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Ballot Photographs as Cues in Low-Information Elections

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In low-information elections, voters are often faced with the task of choosing from a list of unknown candidates. By examining a set of low-information elections where candidate photographs were displayed on the ballot, we test how first impressions of candidates can influence election outcomes. We find that attractive candidates are more likely to be attributed the qualities associated with successful politicians and these trait inferences, based on facial appearances, influence the outcomes of elections. We also find that these trait inferences are based on physical characteristics of the candidates, such as age, race and ethnicity, evident from a photograph. Therefore, first impressions can be important determinants of election outcomes, especially in low-information elections.

KEY WORDS: Heuristics, First impressions, Candidate appearance, Low-information elections, Ballot photographs

Normative democratic theory requires voters to be informed when choosing between candidates, but this expectation runs counter to the empirical research showing that voters tend to be ill informed about candidate and party positions on issues. Nevertheless, a large body of research demonstrates that voters can compensate for a lack of information by using cognitive shortcuts in making voting

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decisions. Cognitive heuristics are commonly used as a bridge between the realities of a grossly uninformed electorate and the demands of normative democratic theory. Citizens can make reasonable decisions without being completely informed by relying on cues provided by the party affiliation of the candidate, elite endorsements, candidate viability, incumbency status, and the appearance of the candidate. For example, Popkin (1991) has argued that the use of such heuristics leads to "low information rationality" (for a contrary view, see Bartels, 1996). These types of shortcuts or heuristics are particularly prominent in low-information elections (McDermott, 1997) and when the situation facing voters is complex (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001).

While these studies contend that shortcuts enable citizens to make meaningful choices, another body of research demonstrates that these shortcuts can sometimes bias electoral outcomes and voter choice. For example, incumbents (Krebs, 1998), male candidates (Smith & Fox, 2001), white candidates (Sigelman, Sigelman, Walkosz, & Nitz, 1995; Terkildsen, 1993), and physically attractive candidates (Sigelman et al., 1987) tend to have greater electoral success. In the absence of other information, voters may resort to cues such as these that lead to stereotyped perceptions of candidates. Male candidates are perceived as tough, aggressive, self-confident, and assertive, while their female counterparts are described as warm, compassionate, people-oriented, gentle, kind, passive, caring, and sensitive (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993a, 1993b; Leeper, 1991; Rosenwasser & Dean, 1989). Gender and race are also used as a cue to infer issue positions and ideology, with women and black candidates being seen as more liberal (McDermott, 1998).

Recent accounts of decision making in the "blink of an eye" suggest that snap judgements based on attractiveness are strong influences regardless of whether they provide meaningful cues or not (see, for example, Gladwell, 2005, pp. 72–98). Studies focusing on first impressions find that influential judgements about candidate characteristics can be based on facial characteristics other than just the race or sex of the candidate (Todorov, Mandisodza, Goren, & Hall, 2005; see also Willis & Todorov, 2006). In dual-process models of social cognition, these first impressions, along with heuristics and stereotypes, form what are considered easy or effortless judgements that are distinct from, but may influence, more deliberate, reflective judgements (see Chaiken & Trope, 1999).

Studies of candidate appearance cues, whether they are race, gender, or attractiveness, have largely relied on experiments to test their influence. While experimental data can help establish the causal links between candidate appearance and voter evaluations, little is known about the actual influence of candidate appearance on election outcomes (for an exception, see Todorov et al., 2005). Rather than relying on experiments, we combine inferences of candidate traits and actual electoral outcomes in the United Kingdom where photographs were used on ballot papers. Not only do photographs allow voters to form first impressions of candidates, but they also provide demographic cues, which may lead to a potential bias that favors certain attributes.

We investigate candidate appearance cues using data collected from elections for community partnership boards that are part of the British government's urban regeneration program—New Deal for Communities (NDC). These NDC partnership board elections, often using innovative electoral arrangements, are low saliency, nonpartisan races to elect members to community councils that are responsible for the distribution of funding for community development (Rallings, Thrasher, Cheal, & Borisyuk, 2004; Rallings & Thrasher, 2002). Since these are nonpartisan elections, party labels did not appear on the ballot. Voters in these elections were instead presented with ballots that displayed a photograph of the candidate alongside the candidate's name. The use of photographs was viewed as an innovative way of improving the quality of elections by providing voters with more information about the candidates. One line of reasoning was that if voters could recognize candidates who were active in the community then they would be able to reward them accordingly. While these photographs might cue voters to recognize active members of the community, they also provide other information about candidates such as their gender, age, and ethnicity. More importantly, we suspect that most voters were seeing these candidates for the first time and, therefore, first impressions could be enormously influential. We examine whether these first impressions from these photographs may have had an unintended consequence by producing a bias toward candidates with a favored appearance.

Candidate Appearance Cues

Two lines of research are particularly important regarding candidate appearance and electoral choices. First, research into the structure of political preferences has demonstrated that, outside of issue positions and party affiliation, candidate evaluations are an important element in voter decision making. In other words, if voters are favorably disposed toward a candidate, they are more likely to vote for him or her. Second, these evaluations act as a running tally of likes, dislikes, issue positions, and even stereotyped evaluations of the candidates. Importantly, these evaluations appear to be influenced also by the personal characteristics of candidates (Miller, Wattenberg, & Malanchuck, 1986). Personal traits such as integrity, competence, and trustworthiness are central to prototypical conceptions of the ideal politician (Brown, Lambert, Kay, & Curtis, 1988; Funk, 1997; Hellweg, 1979; Kinder, Peters, Abelson, & Fisk, 1980; Miller, Wattenberg, & Malanchuck, 1986; Sigel, 1966; Trent, Mongeau, Trent, Kendall, & Cushing, 1993; Wayne, 1982).

Perceptions of the personal traits of candidates may be influenced by factors such as a candidate's experience or how the candidate communicates campaign messages. However, the assignment of these character traits to candidates is also based on nonverbal cues from a candidate's appearance. In the literature on candidate stereotypes, there is ample evidence that a candidate's gender (Huddy & Terkildson, 1993a), race (McDermott, 1998), and physical attractiveness

(Sigelman, Sigelman, & Fowler, 1987) can affect evaluations of a candidate's issue competencies, ideology, issue positions, and electability. Candidate appearance cues should be a familiar tool to voters because citizens, in order to facilitate communication, typically make judgments on the basis of personal appearances in daily social interactions (see Haxby, Hoffman, & Gobbini, 2000).

In general, physically attractive people are thought to possess more desirable personality traits that translate into other advantages. For example, good-looking people earn more over their lifetimes (Hamermesh & Biddle, 1994). In the electoral arena, physically attractive candidates benefit when voters ascribe the attributes of an effective representative and legislator to them (Riggle, Miller, Sheilds, & Johnson, 1994; Rosenberg, Bohan, McCafferty, & Harris, 1986; Rosenberg, Kahn, & Tran, 1991). There is experimental evidence that suggests physically attractive candidates are advantaged (Sigelman et al., 1987) and that attractiveness matters most for women candidates (Schubert & Curran, 2001).

If appearances are important in the political arena, a photograph becomes a crucial means of communicating information that is important in the voter's decision-making process. A photograph conveys information about the gender, age, ethnicity, and physical attractiveness of the candidate. This information, in turn, is used to form judgments about the candidates. In an experimental study of candidate appearance where subjects were simply presented with a photograph of hypothetical candidates, the researchers conclude, "a photograph provides voters with a clear image of the candidate's character and fitness for office and this, in turn, importantly influences the electoral choices they make" (Rosenberg et al., 1986, p. 119). Evaluations can also be influenced by whether the photograph is portrayed favorably or not (Barrett & Barrington, 2005). In discussing the implications of their findings regarding the use of heuristics in voting decisions, Lau and Redlawsk write, "Party labels already are a common part of the ballot for many types of elections; why not a picture of each candidate as well?" (2001, p. 969).

There are good reasons to expect that the placement of a photograph on the ballot would have an impact on how candidates fare. A number of studies have demonstrated that ballot design can influence electoral outcomes. As Niemi and Herrnson (2003) note, variations in ballot design on voter roll-off, split ticket voting, and the outcome of elections were frequent topics of discussion in the earliest days of the political science profession. Importantly for our analysis, ballot designs that give information about a candidate can provide a cue to voters. For example, the presence of party labels on the ballot has been the subject of numerous studies. A recent example, relying on nonexperimental data, suggests that the absence of party labels advantages nonincumbent parties (Schaffner, Streb, & Wright, 2007).

A photograph on the ballot would not only allow voters to evaluate candidate attractiveness but it would also reveal candidate characteristics that may provoke a stereotyped response that could affect electoral outcomes. For example, the election of black candidates is directly correlated with the proportion of blacks in

the population of the electoral district (see, for example, Lublin & Voss, 2000), suggesting that white voters are unwilling to vote for black candidates (Jones & Clemons, 1993; Reeves, 1997; Terkildsen, 1993). Therefore, in the absence of other information, race and or ethnicity may be a powerful cue for white voters particularly when stereotypes are automatically activated (e.g., by a photograph), and there is no motivation to suppress their influence on behavior (see Fazio & Towles-Schwen, 1999). While this relationship has largely gone untested outside the context of the United States, we might expect the same prejudice against candidates of color by white voters in other contexts.

While we do not measure voter sophistication, we expect that first impressions will be particularly influential in the election context we study—a low-salience, low-information election to local boards. The decision context also conditions whether first impressions about candidate traits are used to form judgments or whether a more deliberative process is used. In the absence of other information, stereotypes and other judgments based on appearances can be influential (Riggle, Ottati, Wyer, Kuklinski, & Schwarz, 1992; Riggle et al., 1997). When more information is available, reliance on this other information will depend on the complexity of the task. When comparing candidates, a more cognitively demanding task than making an absolute judgment on a single candidate, subjects will rely on appearance and partisan cues rather than information about issues positions (Riggle et al., 1992; see also Schubert & Curran, 2001). The number of candidates being evaluated might also add complexity to the decision task. However, Lau and Redlawsk (2001) find that both sophisticated (ideology) and unsophisticated (appearance) cues are used if the complexity of the decision task is defined by the number of alternatives. Given that the elections under study are low salience and nonpartisan, voters casting about for a candidate to support may rely heavily on the cues that are readily available to them on the ballot paper. The task is made even more complex because voters were asked to choose more than one candidate in multimember contests and in some cases were asked to rank their preferences.

Inferring Personality Traits from Photographs

We build on previous experimental and survey research by testing how candidate appearance influences outcomes in low information elections using data from real elections. Our sample is based on NDC elections held in 2001–2002 where photographs appeared on the ballots. About half the candidates in these elections were chosen by Single Transferable Vote (STV) while the other half were chosen by Multi-Member Plurality (MMP).[1] In total, there were 20 ballots that featured 212 candidates. Our primary hypothesis is that candidates with a more

[1] In STV elections, voters rank preferred candidates from 1 to n on a list where n is the district magnitude. In MMP elections, voters simply choose *n* candidates from a list where *n* is the district magnitude.

favorable appearance will be more positively evaluated which will give them an electoral advantage.

Our analysis proceeds in two parts. We first evaluate how candidates, on the basis of their photograph, are rated on various personality traits considered to be important for public office holders. We then use these trait evaluations to predict election success (see also Banducci, Thrasher, Rallings, & Karp, 2003). This method is similar to Todorov et al. (2005), who examined how first impressions of the competence of U.S. congressional candidates influence electoral outcomes. They were able to correctly predict the winner in 70% of the contests based on which candidates, from a quick glance at their photograph, looked more competent.

In order to distinguish perceptions of physical attractiveness from perceived personality, we capture two types of first impressions: overall attractiveness of the candidate and evaluations of personality traits. We first establish the overall impressions of candidates on attractiveness and trait evaluations through the use of a web survey administered to respondents recruited via a link on the YouGOV webpage.[2] Our purpose was to replicate how voters in these elections might have judged the appearance of these candidates so that we can compare the first impressions of the candidate to their fate on election day. The photographs were scanned from the ballots and placed alongside a set of questions about the candidate. The 521 recruited respondents (all from Britain) were asked to evaluate the attractiveness and personality traits of 10 candidates that were randomly displayed (one candidate per page) from the total sample of 212 candidates.[3] All 212 candidates were rated for attractiveness and personality traits on a 4-point scale by, on average, 25 respondents.

Along with candidate "attractiveness," respondents were asked to evaluate candidates on the following six personality traits: trustworthiness, shares the respondent's concerns, leadership, qualification, competence, and experience. These traits are commonly used in studies of candidate evaluations (see, for example, Huddy & Terkildson, 1993a; Riggle et al., 1992). The questions were phrased: "Please tell me how well you believe each of the following descriptions fit this candidate." Possible responses were very well, somewhat well, not very well, or not very well at all. The ratings from each respondent were then averaged across each candidate to create a score for each trait.[4] In order to create a summary of the personality traits we constructed for each candidate a composite measure of the six personality trait indicators ($\alpha = .95$).[5] Candidate attractiveness

[2] The respondents ranged in age from 18 to 75, and 52% were women.

[3] Rosenberg et al. (1986) determined that each respondent could evaluate about 10 candidates comfortably (p. 112). We follow this recommendation and each respondent rated 10 randomly assigned candidates along a number of dimensions. Each candidate was presented on a separate screen with the traits displayed to the right of the picture.

[4] The web survey and examples of the photographs and evaluations made by our respondents are available at http://www.jkarp.com/ballotphotos/.

[5] Todorov et al. (2005) find that there are two dimensions to the personality traits: Competence is the best predictor of electoral success and can be differentiated from other characteristics such as

is most analogous to measures of candidate "beauty," which we expect to influence traits. The average responses to the individual items are summarized in the appendix.

Other than the photograph and the name of the candidate, respondents were given no other information about the candidate. While some respondents in the pretest suggested that it was impossible to rate candidates solely on the basis of looks, our procedure follows that of prior research (Riggle et al., 1992; see also Todorov et al., 2005). In order to encourage evaluations of the photographs, respondents were reminded at the beginning of the web survey instrument of the following: "It is important to remember that although people sometimes have very little information about candidates beyond seeing them in a picture, their perceptions of candidates can be surprisingly accurate" (see Riggle et al., 1992, p. 72).

These trait evaluations, based on responses to the web survey, are then combined with the vote totals from the elections and candidate-level data coded from the ballots. Characteristics of the candidates, such as race, sex, and age, have been coded from the ballots themselves and the election statements of candidates.[6] Age was assessed by candidate statements and forms an ordinal scale with five categories that has been rescaled to range from 0 to 1. In the cases where no candidate statement was available or where the information was missing the age was estimated from the photograph. We use a simple dummy variable to compare whites and nonwhites.[7] Given that the elections were held shortly after the September 11, 2001, terror attacks, Arabs and Muslims may have been subject to discrimination, particularly those who could be easily identified. Therefore we also identify whether or not the candidate was wearing something covering his or her head in the photograph.

About 8% of the candidates did not provide a photograph.[8] A dummy variable is used to control for whether the absence of a photograph has a negative impact. As a test of the photograph itself we also include a measure of the quality of the photograph. To ensure reliability of this indicator, four independent coders examined the photograph in terms of whether it was good or poor quality.[9] We also control for the ballot position of the candidate and include a measure of competitiveness to control for the differences in the number of candidates appearing on the ballot and the number of available positions on the board. This measure is based

likability and trust (p. 1624). We find no such differentiation in our responses. A factor analysis of all traits suggests they load onto a single dimension, and no one trait performed remarkably better than the others at predicting outcomes in separate analyses.

[6] Candidate statements were provided on a voluntary basis. In some cases the candidate provided a brief biographical sketch and a statement about what goals they would pursue in office.

[7] We originally created four categories of race/ethnicity (white, Arab/Muslim, Indian/Pakistani, Afro-Caribbean/African). Overall there were no substantial differences between these four categories with the exception of those with Indian/Pakistani descent, who received lower evaluations than whites.

[8] Despite the lack of photograph, respondents to the web survey were still asked to evaluate candidates on the basis of the only information that would have been available on the ballot—the candidate's name.

[9] The rate of agreement across coders varied between .66 and .70.

on the ratio of the number of candidates to the number of positions (i.e., district magnitude).

Our main dependent variable is the success of the candidates in the election contest. Because we are comparing outcomes across types of electoral systems, we need a comparable indicator of the election outcome for each candidate. Using the percent of the vote that each candidate received in the election is not possible, given that only first preferences in the STV elections were recorded and the subsequent rankings of candidates were not. Therefore, as the outcome variable we use whether or not the candidate was elected. In both the STV and MMP elections this indicates the candidate crossed the necessary threshold of votes to win a seat on the community board.

Our review of the literature suggests that candidate appearance and other physical attributes that are evident in a photograph are likely to affect electoral outcomes indirectly by influencing personality traits that are deemed to be important for those holding public office. To test this explicitly we first report the results of a model that estimates the effects of these physical attributes on the index of personality traits associated with successful political leaders. We then estimate a second model that examines the impact of physical attributes such as attractiveness on electoral outcomes. A third model that includes both traits and attractiveness is then estimated to determine whether attractiveness is mediated by personality traits (see MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007).

Results

Table 1 shows the results of a model assessing the impact of attractiveness and other physical characteristics on trait evaluations. The results show that several characteristics of the candidates as well as the actual photograph influence the trait evaluations of the candidates. Attractiveness has a strong impact independent of

Table 1. Effects of Candidate Attractiveness on Personality Traits (OLS Coefficients)

	Coef.	Std. Error
Attractiveness	1.81**	(0.16)
Female	0.01	(0.03)
Age	0.08**	(0.01)
White	0.07*	(0.03)
Headwear	–0.13**	(0.05)
No photograph	–0.38**	(0.06)
Poor quality photograph	–0.11**	(0.03)
Constant	1.25**	(0.09)
Adj. R^2	0.65	
n	212	

**p < .01; *p < .05.

Table 2. Effects of Physical Characteristics and Personality Traits on Election Outcomes (Logit Coefficients)

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Coef.	Std. Error	Coef.	Std. Error
Attractiveness	6.14**	(1.84)	1.84	(2.48)
Trait evaluations			2.00*	(0.78)
Female	–0.61	(0.38)	–0.62	(0.39)
Age	–0.06	(0.16)	–0.25	(0.18)
White	1.89**	(0.39)	1.70**	(0.41)
Headwear	1.06	(0.59)	1.30*	(0.60)
Ballot position	–0.04	(0.02)	–0.03	(0.02)
Ratio of seats to candidates	3.45*	(1.23)	3.51*	(1.29)
Constant	–4.90**	(1.23)	–7.09**	(1.58)
Nagelkerke Pseudo R^2	0.39		0.42	
n	212		212	

**p < .01; *p < .05.

other physical characteristics. It is not surprising that another influential variable is whether or not the candidate actually had a photograph on the ballot. Candidates without a photograph receive significantly lower ratings than those candidates with a photograph.[10]

Several personal characteristics also influence the average trait evaluations. Older candidates are likely to receive more positive evaluations while the sex of the candidate appears to have no impact. However, when attractiveness is omitted from the model, female candidates receive more negative evaluations than male candidates.[11] Whites receive significantly higher evaluations on personality traits than nonwhites. Candidates who have something covering their head are also evaluated less positively than those without headwear. The quality of the photograph also appears to matter. Candidates with poor photographs are significantly less likely to receive positive trait evaluations than those with good photographs. Overall the fit is reasonable, with the model explaining 65% of the variance in trait evaluations.

The first column in Table 2 shows that there is a strong relationship between attractiveness and electoral outcomes. Candidates who were viewed as being more attractive in our web survey are more likely to win. Race is also a significant factor;

[10] It is possible that unattractive candidates choose not to submit a photograph. To test this hypothesis we obtained pictures for five candidates who did not place photographs on the ballot. We then subjected these photographs to the same ratings survey, asking respondents to evaluate candidate traits of trustworthiness, competence, leadership, etc. These candidates received more positive evaluations than in the original analysis (without the pictures). A difference of means test indicates that the differences are statistically significant at $p < .01$. As a control, we also asked respondents to evaluate five candidates whose photographs had also been evaluated in the original survey. The differences between these evaluations were not statistically significant ($p = .497$) from the original evaluations, indicating that our new respondents did not evaluate the candidates in a more positive (or negative) way.

[11] Female candidates were seen as being more attractive than male candidates.

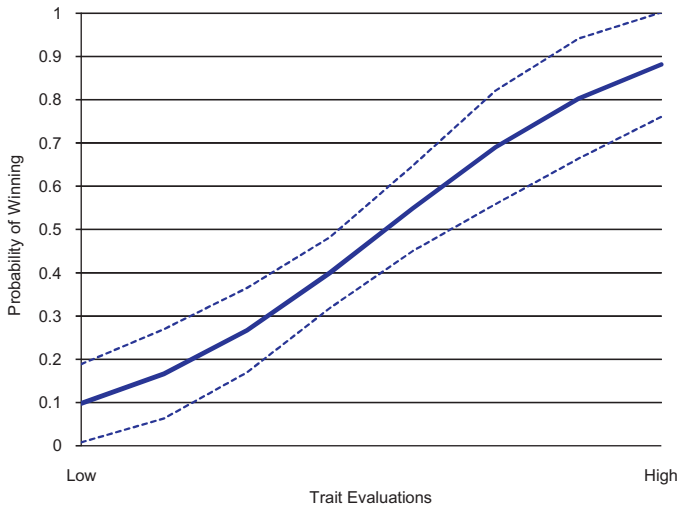

Figure 1. Impact of Trait Evaluations on the Likelihood of Winning.
Note: Estimates derived from Table 2. Broken lines indicate 95 confidence levels.

whites are more likely to win than nonwhites. However when trait evaluations are included in the model, the coefficient for attractiveness reduces by a third and loses significance. In comparison, trait evaluations remain significant, indicating that the effect of attractiveness is mediated by the trait evaluations. Moving from the lowest rating to the highest in the sample increases the candidate's probability of winning by over 70%. These effects, which are independent of other candidate characteristics, are illustrated in Figure 1.

While physical attributes such as beauty appear to be mediated by traits, race remains a significant factor. Although white candidates are also more positively evaluated than nonwhites, the coefficient for white candidates remains significant when trait evaluations are added to the model. Specifically, the probability of winning for white candidates is 38% greater than for nonwhite candidates. These results suggest that white candidates are advantaged in ways that are independent of trait evaluations. As noted earlier, some candidates of color are wearing turbans or other headwear and this negatively influences trait evaluations (even beyond being nonwhite). Once trait evaluations are controlled for in the model, headwear is positively related to outcomes, suggesting that while the respondents evaluated these candidates more negatively the electoral outcomes are not directly biased against these candidates.

The results also suggest that women candidates are not disadvantaged either in evaluations of traits or the election outcomes. Even when trait ratings are dropped from the model, women are still as likely to win as men. In order to see

whether the personality traits were more important for women candidates we tested an interaction between sex of the candidate and the average trait rating; this interaction was not significant and its inclusion did not alter the substantive conclusion that sex of the candidate did not influence the outcome.

While the coefficient for ballot position is negative it is not significant. In part the effects of ballot position are captured by the variable representing competition which takes into account the number of candidates appearing on the ballot. When this measure is omitted from the model, the effect of ballot position increases and achieves statistical significance.

We also tested whether candidate experience was a factor influencing electoral outcomes. We are only able to code candidate experience for a subset of candidates where candidate statements were included with the ballot paper (n = 108). The results from this model indicated that candidate experience has little effect on the fate of a candidate. This result is likely due to the fact that voters in these low-information elections are not likely to be exposed to the level of candidate experience either through candidate campaign material or through media coverage. Even with the reduced sample size, the same candidate and ballot cues significant in the other models are significant in this model and the size of the coefficient remains similar despite adding candidate experience, suggesting that the effects of candidate cues are fairly robust in these low-information elections.

Discussion

Previous studies have either relied entirely on experiments or, as in the case of Todorov et al. (2005), on "naïve" evaluations of candidates to predict past electoral outcomes. Our analysis provides a "real world" test of whether traits that are conveyed by the placement of a photograph on a ballot can alter electoral outcomes. But was it really the photograph that made the difference? If voters based their decisions on their prior knowledge of the candidate's attractiveness (or any other trait) rather than what appears before them on the ballot any observed correlation between trait ratings based on photographs and the outcome of the election would be spurious. There are several pieces of evidence that suggest a nonspurious relationship. First and foremost, our analysis is based on low-information elections.[12] There was minimal campaigning and little to no media coverage so these other mechanisms by which voters may have been exposed to the appearance of candidates are not prominent. Since these elections are nonpartisan and low salience with little media attention paid to them, the photographs are an important source of cues for voters and may be the first indication the voter has of the candidate's appearance. We find fairly conclusive evidence that is consistent

[12] In contrast, Todorov et al. (2005) examined the appearance of candidates competing in U.S. Senate elections and found that attractiveness influenced the outcome of the election even though no photographs appeared on the ballot. These elections, however, are highly salient elections where the candidates are likely to have been seen by voters prior to the election.

with this process. In particular, candidates without photographs receive lower trait evaluations.[13] Furthermore, none of the candidates whose photograph did not appear on the ballot were elected. Finally, the quality of the photograph itself had an indirect effect on electoral outcomes by influencing how candidates were evaluated.

Our research design more closely approximates the decision task voters would have been faced with on the day of the election—choosing from a ballot paper with photographs of unknown candidates. First impressions can be a powerful predictor of election outcomes. What are the implications for accountability and democracy if voters are simply deciding elections on the basis of perceived competence rather than on demonstrated competence?

Although it has been argued that cognitive heuristics can help overcome the informational deficit apparent in democracies, our findings challenge the rationality of voters. Our findings show that candidate attractiveness as well as race influence snap judgments about personality traits. In turn, these personality traits are powerful predictors of election outcomes, particularly in the absence of other information. While we demonstrate that these judgments play a role in the outcome of elections, we cannot show whether these are "correct" or reasonable decisions that are in line with preferences (Lau & Redlawsk, 1997). Unless the traits that are inferred from a quick glance at a candidate's face reflect the actual personality traits of the individual, these snap judgments open up the possibility for misjudgments and incorrect voting.

That electoral outcomes in low-information elections may be biased toward attractive, white candidates may offend notions of democracy that suggest that candidates should compete fairly and on the basis of issues not appearance. Ballot photographs in these local elections were introduced as a way to help voters. In the case of the local elections under study here, voters who might otherwise not recall the name of a candidate may recognize a candidate who has been active in the community from their photograph. In addition, voters can make inferences from candidate characteristics about their ideological positions and compatibility. However, the use of ballot photographs, as our results suggest such as in the case of race/ethnicity, may influence electoral outcomes in unintended ways.

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[13] In addition, there are eight instances where the same candidates appeared in two different elections. In six of these cases a different photograph was used. Although the same candidates were evaluated they received different trait ratings. These latter two pieces of evidence, that can only be the result of cues from the photograph, strongly suggest that it is the photographs and not prior familiarity that are influencing trait evaluations.

meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, PA. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Jeffrey Karp, Department of Politics, Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter, UK, EX4 4RJ. e-mail: j.karp@exeter.uk (www.jkarp.com)

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APPENDIX TABLE 1. Summary Statistics for Candidates

		Min	Max
No photograph	8.0%	0	1
Headwear	9.4%	0	1
White	38.7%	0	1
Female	37.7%	0	1
Age	0.3	0	1
District magnitude	7.5	1	12
Ballot position	10.4	1	46

APPENDIX TABLE 2. Descriptive Statistics for Attractiveness and Personality Traits

	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max
Attractiveness	1.87	0.41	1.26	3.26
Trustworthy	2.35	0.42	1.43	3.29
Empathy	2.08	0.35	1.33	2.88
Leadership	2.20	0.35	1.33	3.15
Qualification	2.37	0.37	1.33	3.27
Competence	2.38	0.39	1.33	3.19
Experience	2.30	0.40	1.33	3.36