Brand Attachment				2.12** (0.74)	1.60* (0.77)
Trump Group Identity					1.49** (0.53)
Constant	5.08*** (0.76)	6.07*** (0.82)	13.61*** (1.16)	12.79*** (1.18)	11.98*** (1.21)
N	432	432	432	432	432
pseudo R^2	0.113	0.159	0.307	0.314	0.321

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$
Ordered Logit results with standard errors in parentheses.

The final three models sequentially add in the three brand variables: evaluation, attachment and identity. Each one contributes significantly to explaining support for Trump's voting base, though predictably the Trump brand evaluation has the largest impact. The fact that both brand attachment and group identity have a significant impact even accounting for brand evaluation is critical for it affirms the changing relationships that voters have to candidates. Increasingly, voters want candidates that they can relate to personally, and they want to share the meaning of that bond with others.

Trump's ability to tap into that need is not a "one-off," but rather an indicator of what the future holds in a political environment where politics is increasingly personalized and social media is pervasive.

Finally, once the three brand variables are entered into the model, only two other variables prove significant in predicting membership in the Trump voting base: strength of identity with the Republican party, and the desire for a leader that will break the rules. This would seem to suggest that the most loyal Trump voters at least in this sample were motivated by somewhat contradictory impulses. On the one hand, they were driven by a strong identity with the Republican Party. But that identity does not prevent them from wanting a leader that will challenge the "rules" – presumably of how Washington runs.

The Social Nature of Brands: Political Participation

So far, we have shown that attachment to and identification with his leader brand has consequences on whether people choose to vote for Trump. However, due to the social nature of this brand-follower connection, particularly the presence of group social identities, we should expect brand-based identities to have an even greater effect on public and interactive forms of political participation. To vote for a candidate behind a closed curtain where others cannot see the choice you make arguably has a lower social cost than advertising your opinions openly. In the following section, we examine the relationship between brand-based supporter identity (having a social identity as a Trump supporter) and three political participation actions in support of Trump's campaign: using swag such as a button or a yard sign, trying to persuade someone to vote for Trump, and attending a rally, meeting, or other campaign event.

For this analysis, we employ logistic regressions using each of the participation variables as dependent variables. The participation variables are coded dichotomously with '0' indicating the individual did not participate in that activity and '1' indicating they did. Along with the brand attachment and group identity variables, we also included typical predictors of participation including strength of partisan identification, age, gender, education, income, and ideology. In order to control for some of the more issue-related sources of support for Trump, we also control for religiosity, authoritarianism, and racial resentment. The results of logistic regression models are shown below in Table 3.

Table 3: Effect of Brand Variables on Social Political Participation

	Model 1 Swag	Model 2 Persuade	Model 3 Rally
Trump Supporter Identity	4.73*** (1.38)	3.14*** (0.70)	6.20*** (2.13)
Trump Brand Attachment	0.64 (1.39)	1.49 (0.81)	0.56 (2.08)
Republican Identification Strength	0.35 (0.55)	-0.28 (0.32)	0.15 (0.80)
Age	-0.001 (0.02)	0.018 (0.01)	-0.025 (0.03)
Female	0.05 (0.47)	-0.44 (0.28)	-0.13 (0.69)
Education	-0.08 (0.18)	0.02 (0.11)	0.02 (0.27)
Income	0.11 (0.14)	-0.07 (0.09)	0.31 (0.21)
Religiosity	-0.06 (0.19)	-0.08 (0.11)	-0.56* (0.28)
Ideology	-0.04 (0.26)	0.31* (0.15)	-0.50 (0.37)
Authoritarianism	-1.07 (0.96)	0.26 (0.58)	-3.53* (1.54)
Racial Resentment	1.67 (1.18)	0.57 (0.62)	3.04 (1.92)
Constant	-6.48** (1.98)	-5.61*** (1.17)	-3.74 (2.75)
N	432	432	432
Pseudo R^2	0.257	0.260	0.305
$LR\chi^2$	56.01	131.89	37.67
$Pr(\chi^2)$	0.000	0.000	0.000

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Logistic regression results with standard errors in parentheses.

As can be seen from the results of these regressions, for all three participatory actions, having brand-based social identity is the most important predictor. For all three, identity is positive and statistically significant, while neither partisan identity nor brand attachment are significant. Most of the control variables also fail to reach statistical significance, with the exception of religiosity and authoritarian predispositions in predicting attendance in a rally or meeting. This may be due to the types of individuals who would be likely to engage in this type of participation to begin with, but such a claim would require further investigation.

These results confirm that the social nature of the brand-based leader-follower connection has consequences beyond the voting booth. Individuals who form social identities with other supporters using the leader's brand as a foundation for their shared identity are more likely to engage in public and higher-cost forms of political participation. This suggests a level of loyalty and dedication that cannot be accounted for by existing concepts and measures, an idea we continue in the following section with evidence from a survey experiment.

Brand Loyalty – an Experimental Test

To further assess how voting and brands affect loyalty, we conducted a simple survey experiment. Specifically, how do citizens react when presented with a message about campaign violence presented by Donald Trump? In one treatment, Trump defends the violence of his own campaign supporters, in part, because “people fight all the time in America.” In a second treatment, Trump discourages the campaign violence of his own campaign supporters warning, “the Democrats are trying to make us look bad.” What is the reaction of Trump supporters, especially, when receiving such messages? Do they remain loyal and agree with the position that Trump is staking out, or do they disagree?

In general, both topics and speakers (e.g. source cues) effect how people respond to statements by political candidates. We chose campaign violence as a topic of the experimental treatment because it was a timely, non-policy issue on which Trump had taken a previous stand blaming protestors – not his own supporters while ostensibly seeking to avoid violence (Decker and Finnegan 2016). Thus, our choice of violence as an issue should reduce somewhat the reliance of partisans on Trump's source cues, because the potency of source cues is typically less on “easy issues” like this where the already public has clear opinions (Nicholson 2011). In effect, we make it harder for people to be swayed by Trumps message just because they belong to his voting base or are attached to his brand. Thus, Trump supporters receiving a message that he opposes violence should find it especially easy to support him, because they are already inclined to have that position. But those receiving a message suggesting that he is changing course and now defending violence by his own supporters should find it doubly hard to accept – both because it requires endorsing violence and because it requires supporting a purported change of position with little information on what it entails. To the extent that

those strongly attached to Trump’s brand or belonging to Trump’s base buck these expectations and follow him regardless, we will have a gauge of the power of his base and brand.

We consider reactions to these two treatments looking at membership in Trump’s base and support for Trump’s brand. An examination of the mean agreement with Trump’s statements either discouraging or encouraging violence in the treatments in Table 4 reveal a clear trend. The more people are part of Trump’s voting base, the more they agree with his statements. While the level of agreement with the statement discouraging violence is greater across all values of the Trump base measure, the supporters from his base also follow his cues on the violence treatment with a mean response of 2.42, falling in between the response categories “neither agree nor disagree” (3) and “agree” (2).

Table 4: Mean Agreement to Treatment Statement by Trump Base

	Never Supported	Formerly Supported	General Vote	Primary and General Vote
Violence not okay	3.09	2.18	1.54	1.37
Violence okay	3.98	3.43	2.81	2.42

Note: Dependent variable is an ordinal variable scaled 1-5, where 1=“strongly agree” and 5= “strongly disagree”.

Critically, when looking at the difference in mean agreement across individuals’ degree of attachment to Trump’s brand in Table 5, we see an even more striking difference. Again, it is clear that the more people are attached to the Trump brand, the more they follow his cues, regardless of whether the cues promote or discourage violence. However, the difference in mean between the lowest level of brand attachment (1) and the highest (4) is greater than the differences between those in Trump’s base and those that never supported him. Additionally, the mean level of agreement with his statements promoting violence is greater in the high brand attachment category (1.96) than in amongst his voting base (2.42).

Table 5: Mean Agreement to Treatment Statement by Brand Attachment

	Never Supported	Formerly Supported	General Vote	Primary and General Vote
Violence not okay	2.93	2.18	1.49	1.23
Violence okay	4.11	3.23	2.70	1.96

Note: Dependent variable is an ordinal variable scaled 1-5, where 1=“strongly agree” and 5= “strongly disagree”.

In order to test whether the differences in mean agreement with Trumps statements are statistically significant, we conducted Kruskal-Wallis H tests. This Kruskal-Wallis H test is a non-parametric variation of an ANOVA, which was necessary given the non-normal distribution of the treatment

discouraging violence (?). The Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there was a statistically significant difference in agreement across values of the Trump base support variable. To obtain a more detailed understanding, we then conducted Dunn non-parametric pairwise multiple comparisons to see if the differences in agreement to Trumps statements are significant across level of support (Dunn 1961; ?). As displayed in Table 6, all comparisons are statistically significant (at the conventional 0.95 level), except for the mean agreement to the treatment statements of his core base (voted for Trump in General and Primary elections) and those who voted for him in the general. The difference falls just short of statistical significance for the pro-violence treatment. The non-statistical significance of the anti-violence treatment is logical, given the high level of agreement with his statement discouraging violence. This cue is more socially acceptable and therefore easier to agree with and follow.

Table 6: P-values for Pairwise Comparisons Difference in Agreement Response by Trump Base

	Never Supported	Formerly Supported	General Vote
Formerly Supported	Violence: 0.024 Anti-Violence: 0.001		
Voted for in General	Violence: 0.000 Anti-Violence: 0.000	Violence: 0.013 Anti-Violence: 0.001	
Voted for in General and Primary	Violence: 0.000 Anti-Violence: 0.000	Violence: 0.001 Anti-Violence: 0.000	Violence: 0.058 Anti-Violence: 0.139

Note: Dependent variable is an ordinal variable scaled 1-5, where 1=“strongly agree” and 5= “strongly disagree”.
P-values determined by Dunns non-parametric pairwise multiple comparison following a Kruskal-Wallis test.

The same Kruskal-Wallis H tests and Dunn pairwise comparisons were performed to see if there are differences across the four ordinal levels of brand attachment. Similar results emerge. Again, the differences in level of agreements across brand attachment in both treatments were statistically significant. As can be seen in Table 7, using the brand attachment variable all pairwise comparisons are statistically significant, except for the difference in agreement to the anti-violence statement for the top two quintiles of brand attachment. However, the difference comes much closer to statistical significance than using the Trump base variable, suggesting that the psychological brand attachment variable may provide more leverage in understanding why individuals stick with Trump, even when he leads them down paths that may not be as socially desirable.

Discussion and Conclusions

Table 7: P-values for Pairwise Comparisons Difference in Agreement Response by Brand Attachment

	1	2	3
2	Violence: 0.000 Anti-Violence: 0.002		
3	Violence: 0.000 Anti-Violence: 0.000	Violence: 0.009 Anti-Violence: 0.000	
4	Violence: 0.000 Anti-Violence: 0.000	Violence: 0.000 Anti-Violence: 0.000	Violence: 0.012 Anti-Violence: 0.074

Note: Dependent variable is an ordinal variable scaled 1-5, where 1=“strongly agree” and 5= “strongly disagree”.

P-values determined by Dunns non-parametric pairwise multiple comparison following a Kruskal-Wallis test.

In 2016, Donald Trump surprised the pundits and experts alike with the support that he generated. Now, commentators are scrambling to determine if his “base” will stand by him. But how do we best determine who his base is and what their loyalty is likely to be?

Herein, we have argued that Trump’s support is not exceptional, but rather is illustrative of what we can expect in the future – an era of personalized politics and social media. To better understand voters, we have proposed thinking of candidate and leader support in terms of branding – a concept that captures both the personalized and social nature of how people relate to leaders in our contemporary era. People want leaders that share their traits and ideals, and they also want to bond with other people who support those leaders. Thus, we can no longer understand candidate and leader support with static, one-sided concepts. Rather we must probe how citizens insert themselves into the evaluative process when judging leaders. Likewise, we must recognize the power of social influence in organizing people who have personal attachments to leaders. Hence, the concepts of brand attachment and identity are timely and needed.

Using an exploratory sample, we probed the nature of Trump’s brand finding, as expected, that it was dominated by traits from the competence domain, like strength. Strong Republicans and people who prefer leaders willing to break the rules were most favorable in their evaluations of his personality. Critically, brand attachment and group identity based on those trait evaluations were important correlates of membership in Trump’s voting base confirming our argument that candidate brands are important to candidate support. This support manifests in political participation as well, with social identification as a member of the Trump supporter group predicting public forms of political action including attending a rally, trying to persuade someone to vote for Trump, and using campaign swag. Finally, in a survey experiment, we also found that those individuals with stronger

Trump brand attachments were more likely to follow his cues on an issue. Thus, brand attachment and identity should provide a good gauge of who is likely to remain loyal to Donald Trump.

Finally, in thinking about President Trump's support going forward, our findings reveal that the strength of his brand lies in his ability to muster his perceived strength and charisma to be a leader who "breaks the rules" in order to make things happen. But, given that much of his core support also comes from strong Republicans there are likely partisan limits to which norms can and should be violated.

CHAPTER 3: Incumbent and Challenger Leader Brands: Evidence from Argentina

Emily B. Carty

Consumers make purchasing decisions based on what brands they like, but also choose to avoid or even act against the brands they dislike. This paper argues that how individuals make political choices can function the same way. People may choose to support a candidate because they like the personal characteristics of the candidate, but they might also support that candidate because they represent a choice against a leader they dislike.

The pages to follow will present a theory of pro– and anti– leader brands and their effect on political choices and participation. Through a series of analyses based on original survey data, this study will demonstrate that individuals can form personalized and socialized connections with leader’s brands that influence how they think about and interact with the political system. These brands and the connections individuals make with them can vary in strength; the stronger brand, the more influential the connection. Due to their notoriety, well-known political figures are likely to have strong leader brands that can provide them with loyal supporters, but can also be used by their challengers to generate a strong opposition group.

Leader Brands: Going Beyond Trait Evaluation

Scholarly examinations of traits of the political leaders have largely focused on individuals’ evaluations of traits and the impact this has on vote decisions (King 2002*b*). In previous research, scholars who sought to explain individual-level consequences (such as vote choice) tended to find that perceptions of candidate or leader traits matter (Kelley and Mirer 1974; Kelley 1983; Stokes 1966; Rosenberg et al. 1986; Rahn et al. 1990; Bean and Mughan 1989), while those who examine the effects of candidate traits on aggregate-level election outcomes argued that perceptions of those traits have a moderate effect at best (Miller and Shanks 1996; Bartels 2002; King 2002*a*). The outcome of interest for these studies has almost exclusively been related to a single election and therefore do

not account for why individuals develop strong loyalties to leaders that influences their attitudes and behavior both in the voting booth and in other forms of political action.

Some theories have gone a step further in looking at how perceptions of a leader's personality traits can create a connection between leaders and those that support them. The 'charismatic bonding' theory originally elaborated by Madsen and Snow posits that in times of crisis individuals feel less secure and efficacious about their ability to survive in the unstable environment in which they find themselves (Madsen and Snow 1991). As a result, individuals seek out a leader who possesses the personality traits necessary to handle the problems that they no longer can. Others have built upon this theory, offering a more elaborate characterization of charisma and show that it can both attract people to a leader, and affect how they evaluate the leader's performance (Merolla, Ramos and Zechmeister 2007). Political psychologists have offered the "congruency model" as a different explanation of how citizens identify with candidate/leader traits. This theory maintains that voters are attracted to candidates that are similar to them, and that this holds when it comes to personality. Thus, people are drawn to support candidates and leaders who resemble them in their personality traits (Caprara and Zimbardo 2004; Caprara et al. 2007). While these theories contribute to our understanding how perceptions of a leader's personality can attract voters, their focus is on explaining behavior only in support of a leader and therefore do not provide a full picture of leader-oriented behavior. Building upon these theories and borrowing from marketing and consumer psychology, this paper proposes the concept of pro- and anti- leader brands as a more holistic way of looking at the connection between leaders and citizens.

As originally developed in marketing, a brand is a unique name and image for a product that aims to establish a differentiated and significant presence in the market. Brands provide an ideal, a vision, of a product with which people can form loyalties (AMA 1960; Keller 2003). While we typically think of brands as commercial in nature, they have been applied to politics as well, where research has primarily centered on party brands (Kavanagh 1995; Needham 2006; Smith and French 2009) or nation branding in the international arena (Aronczyk 2008). Some attention has been given to the relevance of branding for political leaders, but largely in reference to contributing to a party's brand (Smith 2009; Smith and French 2009; Speed, Butler and Collins 2015). While partisan and ideological organizations are able to form brands as well, these types of brands are based more on issues and abstract ideas (Poole and Rosenthal 1997; Cox and McCubbins 1993) than leader brands.

Leader brands are grounded in human characteristics similar to the brands of commercial products (Smith and French 2009). Individuals form clearer and stronger opinions about people than they do about abstract concepts (Converse 1964; Zaller 1992; Zaller and Feldman 1992; Hamilton and Sherman 1996; Lavine 2002; McGraw, Hasecke and Conger 2003) and are therefore likely to form stronger evaluations of leaders' brands than ideological or party brands. Beyond this distinction, the actions of leaders and the organizations with which they are affiliated may intentionally distinguish between organization and leader brands (Needham 2005; de Landtsheer and de Vries 2015).

This study presents a theory on incumbent leader brands and their effects on supporter and opponent behavior. When thinking about how leader brands can influence political behavior of individuals, there are various stages of assessment and connection to the brand. To begin, individuals evaluate a leader's brand based on their perceptions of the brand's traits, or *brand evaluations*. Second, individuals form *brand attachments* to the brands of political figures containing traits that they both admire and that are similar to their own, thus personalizing their relationship with the leader. Third, there is a social element to political branding: people develop group identities with other people who share their brand attachments. Thus by adapting the brand concept, we can simultaneously capture personalized and social attachments to leaders. While it is possible for any leader to have a brand, due to their exposure to the public, incumbents are more likely to develop stronger brands that can become socialized and shared around which people form social identities. Therefore, this third stage is more likely to occur with well-known politicians, particularly incumbents.

In specific terms, a leader's brand content is conceptualized as the combination of the leader's personality traits; thus *brand evaluations* are how people assess those traits. Earlier work on candidate personality and image relied on a variety of models in specifying the traits for study (Garzia 2011), typically emphasizing traits dealing with leadership or agency. However, in recent years, there is a growing consensus in psychology that there are two basic dimensions in person and group perception labeled as warmth and competence, or alternatively communion and agency (Cuddy et al. 2008; Fiske, Cuddy and Glick 2007; Malone and Fiske 2013). Evaluations of warmth include whether an individual is sincere, trustworthy, honest, good-natured, friendly, and kind. Competence is attributed to individuals who are perceived to be skillful, capable, intelligent, efficient, and possessing the resources and confidence to achieve their goals. The majority of work on leader personalities overemphasizes traits related to competence, and ignores or downplays those characteristics related to

the perceived warmth of a leader. Not only should warmth be just as important as competence; it often should be more important. Research has demonstrated that warmth traits are processed more rapidly than competence traits (Abele and Bruckmuller 2011), individuals are more interested in gathering warmth-related information than information on competence (Brambilla, Carnaghi and Ravenna 2011; De Bruin and Lange 2000), and in many studies on person-perception evaluations of warmth have been shown to carry more weight than assessments of competence in shaping emotional and behavioral reactions towards social targets (Abele and Bruckmuller 2011; Brambilla and Leach 2104; De Bruin and Lange 1999, 2000; Vonk 1996; Wojciszke, Bazinska and Jaworski 1998). Therefore, although warmth and competence should both make up part of a leader's brand content, it should be expected that warmth should be the primary dimension.

Drawing on the disciplines of political, consumer, and social psychology, an individual's *brand attachment* is determined by two factors: admiration of the brand personality, and self-brand similarity, or the degree to which a person shares the same traits as the brand (Caprara and Zimbardo 2004; Caprara et al. 2007; Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar and Sen 2012). The development of a brand attachment begins with the perception of a leader's traits. First, individuals evaluate the leader's warmth and competence in terms of specific traits representing those dimensions, resulting in their assessment of the leader's brand. Then, they judge the degree to which they admire and share those traits. The higher their personal evaluations of and connection to those traits, the greater their attachment with the brand. Therefore, brand attachment goes beyond a simple evaluation of traits; individuals are making a more personal appraisal by assessing the traits in comparison to their own traits and ideals. Moreover, they are taking the first step toward building a "personal" relationship with the brand that says something about, not only the politician, but who they are as well. In effect, voters, too, are now personalizing politics by personalizing their relationships with political leaders.

Brand-Based Identities: Incumbency's Double-Edged Sword

Because brand attachment is admiration of and perceived similarity to the brand's characteristics, individuals can form brand attachment around any leader that has been in the public eye, even if not for a particularly long period of time. An individual merely needs enough information to be able to rate a leader on warmth and competence traits. This connection is therefore only between the

individual and the leader's brand. However, the more a leader is exposed to the public, the more developed their brand becomes and the stronger the assessments an individual can make. The more exposure to the leader's brand, the greater the tendency an individual has to share their assessments with others. In this way, brands of well-known leaders, like incumbents, should give birth to more socialized brand interactions, leading to brand-based social identities.

Social identities are psychological attachments to a group that become part of one's self-concept (Tajfel 1981); they play a key role in political behavior, affecting attitudes and mobilizing people to participate (Conover 1984, 1988; Tate 1993; Huddy 2003). Given that people readily form identities around political parties and ideologies (Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002; Huddy, Mason and Aaroe 2015), it is likely that they also will develop social identities as "supporters" of political leaders. With consumer brands, individuals form group identities based on their assessments of and attachments with brands (Schneider 2004); Apple users, for example, come to identify with other Apple users. Applying this to the concept of leader brands, brand attachment should encourage the formation of a group identity as a supporter of the leader. In particular, leaders who inspire citizens to admire and identify with them should be the most effective in creating a brand that inspires group identification and loyalty. Thus, two types of connections develop and fuel loyalty to the leader's brand: a personal connection between the leader and the individual, and a social connection between individuals, where the common bond of supporting a leader gives them the basis for a shared social identity. Following the literature on the consequences of social identity, identifying as a supporter of a leader brand should cause individuals to form attitudes that promote a positive image of their in-group of fellow identifiers (Conover 1988; Huddy 2003). The 'us' versus 'them' distinction coupled with attachment to one's brand-oriented in-group should strengthen an individual's evaluations and emotions towards the leader, resulting in a higher willingness and likelihood to defend the brand group. Those with a leader brand identity should actively support that leader and his/her associated institutional entities (political party, government, etc.) through various forms of political participation, such as voting, donating time or money, or engaging in political rallies, protests, or other mobilizations.

Due to their time in the public eye, incumbents have the ability to develop strong pro-leader brands that can attract a loyal following, but being well-known can be a double-edged sword. Together with the development of a pro-brand, *anti-leader brands* may also form. Anti-brands have

traditionally been considered to be fueled by a perceived incongruence between how an individual sees themselves and how they see the brand (Elsbach and Bhattacharya 2001; Park, Eisingerich and Park 2013). A more detailed conceptualization contends anti-brand identity formation is driven by three types of factors: experiential, symbolic identity incongruence, and ideological or moral incompatibility (Lee, Motion and Conroy 2009). The first, experiential factors, are rather straightforward. Negative experiences with the brand, such as unmet expectations, contribute to brand avoidance and anti-brand identity formation. With leaders, this is something that is easy to conceptualize – disappointment with a leader’s performance should contribute to the development of a leader’s anti-brand. Symbolic identity incongruence is the perception that supporting the brand contributes negatively to how the individual wants to be – their desired self. This is influenced by factors like seeing those who support the leader as an inferior or otherwise negative group, or the thought that supporting the brand makes themselves inauthentic, which leads to the development of a social basis for the anti-brand. Finally, moral incompatibility is the idea that an individual sees the brand as in direct conflict with their morals or ideological principals. Moral incongruence in this sense would be that an individual sees the leader as possessing the traits they believe to be at odds with their moral values or beliefs.

There are many contexts in which we should expect to find strong leader brands. Because people have more exposure to and experience with incumbents, they are likely to be very well-known by people and therefore the most likely political figures to have strong pro– and anti-brands. Particularly strong brands should be present where the incumbent has been in power for an extended period of time (by either democratic or non-democratic means) and in contexts where a leader is particularly divisive or polemic. In thinking of how this affects brands of opposing politicians, challengers to the incumbent should fall into two general categories. If challengers are well-known, more of their brand will be based on their characteristics as a candidate. In other words, an established challenger will have a more stand-alone brand. A newcomer’s characteristics are less known to the public and their brand less established. This leaves room for anti-brand sentiments towards the incumbent to be incorporated into the challenger brand.

Therefore, the hypotheses in reference to brand attachment are the following:

H₁: The more positively an individual rates an incumbent or challenger along warmth and competence traits, the greater the brand attachment they feel toward that leader.

H₂: In the case of a newcomer, incumbent anti-brand identity in addition to warmth and competence should predict pro-challenger brand attachment.

Just as pro-leader brand identities should cause supporters to mobilize in favor of a leader, so should leader anti-brands motivate behavior. Previous studies have shown that anti-brand identities can lead to a variety of behavioral consequences (Elsbach and Bhattacharya 2001; Lee, Motion and Conroy 2009). Anti-brand identifiers may be more passive and simply avoid the brand they perceive as negative, or they may be more active in their brand behavior acting directly against the negative brand (Elsbach and Bhattacharya 2001). In regards to the effects of pro- and anti-brand identification on electoral and non-electoral political behavior, the following hypotheses are presented:

H₃: The greater identification one feels with the incumbent pro-brand, the more likely they should be to vote for the incumbent.

H₄: The greater identification one feels with the incumbent anti-brand, the more likely they should be to vote for a challenger.

H₅: The more one identifies with the incumbent pro-brand, the more likely they will be to engage in pro-incumbent activism.

H₆: The more one identifies with the incumbent anti-brand, the more likely they will be to engage in pro-challenger activism.

Testing the Theory with the Argentine Case

The data used are from an original online survey of respondents in Argentina and was conducted in September of 2016.¹ Although the data were collected in an online survey, through the use of quotas the survey sample is an accurate representation of the general population on relevant socioeconomic variables, such as income, education, locality, age, and gender.² Respondents were asked questions on four political leaders: Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, the incumbent who was prevented from running for re-election due to term limits; her successor, Daniel Scioli, who ran with Kirchner's full support; and two challengers to the incumbents, Mauricio Macri, the leader of the large opposition coalition *Cambiamos* or *Coalition for Change*; and Sergio Massa, a former

¹Data obtained from a survey designed by Dr. Mariano Torcal of the Universitat Pompeu Fabra and Emily Carty of the University of North Carolina and administered by Netquest.

²Some summary statistics on the characteristics of respondents in the sample can be found in Appendix tables 1 and 2.

Kirchner supporter who broke with the President to run as the candidate of a new party, the Renewal Front. Because the interest of this paper is the dynamics of incumbent and challenger brands, the results to be presented focus on Kirchner and Macri, the incumbent and the main challenger. Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, had been the President of Argentina for the eight years prior to the 2015 elections. Her policies were often seen as a continuation of her husband's, Nestor Kirchner, who was President before her from 2003 to 2007. The Kirchner brand, therefore, developed over more than a decade, beginning in 2003. Although she was legally not permitted to run for a third consecutive term, she fully supported Daniel Scioli as the candidate for the political party she created, the *Frente para la Victoria* or *Front for Victory*. Daniel Scioli was therefore seen as the “Kirchnerista” candidate and a continuation of the Kirchner regime.

As a multiparty system, there were many candidates running against the Kirchneristas, but the primary opposition candidate was Mauricio Macri. Macri ran as the candidate of *Cambiamos*, a coalition of parties that formed with the explicit goal of removing the Kirchneristas from power. Although Mauricio Macri had run for local-level office in the capital of Buenos Aires in 2003, it was not until 2005 that he was elected to public office as a representative in the lower house. He held various local-level positions until his candidacy for the Presidency in 2015. As such, Macri did not gain national notoriety until the 2015 elections.

The analyses in this paper use two sets of variables measuring individuals' connections to leader brands. The first are the non-socialized variables including evaluations of the brand content and their attachment to the brand. To measure perceptions of leader warmth and competence, respondents were asked to what extent they would use specific adjectives to describe each leader on a 7-point Likert scale. These included four warmth traits ('caring', 'trustworthy', 'dishonest', and 'arrogant') and four competence traits ('assertive', 'charismatic', 'intelligent', and 'incompetent'). Exploratory factor analysis of all the traits together confirmed the two-factor solution along warmth and competence dimensions. Factor loadings from a principle component analysis are then used to create a weighted additive index for the perception of leader warmth and competence variables which were then rescaled to 0-1.³ Immediately following these leader trait evaluation questions, respondents were asked to what extent they admire those traits and the degree to which they feel those traits also represent how

³Principal component analysis with varimax rotation. For detailed results of the factor analyses, see appendix.

they see themselves with five response options on a scale from ‘none’ to ‘a lot’. The responses for these two items were added together to create the measure of *brand attachment* ranging from 0-8 and then rescaled to 0-1.⁴ All questions used to compose these measures about brand personalities and attachment ask explicitly about the leader’s traits and make no reference to the political party or ideological group with which they are affiliated nor any other contextual information besides the leader’s first and last name. The measure of brand attachment is therefore created in a way that attempts to tap into perceptions of the personal traits of the leader and avoid contamination effects from political affiliation or incumbency. The first statistical analysis in this paper tests hypotheses H_1 and H_2 by looking at the determinants of brand attachment. In these models, *brand attachment* is the dependent variable. In subsequent analyses, brand attachment as an independent variable to explain political behavior.

The second set of brand variables used are those relating to the social identity component of brands. As Macri was fairly new on the national political scene before the 2015 presidential campaign, there should be no social identity built upon the socialization of a pro-Macri brand. In this context, the only candidate with enough time in the public eye for brand attachments to be socialized and shared is Cristina Kirchner. As such, the analyses looking at pro-Kirchner behavior contain the variable *pro-Kirchner identity*. This is measured as an additive index of responses to a battery of questions on social identification with the Kirchner brand.⁵ For models looking at pro-challenger behavior, both pro-challenger brand attachment and *anti-Kirchner brand identity* are included as explanatory variables. Anti-Kirchner brand identity is measured as an additive index of responses to a battery of questions on identification with the Kirchner anti-brand.⁶ Because the two pro-brand measures are so highly correlated for Kirchner (at 0.92), pro-brand identity is included in the models and brand attachment is omitted.

⁴ $\alpha_{brandattachment} = 0.85$ for Kirchner and 0.89 for Macri.

⁵Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed with the following statements: “I identify with others who support Cristina Fernández de Kirchner”, “Being a supporter of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner says a lot about me to other people”, “I generally use ‘us’ instead of ‘them’ when I talk about the Kirchneristas” and “I prefer to be around Kirchneristas”. Response options along a five-point scale range from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. $\alpha = 0.88$

⁶Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed with the following statements: “I identify with others who oppose Cristina Fernández de Kirchner”, “Being an opponent of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner says a lot about me to other people”, “I enjoy seeing the failure of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner”, “I prefer to be around anti-Kirchneristas”, “The type of person Cristina Fernández de Kirchner is conflicts with my values”, and “Cristina Fernández de Kirchner always disappoints me”. Response options along a five-point scale range from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. $\alpha = 0.89$

One of the analyses in this paper explores vote choice as the dependent variable. The relevant distinction of interest in this paper is choosing to vote for the incumbent, in this case, voting for Kirchner's party, Front for Victory, or choosing to vote for a challenger. As such, two models are presented. The first is a logistic regression where voting for the incumbent is dichotomous. Respondents who voted for the incumbent party were coded as '1' and those that voted for another party's candidate were coded as '0'. In the second model, respondents who voted for a challenger candidate (from any party other than Front for Victory) were coded as '1'. Those that voted for the incumbent were coded as '0'.

To explore the effects of brand attachment and identities on political activism, the last set of dependent variables is a count of the frequency with which an individual has attended a rally, protest, or political meeting in support of either the incumbent, Kirchner, or her main challenger, Macri. Respondents were asked how frequently they engaged in one of these activities either in support of or against each of the two leaders in the last 12 months. The responses of those who had never attended were coded as '0'. Those that had participated were coded according to the frequency with which they attended such an event, ranging from 1-5 where '1' indicates "once every couple of months", and '5' signifies "two times or more per week".

Other variables are included in the models to control for other potential sources of leader-oriented identification. *Government evaluation* is a measure of how well an individual evaluates the performance of the current government. Variables controlling for gender, age, level of education, and income are also included. Because the majority of political parties in Argentina were formed very recently, including those Kirchner and Macri represent, we do not expect individuals to have strong partisan attachments to most parties. Dummy variables for identification are included for the two traditional parties, the Peronist or 'Justicialista' and the Radical Civic Union.⁷ There is much debate as to whether ideological self-placement is well-distinguished among average citizens in Latin

⁷The Peronist Party was established in 1946 and the Radical Civic Union was founded in 1981. All other effective national parties in the electoral system were established within the last 10 years except for the Front for Victory, which was established in 2003. The Front for Victory was founded by Nestor Kirchner, Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner's husband and her predecessor in the presidency. Although considered by some to be a center-left wing of the Peronist Party, Front for Victory ran candidates under its own banner and was seen as the personal project of the Kirchners. The ideology of the party is known as "Kirchnerismo" and its followers known as "Kirchneristas". As this is a personalistic party, it is very highly correlated with the evaluation of and attachment to the leader Cristina Kirchner. We therefore chose not to identification with the Front for Victory as it should be a consequence of attachment and identification with the Kirchner brand.

America (see, for example, (Kitschelt et al. 2010)). Indeed, over 10% of respondents in our sample said they did not know or chose not to answer the standard self-placement ideology question in our survey. Given this, ideology is not included in the models.

The Kirchner and Macri Brands

The analyses below begin by looking at the determinants of brand attachment. As previously elaborated, brand attachment is the personalized connection individuals feel towards a leader's brand, measured as the additive values of their admiration and perceived similarity towards the brand content. It is expected that brand attachment for both leaders will be strongly related to an individual's perceptions of that leader's warmth and competence (H_1). For newcomer challengers, such as Macri, identification with the incumbent's anti-brand should also play an important role (H_2).

The results in Table 1 below show partial support for hypotheses H_1 and H_2 . While perceptions of a leader's warmth is positively and significantly related to brand attachment, the results do not show that there is a statistically significant relationship between competence and brand attachment. From these results, it is clear that warmth is the key determinant for an individuals' attachment to either the Kirchner or the Macri brand. The coefficients for both leaders' warmth are of such a magnitude that it is not surprising that competence evaluations do not reach statistical significance. As stated above, warmth is the primary dimension in people perception and when evaluations are particularly strong or polarized on this dimension, secondary factors relating to competence should be less relevant for brand attachment. That is indeed what comes through in the results of these analyses.

In regards to challenger brands, the more an individual identifies with the anti-brand of the incumbent, the higher their brand attachment to the opponent. This suggests that anti-incumbent brand identity can be closely tied to support for leaders, helping those candidates who are running against a well-known figure. This should be particularly true for politicians who are relatively new in the public eye, as they have the ability to incorporate anti-brand identifiers into their support base.

Anti-Incumbent, Pro-Challenger Behavior

Table 8: Determinants of Kirchner and Macri Brand Attachment

	Kirchner Pro-Brand Attachment	Macri Pro-Brand Attachment
Kirchner warmth	0.861*** (0.05)	
Kirchner competence	-0.089 (0.06)	
Macri warmth		0.745*** (0.15)
Macri competence		-0.149 (0.15)
Kirchner anti-brand identity		0.189*** (0.03)
Government evaluation	0.117*** (0.03)	-0.290*** (0.04)
Female	-0.022* (0.01)	-0.018 (0.01)
Age	-0.011 (0.02)	0.012 (0.03)
Income	0.040* (0.02)	0.062* (0.03)
Education	-0.002 (0.03)	-0.004 (0.03)
Constant	-0.103*** (0.03)	0.029 (0.06)
Number of observations	893	717
F	357.02	204.23
Prob(F)	0.000	0.000
Root MSE	0.150	0.166
R ²	0.748	0.673

+ p < 0.10, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001
 OLS results with standard errors in parentheses.

These results confirm that incumbent brand identities can have an influence over the connection individuals make with challenger's brands, but does this manifest in behavioral outcomes? Do both pro- and anti- leader brand identities mobilize people to actively support one candidate or the other? In the next analysis, we use logistic regressions to look at the consequences of pro- and anti-brand identity on voting for the incumbent or a challenger.

The results for the determinants of voting for the incumbent, Kirchner, or a non-incumbent candidate are presented in Table 2 below. Brand-based identity clearly comes through as the strongest predictor of vote choice. Pro-Kirchner brand identity is strongly and positively related to the decision to vote for the incumbent, even more so than government evaluation or identification with the Peronist

party, confirming hypotheses H_3 . There is also support for hypothesis H_4 , as identification with the Kirchner anti-brand is important in explaining the vote for a challenger. In fact, voting for a non-incumbent candidate is more determined by Kirchner anti-brand identification than pro-brand attachment for either one of the two main challengers. This indicates that voting for a challenger is more of an anti-incumbent behavior; people vote *against* Kirchner, as opposed to voting *for* a candidate.

Table 9: Pro– versus anti-incumbent vote

	Vote for Kirchner	Vote for Non-Incumbent
Kirchner pro-brand identity	5.348*** (0.66)	
Kirchner anti-brand identity		6.097*** (0.68)
Macri brand attachment		3.192** (0.99)
Massa brand attachment		0.582 (0.67)
Government evaluation	2.214** (0.70)	-0.126 (0.84)
PID Peronist	1.276** (0.43)	-1.431** (0.51)
PID Radical Civic Union	-0.744 (0.81)	-0.047 (0.93)
Income	0.596 (0.67)	-0.291 (0.65)
Education	1.634 (0.89)	0.704 (0.88)
Age	0.162 (0.75)	-0.571 (0.73)
Constant	-5.553*** (0.81)	-1.871 (0.97)
Number of observations	593	640
Prob > χ^2	0.000	0.000
Wald $\chi^2(9)$	181.87	150.10
Pseudo R^2	0.579	0.622

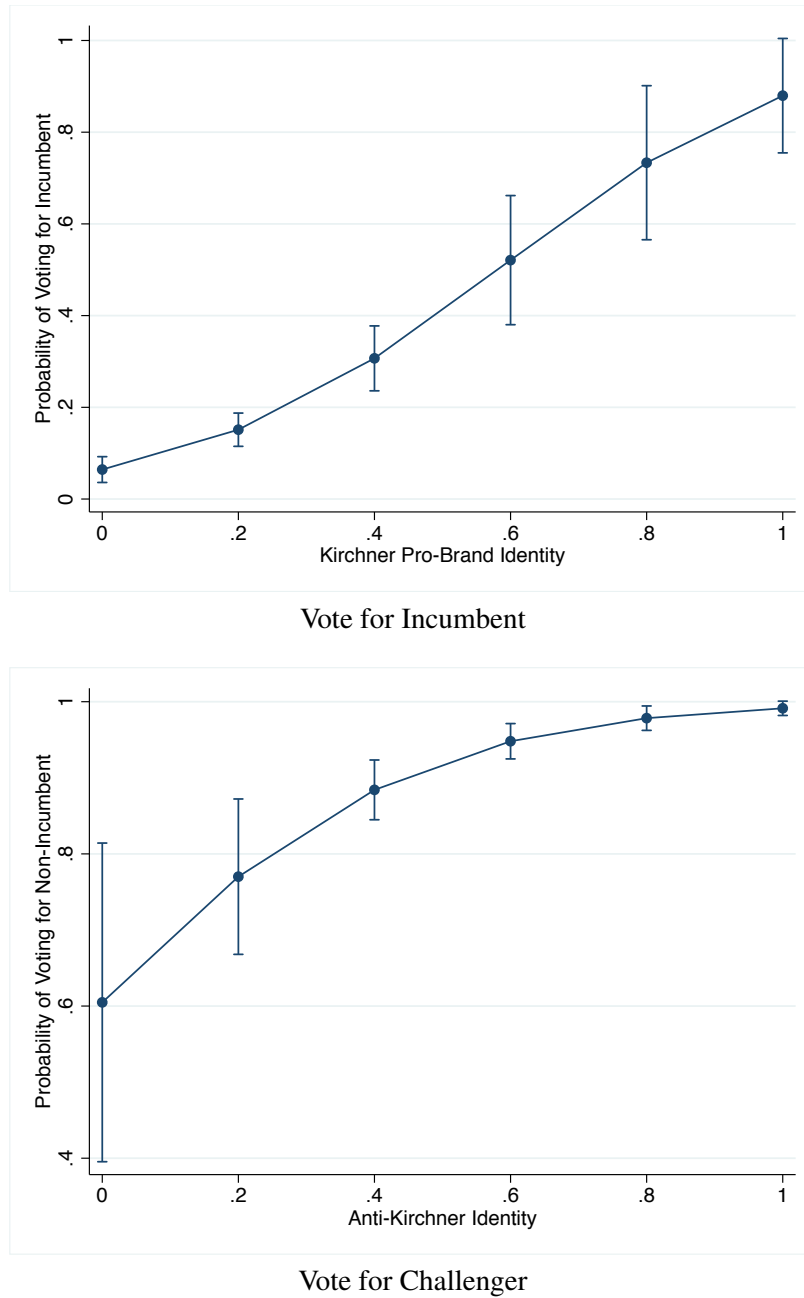
+ p < 0.10, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Logistic regression results with robust standard errors in parentheses.

From the predicted probability plots in Figure 1, it is clear that brand-based identities play a critical role in deciding one's vote. If an individual feels no favorable identification with Kirchner's brand, the probability of them voting for Kirchner's party is 0.06. At the highest level of identification, the probability increases to 0.88. A similar pattern can be seen in the effect of negative identification

with Kirchner's brand on the decision to vote for a candidate from another party. At the lowest value of anti-brand identification, the predicted probability of an individual voting for a challenger is 0.41; at the highest value the probability increases to 0.99.

Figure 3: Probability of Voting for Incumbent or Challenger



These results clearly demonstrate that brand-based identities play an important role in determining vote choice. However, voting in Argentina is compulsory and consequences for the failure to

vote are regularly enforced making voter turnout very high. Vote choice therefore provides us with a good test of when individuals are required to choose between candidates.⁸ In order to test the true mobilization power of brand identities, the next analysis examines the effect of brand identities on a truly voluntary and high-cost form of political participation – attending a rally or protest.

Because attending a rally or political meeting is a relatively rare form of participation and it is measured here as a count variable, zero-inflated Poisson regression is the most appropriate modeling strategy.⁹ This modeling strategy supposes that there are two processes that generate the values of the dependent variable: one with a binary distribution that generates structural zeros to account for the inflated number of zeros; the second is a Poisson distribution that generates the count, including zeros. A statistically significant result for the Vuong test to compare the fit of the zero-inflated Poisson to a regular Poisson verified that the zero-inflated model is appropriate for the distribution of the data.¹⁰

Because of the well-established connection between one's resources and their likelihood to participate in activism, for the inflated portion of the model we include variables typically included in the resource model of participation (Brady, Verba and Schlozman 1995; Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Nie and Kim 1978; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995) including *income*, *education*, *age*, *gender* (*female*), self-reported *political interest*, perceptions of *external efficacy*, and whether or not one identifies with a political party (*party identification*).¹¹ Due to the complexity of the party system already discussed in this paper, identification with specific parties is not included; however, political parties can play an important role in mobilization and we want to account for this in the model. As such, the models include a dummy variable for identification with any political party. For the count portion of the model, we include the relevant brand variables and government evaluation. In the

⁸Of course, voters could submit a blank ballot, but the percentage that do so is quite low at just over 3% of the vote. The observations from these respondents were dropped from the vote analysis.

⁹Respondents were first asked a filter question "In the last 12 months, have you attended a meeting, rally, or protest either in favor or in opposition to Cristina Fernández de Kirchner?". If the respondent selected "Yes", they were then asked how frequently and provided with five response options: 'once every couple of months', 'once a month', 'two or more times per month', 'once a week', and 'two or more times per week'. Respondents were then asked the clarification question "Were most of these generally in favor of or against Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner?", to which they responded either 'yes' or 'no'.

¹⁰Vuong test of zero-inflated Poisson versus standard Poisson: $Pr > z = 0.0000$ for the Kirchner model and $Pr > z = 0.0003$ for the Macri model.

¹¹Political interest is measured as individuals' responses to the question "How much are you interested in politics?" with four response options ranging from "None at all" to "A lot". External efficacy is measured by responses to the question "To what degree do you believe that politicians care about what people like you think?" with responses on an 11-point scale ranging from "Not at all" to "Completely".

model predicting attending a rally in favor of Kirchner, these include the level of positive social identification with Kirchner's brand (*Kirchner pro-brand identity*) and *government evaluation*. In the model for Macri, *Kirchner anti-brand identity*, attachment felt towards Macri's brand (*Macri brand attachment*), and *government evaluation* are included. The results for both of these two-process models are presented below in Table 3.

Table 10: Attending a Rally in Favor of Incumbent versus Opponent

	Kirchner	Macri
Poisson		
Kirchner pro-brand identity	4.285*** (0.64)	
Kirchner anti-brand identity		1.381 ⁺ (0.83)
Macri brand attachment		0.635 (0.91)
Government evaluation	-0.089 (0.18)	-0.107 (0.20)
Constant	-2.928*** (0.67)	-0.769 (0.95)
Inflate		
Income	1.481 (1.33)	-0.480 (0.68)
Education	-2.712 (1.83)	-0.050 (0.94)
Age	-2.284 (1.54)	0.954 (0.78)
Female	-0.105 (0.70)	0.800* (0.39)
Political interest	-5.765** (1.90)	0.815 (0.80)
External efficacy	-2.150 (1.58)	-1.257 ⁺ (0.72)
Party identification	0.082 (1.04)	-1.062** (0.40)
Constant	8.129*** (2.23)	2.392** (0.81)
Number of observations	593	717
Non-zero observations	37	38
Log likelihood	-126.70	-194.75
LR χ^2	66.21	8.79
Prob(χ^2)	0.000	0.032

+ p < 0.10, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Zero-inflated Poisson results with standard errors in parentheses.

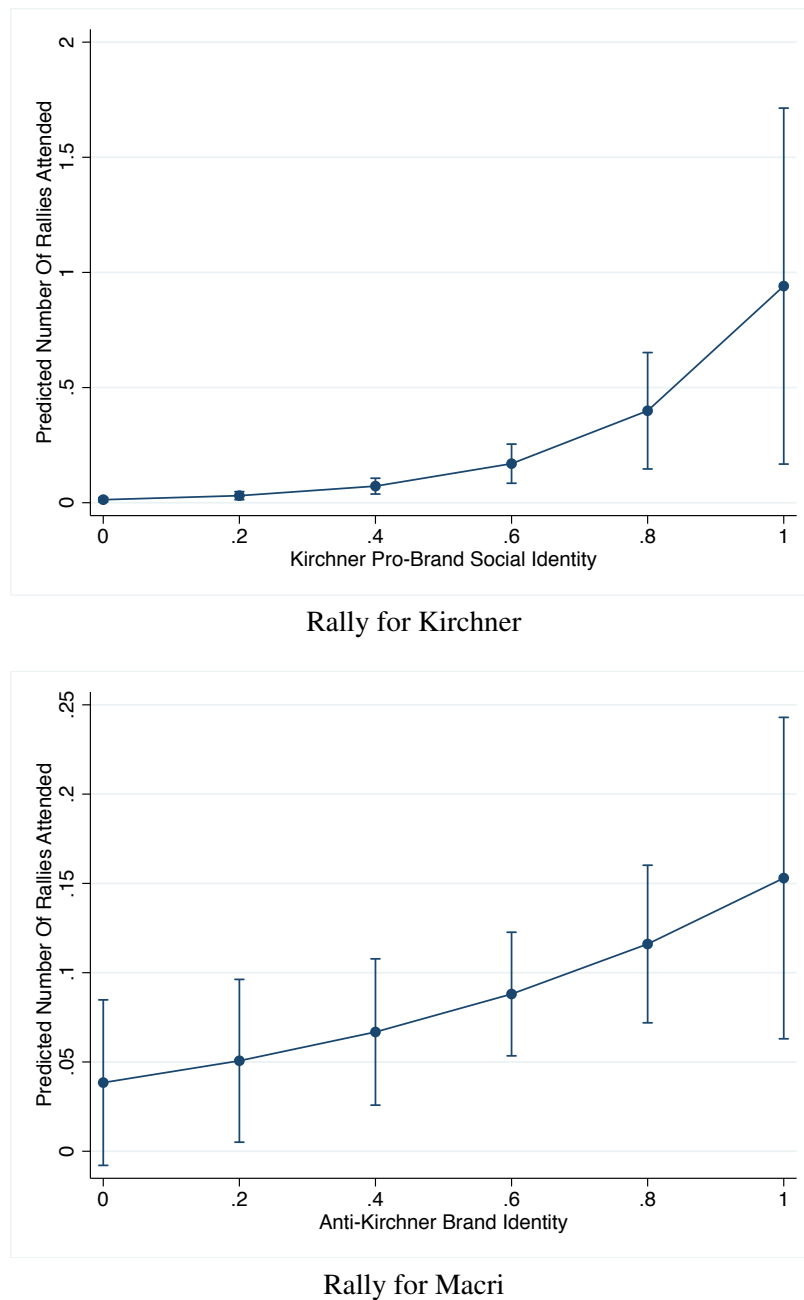
When looking at the inflated or binomial model, the results are not consistent across the two models. For the model explaining participation in a rally for Kirchner, the only statistically significant coefficients are for political interest and the constant. Therefore, those individuals who have more interest in politics are less likely to fall into this structural ‘zero’ group. Put another way, those with *less* political interest, are more likely to not attend any rally for Kirchner. In the results for Macri, those that are female, those with lower external efficacy, and those that do not identify with a political party are more likely to be ‘structural zeros’ and therefore unlikely to attend any rally in support of Macri. In both models, the constant for the inflated portion is positive and significant, suggesting there is more that accounts for the large number of zero observations that is not explained by the model presented here.

When looking at the count portion of the model, the key explanatory variable in determining attending a rally for either the incumbent or the challenger is pro- and anti- identification with the incumbent brand. As expected, the stronger the positive identification one feels with Kirchner’s brand, the more likely they are to attend rallies in support of Kirchner, confirming hypothesis H_5 . Turning now to the models for the challenger, attachment to Macri’s brand does not emerge as an important predictor for participation in rallies. However, identification with the incumbent anti-brand is positive and statistically significant at the 0.10 level, confirming hypothesis H_6 . The effect of identification with the Kirchner pro- and anti- brand on predicted participation in rallies are represented graphically in Figures 2a and 2b below.

Discussion

These analyses have demonstrated that leader brands have a strong power to influence political choices and mobilize people. The effects are logically stronger for incumbents, who have had more time in the public eye for their brands to develop and socialized identities to form. This can work to the incumbent’s advantage, as has been shown for Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, as those with pro-brand identities are much more likely to engage in pro-brand behavior, but having a strong brand can also work in favor of the incumbent’s opposition. As was demonstrated in the analysis of brand attachment, challengers can incorporate anti-brand sentiments people feel towards the incumbent into their own brand content, turning them into not only a candidate, but also the anti-incumbent

Figure 4: Probability of Attending a Rally in Support of the Incumbent and Challenger



candidate. This should especially be true for those opposition leaders whose personal characteristics are lesser-known and therefore have a ‘blank slate’ on which to develop their brand. In this way, many of those that supported Macri did so because they were anti-Kirchneristas.

One could expect identification with an incumbent anti-brand to have two possible consequences – either to generate brand avoidance or to cause behavior that actively opposes the brand. The analyses

above reveal that strong anti-brands not only influence people's vote choice, but also mobilize them to participate. Choosing to vote for a challenger is related to not only brand attachment to the candidate, but also to anti-Kirchner brand identification. Because voting is compulsory, it is necessary for individuals to choose between these options. Therefore, it is possible that some voters are engaging in brand avoidance and deciding their vote based on their positive evaluation of the challenger, but others are clearly motivated by their identity as 'anti-incumbent'. Anti-incumbent brand identification is even stronger than pro-challenger brand attachment in the decision to participate in voluntary activism. There is a significant relationship between attending a rally for Macri and anti-Kirchner identity, whereas no such effect is seen on rallies and attachment to Macri's brand. In the context of strong incumbent brands, it therefore appears as though political behavior is largely a result of how an individual relates to the incumbent brand, regardless of whether their participation favors the incumbent or a challenger.

Notoriety is double-edged sword for leaders. Being well-known creates the possibility for strong brands to develop around leaders. This can be beneficial or harmful for a leader, depending on the relative strength of their pro- and anti-brand, as both have the ability to influence how individuals think about leaders and to mobilize supporters and opponents to action. While lesser-known politicians can use anti-incumbent sentiments to their advantage by incorporating it into their own brand content and thereby gaining the support of anti-brand identifiers, this may present longer-term concerns, especially should they succeed in ousting the incumbent.

CHAPTER 4: The Role of Leader Brands in Political Support: Evidence from Spain

Emily B. Carty

An ever-growing literature in political science has identified the “personalization” of politics in western developed societies. Some scholars identify this personalization to be a change in how politics is organized away from collectivities and towards individual candidates and leaders (Karvonen 2010; van Aelst, Sharif and Stanyer 2012), while others describe it as the relative increase in visibility and power of individual leaders (Garzia 2011; McAllister 2007; Rahat and Sheaffer 2007). This is generally seen to be the result of various interconnected processes: the changing nature of political parties (Garzia 2011) and the weakening of traditional linkages between voters and parties (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Mair 2005), and changes in the media, particularly, the rise of television as an important source of political information (Mazzoleni 2000; Meyrowitz 1985). In the past, individual leaders needed to be particularly exceptional in order to attract followers independent of the draw of a political party. In today’s world where party ties are weaker and party system volatility has become more of a reality in many places within Europe (“Chiaromonte and Emanuele” 2017), individual leaders and the personalized connections between them and citizens likely matter more as a general rule than they did in the past. The study of political behavior therefore requires new theories and concepts in order to account for these changes.

This paper puts forward the concept of ‘leader brands’ as a way to better understand the relationship between leaders and citizens. Drawing upon literature from consumer and social psychology, it is possible to conceptualize leaders as having brands; brands that may also to a certain degree be associated with a political party, but that has qualities unique to that particular leader with which people identify and admire. Although previous research in political science has shown that personality traits of political leaders matter for political behavior, the connection individuals feel towards a leader’s brand is deeper than simple trait evaluation and allows for the creation of a more personal attachment.

The following study examines the effects of leader brands on vote choice in the Spanish 2015 national general elections. Spain is an excellent context in which to test the effect of leader brands on political behavior for a number of reasons. In spite of being a fairly new democracy compared with some others in Europe, Spain has been characterized by a very party-centric parliamentary political system and a highly institutionalized party system typically dominated by two traditional parties at the national level.¹² It is also a parliamentary system where, unlike the Chancellor parliamentary systems such as Germany or more majoritarian systems like the United Kingdom, the focus of political contestation is on the political parties and not their leaders (McAllister 2007). Like many other democracies in Europe, ideology is an important predictor of support for political parties and vote choice (Thomassen 2005; Thomassen and Rosema 2009). This should not only make the findings generalizable to other European democracies, but it also makes for a harder test of the case at hand. The more ideological and programmatic the political system, it seems fair to say that the personal appeal of individual leaders should matter less. It has also been shown that there is a good rate of renovation of political leaders in the Spanish system (Kakepaki et al. 2018), which should prevent leaders from staying in office for long periods of time and therefore developing stronger brands. Additionally, the level of citizen trust in politicians in Spain is amongst the lowest in Europe (Torcal 2017). Due to these various factors, individual leaders should be less salient than parties and ideology in the thoughts of citizens, and leader brands and attachment to them should be much weaker in this context than other political systems.

Introducing the Concept of Leader Brands

What exactly is a ‘brand’? As originally developed in marketing, a brand is a unique name and image for a product that aims to establish a differentiated and significant presence in the market (AMA 1960). Brands provide an ideal, a vision, a certain perception of a product with which people can form loyalties (Keller 2003). To identify with a brand says something about you as a person. While we often think of brands as commercial in nature, they have been applied to politics as well. Existing work on how brands form in politics has primarily centered on brands of parties

¹²This study uses data from a pre- and post- election survey collected online in 2015. At that time, the two parties examined in this study were still the two most important parties in regards to vote percentage at the national level. The party system in Spain began to experience fragmentation at the national level beginning in this election, but more so in subsequent elections.

(Kavanagh 1995; Needham 2006; Smith and French 2009) or nation branding for building prestige in the international arena (Aronczyk 2008). Some attention has been given to the relevance of branding for political leaders, but largely in reference to contributing to a party's brand (Smith 2009; Smith and French 2009; Speed, Butler and Collins 2015).

Both attachment to parties and to leaders are relevant for attitudinal and behavioral outcomes and by not examining leader brands a big piece of the puzzle is missing. Due to both the differences in content of the brand and motivations of leaders and party organizations, brands that develop around leaders should be distinct from party brands. In regards to brand content, party brands are based more on issues and abstract ideas of ideology (Poole and Rosenthal 1997; Cox and McCubbins 1993), whereas leader brands are grounded in human characteristics similar to the branding of commercial products (Smith and French 2009). Given that psychologists have shown that people form clearer and stronger opinions about people than they do about abstract concepts (Converse 1964; Zaller 1992; Zaller and Feldman 1992; Hamilton and Sherman 1996; Lavine 2002; McGraw, Hasecke and Conger 2003), individuals should form even stronger perceptions of and attachment to individual leaders' brands than around parties or ideologies. Beyond this distinction, the actions of leaders and their parties may intentionally distinguish between party and leader brands. For example, leaders may not see their party as an effective vehicle for them to gain more support and so choose to develop a brand distinct from their party. Likewise, parties may attempt to distance themselves from a leader they no longer wish to support. Studies of executives and branding have shown, for example, that once in office, leaders develop their own personal brand distinct from their party that determines their level of support (Needham 2005; de Landtsheer and de Vries 2015).

In the present study, a leader's brand personality, or the content of their brand, is conceptualized as the combination of the leader's personality traits falling along warmth and competence dimensions. While most literature in political science has focused on competence (cite), in the field of psychology there is a great deal of evidence that warmth and competence are two basic dimensions in person and group perception (Fiske, Cuddy and Glick 2007; Cuddy et al. 2008; Malone and Fiske 2013). Then, based on findings from consumer psychology, an individual's *brand attachment* is determined by two factors: admiration of the brand personality, and self-brand similarity, or the degree to which and individual believes they share the same traits as the brand (Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar and Sen 2012). This connects nicely to the congruency model in political science that maintains voters prefer

candidates who have personality traits similar to their own (Caprara and Zimbardo 2004; Caprara et al. 2007). Brand attachment is therefore the result of an individual's perceptual processing of leader's traits. First, they must evaluate their perceptions of the leader's warmth and competence, resulting in their evaluation of the leader's brand content. Then, the individual assesses the degree to which they admire and share those traits. The higher their personal evaluations of and connection to those traits are, the greater their attachment with the brand. Brand attachment is therefore a step beyond simple evaluation of traits; individuals make a more personal evaluation by assessing the traits in comparison to their own and their ideals.

To evaluate the concept of brand attachment, it is necessary to first test the extent to which a leader's brand personality (warmth and competence) are predictive of brand attachment. Unlike the bulk of literature on candidate trait evaluation in political science, this study follows the stereotype content model from social psychology in the expectation that both warmth and competence to be important predictors of brand attachment (H_1). It is also anticipated that how one evaluates leaders on these traits will also be related with their partisanship. If an individual identifies with a political party, they should be more to find the party leader's brand attractive and feel more attachment to it (H_2). In the case of Spain, where partisan identification is low, ideology is likely to be an important predictor of how one evaluates leaders as well (H_3). In cases where the leader's brand is strong and more appealing to voters (rated more positively), it should be expected that brand identification would rely more on those trait evaluations and less on other factors such as party identification and ideology.

Using Brands to Reevaluate Effect of Leader Traits on Behavior

Scholarly examinations of traits of political leaders have largely focused on how individuals' straightforward evaluations of traits impact vote decisions (King 2002a). In previous research, scholars who sought to explain individual-level consequences (such as vote choice) tended to find that perceptions of candidate or leader traits matter (Kelley and Mirer 1974; Kelley 1983; Stokes 1966; Rosenberg et al. 1986; Rahn et al. 1990; Bean and Mughan 1989), while those who examine the effects of candidate traits on aggregate-level election outcomes argued that perceptions of those traits have a moderate effect at best (Miller and Shanks 1996; Bartels 2002; King 2002b). However, the

mechanism by which individuals go from evaluating candidates' and leaders' traits to participating in the political arena is significantly under-explored.

The 'charismatic bonding' literature describes the conditions under which individuals can form strong bonds with a political leader based on their perceptions of a leader's personal traits. Originally elaborated by Madsen and Snow (1991), this theory posits that in times of crisis, individuals feel less secure and efficacious about their ability to survive in the unstable environment in which they find themselves. This, in turn, leads them to seek out a leader who they believe can handle the problems that they no longer can. Citing figures such as Adolf Hitler and Juan Perón, the authors argue that these leaders are highly charismatic, although without much elaboration on their definition of 'charisma' (Madsen and Snow 1991). Charisma certainly can attract people to a leader and it has been shown to affect how they evaluate the performance of leaders (Merolla, Ramos and Zechmeister 2007), but looking at charisma alone does not provide a full picture of how leaders' traits influence their support.

The charismatic bonding literature, like the majority of work on leader personalities overemphasizes traits related to competence, and ignores or downplays those characteristics related to the perceived warmth of a leader. However, according to the stereotype content model, frequently used in social and political psychology, both dimensions of warmth and competence are important in predicting attitudes about and behavior towards other individuals and groups (Fiske and Taylor 1984; Macrae and Bodenhausen 2000; Malone and Fiske 2013). Evaluations of warmth include whether an individual is sincere, trustworthy, honest, good-natured, friendly, and kind. Competence is attributed to individuals who are perceived to be skillful, capable, intelligent, efficient, and possessing the resources and confidence to achieve their goals. Because both warmth and competence are relevant for how people evaluate others, warmth traits should be considered just as relevant in how individuals perceive leaders as their competence as a politician.

A key benefit of adopting a more consumer brand-based conceptual framework is the ability to use brand evaluations and attachment to explain behavior. For example, in a recent study of consumer brands using the warmth and competence dimensions of the stereotype content model, researchers found that individuals are not only capable of placing company brand names on warmth and competence dimensions, but these placements tend to fall into distinct clusters. Where individuals place brands predicts their emotions towards the associated companies as well as their likelihood

of supporting that brand by purchasing its products (Kervyn, Fiske and Malone 2012; Malone and Fiske 2013). Individuals feel pity towards brands that score high on warmth of intentions and low on competence, like the Veteran's Hospital or the Postal Service. 'Elitist' brands, such as Mercedes and Rolex, are seen as ill-intentioned, but highly competent. Individuals feel contempt toward 'troubled brands' like BP and Goldman Sachs that score low on both dimensions, and are least likely to support these brands and buy their products. Individuals are most likely to support 'popular' brands that they admire, like Hershey's and Campbell's. The same patterns should be expected for leader brands: evaluations about the characteristics of a particular leader brand should predict the emotions individuals feel towards the brand as well as their loyalty and intention to support it.

The subsequent study will show that not only do citizens' evaluations of a leader's traits matter, but also that previous research has missed a key component explaining why they matter: brand attachment. Incorporating theories from consumer and social psychologies into a framework of leader-supporter dynamics contributes a deeper and better understanding of which leader traits matter, why they matter, and the resulting effect on citizen political attitudes and behavior. To examine the consequences of leader brands on vote choice, the following study tests the extent to which brand evaluation and attachment have an effect on vote choice. As found in previous studies of candidate trait evaluation, voters' straightforward evaluation of a leader's brand personality (how warm and competent they perceive a leader to be) should have a direct effect on vote choice. Therefore, the more positively an individual evaluates the warmth and competence of a leader, the more likely they should be to vote for that leader's party (H_4). In addition to this basic trait evaluation, the degree to which an individual feels attachment to that leader's brand should correspond with how likely that individual is to support the leader by voting for their political party (H_5). In addition to brand evaluation and attachment, partisan identification (H_6) and ideology (H_7) should continue to be important predictors of vote choice as well.

Data and Methods

The data used are from a Spanish pre- and post-election survey conducted in December-January of 2016, which are the last 2 waves of a 6-wave panel survey on broad topics relating to political

attitudes and behaviors (Torcal, Martini and Serani 2016).¹³ Although the data were collected in an online survey, through the use of quotas the survey sample is an accurate representation of the general population on relevant socioeconomic variables, such as income, education, locality, age, and gender.¹⁴ We use questions from the survey on two Spanish political leaders: Mariano Rajoy, incumbent national President and leader of the People's Party (PP); and Pedro Sánchez, leader of the main national opposition party, the Spanish Worker's Socialist Party (PSOE). In this election, dissatisfaction with parties and politicians was higher than in previous cycles and party identification is relatively low. However, leaders included in the survey were from older, well-established parties (the Popular Party, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) and excluded the newer parties (PODEMOS and Ciudadanos) that arose as a response against the traditional parties. In doing so, those parties and leaders that are newer and therefore likely more prone to personalization are omitted, making a much more difficult test for the theory.

In the following analyses, there are two dependent variables. The first is *brand attachment*, which is conceptualized as individual's admiration of and perceived similarity to a brand's content, in this case, the leader's personality traits. To measure *perception of leader warmth* and *perception of leader competence*, respondents were asked to what extent they would use specific adjectives to describe each leader on a 7-point Likert scale. These included four warmth traits ('caring', 'trustworthy', 'dishonest', and 'arrogant') and five competence traits ('assertive', 'charismatic', 'intelligent', 'disconnected from reality', and 'incompetent'). Exploratory factor analysis of all the traits together confirmed the two-factor solution along warmth and competence dimensions. We then used the factor loadings from a principle component analysis to create a weighted additive index for the perception of leader warmth and competence variables which were then rescaled to 0-1.¹⁵ Immediately following these leader trait evaluation questions, respondents were asked to what extent they admire those traits and the degree to which they feel those traits also represent how they see themselves with response options on a 5-point scale from 'none' to 'a lot'. The responses for these two items were added together to create a measure ranging from 0-8 and then rescaled to 0-1 to

¹³Data obtained was part of the online CIUPANEL designed and administered by Dr. Mariano Torcal of the Universitat Pompeu Fabra and the Research Centre for Survey Methodology and funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (CSO2013-47071-R, 2014-2016, PI: Mariano Torcal).

¹⁴Some summary statistics on the characteristics of respondents in the sample can be found in Appendix tables 1 and 2.

¹⁵Principal component analysis with varimax rotation. For detailed results of the factor analyses, see appendix.

create the *brand attachment* variable.¹⁶ All questions used to compose these measures about brand personalities and attachment ask explicitly about the leader's traits and make no reference to the political party with which they are affiliated nor any other contextual information besides the leader's first and last name. The measure of brand attachment is therefore created in a way that attempts to tap into perceptions of the personal traits of the leader and avoid contamination effects from partisan affiliation or incumbency, both of which will be discussed below in more detail.

The second dependent variable, vote choice, is operationalized in two different ways due to the two modeling techniques used. As the conditional logit model is a discrete choice model, vote choice is operationalized as voting for one of the available party options, or in this case, the PP and the PSOE. The second modeling technique employs a logistic regression for which vote choice is operationalized as a dichotomous variable. If the respondent voted for the political party led by the leader, their response is a '1', if they voted for another party they are coded as '0'. Respondents who did not know the leader were dropped from the analyses.

As previously stated, party identification and ideology should be key independent variables in these analyses as well. An individual that shares the same party identification as a leader should be more likely to positively evaluate the leader's brand (H_2) and to vote for the leader's party (H_6). The variable *strength of shared partisan attachment* indicates the strength of partisan identification the respondent feels to the political party of the leader. If an individual does not identify at all with that party, their response is coded as '0'. If they do identify with that party, the values ranging from 1-3 reflect the strength of that attachment with '1' representing 'somewhat close' and '3' signifying a 'very close' attachment to the party. *Ideology* is measured as the respondent's self-placement on the left-right scale where '0' indicates the far left and '10' represents the far right side of the ideological spectrum.

Other variables are included in the models to control for other potential sources of leader-oriented identification. *Evaluation of the economy* is a sociotropic measure of how well an individual thinks the economy in Spain is doing. This is included to account for incumbent evaluation.¹⁷ Variables controlling for gender, age, level of education, and income are also included.

¹⁶ $\alpha_{brandattachment} = 0.86-0.93$.

¹⁷The choice to use economic evaluation instead of incumbent evaluation was decided because it has been demonstrated to be an important predictor of vote choice in previous studies, as well as is less correlated with partisanship and ideology, minimizing the multicollinearity of the model.

Leader Brand Evaluation and Attachment

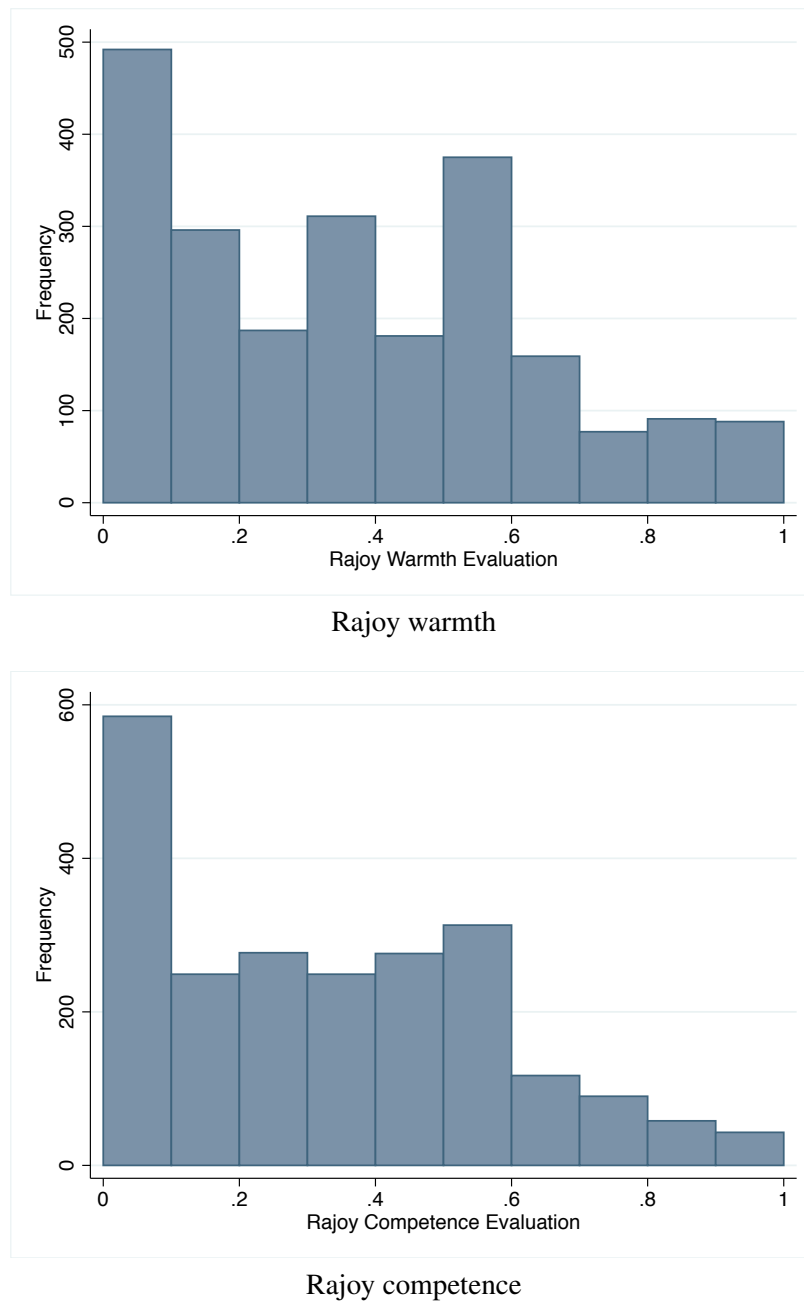
As of 2015 when the survey used here was administered, Mariano Rajoy had been the president of Spain for the last four years. Although his party won the most votes in 2011 and 2015, he was not particularly well-liked. In fact, the Centre for Sociological Investigation (CIS) in Spain noted that as of 2016 he was the worst rated President in democratic history in Spain (Varela 2016). His opponent in the 2015 elections, however, was the young, attractive, confident new leader of the PSOE, Pedro Sánchez. In order to first get a picture of how individuals interpret the brand personalities of these leaders, histograms of the distribution of respondents' evaluations of Rajoy's and Sánchez's warmth and competence are displayed below in Figures 1 and 2.

As can be seen from these figures, in general, Sánchez's evaluations in both warmth and competence seem to be more normally distributed than Rajoy's. Rajoy's evaluations are skewed more heavily to lower evaluations. It therefore appears that Rajoy's brand is not as appealing as his opponent's, and that his party's success is likely due to other factors such as ideology and partisan identification. Sánchez, on the other hand, has a more appealing brand that is likely to play a larger role in determining support for his party than in the case of Rajoy.

As stated above, previous studies have shown that warmth and competence are important predictors of attitudes and behaviors toward individuals in the social psychology discipline and that this has been shown to apply to consumer brands as well. To test whether this concept carries to leader brand attachment, Figure 3 below displays the results of OLS regression models with *brand attachment* as the dependent variable and perceptions of leaders' warmth and competence as independent variables along with the potential other sources of attachment to a leader mentioned above. All variables have been standardized to 0-1 for comparability. None of the sociodemographic variables were found to be statistically significant for either leader and are therefore not presented in the figure below (for full model results, see appendix).

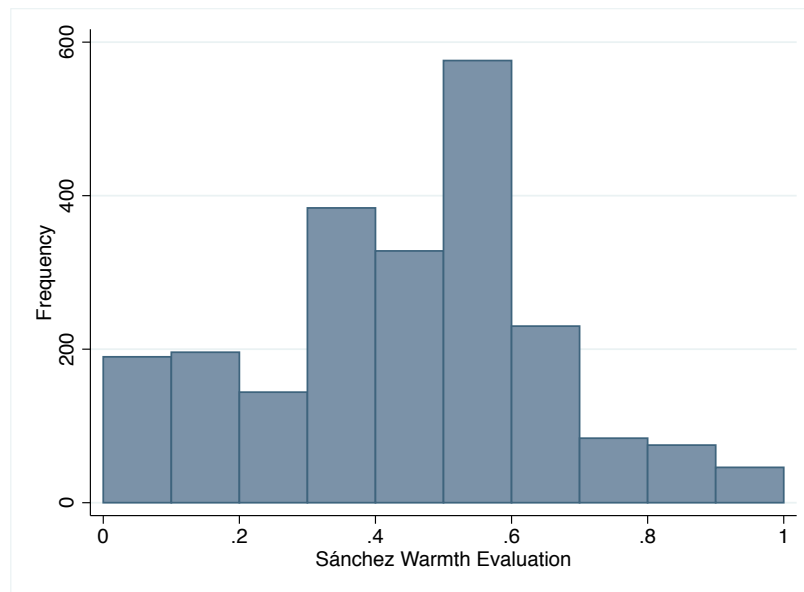
From these results, it is clear that perceptions of both warmth and competence of a leader are significant predictors of respondents' brand attachment with that leader, confirming H_1 . This confirms the validity of using warmth and competence as important dimensions of *brand attachment* as applies to political leader brands. Partisan attachment is also a significant predictor for both leaders, confirming H_2 . There are two additional variables that are significant in predicting brand attachment

Figure 1: Rajoy (PP) Brand Personality Evaluations

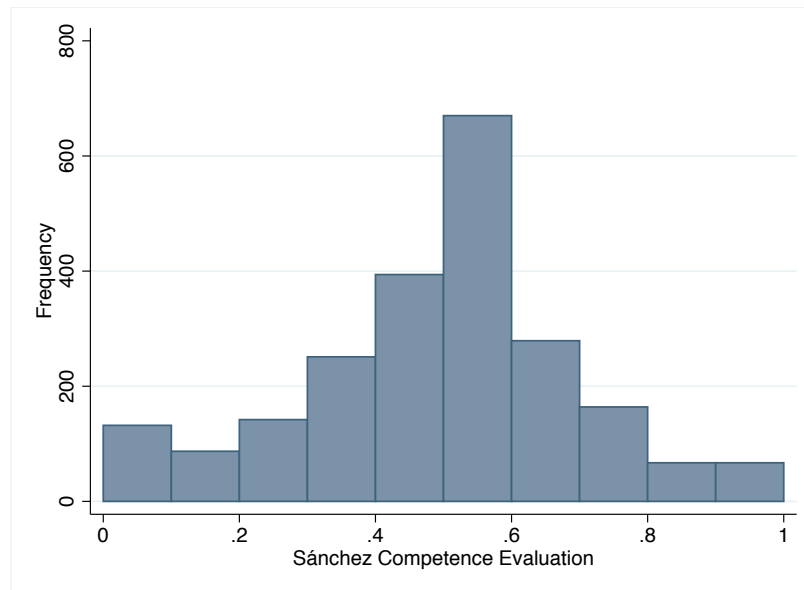


for Rajoy, but not for Sánchez: ideology and evaluation of the economy. Therefore the results show limited support for H_3 , and posit that the extent to which ideology and incumbent performance effects brand attachment may depend on the specific brand personality of a leader. This finding, combined with the smaller coefficients for the personality evaluations for Rajoy in comparison to

Figure 2: Sánchez (PSOE) Brand Personality Evaluations



Sánchez warmth

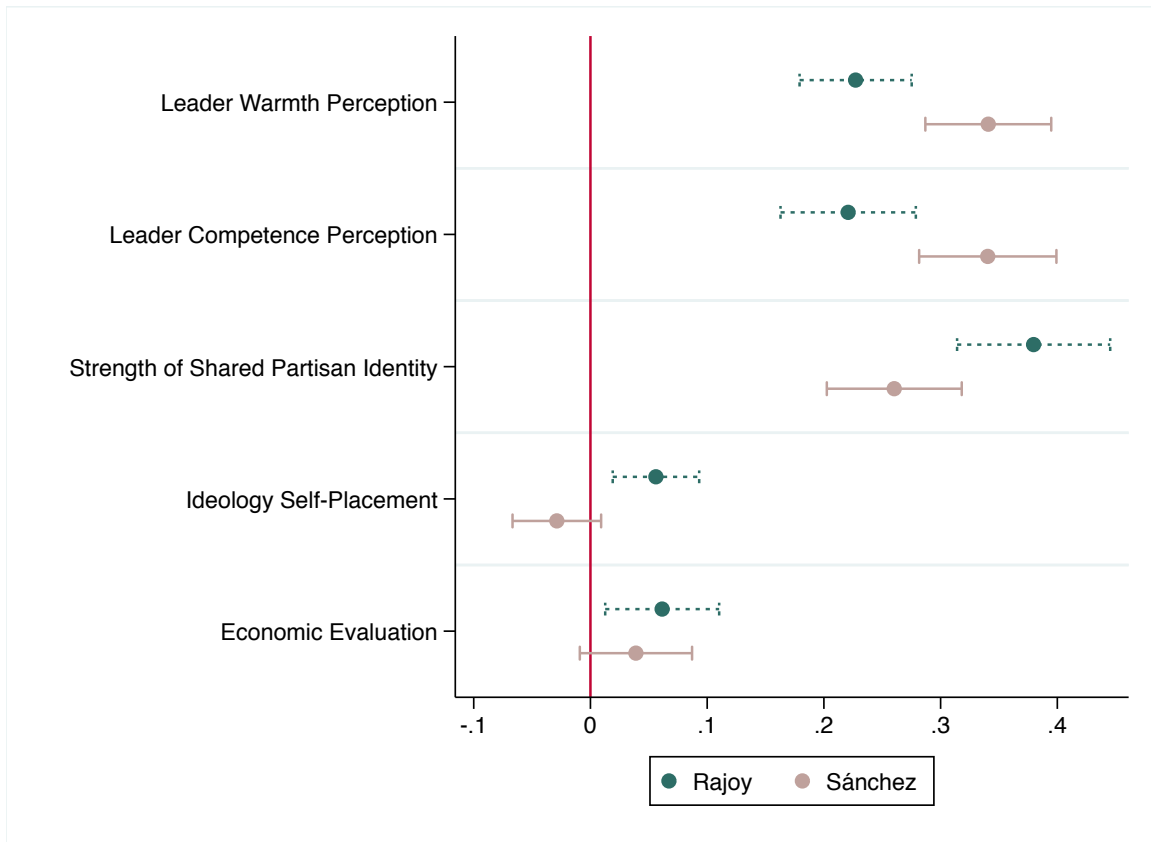


Sánchez competence

Sánchez suggests that when people think about whether they admire and share commonalities with Rajoy's brand, they are relying more on non-personal factors than they do with Sánchez's brand.

Leader Brand Identification and Vote Choice

Figure 3: Brand Attachment Explanatory Variables



In order to test the effect of brand evaluation and attachment on political support, two analyses using vote choice as the dependent variable were conducted: conditional logit and logistic regression.¹⁸ Conditional logit is the modeling technique of choice for multiparty systems as well and present less statistical issues in dealing with party-level variables (McFadden 1973; van der Eijk 2002; Belanger and Aarts 2006; van der Eijk et al. 2006). Although only individuals who voted for one of the two large traditional parties are included, using a conditional logit allows the modeling of variables at the party-level and sociodemographics at the individual-level (y-hats).¹⁹ As such, a conditional logit model is used to test the broader question of whether leader brand evaluation and attachment matter for vote choice in a general sense while addressing some of the statistical concerns. However, because the conditional logit model does not allow for the examination of the

¹⁸For both analyses, we drop all respondents from the sample that did not vote for one of the two traditional parties (the PP or the PSOE). As previously mentioned, limiting the sample to the two traditional parties makes for a harder test of the theory, as newer parties should be expected to have higher susceptibility to personalization.

¹⁹See appendix for more information on model strategies.

effects of brand evaluation and attachment for each leader separately, it is followed by a logistic regression where voting for the PP or not is the dichotomous dependent variable. The results of the conditional logit are displayed below in Table 1. The variables at the party-level are individual's perceived left-right distance from a party choice, their evaluation of a party leader's brand personality, and their level of attachment to a leader's brand. Ideology, evaluation of the economy, female, age, education, are at the individual-level, the coefficients for which are in reference to the choice of voting for the PSOE, as voting for the PP is the base alternative choice.

As can be seen in the table below, both leader brand evaluation and attachment are key explanatory factors for vote choice, confirming hypotheses H_4 and H_5 . This shows that even after accounting for evaluation of a leader's personality traits, there is still a more personalized attachment that matters for vote choice. Additionally, as evidenced by the similar size of the coefficients, it's predictive power is almost equally as strong as that of trait evaluation. The results do not show perceived ideological distance from the party, ideological self-placement, evaluation of the economy, age, gender, or education to be significant predictors of vote choice. However, when only one of the two ideology variables is put in the model (perceived ideology distance and left-right self-placement) ideology is a statistically significant predictor of vote choice (see appendix for results). Using this model, we can therefore confirm H_7 that ideology, in general, is an important predictor of vote choice.

We now turn to the results of the logistic regression model, for which the dependent variable is whether or not the respondent voted for the PP. Unlike the conditional logit, the logistic regression permits testing the effect of variables for each party and leader on vote choice. For example, instead of now having only one left-right distance variable, we now have one that measures the respondent's perceived distance from the PP and for the PSOE. As with the conditional logit model above, only respondents who voted for one of the two traditional national parties (the PP and the PSOE) are included. Variables measuring respondents' evaluations of Rajoy's and Sánchez brand evaluation and attachment are included to allow a direct comparison of the coefficients to see which leader's brand is more important in predicting vote choice. In addition, the same control variables from the conditional logit are also included here: evaluation of the economy, ideology, female, age, and education. Due to the relatively small sample size, the model does not converge when partisan attachment is included and is therefore excluded from the model. However, to see the effect on different partisan groups, the marginal effects following the model results are broken down by party identification group.

Table 1: Effect of Leader Brands on Vote Choice: Conditional Logit Results

Left-Right Distance	1.078 (6.69)
Brand Evaluation	11.681** (4.47)
Brand Attachment	11.280** (4.15)
Ideology	-10.640 (7.42)
Evaluation of the Economy	0.823 (2.72)
Female	1.152 (1.16)
Age	-1.948 (3.95)
Education	-2.772 (2.79)
Constant	6.508 (5.50)
Number of observations	880
Number of cases	440
Prob > χ^2	0.029
Log likelihood	-14.887
Wald $\chi^2(9)$	17.07

+ p < 0.10, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Conditional Logit results with standard errors in parentheses.

The results of the logistic regression are shown below in Table 2 and reveal some interesting findings. First, the effect of leader brands on how individuals vote is not equivalent across the two leaders. Neither Rajoy's brand evaluation nor attachment to his brand are significant predictors for whether or not an individual votes for Rajoy's party, the PP. However, the coefficients for both Sánchez brand evaluation and attachment are quite large, statistically significant, and negative. This indicates that the more an individual positively evaluates Sánchez's brand and the more attachment to his brand they feel, the more likely they are to vote for the PSOE instead of the PP. Ideological self-placement is statistically significant, as is perceived ideological distance from the PP. The fact that ideological distance matters in the case of the PP, but not in the PSOE, is similar to the finding that ideology was also an important predictor of Rajoy's brand evaluation. This adds some naunce to the findings above that confirmed the importance of ideology in vote choice (H_7). Evaluation of the

economy is also found to be significant in this model, indicating that incumbent performance is also important for vote choice.

Table 2: Effect of Leader Brands on Voting for the PP: Logit Results

Left-Right Distance PP	0.130* (0.05)
Leader Brand Rajoy	7.298 (5.47)
Brand Attachment Rajoy	12.580 (6.43)
Left-Right Distance PSOE	0.039 (0.05)
Leader Brand Sanchez	-19.651** (6.28)
Brand Attachment Sanchez	-24.628*** (5.88)
Evaluation of the Economy	8.477** (3.28)
Ideology	20.467** (7.61)
Female	-1.891 (2.51)
Age	9.123 (6.76)
Education	4.570 (3.10)
Constant	-8.603 (4.76)
Number of observations	440
Pseudo R^2	0.971
Prob > χ^2	0.000
Wald $\chi^2(9)$	82.55

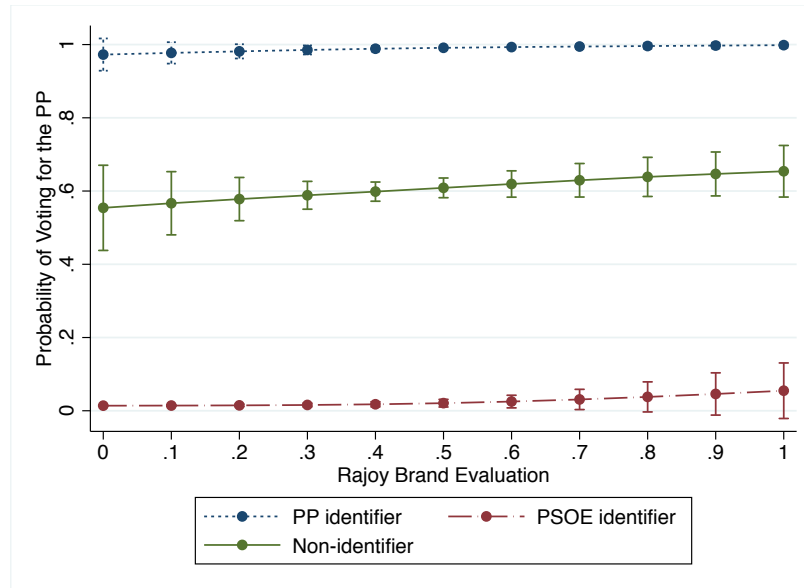
+ p < 0.10, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Logit results with robust standard errors in parentheses.

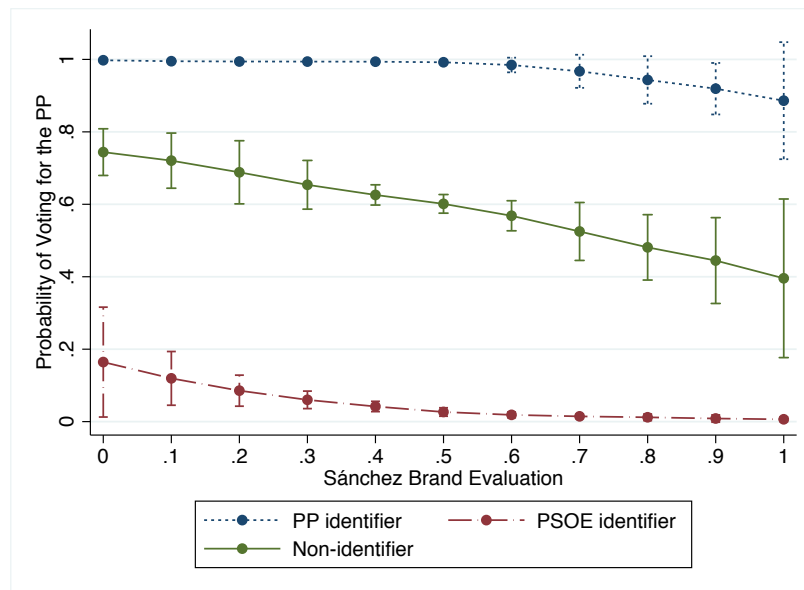
These findings may suggest that individuals are relying more heavily on other factors, such as their ideology in making their decision when leader brands are less appealing, such as in the case of Rajoy. As was shown in Figures 1 and 2 earlier in the paper, the evaluations for Rajoy's warmth and competence were generally skewed to a lower level than that of Sánchez. Another factor on which people may be relying is partisan identity. Although it could not be included in the model, it is possible to calculate predicted probabilities for three different partisan groups: those that identify with the PP, those that identify with the PSOE, and those that do not identify with either. Of the

sample, “PP identifiers” make up 31.9%, PSOE identifiers 28.5% and Non-identifiers 39.6%. In taking this approach, it is possible to see the difference in effect that brand evaluation and attachment have on vote choice. In Figures 4 and 5 below the results are presented in graphic form.

Figure 4: Effect of Leader Brand Evaluation on Probability of Voting for the PP



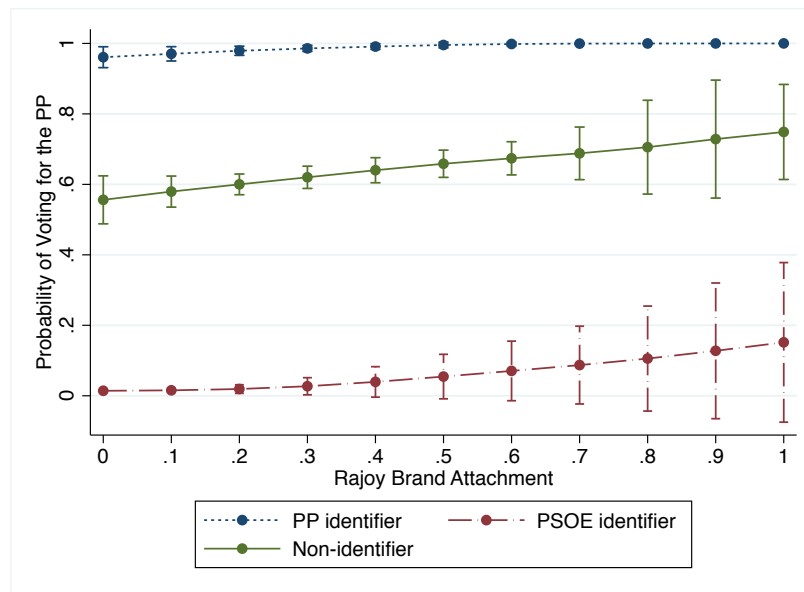
PP: Rajoy brand evaluation



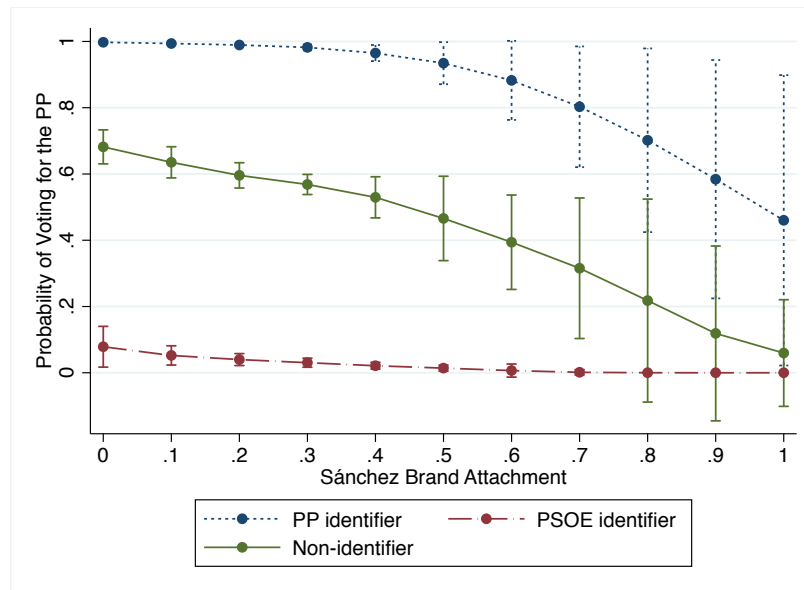
PSOE: Sánchez brand evaluation

A number of conclusions can be drawn from an examination of these graphics. Firstly, the effect of leader brand attachment on vote choice is minimal for those with party identification. We can

Figure 5: Effect of Leader Brand Attachment on Probability of Voting for the PP



PP: Rajoy brand attachment



PSOE: Sánchez brand attachment

therefore confirm H_6 , that party identification is still a very important factor in determining vote choice. However, there are some interesting dynamics with leader brand attachment among party identifiers. By going from the lowest value of brand evaluation to the highest, the only change that can be seen is the widening of the confidence intervals around the predicted probability of voting for the PP. For PP identifiers, the evaluation of Rajoy's brand personality and their attachment to his

brand have no apparent effect on their choice to vote for the PP. Whether they evaluate Rajoy's brand very positively or very negatively, and whether they identify or not with his brand, they will still, with very little question, vote for the PP. However, how they perceive Sánchez's brand and whether or not they identify with it seems to have a small effect, although only statistically significant in the case of brand attachment. Although substantively the predicted probability of voting for their party is still very high, the widening of the confidence intervals on the highest levels of evaluation for Sánchez's brand and if they feel a strong attachment to it, suggests that these brand-related attitudes can at least cause party identifiers to contemplate switching their vote away from their party, especially if they create a more personalized connection through brand attachment. The same pattern can be seen in regards to PSOE identifiers, not only for the PP's leader, but also for brand evaluation of their own leader, Sánchez. If they do not attribute positive qualities to Sánchez's brand, there is an increased probability that they will go against their party attachment and vote for the PP.

The most interesting finding from these figures is the predicted probability of voting for the PP among those respondents who do not identify with either of the two parties, represented by the solid line. As previously mentioned, this sample is limited to those who voted for either the PP or the PSOE and are therefore the voters for which these two parties would likely be competing. They are individuals who chose to vote for one of the two traditional political parties, but who do not identify with either one. They are not a small group, as they represent over one-third of the sample, so the decisions of these voters are pivotal to the results of an election. As can be seen by observing this group's predicted probabilities, both brand evaluation and brand attachment can have a large effect on how these individuals cast their votes. There are a couple of patterns to note here. First of all, the effect is clearly larger for Sánchez than for Rajoy in regards to both brand evaluation and brand attachment. While the effect of brand evaluation and brand attachment on vote choice is positive for Rajoy, the effect is not statistically significant, unlike Sánchez. This should be expected, as shown in the histograms in Figures 1 and 2 previously in the paper, Sánchez's brand personality components were rated more highly than Rajoy's. As his brand is more attractive, it should be more of a draw to people who do not have a strong partisan affiliation. Secondly, we can see that although the effect of brand evaluation and attachment are both positive, the effect of brand attachment is stronger. This indicates that if individuals go beyond the simple brand trait evaluation and make a

more personalized connection to a leader by developing a brand attachment, their likelihood to vote for that leader's party substantially increases.

To summarize the findings of the analyses, although traditional factors such as ideology and partisan identification still matter a great deal for vote choice, there is a piece that has been missing from the study of political behavior, which is the different effects of leader brands. Previous literature has found perceptions of leader competence to be important, but here we discover there is more to the story than previously told. The results of this study demonstrate that even in the context of a highly institutionalized party-centric system, individuals are swayed to vote for leaders that are not only competent, but also ones they perceive to have warm personalities. In the absence of an appealing leader brand, it seems that individuals rely more on traditional vote choice inputs, such as ideology, to make evaluations of the leader. Additionally, leaders can have an effect on vote choice even beyond simple trait evaluation. If individuals come to form a more personalized attachment with a leader's brand through perceived similarity and admiration for its characteristics, this has an additional effect that is even stronger than the effect of trait evaluation.

Discussion

Previous discussions on the importance of leaders' personality traits have largely over-simplified their relationship with citizen attitudes and behavior. Generally, traits have been seen as an input to an evaluative process in which citizens observe and assess traits of leaders and directly use that information to decide if they want to vote for them or not. While the analyses above reveal that this does happen, the results also show that traits have the ability to connect citizens to leaders in a more complex and personalized way. The brand that forms around a candidate or leader, defined by their personal combination of perceived warmth and competence, is observed and interpreted by individuals; they decide whether they admire those traits and whether they see those traits as similar to their own. The result of this process is an individual's attachment to the leader's brand which allows citizens to connect with the leader in a way that goes beyond simple evaluation to a relationship that is deeper and more personal.

We see time and time again in politics where a leader has a group of followers that is so loyal it seems their attachment to the leader will never fade. Donald Trump, for example, was able to

develop a candidate brand that was so powerful that supporters did not waver despite multiple gaffs, missteps, and indiscretions that came to light throughout his campaign. While the importance of leaders' personal traits would seem obvious in cases with long histories of pervasive personalization of the political system like Russia or even the United States, this is becoming a more visible trend in contexts where personalization of the political arena seemed much less important than programmatic-based attachments, such as to political parties or ideologies. Even in well-established democracies, changes in the electoral arena have demonstrated the importance of a leader's brand in connecting with citizens beyond programmatic platforms. Leaders like Marine LePen or Geert Wilders have come to be seen as the embodiment of their party instead of its representative. Especially in the current political context where questions about populism and the role of specific leaders in mobilizing citizens to action, it is important to reconsider the factors contributing to support for political leaders.

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