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THE WINNER TAKES IT ALL? A PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF POLITICAL SUCCESS AMONG UK MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

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Abstract:

Is there a winning formula when it comes to individual success in contemporary politics? In this paper I analyse self-report data on the Basic Human Values (Schwartz, 1994) of 106 national politicians in the UK to examine the impact of these individual characteristics on three alternative political outcomes: the size of a candidate's electoral majority, their longevity as an elected representative, and their progression (or not) to frontbench office. On the one hand, it seems that the values of individual politicians make very little impact on their electoral performance at the ballot box. On the other hand, politicians' values seem to impact on both their ability to hold on to office once elected and in turn to make in-role career progression.

Key Words: Politicians - Parliament – Basic Values – Political Success – Elections

There is a long literature to show that people do not appear randomly in political roles (see, for example, Browning and Jacobs 1964; George, 1974) and that behaviour flows from constant symbiosis between mental states and the environment (for an early example, see Lewin, 1936, pp.11-12). Yet sound empirical studies of politicians that test these general findings are few in number, and practically non-existent in the UK. As Fred Greenstein (1992, p. 125) argued almost three decades ago: 'If the connections between the personalities of political actors and their political behaviour are obscure, all the more reason to illuminate them.' In this article I take up Greenstein's challenge as an important step forward for studies of political elites in the UK and beyond. In particular, I focus upon the Basic Human Values (Schwartz, 1994) of 106 Members of Parliament (MPs) in order to assess the impact of these personality characteristics upon three alternative measures of political success: electoral majorities, longevity in office, and in-role progression.

Whilst a great deal of the extant research into policy-making and politicians has focused on the latter's 'descriptive' qualities (e.g. Atkeson, 2003; Banducci et al., 2004; Mansbridge, 1999) or decision-making and deliberation (e.g. Levy 2013; Sheffer et al. 2018), contemporary politics also demands that its practitioners wear a number of psychological hats. Politicians must, for example, persuade and convince others in parliament, in their party and in their electorate of their

own beliefs or a set course of action; they must be proactive and acclimatise to a culture of constant competition; and they must be able to balance multiple, often diverse and sometimes contradictory activities (see Silvester, 2012; Silvester and Dykes, 2007). Whilst the populace may, theoretically, want political agents who are honest, reliable and principled, it may be that politicians who can 'stick the course' necessarily need to move quickly, act decisively, take initiative and prioritise responsibilities in a calculated manner. Given the diversity of these psychological demands, it seems natural that politicians with particular personality characteristics will be better at some tasks than others, and therefore more successful at particular aspects of the job than their colleagues (and vice versa). This study is the first of its kind to test this assumption empirically with national politicians in the UK.

This article makes three distinctive contributions to the existing literature on political elites and political success. Firstly, this article is unique for examining the electoral success and political efficacy (in-role success) of national politicians in the UK. Moreover, the data are taken from the same MPs at the same time using robust empirical measures. Secondly, it offers the first in-depth quantitative analysis of MPs' basic values in the UK and, furthermore, it is the first study to acquire self-report data on basic values from national politicians anywhere outside of Italy (Caprara et al., 2010). Although research into the role of personality in politics has gathered pace in recent years (Caprara and Silvester, 2018; Dietrich et al., 2012), studies that overcome issues of inaccessibility and manage to gather representative self-report data on elites' personality characteristics are particularly unique (cf. Wyatt and Silvester, 2018). Thirdly, this article is the first to apply empirical data on basic values to explanations of political outcomes at the parliamentary level. In the analyses that follow, I show that psychological studies of this kind carry appraisive potential to unlock new empirical insights into elite behaviour in democratic systems.

I. Personality and Political Success

Although '[t]he relationship between personality and politics is one of the oldest and most frequently debated topics in political psychology' (Caprara and Silvester, 2018, p.467), there is no direct empirical evidence on the role of personality - and specifically basic values - on elite political recruitment, behaviour and representation in UK parliamentary politics. In fact, direct empirical research into UK policy makers per se is extremely rare (Kwiatkowski, 2016). By contrast, the history of psychological assessments of political elites worldwide is predominantly one of content analysis done 'at a distance', relying on archival documents such as letters, diaries, or speeches (see Winter, 2003). Noteworthy examples include studies of John F. Kennedy (Hargrove, 2008),

Woodrow Wilson (George and George, 1956) and Josef Stalin (Tucker, 1973) that have attempted to fit specific political leaders within extant psychological typologies.

The substantive and methodological heritage of this literature pertains to the need for data collection directly from political elites and analyses that are both robust in their application of psychological theories and measures, and sensitive to specific political environments. In order to answer important questions about 'who' enters politics, how/why they differ in their policy choices, selective participation in political processes, and even agents' normative understanding of political institutions and situations, political science must move away from *de novo* studies of political actors as structural/institutional pawns (see also Bell, 2017). In this article I focus specifically on one aspect of this broader research agenda: political success. This is an important line of inquiry, not least for the potential implications it carries for the quality of representation and democracy in the UK. Put another way, political scientists have expended enormous energy on understanding the effects of personality upon *citizens'* ideologies, attitudes and political choices (e.g. Fatke, 2016; Jonason, 2014), but academe has not given sufficient attention to examining which personality characteristics [of politicians] assist in the execution of different aspects of democratic politics.

More than any other personality measure, traits have received the most attention in theoretical and empirical studies of political elites. Personality traits are quantifiable psychological qualities that are, generally, normally distributed in the population (Capara and Silvester, 2018). Research into traits has been made more accessible by the widely used taxonomy of traits known as the 'Big 5' or the Five Factor Model (Wiggins, 1996). This taxonomy includes five basic traits: Extraversion (sociability, vigour, dynamism), Agreeableness (honesty, sincerity, loyalty), Neuroticism (impulsiveness, emotional stability), Conscientiousness (diligence, precision, reliability), and Openness to Experience (imagination, creativity, innovation). In recent years, a small pool of scholars has been able to obtain self-report statistics on the Big 5 from political actors. Two studies focus specifically upon political success and are of special relevance for this article (Joly et al., 2018; Wyatt and Silvester, 2018).

In their study of 138 local politicians in the UK, Wyatt and Silvester (2018) gathered self-report data on the Big 5 personality traits from local councillors and ascribed traits from 526 members of the public based on each councillor's image. They found that Agreeableness was the most important predictor of candidate success in an election but a negative predictor of efficacy in-role (as measured by peer appraisals of each councillor). The results of six multivariate regression models showed that candidates who scored higher for the trait Agreeableness accrued

a larger percentage of the vote in their last council ward election. Wyatt and Silvester conclude that politicians scoring high on Agreeableness are likely to achieve larger election margins because voters are attracted to specific components of this trait such as competence, altruism, trustworthiness, and humility (see also Little et al., 2007). By contrast, they also find negative associations between Agreeableness scores and peer appraisals of councillors' analytical skills and their capacity to represent or engage with their constituents. Taken together these results suggest that the trait Agreeableness taps specific aspects of personality that suit one task in politics (i.e. getting elected) but hinder politicians when it comes to performing their job well in the eyes of their political colleagues.

In the study most akin to the research presented in this article, Joly et al. (2018) studied the personality traits and political success of 272 politicians from the Flemish and Walloon Parliaments, as well as federal and regional parliaments in Belgium. Once again, Joly et al. (2018) found that the trait Agreeableness was of particular importance for vote share, longevity, and elite status (although the effect sizes were small and relatively weak). For example, Joly et al. found that the number of preference votes received by politicians increased for those scoring lower on Agreeableness: a 2-point decrease in Agreeableness was associated with an increase of 3 percentage points in a candidate's preference votes. Although Joly et al. controlled for each candidate's list position, it is possible that tests using MPs from a majoritarian system (such as the UK) might reveal a more direct assessment of personality characteristics and vote success. Joly et al. also found that lower levels of Agreeableness were associated with longer parliamentary careers and increased experience of leadership roles in parliament. Whilst these latter findings echo those found by Wyatt and Silvester (2018), the inverse relationship between Agreeableness and electoral success is at odds with their results. Cultural differences aside, it is possible that the clash between these findings reflects the difference between voters' attitudes towards local and national issues, and the types of people they want to represent them in each domain.

II. Basic Values and Political Success

The use of the term 'personality' in psychological studies is extremely broad and multifaceted, going beyond the narrow psychopathological differences that have preoccupied political science studies of politicians (cf. Caprara and Silvester, 2018). The previous section reviewed key studies of political success that focus upon personality traits, but this article is concerned with the basic values of UK MPs. In order to set up theoretically informed hypotheses for empirical testing, this section will a) introduce the theory of basic values and outline its

applicability in studies of politics, and b) review existing research into basic values that might shed light on the topic of political success.

In studying the basic values of MPs, this article is built around a three-tier classification of personality. At the broad level of self-regulation, I agree with Caprara and Vecchione (2013, p.24) that personality is a 'dynamic system of psychological structures and processes that mediates the relationship between the individual and the environment and accounts for what that person is and may become'. Beneath this complex system exists synergistic relations between various subsystems - cognitive and affective - that construct and communicate an individual's personal identity (Caprara and Cervone, 2000). Thirdly, I narrow my focus to values, and specifically the theory of Basic Human Values developed by Shalom Schwartz (1992), as the core of personal identity (Hitlin, 2003). In adopting a social cognitive approach, I am concerned with a functional base of personality that is both more distal than perceptions and beliefs, and more proximal than personality traits (Greenstein, 1992). Research has shown, for example, that basic values mediate the effect of traits in behavioural analysis (Caprara et al., 2009), whilst people also tend to find their own values more desirable than their traits and express less of a wish to change them (Roccas et al., 2014). Their inherent desirability makes basic values uniquely powerful as a motivator of behaviour and, consequently, incredibly useful as a way for social scientists to explain situated agency such as the political success of elected politicians.

Basic values are cognitive representations of desirable, trans-situational goals that act as guiding principles in the life of a person or group (Piurko et al., 2011). The Schwartz theory identifies ten broad personal values, each of which is described in terms of the motivational goals it captures and the derivative characteristics it encompasses. These values are organised in a circumplex continuum according to their conflict and congruence with one another (see Schwartz et al., 2010, p. 425). On one orthogonal, values are collated for their shared expression of Openness to Change (Self-Direction, Hedonism, and Stimulation values) and in opposition to Conservation values (Tradition, Conformity, and Security values). The former group of values stresses receptivity to change as well as independent thought, feeling and action, whereas the latter emphasises submissive self-restriction, maintaining stability and the preservation of traditional practices (Schwartz, 2010). The second dimension juxtaposes Self-Transcendence values (Universalism and Benevolence values) with Self-Enhancement values (Power and Achievement values). The former group of values essentially encourages acceptance of others as equals and regard for their welfare, whilst the latter gives weight to the pursuit of personal success and dominance over material and human resources (Schwartz, 2010).

In terms of understanding political success, there are a number of relevant studies outside of politics that have examined basic values as antecedents of organisational workplace phenomena as diverse as organisational culture, socialisation, employee performance, commitment and identification (for a review, see Bourne and Jenkins, 2013). These studies have shown, for example, that basic values can be highly predictive of career choice. People high in Openness to Change values tend towards artistic and investigative professions (e.g. artist, musician, doctor, historian; Knafo and Sagiv, 2004), whilst those high in Conservation values favour conventional, programmatic occupations (administrative and hierarchical professions; Sagiv, 2002). Similarly, Self-Transcendence values have been strongly correlated with 'calling' professions that have 'social interest' agendas, where the orientation of work is fulfilling socially valuable tasks (Arieli et al., 2016; Gandal et al., 2005). By contrast, Self-Enhancement values are positively associated with 'career' professions that have 'enterprising' interest agendas, where the work involves managing subordinates towards a set of organisational or self-specific targets (Gandal et al., 2005; Sagiv, 2002).

For the purposes of relating these findings to elected politics, there is a theoretical tension insofar as politics is a 'calling' profession where prosocial ethical behaviour - based on high Self-Transcendence orientations - is expected at the same time as intense conflict between tribal political parties and rigid hierarchies of power. Existing studies of basic values with public samples have shown strong positive associations between levels of political activism and Self-Transcendence values and Openness to Change values, weak to non-existent associations with Self-Enhancement values, and negative associations with Conservation values (Pacheco and Owen, 2015; Vecchione et al., 2015). In and of themselves, these results suggest that the prosocial elements of politics are dominant motivators in self-selection to political action per se, but they do not necessarily say a great deal about the motivations required in *formal* political roles such as parliamentary office or, to a greater extent, which values are most apposite for succeeding in politics. This article operationalises data on the basic values of 106 national politicians in the UK to address this gap in the literature.

In their study of local councillors, Wyatt and Silvester (2018; see Part I) found positive relationships between councillors' self-rated personality trait Agreeableness and election success. In a meta-analysis of basic values and traits (Park-Leduc et al., 2015, p.13), the personality trait Agreeableness correlated positively with Benevolence values ($\rho = .61$), Universalism values ($\rho = .39$), and Conformity values ($\rho = .26$), and negatively with Power values ($\rho = -.42$). It is possible, therefore, that the strong associations found between Self-Transcendence values and political

activism in the public (see above) may also hold in measures of formal political success (Hypothesis 1). I expect, for example, that politicians motivated by a need for honesty, social justice and a responsibility to help care for others (all exemplar facets of Benevolence and Universalism values) will accrue more votes at the ballot box by virtue of the fact that (a) these qualities are highly regarded by a sceptical voting public (e.g. Allen and Birch, 2015; Little et al., 2007), and (b) these values are likely to be made manifest in candidate behaviours on the door step, in local campaign literature, or during local hustings (for more on the link between values and behaviour, see Bardi and Schwartz, 2003).

At the same time, both Wyatt and Silvester (2018) and Joly et al. (2018) found negative associations between Agreeableness and in-role success. If these findings hold among UK MPs, then it would be expected that Self-Enhancement values - orthogonally opposed to Self-Transcendence values - win out as predictors of political advancement and possibly longevity post-election (Hypothesis 2). As such, I anticipate a 'value paradox', whereby those MPs successful in garnering votes in elections exhibit less in-role success than their colleagues who are more motivated by leadership, resource dominance, achievement and personal prestige (all facets of Achievement and Power values).

III. Methods

III.i Participants and Data Collection

Findings presented in this article are based on a three-phase tailored design study (Dillman, 2014) that ran from November 2016 to May 2017. This involved a customised survey procedure, in which mixed modes of data collection were utilised in a scientific manner to reduce the four sources of error (coverage, sampling, non-response, and measurement) and to build a positive social exchange relationship with the target population. MPs were thus approached sequentially via post, email and phone, as well as through advocates recruited in the participation process. This process was repeated.

>>INSERT TABLE 1 HERE<<

This three-wave data collection process was followed up with a single wave of targeted email correspondence to recently retired MPs who are still active in parliament as members of the House of Lords. This was done for two reasons: to bolster the sample size and to ensure maximum diversity of occupational experience. In terms of the former, this was necessary given that many of the challenges faced by survey research into sensitive psychological phenomena are exacerbated

in populations of political elites where a) no code of best practice exists that combines both maximal response rates and ethical recruitment, and b) the response rates for political research have already dwindled significantly (see Campbell and Lovenduski, 2015, p. 695). In terms of the latter, this was necessary given the highly inaccessible timetables of current ministers and secretaries of state. Although a number of current office-holders did participate in the research, the additional recruitment exercise boosted the proportion of the sample with these experiences. The data collected produced a diverse sample of 106 MPs (85 current, 21 former) by gender, party, age, status and length of service (see Table 1). The survey itself was designed in two main sections with a total of 30 questions. The first section included the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ) used to measure participants' basic values, and the second section asked MPs to provide basic demographic information on age, gender, education and occupational experience, as well as information on specific political behaviours, attitudes and ideologies.

III.ii Basic Values

Data on MPs' basic values was gathered using a shortened version of the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ; Schwartz et al., 2001). The PVQ emphasises context-free thinking and contains short portraits of individuals, gender-matched with the respondent. Each portrait implicitly expresses the importance of a specific value according to the goals, desires and standards it describes. These portraits are configured as two statements, one expressing the importance of a value and the other the desirable goal of that motivational type. For each portrait, participants respond to the question "How much like you is this person?" using a six-point Likert scale that ranges from 'very much like me' to 'not like me at all'. The shortened measure – the Twenty Item Values Inventory (TwIVI) – contains two portraits for each of the motivationally distinct types of value. Example portraits include:

1. S/he believes s/he should always show respect to his/her parents and to older people. It is important to him/her to be obedient (*Conformity values*);

2. S/he thinks it is important that every person in the world be treated equally. S/he believes everyone should have equal opportunities in life (*Universalism values*);

3. Getting ahead in life is important to him/her. S/he strives to do better than others (*Achievement values*).

Critics of the Schwartz theory of basic values propose an alternative lexical approach that accounts for all unique cultural value terms used in localised and globalised communities (eg. De Raad et al., 2016). They argue that the Schwartz theory of values, and the associated measures, are too etic and thus over- or under-represent values that have been pre-ordained as important by the

researcher. However, these arguments overlook the fact that the theory-led Schwartz approach is based on a common structure of the value domain that is flexible to the addition and removal of value terms. The specific order of prescribed values in the Schwartz theory has also been empirically reproduced using different measures and methods in over 100 cultural contexts and provides comparative validity that is still not available in lexical studies of values (see Schwartz, 2017, for a full defence). The TwIVI used in this study can also be completed in less than 5 minutes, making it perfectly suited to collecting data from time-poor populations. Moreover, the TwIVI has already proven capable of fully recapturing the psychometric properties of the longer PVQ-IV in large-N comparative populations (Sandy et al., 2017).

Each of the ten basic values is presented across multiple portraits and a score for the importance of each value is calculated from the average rating the respondent gives to these portraits. By focusing on the goals and wishes that are most important to each persona in the portraits, the PVQ can measure a respondent's values without explicitly specifying the value being measured in each portrait.[1] The comparison of other to self also avoids some of the pitfalls of similarity judgements in self to other surveys (Holyoak and Gordon 1983). For each value, participants' scores were centred on his/her mean rating of all items on the scale in order to correct for individual differences in the scale use as well as social desirability bias. Even without this scale correction, Schwartz et al. (1997) found that only a small variance in the results of value questionnaires (3-7%) taken by diverse samples could be explained by substantive social desirability bias (measured using the Marlow-Crowne index). Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients for the four higher order values were .718 for Conservation, .666 for Self-Transcendence, .824 for Openness to Change, and .870 for Self-Enhancement (alphas for the ten individual values ranged from .443 for Security to .880 for Achievement with seven values scoring greater than .6).[2]

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[1] Ethics approval was granted in advance by the University of Sheffield's Department of Politics (ref.008585). Every MP was given a detailed participant information sheet and signed a consent form.

[2] Cronbach alpha scores of >.6 are generally acceptable in multivariate research (Hair et al., 2006), although some argue that >.5 is also reasonable in social psychology studies that deal with small-N populations or new psychometric surveys (Hinton et al., 2004).

III.iii Political Success

The analyses of political success presented here use readily available observational data. The first measure of success is the electoral performance of each participant. In particular, I use each candidate's majority as a percent of all votes cast in that constituency in their last General Election. These data are published online by the Electoral Commission.[3] The average majority of MPs in the current sample is 19.8% of votes (SD = 14.5). Elections are a powerful context in which to test the effect of values on political success. Given that voters are not held accountable for their choices, it is possible to use votes as a measure of success without the potential confound of candidate's personal power networks that often affect more traditional occupational selection procedures (see Jacquart and Antonakis, 2015). The UK also has strict rules on campaign spending and behaviour that create a constant environment in which to test the effect of individual candidates after applying relevant controls (see section IV).

The second measure of political success focuses on MPs' ability to keep their job once elected to the House of Commons. Whilst some MPs may come and go with a bang, achieving significant yet brief tenures as an elected representative, others manage to stay in office for many years if not decades. In the current sample, only a fifth of participants had served fewer than 2 years (substantially fewer than those in the sample analysed by Joly et al., 2018) and 40% had served more than 10 years (mean of 9.7 years). Finally, I examine the effect of MPs' basic values on whether they progress once they are elected. Here I distinguish between participants who held (or had ever held) frontbench positions in the House of Commons and those that had not (at the time of sampling). Frontbench experiences ranged from Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Minister, Secretary of State, and Prime Minister. Parliamentary Private Secretaries were also included in this group. Although not technically a frontbench role, the position offers additional responsibility and proximity to decision makers, and often acts as a career stepping stone to higher office (Searing, 1994). In total, 63 participants reported frontbench experience at some point in their career and 43 reported that they had never held a frontbench position.

In the analyses that follow, the effects of MPs' basic values upon each of these measures of political success are tested using a series of linear and logistic regressions. In each instance, tests of difference and correlations were run beforehand to select appropriate values to enter into each equation. Theory-based additions were also made, but in each case no more than 6 values were

[3] Full results from each UK election since 2001 are available online at:

https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/our-work/our-research/electoral-data/electoral-data-files-and-reports

entered into an equation to (a) retain the power of each test with a small-N sample, and (b) to ensure that the interdependence of the value items did not impinge on meaningful results. For each regression, a series of additional linear regressions were conducted on each predictor variable in turn in order to assess the collinearity diagnostics (Tolerance statistics and Variance Inflation Factors (VIF)) of items included in each equation. For the ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions run for electoral success and longevity, as well as the logistic regression run for in-role success, the tolerance levels of the independent variables (see section IV) were well above .10 (e.g., Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001) and even .25 (e.g., Huber and Stephens, 1993). Similarly, the VIF statistics for each predictor - as a predictor of another value item in each equation - were below 2, and thus well beneath the maximum VIF scores of 5 recommended in the literature (e.g., Rogerson, 2001).

IV. Results

In the first study of its kind to collect data on basic values from national MPs in the UK, I present empirical analyses of the association between politicians' personality characteristics and three alternative measures of political success: electoral majorities, longevity in office, and in-role progression.

IV.i Election Majorities

Table 2 presents the results of an OLS regression explaining the majority (as a percentage of all votes cast) by which each MP in this study won their last general election. Controls are included for age and gender as well as party performance in the relevant election for each participant, thus accounting for the strength of partisanship as a predictor of vote choice in the UK system. The model also controls for the number of years each participant has held office, thus accounting for any advantages accrued to an incumbent candidate, as well as the marginality of each seat. Although marginality was not controlled for in either Silvester and Wyatt (2018) nor Joly et al. (2018), the literature makes a strong case for its inclusion as a key predictor of electoral success in the UK and elsewhere (Curtice, 2015; Johnston et al., 2018). For ease of interpretation, all of the continuous predictor variables have been rescaled 0-1. 'Party Success' represents the percentage of the total vote share accrued by each candidate's political party in the relevant General Election; 'Tenure' refers to each MP's longevity in Parliament in years; 'Gender' is coded as a dummy variable where 1=Female; and 'Marginality' controls for the size of the winning margin in each seat at the previous general election.

The results of the OLS indicate that political success at the ballot box is largely dependent on political opportunity structures afforded to individual candidates in UK general elections. Of all the variables included in the equation, only the marginality of each seat had a strong statistically significant effect on the outcome. Indeed, moving from the most marginal seat in the sample to the safest seat in the sample resulted in an average increase of 22 percentage points in a MPs' majority at their most recent election. The national success of each candidate's political party also had an effect, albeit it much weaker. Being a candidate for the most successful party in a given general election only appears to accrue an average of four additional percentage points to a candidate's election majority. When it comes to personality characteristics - measured here using MPs' basic values - it appears there is a null effect on electoral success. These results contradict Hypothesis 1. Even Benevolence values, predicted to be apposite for accruing votes, exert a non-significant effect on the dependent variable. This is a disappointing finding but may in itself provide interesting insights about the extent and efficacy of personalisation in contemporary political campaigning.

IV.ii Longevity in office

Table 3 examines whether certain basic values are associated with longer parliamentary careers among elected politicians. Politicians may leave office because of a failure to get re-elected (or even re-selected in rare instances), a loss of interest in the pursuit of politics, a general ennui with the pace of political processes, or even because of the mental as well as physical strains of the job (Flinders et al., 2018). Controlling for politicians' age and gender, as well as the marginality of their seat (using an aggregate score of the election margin in each seat at the last three general elections), the OLS results in table 3 show that three basic values – Universalism, Stimulation, and Security – exert moderate negative effects on how long a participant had held office. Given that these predictors have been rescaled 0-1, the results imply that those MPs most motivated by these values had held office for an average of 10 or 11 years less than those least motivated by these values in the sample.

The OLS results also reveal that age is a highly significant predictor of longevity, implying that the oldest MPs in the sample had (perhaps unsurprisingly) held office for an average of 24 years longer than the youngest. The marginality of an MPs seat also has a small but statistically significant effect on longevity – those in the most marginal seats had held office for average of

just 2 months less than those in the safest seats. Given the large effect of marginality upon electoral success (above), this would suggest that being in a safe seat can secure a candidate a healthy win in any given election, but it is not enough in itself to keep them in office once elected.

IV.iii Frontbench vs. Backbench

In the third test of political success, I examine differences in basic values between frontbench (current and former) and backbench MPs. A series of bivariate t-tests indicate that MPs who are/have been on the frontbench score significantly lower for Conservation values and higher for Self-Enhancement values. In particular, frontbench politicians score lower than backbench colleagues for Conformity values (mean difference = 0.645, t (101) = 3.63, p < 0.001); lower for Tradition values (mean difference = 0.558, t (101) = 2.14, p < 0.05); and higher for Achievement values (mean difference = - 0.416, t (101) = -2.07, p < 0.05). Even after applying Bonferroni corrections to reduce the chance of family-wise error, the difference in Conformity values between frontbench and backbench MPs remained highly statistically significant. However, Bonferroni corrections can be too conservative in their deflation of significance levels and heighten the risk of type II errors that ignore theoretically meaningful results. Thus the differences between front- and backbench MPs across Achievement and Tradition values remain of interest. MPs with frontbench experience also scored higher for Power values, although this result was not statistically significant. Figure 1 presents the results of these tests.

Figure 1. Comparison of lower order basic values for frontbench MPs (n = 63) and backbench MPs (n = 43).

>>INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE<<

As per Joly et al. (2018), the status of MPs was then operationalised as a dichotomous dependent variable (frontbench now or ever vs. backbench) in a binary logistic regression to test the predictive power of basic values upon in-role success (Table 4, below).[4] Controls were included

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[4] Binary logistic regression is an appropriate statistical analysis when the purpose of research is to evaluate the predictive effect of continuous and discrete independent variables upon a dichotomous dependent variable (in this case 'status'). More than 10 participants per predictor are included in this equation to ensure that the statistical power of the model is retained. The items included in the model do not suffer from multicollinearity (see section III), which can skew logistic regression results, and both the classification accuracy of the model (80.4%) and the overall χ^2 omnibus test of model coefficients (45.847, p<0.001) are acceptable.

for MPs' age, gender and longevity in Parliament, and only six values were retained to maximise the statistical power of the equation. The results show that an MP's longevity in office has a particularly strong and statistically significant effect upon their in-role progression. Those participants who had served in the UK Parliament the longest were over 92 times more likely to have held a frontbench position than those participants who had served for the least number of years (1-2 years at the time of sampling). This would suggest that service and experience are rewarded with promotion, and that the most effective way of succeeding in-role is simply to succeed at staying in office.

>>INSERT TABLE 4 HERE<<

The logistic regression also shows, however, that Achievement values exert a significant effect upon in-role success. Complementing the results of the t-tests, the logit suggests that those MPs scoring highest for Achievement values were almost 30 times more likely to hold a frontbench position than those participants scoring lowest for this value factor. The data would suggest, therefore, that those who rise to the top are far more ambitious, self-referential, and desirous of influence than those who remain on the backbench (Hypothesis 2). As anticipated by the t-tests, Conformity values were also a significant negative predictor of frontbench status. Those MPs scoring lowest for Conformity values in this sample were 66 times more likely to have served on the frontbench during their career than those scoring highest on this value factor.

V. Discussion

This article aimed to test the assumption that basic values – as one aspect of personality - matter for political success in the UK. The results of three separate analyses on original self-report data from MPs in the UK suggests that basic values do matter, and that different basic values help MPs to succeed at different aspects of their job. I find:

a) MPs' basic values exert a null effect on electoral success when controlling for the powerful impact of marginality (H1 unsupported); but

b) MPs who are highly motivated by Universalism, Security and Stimulation values are less likely to stay in office (H2 partially supported); and

c) Conformity and Achievement values appear to directly impede and facilitate MPs' career progression respectively once elected (H2 supported).

These findings will be taken in turn. In the first instance, I find no evidence of a causal or even correlative link between MPs' basic values and electoral success. This is surprising given the results reported by Wyatt and Silvester (2018) and Joly et al. (2018), as well as a strong US-centric literature on the effect of warmth-related characteristics on voters' candidate preference (Goodwin et al., 2014; Lausten and Bor, 2017). These studies suggest that Benevolence values in particular should exert an impact on candidate performance at the ballot box, but I find no such effect in UK parliamentary elections. At a local level – as in Wyatt and Silvester's (2018) study - elections are policed less, in the sense that the media presence in each council ward as well as the top-down directive of political parties is weaker. Therefore, it may be easier for local candidates to 'be themselves' and, in turn, to convey their values by comparison to their peers running for national office.

Although basic values – Self-transcendence values in particular – were not predictors of electoral success in this study, it is still possible that they do play a role in election settings that is masked by the noise of many other confounding factors in a general election. On one hand, it is conceivable that voters do seek candidates that are honest and trustworthy, but the distance between voters and political candidates at a general election prevents them from identifying these characteristics and basing their subsequent decisions upon them as well. On the other hand, electoral margins can be affected, for example, by countless other variables such as the marginality of a constituency seat or national party success (as demonstrated in the results above), resource allocation and communication strategies, and turnout. This makes it much more difficult for researchers to isolate individual candidate effects in election scenarios. It is also important to note that basic values may not account for candidates' electoral success whilst still exerting a strong predictive effect on who pursues a political career in the first place (Weinberg, 2017).

The null finding about electoral success reported in this paper also contradicts many of the claims made about the personalisation of politics in the UK. There is no doubt that 'personalism' – i.e. the role and prominence of the individual political actor regardless of time – has intensified (e.g. Karvonen, 2010; Langer, 2007), but whether that manifests in clear electoral gains is less clear. Single member plurality systems like the UK do not provide voters with intraparty choice, and as such there is very little to no incentive for party loyalists, at the very least, to think about individual candidates at the ballot box. This may, in part, explain the lack of a correlation between basic values and electoral success. However, a substantial research base on personalisation in politics cannot be ignored (see Cross, Katz and Pruysers, 2018), and I suggest that the null results

presented in this paper demand more concerted research into the relative importance of psychological characteristics for UK voters.

This article did not, however, set out solely to examine the relationship between basic values and electoral success, but to examine whether these particular personality characteristics have an impact on different modes of political success at different stages of a political career. In that respect, I present preliminary results that suggest basic values might matter far more for *in-role* success. For example, the data indicate that politicians scoring low on Universalism, Stimulation and Security values have longer parliamentary careers. At this stage, I can only speculate at the causal mechanisms underpinning these results. It may be that candidates who are highly motivated by Universalism values enter politics with a belief in the possibility of enacting grand changes for the protection and welfare of other peoples, and then quickly lose faith when faced with the post-election reality of long, drawn-out legislative procedures with incremental outputs. Once in power, these MPs may quickly realise that their control capacity and the available resources are insufficient to meet their personal goals and leave elected office earlier than their peers.

Politics is also an extremely precarious profession. Even the most gregarious and confident MPs are readily reduced to extreme levels of insecurity by the lack of control in their occupational lives: whether it be the long shadow cast by opposition candidates in their constituency or the unpredictability of critical incidents that demand instant decision-making from ministers and government officials. Control in politics is difficult to achieve, and therefore it is possibly unsurprising that MPs scoring high on Security values (and thus strongly motivated by safety and stability in their own lives and society) are less able to last the course than their colleagues with lower scores for this value factor. At the same time, the day-to-day business of politics – especially for those MPs destined to a life on the backbenches – is still characterised by Weber's aphoristic slow boring of hard boards. For MPs scoring high on Stimulation values who may love the fight and adrenaline of the campaign trail, the burden of constituency case work, long public bill committees and obscure debates about the correct height of post boxes (HC Deb 16 January 2019), may seem anything but new, stimulating, and challenging. By contrast to their colleagues with high Security values, these MPs may well step away from elected politics earlier precisely because it lacks the sustained excitement they seek in their occupational lives.

Finally, Basic values also appear to contribute to the career progression of MPs in Parliament. Indeed, I find that MPs who rise to the top of the 'greasy pole' are those who are less restrained in their actions, impulses or inclinations (Conformity values), and more driven to

demonstrate their competence through social success (Achievement values). Holding frontbench political office in a democracy necessarily demands a certain set of skills and characteristics that are associated with confronting others, arguing for and defending beliefs, leading others and, at the same time, manipulating or persuading them to behave for you in certain ways (Deluga, 2001). MPs who score above average for Conservation values and thus attribute importance to authority, respect and moderation may naturally find it harder to succeed in this environment than those with above average scores for Achievement values who are ambitious for personal success. It is possible that these values might act as independent hygiene factors (Herzberg, 1966) when it comes to political career advancement. For example, the presence of strong Conformity values may inhibit an MP's in-role success, but the absence of strong Conformity values will not necessarily promote career progression. This contention could form a useful subject for future experimental research with political elites.

These results raise some worrying questions about the circumspection of those MPs who hold the most power over far-reaching policy decisions and who make those decisions under the time pressure of fixed term parliaments in the UK. Whilst voters *may* want MPs who are altruistic, authentic or loyal (Silvester and Wyatt, 2018), party political gatekeepers may also see these characteristics as weaknesses in a contested and conflictual parliamentary environment where success depends on taking tough decisions, building compromises, and making sacrifices (Crick, 1962; Medvic, 2013). Not only does this appear to result in frontbench MPs who are more motivated to seek out new opportunities to use their positions for personal success, but the data presented here also imply that they are less likely to inhibit socially disruptive tendencies in their occupational lives (low Conformity values). The real-world repercussions of this may be manifest in the volatile handling of UK-EU negotiations in and out of Parliament since the Brexit referendum. Future studies of political success that manage to gather a larger sample size may support these results with more advanced quantitative models that account for interaction effects between these basic values and other contingent predictors. However, I argue that the results presented in this article show that basic values *do* matter for the political success, that the effects are nuanced across different aspects of the job, and that this area of psychologically driven political science research demands greater attention.

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Table 1. Descriptive data comparing a sample of 106 UK MPs with the composition of the House of Commons (a.o. May 2017).

Variable	MP Sample (n = 106)	House of Commons (n = 650)
Gender:		
Male:	67%	70%
Female:	33%	30%
Age: (mean)	55 yrs	50 yrs
Length of Service (mean):	9.6 yrs	8.7 yrs
Party:*		
Labour:	47%	35.2% (40%)
Conservative:	31%	51% (49%)
Liberal Democrat:	5%	1% (2%)
SNP:	9%	8.3% (5%)
Other:	8%	4.3%
Additional Frontbench Responsibilities	At time of sampling: 19% Over career: 63%	42%**

* Figures in brackets show the change in the party composition of Westminster after the June 2017 election.

**Based on the four most represented parties in Westminster at the time of sampling.

Table 2. Linear regression to test the effect of basic values on electoral success (candidate majorities by percentage of votes cast) in the UK.

	B	Std. Error	P-Value (Sig.)
Conformity	.562	5.052	.912
Benevolence	-.071	4.842	.988
Self-Direction	-1.818	4.484	.686
Stimulation	-1.753	4.216	.678
Achievement	1.829	4.635	.694
Security	-.814	4.403	.854
Age	-1.440	4.845	.767
Gender	-.593	1.656	.721
Party Success	4.792	2.542	.063
Tenure	4.414	4.135	.289
Marginality	22.334	3.432	.000
(Constant)	39.231	9.273	.000
Observations	106		
R^2	.499		

Table 3. Linear regression to test the effect of basic values on longevity (length of service in Parliament by years) in the UK.

	B	Std. Error	P-Value (Sig.)
Conformity	-4.226	5.054	.406
Tradition	-.278	5.481	.960
Universalism	-11.759	5.947	.052
Stimulation	-10.057	4.723	.037
Security	-10.095	5.077	.051
Achievement	-7.185	5.319	.181
Gender	-1.279	1.857	.493
Age	24.323	4.657	.000
Aggregate Marginality	.149	.066	.027
(Constant)	17.526	10.213	.091
Observations	106		
R^2	.422		

Table 4. Binary logistic regression to test the effect of basic values upon UK MPs' elite status (frontbench vs. backbench).

	B	Std. Error	P-Value (Sig.)	Exp(B)
Conformity	-4.185	1.924	.030	.015
Tradition	-2.484	1.348	.065	.083
Universalism	.858	1.616	.595	2.359
Stimulation	1.231	1.586	.438	3.424
Achievement	3.368	1.635	.039	29.021
Power	-1.981	1.945	.308	.138
Gender	.996	.694	.151	2.707
Age	3.215	2.206	.145	24.894
Tenure (Years)	4.530	1.960	.021	92.779
Marginality	2.092	1.582	.186	8.101
(Constant)	-1.294	1.738	.456	.274
Observations	106			
Cox & Snell R²	.392			

Figure 1. Comparison of lower order basic values for frontbench MPs (n = 63) and backbench MPs (n = 43).