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What matters most in leader selection? The role of personality and implicit leadership theories

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to determine the primary basis upon which raters make decisions in the context of selection for formal leadership positions. Specifically, this paper examines the applicant's personality, the rater's personality, and the congruence between the applicant's personality and the rater's implicit leadership theories (ILTs) as predictors of interview scores.

Design/methodology/approach – The hypotheses were tested via random coefficient modeling analyses using HLM software with the control variables included in Step 1 and the main effects entered in Step 2, and interaction effects in Step 3 as appropriate.

Findings – Analyses suggest that both applicant and rater personality impact interview scores, but raters do not appear to select leaders on the basis of their conceptualization of an ideal leader.

Research limitations/implications – The results suggest that raters may not consider their own ILTs when attempting to identify future leaders. Given this lack of a natural tendency toward selecting individuals that match one's perceptions of an ideal leader, future research should focus on adapting current selection methods to leader selection and the development of new selection methods that are more valid.

Practical implications – These findings suggest that current staffing practices may not encompass the most effective tools for selecting future leaders of the organization. These results highlight the importance of clarifying the outcome goals of the selection process in advance by giving raters a clear representation of the qualities and ideals that should be present in potential leaders.

Originality/value – This study is among the first to examine the relationships between personality and ILTs in the context of a formal leadership selection process and makes a significant contribution to the literature by providing insight into the influence of both rater and applicant personality differences along with rater conceptualizations of ideal leadership in the context of formal leadership selection.

Keywords Personality, Implicit leadership theories, Leader selection, Selection bias, Selection interviews

Paper type Research paper

> Given the centrality of leadership to the success or failure of organizations and even societies, there are few more important questions than, "What makes a leader great?" (Judge and Bono, 2000, p. 751).

One of the most important success factors for any organization is the ability to identify and select effective leaders. Although other selection processes affect individual performance, leadership selection affects both the leader's performance as well as the performance of all associated followers. Mistakes made during leader selection are multiplied by the number of people the leader will influence. Thus, when considering candidates for leadership roles, it is important to identify those individuals who will be most effective at leading and influencing.

Although significant research attention has been invested in the area of leadership in general, there is a paucity of studies that attempt to understand formal leader selection processes. Furthermore, the general employee selection literature focusses on

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factors such as task performance and organizational citizenship, but leaves the topic of leader selection largely unaddressed. The purpose of the current study is to examine some key factors that may influence leader selection processes including the utility of traditional selection procedures for selecting leaders. More precisely, our research design employs interview ratings in a simulated formal leadership selection process to investigate the effects of personality differences in both leadership candidates and associated interviewers (raters) responsible for the selection decision, along with the impact of the rater's implicit leadership theories (ILTs) on applicant interview scores.

Our study is among the first to examine the relationships between personality and ILTs in the context of a formal leadership selection process. Our paper therefore makes a significant contribution to the literature by providing insight into the influence of both rater and applicant personality differences along with rater conceptualizations of ideal leadership in the context of formal leadership selection. We hope that this inquiry will encourage other scholars to explore the intricacies of formal leader selection as compared to general employee selection. We begin by reviewing the existing literature on leadership selection before providing conceptual overviews of the five-factor model (FFM) of personality and ILTs as a basis for developing and presenting our research hypotheses. After presenting the results of our analyses, we discuss the practical and theoretical implications of our findings along with possible directions for future research.

Leader selection

Given the importance of choosing the right person for leadership roles, surprisingly little research attention has been focussed on understanding formal leader selection processes in organizations. In a notable exception, Howard (2007) provides an extensive review of best practices for leader selection in organizations by examining the objectives of selection, current selection techniques and their effectiveness, and how specific selection techniques might be combined into an effective overall selection system. Howard's (2007) chapter draws concepts from general selection theory and research, while providing specifics regarding leader selection when possible. Despite providing an excellent overview of selection best practices relating to leadership, Howard's (2007) review stops short of examining possible rater biases in making leader selection decisions. Furthermore, although she includes a discussion of the use of personality inventories as a selection tool, she does not speculate on the effects of either applicant or rater personality on selection decisions and outcomes. Similarly, while she discusses key leadership competencies and performance domains as key criteria for leadership selection, she does not consider whether or not raters who make leadership selection decisions actually do so based on an ideal leadership profile. The current study attempts to examine the question of what matters most in the actual process of leader selection – personality factors or an ideal leadership type based on an ILT.

Rater biases, based on both rater and applicant characteristics, have long plagued employment selections processes in general (e.g. Reichel and Mehrez, 1994). For example, selection biases have been identified relative to applicant skin color (Harrison and Thomas, 2009), overweight applicants (Kutcher and Bragger, 2004), and applicants with cancer (Bordieri *et al.*, 1990) among others. Selection bias has also been examined in the context of leadership selection. For instance, Bosak and Sczesny (2011) provide some evidence of gender bias in leader selection decisions in a simulated personnel selection process. Along the same lines, Lönnqvist *et al.* (2011) found bias related to two types of applicant self-enhancement in the selection of military leaders.

Beyond studies such as these focussing on bias in the leader selection process, a small number of leadership theorists have proposed comprehensive models of the leader selection process within organizations. For example, Povah and Sobczak (2010) propose a context-oriented leadership selection model that includes core leadership elements such as intelligence, emotion, values, drive, and learning agility. Additionally, Vardiman *et al.* (2006) present a contextual model of leadership selection and effectiveness that examines the interactions between the level of environmental support for leadership development and the level of individual leadership characteristics. According to this model, organizational members with certain essential skills, abilities, and characteristics are most likely to be perceived and selected as leaders (cf. Fiedler, 1996). The model's conceptualization of leadership selection is founded on the concept of ILTs (e.g. Lord *et al.*, 1982, 1984; Lord and Maher, 1991). According to this perspective, which will be reviewed in more depth shortly, people hold generalized conceptualizations or sets of beliefs regarding the characteristics that they believe relate to leadership across a variety of diverse situations (Foti *et al.*, 1982; Lord *et al.*, 1984; Offermann *et al.*, 1994). The Vardiman *et al.* (2006) model suggests that organizational members use ILTs to judge whether or not a target individual appears to be a leader and ultimately to make selection decisions for formal organizational leadership roles (p. 95).

The FFM of personality

Prior research suggests that applicant personality traits are predictive of employment interview performance and selection decisions (Cook *et al.*, 2000). Indeed, the use of personality tests in the context employee selection has become commonplace (Rothstein and Goffin, 2006). According to one recent survey of recruiters, 30 percent of all US firms have used personality tests for applicant selection (Heller, 2005), while another estimate suggests that the costs of personality testing are in the $400 million range and growing (Hsu, 2004).

Although a number of personality characteristics and perspectives could be considered in the context of leader selection, we focus our attention on the FFM or the Big Five (e.g. McCrae, 2009), which includes openness to experience, conscientious, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (or emotional stability). Past empirical research has found that certain personality factors are associated with increased employee performance and leadership effectiveness. For example, Barrick and Mount's (1991) classic FFM meta-analysis revealed that both conscientiousness and emotional stability may lead to increased employee performance. In addition, both extraversion and agreeableness may be positively related to transformational leadership, especially the facet of charisma (Judge and Bono, 2000). Extraversion may therefore be a desirable trait for applicants applying for a leadership position. Judge *et al.* (2002) provide additional empirical support for this assertion, reporting that extraversion was the most consistent predictor of leadership across all settings that they examined, including the areas of leader emergence and leadership effectiveness.

Of all the FFM traits, conscientiousness traditionally has been seen as the best predictor of individual performance (Barrick and Mount, 1991). Conscientiousness may be associated with leader characteristics such as discipline, dedication, and hard work. In addition, Keller (1999) suggests that individuals high in openness may have increased tendencies toward transformational leadership, due to the fact that the change processes often associated with transformational leadership may be embraced more fully by those who are higher in openness. Agreeableness also may be

associated with transformational leadership, particularly in the area of consideration. It therefore seems logical to suggest that raters higher in agreeableness may provide higher ratings to applicants for leadership positions. Although the results of studies using the FFM as a predictor of leader performance have been mixed, empirical research suggests that personality variables may interact with aptitude or other variables to determine performance (Hollenbeck *et al.*, 1988). Finally, Foti and Hauenstein (2007) demonstrated relationships between a number of individual difference variables and leader selection and performance. Based on the preceding theoretical and empirical evidence, we advance:

H1. Applicant extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and agreeableness are significant, positive predictors of interview score when controlling for intelligence and interview experience.

As outlined above, rater bias has the potential to negatively impact leader selection processes and several recent studies have examined these potential influences (e.g. Lönnqvist *et al.*, 2011). In particular, Bosak and Sczesny (2011) showed that the gender of the rater was a significant factor resulting in gender bias in leadership selection in a simulated selection process. In the current context, we are interested in whether or not rater personality has the potential to bias leadership selection decisions. Although theoretical and empirical evidence relative to this issue is sparse, one recent study suggests that four aspects of rater personality (agreeableness, extraversion, openness to experience, and conscientiousness) may influence ratings of leader transformational and transactional behavior (Bono *et al.*, 2012). Another study, conducted by Hilliard and Macan (2009), empirically links rater agreeableness to higher interview scores. Given this evidence that a rater's personality could affect rating outcomes, we propose the following:

H2. Rater extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and agreeableness are significant, positive predictors of interview score when controlling for intelligence and interview experience.

ILTs

ILTs are representations that followers hold at an unconscious level to differentiate leaders from non-leaders (Shondrick and Lord, 2010). These representations may contain both positive (prototypical) and negative (anti-prototypical) leadership traits (Epitropaki and Martin, 2004). Although differing prototypical and anti-prototypical traits may be contained in any given person's ILT and in varying degrees of strength, substantial empirical research conducted over the past three decades (e.g. Epitropaki and Martin, 2004; Lord *et al.*, 1984; Offermann *et al.*, 1994) has identified a small number of prototypical and anti-prototypical traits that appear to generalize across the ILTs of many people. Common prototypical leadership traits include sensitivity, intelligence, dedication, and dynamism, while tyranny and masculinity are common anti-prototypical leader characteristics (Epitropaki and Martin, 2004; Offermann *et al.*, 1994). Dynamism is a characteristic applied to individuals who are energetic and charismatic. This dimension appears likely to relate to transformational leadership. Dedication is similar to conscientiousness and includes the concept of motivation, which may help inspire followership in others. Leader emergence also seems likely to be associated with intelligence (Taggar *et al.*, 1999), while sensitivity may relate to personality trait of agreeableness (Keller, 1999). Sensitive leaders are generally sincere, understanding, and

helpful (Epitropaki and Martin, 2004), characteristics often associated with individual consideration.

ILTs likely develop early in life through parent-child relationships and continue to evolve into adulthood as individuals increase their understanding of effective and ineffective leadership (e.g. Ayman-Nolley and Ayman, 2005; Keller, 1999, 2003). Indeed, because each individual has differing experiences and opinions about what it means to be a good leader, much of the current research in the field considers the generalizability of ILTs (e.g. Bryman, 1987; Epitropaki and Martin, 2004; Offermann *et al.*, 1994). Important leadership traits, characteristics, and behaviors may vary by individual, across cultures, and according to demographic factors. For example, a number of researchers have attempted to identify ILTs within and across various cultures (Ling *et al.*, 2000; Subramaniam *et al.*, 2010). The issue of gender bias is yet another important concept related to the generalizability of ILTs. The gender bias issue has been described as a think-manager-think-male phenomenon and it refers to the notion that when people think about managers and leaders, they often think of male attributes (Schein, 1973, 1975; Sczesny, 2003). However, research suggests that women and men may have differing conceptions of an ideal leader. More specifically, Epitropaki and Martin (2004) found that women held a perception of an ideal leader as more understanding, sincere, honest, and less domineering, pushy, and manipulative than did their male counterparts.

Much of our current understanding of ILTs is based on earlier writings on implicit personality theories (Cronbach, 1955), early work on ILTs (Eden and Leviatan, 1975), and categorization theory (Lord *et al.*, 1982, 1984). As mentioned above, ILTs may develop from early childhood experiences and thus the understanding of the leader-subordinate relationship may be connected to the parent-child dyadic relationship (Keller, 2003). Hence, building on the basis of attachment theory, ILTs may vary according to the attachment needs of the individual, which suggests that congruence between follower attachment needs and leader attachment style is necessary and beneficial for healthy and productive relationships (Keller, 2003). Beyond attachment theory, the process of identifying distinctions between leaders and non-leaders may be guided by categorization theory (Lord *et al.*, 1982, 1984) and identity theory insomuch as follower perceptions of effective leadership may be at least partially based on their own self-identities (MacDonald *et al.*, 2008). In general, ILTs appear to be utilitarian and may therefore provide the cognitive simplifications necessary to make predictions and engage in appropriate responses (Phillips and Lord, 1986). For example, Schyns (2006) has suggested that ILTs and leader perceptions may relate to performance evaluation. Similarly, ILTs may play an important role in leader-member exchange (LMX) theory, with the evidence suggesting that ILTs may be related to leader/follower similarity and LMX (Subramaniam *et al.*, 2010) as well as to LMX quality and employee attitudes (Epitropaki and Martin, 2005).

Of particular importance relative to the current study, prior research has shown a relationship between ILTs and personality (Keller, 1999). Specifically, researchers have noted important similarities between FFM personality dimensions and ILT prototype dimensions (Keller, 1999; Offermann *et al.*, 1994). For instance, Keller (1999) found significant relationships between agreeableness and sensitivity, between conscientiousness and dedication, and between extroversion and charisma. As Keller (1999) suggests, the idea that people may develop their ILTs on the basis of their underlying personality dimensions is supported by research on attraction and similarity. For example, studies have shown that individuals prefer associating with others who are

similar to themselves (Berscheid, 1984; Kandel, 1978) and that people tend to select partners who have similar traits, values, and attitudes (e.g. Byrne, 1971; Caspi and Herbener, 1990; Hill and Stull, 1981). Furthermore, Felfe and Schyns (2010) found evidence that the perception of supervisors' personality mediates the relationship between followers' personality and perceptions of leadership and commitment, thus providing additional support for a similarity hypothesis. Consequently, individual ILTs are likely to contain leadership characteristics and traits similar to one's own personality. As Keller (1999) concludes, "if the ideal leader is analogous to self, then personality traits and implicit leadership theories should be related" (p. 591).

In the present study, we extend Keller's (1999) basic correlational analysis examining the relationships between personality and ILT dimensions to the context of leader selection. In short, we examine the extent to which interview ratings are affected by the interaction between ILTs and personality dimensions, while controlling for gender, race, interview experience, and intelligence (Judge *et al.*, 2002; Lord *et al.*, 1986). More specifically, based on Keller's (1999) empirical findings of significant correlations between specific Big Five personality dimensions and certain ILT dimensions, we will hypothesize a moderating role for key ILT dimensions on the relationship between an applicant's personality and their interview score. This suggests that raters view applicants as potentially effective leaders when they see personality traits that "activate" their ILT dimensions. First, raters who value dynamism, which refers to individuals who are energetic, strong, and charismatic, as part of their ILT are more likely to positively assess applicants who are high in extraversion. Second, raters for whom dedication, which refers to individuals who are motivated, dedicated, and hardworking, is an important part of their ILT are more likely to positively assess applicants who are high in conscientiousness. Third, raters who have a strong component of intelligence, which refers to someone who is knowledgeable, educated, intelligent, and clever, in their ILT are more likely to positively assess applicants who are high in openness. Finally, raters who view sensitivity, the extent to which an individual is understanding, sincere, and helpful, as a significant aspect within their ILT are more likely to positively assess applicants who are high in agreeableness. Although a case possibly could be made for examining neuroticism and the antiprototypic dimensions of tyranny and masculinity in the current context, the theoretical and empirical evidence best supported an examination of the relationships outlined above. Based on the discussion above, we suggest that raters will perceive that applicants are more suitable for leadership when the applicant's personality traits closely resemble the rater's perception of an ideal leader's traits. As a result, applicants with personality traits that match their rater's ILTs should score higher during an interview in a leader selection context. Finally, while we recognize that any number of factors may affect selection processes (Hilliard and Macan, 2009; Huffcutt, 2011), we focus on the effects of rater personality and ILT dimensions on interview scores. The specific hypothesized relationships, which were derived generally based on the theoretical discussions in the preceding paragraphs and specifically based on the empirical evidence advanced by Keller (1999), are represented in Figure 1.

Our arguments for these hypothesized moderating relationships as outlined above may be summarized as follows: first, ILT theory suggests that when in the process of selecting leaders, raters are likely to evaluate applicants relative to their own ILT or ideal leader type; and second, raters whose ILT or ideal leader type includes a high level of a given ILT dimensions (e.g. dynamism) will be inclined to rate applicants with a correlated personality dimension (e.g. extraversion) more positively than applicants

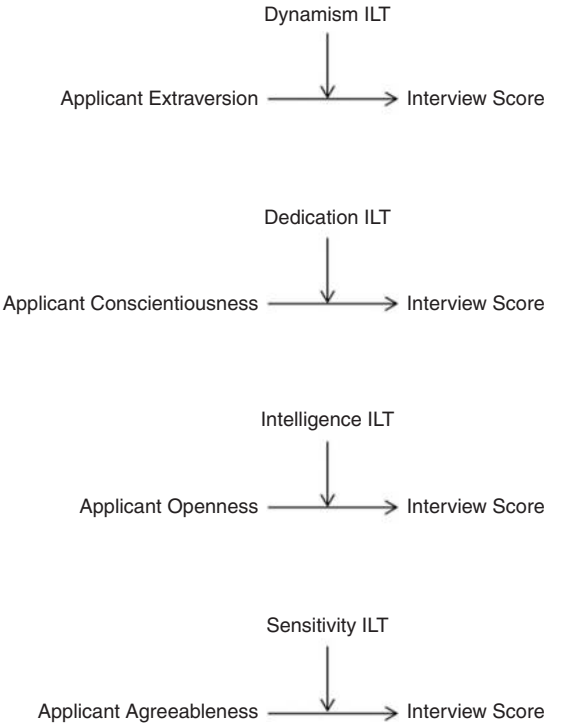

Figure 1.
Hypothesized relationships

who are lower in the correlated personality dimension. Given that one's ILT is likely to contain leadership characteristics and traits similar to one's own personality as outlined above, Keller (1999) captures our underlying rationale for hypothesizing these moderating relationships in a leadership selection context very nicely as follows: "In terms of selection, individuals who possess the same traits as the recruiter may be more likely to be viewed as possessing 'leadership potential' than individuals with different traits" (p. 602). Hence, based on the theoretical concepts and empirical evidence outlined above, it seems reasonable to hypothesize the following:

H3. The rater's ILT score will moderate the relationship between applicant personality and interview score such that higher ILT scores will strengthen the relationship between personality and interview score. See Figure 1 for specific relationships.

Methods

Participants

Data were collected using a comprehensive interview simulation at a large mid-Atlantic university in the USA. Students received course credit for participating in the simulation as either a rater or an applicant and they represent members of the population that this study attempts to address. The raters were trained graduate students with training equivalent to that of the average graduate of a master's degree program in human resource management. The applicants also received training prior to the simulation to

familiarize themselves with the STAR (Situation, Task or Action, and Result) interviewing strategy, in addition to being exposed to techniques relevant to proper résumé, cover letter, and interview preparation. In total, we received completed responses from 31 raters (96.9 percent response rate) and 290 applicants (84.55 percent response rate). These responses resulted in a total of 284 rater-applicant dyadic pairs that could be used for analysis. In terms of the raters, 53.2 percent were female and 19 percent were racial minorities with 92.7 percent having at least one year of work experience and 56.3 percent having over three years of work experience. The applicants were 69.7 percent male and 92.6 percent non-minority with 88 percent having at least one year of work experience and 51.4 percent having more than three years of work experience. Most of the applicants (86.6 percent) had past experience as an applicant in an interview setting. We also assessed race and gender congruence between rater and applicant. In terms of the matched dyads, 76.8 percent were congruent based on race and 49.3 percent were congruent based on gender.

Simulation design

In designing the simulation, we emulated the hiring processes used by a global Fortune 50 corporation to select new graduates for a leadership development program. After receiving the pre-simulation training, raters and applicants met for the first time at a simulated career fair where raters established rapport with the applicants while discussing the logistics of the process. Applicants were given a job description for the position and the opportunity to ask questions of the rater about the process and the job opening. Upon the conclusion of this meeting, both parties completed a pre-interview survey that contained several personality and individual difference scales used to generate data output that allowed the participants to identify their own strengths and weaknesses. Participants identified themselves only by their student identification numbers to ensure confidentiality throughout the process. Reports from these surveys were distributed after the completion of the simulation and were not available to either the raters or the applicants during the process.

Upon completion of the surveys as described above, each applicant participated in a selection interview ranging from 15 to 45 minutes over the course of a six-week period. Raters were given several minutes to build rapport with the applicant before the interview continued with a series of structured interview questions. This process resulted in a behavioral interview score for each applicant based on the content and quality of each answer. The next step involved the raters participating in "regional" and "corporate" level meetings in which they identified approximately the top 10 percent of the participants who would be "hired" for this position. Following the completion of the simulation, raters were given a follow-up survey that assessed their ideal leadership type and provided closure to the process. In all, this simulation provided a realistic design strictly based on the processes of a large global organization while using members of the population to which we wish to generalize.

Measures

Personality. Both the applicants and the raters completed a 50-item personality assessment derived from the International Personality Item Pool. These items are based on the five factors markers developed by Goldberg (1992). Ten items were devoted to each of the five factors including openness to experience ($\alpha = 0.78$), conscientiousness ($\alpha = 0.82$), extroversion ($\alpha = 0.88$), agreeableness ($\alpha = 0.83$), and

neuroticism (results not used for the current analysis). The scale included items such as "I am stressed out easily, I feel comfortable around people, I have a soft heart, and I like order." These items were collected during the pre-interview assessment for both the rater and the applicant.

ILT. The scale used to measure ILT is Epitropaki and Martin's (2004) validated adaptation of Offermann *et al.*'s (1994) original scale. This 21-item scale includes measures of both leadership prototypes and anti-prototypes. For the purpose of this study, we chose to include measures of dynamism ($\alpha = 0.73$), dedication ($\alpha = 0.70$), intelligence ($\alpha = 0.76$), and sensitivity ($\alpha = 0.79$). Participants indicated their ideal leader type by identifying their perception of the importance of 21 characteristics to their ideal leader using a nine-point Likert scale ranging from "Not At All Characteristic" to "Extremely Characteristic." These characteristics included items such as "sincere, clever, hardworking, and dynamic."

Intelligence. In accordance with prior research (e.g. Foti and Hauenstein, 2007), we used the applicants' scores on the scholastic aptitude test (SAT) as a proxy for the individual's intelligence. This information was obtained from an archival database containing the scores that were reported directly from the testing agency. Scores for students who elected to take the American College Testing (ACT) examination were converted to SAT scores using a matrix provided by the ACT testing agency. For analytical purposes, we combined each participant's scores on the quantitative and analytical portions of the exam to obtain a combined score on the traditional 1,600/point scale. Analytical writing scores were excluded from analysis because the university does not include this data in their reports.

Interview experience. Participants indicated their prior experience in interview situations by indicating the number of interviews in which they have participated. Respondents indicated their level of interview experience by responding either "0, 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 or more" when asked how many interviews they attended prior to the simulation. The data were then coded one through seven, respectively.

Other demographic control variables. As noted in the literature review, past research shows that gender and race could impact interview scores (e.g. Lönnqvist *et al.*, 2011). For this reason, we included race, gender, race congruence, and gender congruence to account for potential demographic biases. Both applicants and raters provided their race and gender with race coded zero for non-minorities and one for minorities and gender was coded zero for male and one for female. Congruence for both race and gender was considered by coding zero for a lack of congruence between rater and applicant and one for congruence.

Data analysis and results

Table I presents the descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, and correlations. Of note are the significant correlations between each personality variable for both the rater and the applicant and interview score. To further investigate these relationships, we used the methodology of Raudenbush *et al.* (2010) to perform random coefficient modeling analyses to test each hypothesis. *H1* and *H2* were examined using HLM software (Raudenbush *et al.*, 2010) with the control variables (intelligence, interview experience, race, gender, race congruence, and gender congruence) included in Step 1 and the main effects (personality) entered in Step 2. *H3* was also tested using random coefficient modeling by including the control variables in Step 1, the main effects in Step 2, and the interaction effects in Step 3. For this hypothesis, we would

Table I.
Means, standard deviations, and correlations

Variable	*M*	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1. Gender	0.30	0.46	1																		
2. Race	0.07	0.26	−0.07	1																	
3. Gender Congruence	0.49	0.50	0.09	−0.01	1																
4. Race Congruence	0.77	0.42	0.07	−0.39**	−0.09	1															
5. Intelligence	1078.03	131.08	0.00	−0.14*	0.04	0.11	1														
6. Interview Experience	3.46	1.69	−0.05	−0.04	−0.13*	0.15*	0.00	1													
7. Applicant Extroversion	33.81	7.03	0.04	0.03	−0.11	−0.01	−0.11	0.11	1												
8. Applicant Conscientiousness	38.82	5.96	0.19**	−0.13*	−0.01	−0.02	0.12	0.02	0.17**	1											
9. Applicant Openness	36.99	5.26	−0.07	−0.04	0.04	0.01	0.21**	0.17**	0.29**	0.36**	1										
10. Applicant Agreeableness	39.29	6.02	0.32**	−0.07	0.06	−0.07	0.12*	0.00	0.37**	0.44**	0.365**	1									
11. Rater Extroversion	34.88	8.25	0.18**	0.02	−0.08	0.28**	0.06	−0.00	0.01	−0.01	−0.04	0.07	1								
12. Rater Conscientiousness	41.31	4.62	0.01	−0.08	−0.22**	0.23**	0.07	0.09	−0.00	−0.01	0.02	−0.02	0.03	1							
13. Rater Openness	38.39	5.35	0.06	−0.02	0.15*	−0.07	0.01	−0.15*	0.03	−0.02	0.03	0.00	0.28**	0.03	1						
14. Rater Agreeableness	34.12	6.24	0.17**	.04	−0.08	0.25**	0.06	−0.01	−0.00	−0.00	−0.04	0.07	0.33**	0.00	0.24**	1					
15. ILT Dynamism	22.29	2.91	−0.12*	0.09	0.02	−0.31**	−0.03	−0.13*	0.01	−0.04	0.05	−0.04	−0.32**	0.05	0.19**	−0.30**	1				
16. ILT Dedication	25.59	1.72	0.01	−0.07	−0.12	0.33**	0.10	0.09	−0.03	0.01	−0.01	−0.04	0.14*	0.45**	0.18**	0.06	−0.10	1			
17. ILT Intelligence	30.66	3.23	−0.01	0.08	−0.07	−0.08	−0.06	0.01	−0.02	0.02	−0.03	−0.05	−0.08	0.05	0.06	−0.07	0.38**	0.33**	1		
18. ILT Sensitivity	20.67	3.84	0.01	0.10	0.11	−0.21**	−0.10	−0.10	−0.02	−0.08	−0.01	−0.11	−0.17**	−0.16**	0.16**	−0.13*	0.54**	−0.15*	0.41**	1	
19. Behavioral Interview Score	25.66	5.91	0.01	0.02	0.06	−0.22**	0.12*	−0.06	0.22**	0.28**	0.24**	0.24**	−0.17**	0.13*	−0.02	−0.16**	0.10	0.02	−0.08	−0.03	1

Notes: $n = 284$; *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$

consider the ILT variables to moderate the relationships between personality scores and interview scores if the interaction term entered in Step 3is significant.

The first goal of this study was to determine whether applicant and/or rater personality have an effect on interview scores. Given the goals of behaviorally based interviewing techniques, we would expect that there would in fact be significant relationships. *H1* suggested that the personality of the applicant would have a significant impact on their interview score when controlling for intelligence, interview experience, race, gender, race congruence, and gender congruence. As shown in Table II, applicant conscientiousness ($\gamma = 0.195$, $p < 0.001$), applicant extroversion ($\gamma = 0.135$, $p < 0.01$), and applicant openness to experience ($\gamma = 0.123$, $p < 0.05$) were significant predictors of the behavioral interview score. However, applicant agreeableness ($\gamma = 0.076$, ns) was not a significant predictor of interview score. In total, applicant personality variables accounted for over eighteen percent of the variance in interview score ($\Delta R^2 = 0.182$) after controlling for the variables listed above. The above information provides support for *H1* and suggests that the applicant's personality has a significant impact on interview score.

In examining *H2*, we applied the same procedures used to test *H1*. This research question addressed whether or not rater personality would have an effect on interview scores after controlling for intelligence and interview experience. Results suggest that only rater conscientiousness ($\gamma = 0.251$, $p < 0.05$) was a significant predictor of interview score. This is somewhat surprising considering that all four personality variables tested in this study displayed significant correlations with interview scores. All of the other variables, including rater extroversion ($\gamma = -0.115$, ns), rater openness ($\gamma = -0.040$, ns), and rater agreeableness ($\gamma = 0.043$, ns), were not significant. Therefore, we found mixed results as rater personality appears to have a partial effect on interview scores. In total, the entire model accounts for a significant of the variance in interview scores above and beyond the control variables (Table III).

H3 suggested that raters would select based on their conceptualization of an ideal leader. This was tested by checking for interactions between the applicant's personality

Table II.
Regression results for *H1*

	Step 1 Coefficient	Step 2 Coefficient
Step 1		
Intelligence	0.005	0.003
Interview experience	−0.175	−0.320
Race	−1.077	−0.884
Gender	0.332	−0.627
Race congruence	−2.735**	−2.515**
Gender congruence	0.900	1.324**
Step 2		
Applicant extroversion	–	0.135**
Applicant conscientiousness	–	0.195***
Applicant openness	–	0.123*
Applicant agreeableness	–	0.076
R^2	0.018	0.200
ΔR^2	0.018	0.182

Notes: *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$

	Step 1 Coefficient	Step 2 Coefficient
Step 1		
Intelligence	0.005	0.005
Interview experience	−0.175	−0.192
Race	−1.077	−1.003
Gender	0.332	0.401
Race congruence	−2.735**	−2.828**
Gender congruence	0.900	1.037*
Step 2		
Rater extroversion	–	−0.115
Rater conscientiousness	–	0.251*
Rater openness	–	−0.040
Rater agreeableness	–	0.043
R^2	0.018	0.019
ΔR^2	0.018	0.001

Notes: *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$

Table III.
Regression results for *H2*

and the rater's ILT. In short, we found no support for any portion of this hypothesis because all of the interaction terms were insignificant. The results of these analyses are shown in Table IV. It is notable that Step 3, which adds the interaction term to test for a moderated relationship, does not explain a significant amount of additional variance in any of the analyses. This suggests that interviewers might not consider their idea of an ideal leader when selecting individuals for leadership positions. While this finding is rather unexpected, it reveals several important implications for both research and practice.

Discussion

To this point, very little research has addressed the process of hiring future leaders (e.g. Howard, 2007). The purpose of this study was to investigate the utility of traditional methods for selecting future leaders. We chose to study this issue in the context of traditional structured interviews, which are widely used in many organizations and are sometimes the only analytic method used to select employees. In theory, raters should search for future leaders using their perception of an ideal leader as portrayed by their ILT (Shondrick and Lord, 2010).

In general, our results provide mixed support for the validity of interview scores as assessment instruments. In support of the utility of interview scores, the applicant's personality made a significant impact on interview scores, suggesting that interviews are useful tools for traditional selection purposes. As Huffcutt (2011) indicates, personality information is a desirable outcome of the interview process because it is likely to translate into actual performance. Additional support for the validity of interview scores comes from our finding that, with the exception of conscientiousness, rater personality did not significantly influence interview scores. On the other hand, our findings that rater ILTs do not interact with applicant personality to impact interview scores leads one to question the utility of interview scores for selecting leaders. This finding is counterintuitive because one would expect interviewers to consider the congruence between an applicant's personality characteristics and their own conceptualization of an ideal leader when they are tasked with selecting the future

Table IV.
Regression results for personality-ILT interactions

	H3a			*H3b*		*H3c*		*H3d*	
	Step 1 Coefficient	Step 2 Coefficient	Step 3 Coefficient	Step 2 Coefficient	Step 3 Coefficient	Step 2 Coefficient	Step 3 Coefficient	Step 2 Coefficient	Step 3 Coefficient
Step 1									
Intelligence	0.005	0.006*	0.006*	0.003	0.003	0.002	0.002	0.003	0.004
Interview experience	−0.175	−0.270	−0.271	−0.176	−0.175	−0.325	−0.319	−0.221	−0.220
Race	−1.077	−1.345	−1.354	−0.646	−0.628	−1.165	−1.160	−1.028	−0.937
Gender	0.332	0.054	0.081	−0.410	−0.406	0.462	0.490	−0.804	−0.754
Race congruence	−2.735**	−2.715**	−2.734**	−2.700**	−2.688*	−2.735***	−2.755***	−2.626**	−2.589**
Gender congruence	0.900	1.357*	1.353*	1.133*	1.123*	0.911	0.879	0.857	0.842
Step 2									
Applicant personality	–	0.225***	0.015	0.288***	0.341	0.285***	−0.153	0.258***	0.039
Rater ILT dimension	–	0.098	0.096	0.306	0.304	−0.123	−0.140	−0.114	−0.096
Step 3									
Personality × ILT	–	–	−0.271	–	−0.002	–	0.014	–	0.010
R^2	0.018	0.136	0.136	0.130	0.130	0.105	0.105	0.106	0.106
ΔR^2	0.018	0.118	0.000	0.112	0.000	0.087	0.000	0.088	0.000

Notes: H3a, Applicant extraversion×dynamism ILT interaction; H3b, applicant conscientiousness × dedication ILT interaction; H3c, applicant openness × intelligence ILT interaction; H3d, applicant agreeableness × sensitivity ILT interaction. *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$

leaders of the organization. These results, both expected and unexpected, have important implications for both research and practice.

Statistical power and practical significance

Given the possible implications of the results of *H3* to the general area of leader selection, it is important to discuss the power of our statistical analysis as well as the practical significance of the regression coefficients aside from statistical significance. First, it appears that the current sample provides adequate power given evidence from past simulations using multilevel data. According to simulation results presented by Scherbaum and Ferreter (2009), it seems that the current sample size at Levels 1 and 2 has a power of approximately 0.81 to detect a somewhat moderate effect that would constitute practical significance. According to Cohen (1990), this should provide enough power to produce an effect if one does in fact exist. In addition, the effect sizes for hypothesis testing would not be practically significant even if they were in fact statistically significant. According to Scherbaum and Ferreter (2009), the current sample should provide stable estimates in addition to the adequate power discussed above. At 0.014, one of the strongest effect sizes obtained during significance testing would only account for 0.01 percent of the variance in interview scores. Although we are not advocating that generalizations be made from this null finding, the statistical power and practical significance of the obtained effect sizes suggest that future research may be warranted in the leader selection area to further investigate the utility of current practices for selecting future leaders.

Research implications

Our study makes a substantial contribution to the existing leadership literature by focussing on the relatively under-examined topic of leader selection. Leader selection is important for both the present and the future because of the growing complexity and globalization of organizations (Cascio, 1995). Therefore, a bridge is needed between the leadership and talent acquisition disciplines to provide organizations with the tools to staff modern global organizations. This study represents a step toward filling the void between the leadership and selection fields by assessing the utility of existing selection procedures to identify future leaders. Our results imply that raters still use traditional indicators such as applicant personality in leader selection, but may rely less on their own ILTs. Given this lack of a natural tendency toward selecting individuals that match one's perceptions of an ideal leader, future research should focus on adapting current selection methods to leader selection and the development of new selection methods that are more valid. This could include issues such as specialized rater training that clarifies the mission of the organization as well as procedural and outcome goals for the staffing process. Other options might include extra emphasis on past leadership experience during the interview process or the use of assessment centers to gauge leadership ability. Doing so could increase the validity and reliability of the leader selection process and help to create a sustainable competitive advantage via human capital.

In addition, the results showing an effect of rater personality on interview scores adds to the literature addressing bias in the selection process. Huffcutt (2011) provided a comprehensive overview of the legitimate contributions to interview scores such as job-related interview content, interviewee performance, and personal characteristics. Other studies have also addressed the possibility of bias in the selection process from

sources such as race and gender congruence in the leader selection process (e.g. Bosak and Sczesny, 2011). This study provides further evidence of the potential for bias in the selection process by demonstrating that rater personality, specifically conscientiousness, impacts interview scores. We classify this as bias because the rater's conscientiousness should not relate to the future performance of the applicant. Future research in this area could extend these findings by exploring other sources of bias in the leader selection process, such as applicant appearance and demographic variables that are unrelated to future performance. Another avenue of future research that could prove fruitful is the pursuit of ways in which to reduce the effects of rater biases in the selection processes. It is possible that increased awareness, score standardization, or direct instruction might make the interview process more reliable and valid by reducing the effect of rater bias. Future research addressing this topic would provide support for both research and practice in that it could identify the sources of rater bias and develop solutions for reducing its effects.

Implications for practice

In addition to the above research implications, our findings also generate several practical implications that could ultimately impact organizational success. First, our findings suggest that current staffing practices may not encompass the most effective tools for selecting future leaders of the organization. The raters in this study were given a job description for a leadership development position and instructed to identify the top 10 percent of the applicants who would move into current and future leadership roles. Given this information, we expected that the raters would select future leaders based on the qualities that they expect in an ideal leader. Results did not support this notion. Practitioners could consider supplemental assessment methods when selecting future leaders, such as intelligence tests, to measure qualities that are supported meta-analytically as predictors of leadership performance (e.g. Judge *et al.*, 2004). In any case, practitioners should proceed with caution until additional research further explores the utility of various general selection procedures for formal leader selection.

Given the potential for bias in the interview process and the potential lack of focus on selecting future leaders, practitioners should consider addressing these issues directly. It is important to clarify the process and outcome goals of the selection process before interviews commence. This should give the raters a clear representation of the qualities and ideals that should be present in potential leaders. Likewise, the raters should also receive a realistic job preview for the position they are attempting to fill. Phillips (1998) discovered that realistic job previews lead to lower turnover and ultimately better fit between the final selection and the organization. This tool might also be useful for raters in that they might have a better idea as to the regular demands and requirements of the leadership position that they aim to fill. Finally, it might be useful to give raters an explicit description of the ideal leader as it pertains to the organizations roles, goals, mission, and values. Infusing this view into the minds of raters will likely provide a standardized view of the ideal candidate while improving the validity and reliability of the process.

One final practical implication of these results is that a combination of structured interviews with other assessment methods could prove to be more reliable and valid than using structured interviews alone. Other useful assessment methods could include tools such as leadership type assessments, job simulations, or resume screenings for leadership experience. In addition to the typical positive benefits in terms of validity,

reliability, and legality, these results also suggest that combining assessments could be even more crucial when selecting future leaders.

Limitations

Although this study's design provides numerous strengths, there are also several limitations that readers should consider. First, the data used for analysis were collected in a cross-sectional manner. We attempted to minimize this concern by combining the cross-sectional self-report personality and ILT data with archival data and other report data that were collected at other temporal positions. Another limitation of this study is its use of student data. In this case, the use of student data is a very minor limitation because all of those involved are part of the actual population to which we presume to generalize. All applicants were third and fourth year business students who were currently or imminently seeking both internships and full-time positions making them active job seekers. In addition, the raters received training equivalent to that of an entry-level recruiter prior to the commencement of the simulation. This step was taken to avoid potential issues associated with the use of non-expert judges following the guidance of Barr and Hitt (1986). In terms of the simulation process, we attempted to make the simulation as real as possible by joining with a Fortune 50 organization to emulate an actual process with proven success. One final limitation is the small sample size at Level 2 of the hierarchical model. For this study, there were 290 observations at Level 1 and 31 observations at Level 2. That being said, the fact that our hypotheses are tested using matched dyad data provides strength to our conclusions. All analyses using variables at Level 2 of the hierarchical model were tested using the 290 dyads composed of rater-applicant pairs rather than using only the 31 raters. In addition, existing research provides empirical evidence to suggest that "increasing the sample size, no matter at which level, does not play as important a role in increasing the model power as researchers have believed, especially in the HLM model" (Zhang and Willson, 2006, p. 628). In addition, simulation data provided by Scherbaum and Ferreter (2009) suggests that our sample should provide adequate power, as additional observations at Level 2 do not substantively impact power beyond 30 observations. For these reasons, we are confident in our findings despite the relatively small sample size at Level 2.

In conclusion, our findings suggest that traditional selection methods alone may not be sufficient for selecting quality leaders. We found that both applicant and rater personalities contribute to interview scores, but failed to find evidence that rater conceptualizations of an ideal leader influence the decision-making process. This finding is somewhat surprising and indicates a need for additional future research in the area of leader selection. Considering the importance of leader selection to organizational success, additional insights into these processes could possibly resolve a number of practical issues related to leadership effectiveness in organizations. Taken together, the results of our study suggest that leader selection is a complex process that should not be approached via traditional staffing processes alone.

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