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DOI

[10.1111/psq.12511](https://doi.org/10.1111/psq.12511)

Publication date

2019

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Presidential Studies Quarterly

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[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Nai, A., Martínez i Coma, F., & Maier, J. (2019). Donald Trump, Populism, and the Age of Extremes: Comparing the Personality Traits and Campaigning Styles of Trump and Other Leaders Worldwide. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 49(3), 609-643. <https://doi.org/10.1111/psq.12511>

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Donald Trump, Populism, and the Age of Extremes: Comparing the Personality Traits and Campaigning Styles of Trump and Other Leaders Worldwide

ALESSANDRO NAI, FERRAN MARTÍNEZ I COMA, and JÜRGEN MAIER

A common narrative portrays Donald Trump as impetuous and quick to anger, thin skinned, constantly lying, brazen, vulgar, and boasting a grandiose sense of self and his accomplishments. Little systematic evidence exists that this is the case, however. With a novel data set based on expert ratings, we (1) provide systematic empirical evidence about Trump's personality profile, (2) contrast his profile with 21 other populist leaders and 82 mainstream candidates having competed in recent elections worldwide, and (3) discuss the implications of such an extreme profile in terms of campaigning style and the use of negative and emotional campaigns. Our results illustrate Trump's off-the-charts personality and campaigning style and suggest that even when compared with other abrasive, narcissistic, and confrontational political figures, he stands out as an outlier among the outliers. We conclude by discussing the implications and potential outcomes of such an extreme personality profile for Trump's policy style and achievements while in office.

Keywords: Trump, populism, personality, Big Five, Dark Triad, negative campaigning, emotional campaigning

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In the first years of Trump's presidency, the attention to his mental fitness for office took center stage in the public debate. Waving the flag of Section 4 of the Twenty-Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, many of his detractors hoped to find in his alleged mental instability a way out from a dire situation or solace after a bitter defeat in 2016. Many psychiatrists also added their voice to the cacophony, in partial disregard of the "Goldwater Rule"—an ethical guideline according to which the mental health of a public figure should not be assessed unless a direct examination of him or her occurred¹ and which many now consider as outdated (Lilienfeld, Miller, and Lynam 2018).

Regardless of their diagnostic value, these considerations overlapped with a narrative that portrays Donald J. Trump—the billionaire, the candidate, and now the president—as impetuous and quick to anger, thin skinned, constantly lying, insecure, brazen, vulgar, uninterested in details, and boasting a grandiose sense of self and an exaggerated vision of himself and his accomplishments (Cillizza 2018). Many have suggested that Trump exhibits “sky-high extroversion combined with off-the-chart low agreeableness [... and] grandiose narcissism” (McAdams 2016) and that he could possibly “present a diagnosis of psychopathy” (Olbermann 2016). His actions display “a messiah complex, no conscience, and lacks complete empathy” (Hoise 2017). Late-night-show hosts—from Stephen Colbert to Samantha Bee, Seth Meyers, and the *Saturday Night Live* team—have eagerly done their part to enforce that narrative.

Yet this narrative is supported by very limited systematic evidence (but see Visser, Book, and Volk 2017; Hyatt et al. 2018; Nai and Maier 2018), which is detrimental for a complete understanding of Trump's political figure and potentially for understanding his ascension to the supreme executive position (Ahmadian, Azarshahi, and Paulhus 2017). Furthermore, and probably more important in a comparative perspective, opinions about Trump's personality in the press often forget to mention that many populist political figures in other countries are also consistently described as having abrasive, narcissistic, provocative, and offensive personalities. Indeed, it is rather common to see populists described in the media or the public debate as “drunken dinner guest[s]” (Arditi 2007, 78) who rely on provocation and a more aggressive rhetoric, which sets them apart from other mainstream candidates. Acting at odds with social norms and taking pleasure in displaying “bad manners” (Moffitt 2016), populists tend to adopt a “transgressive political style” (Oliver and Rahn 2016, 191) that “emphasises [sic] agitation, spectacular acts, exaggeration, calculated provocations, and the intended breach of political and socio-cultural taboos” (Heinisch 2003, 94), often by introducing “a more negative, hardened tone to the debate” (Immerzeel and Pickup 2015, 350). Is Trump then simply the U.S. incarnation of a general political style based on an abrasive, provocative, and bombastic public figure? Or does he stand apart even when compared to his fellow populists?

With these questions in mind, it seems important for a better understanding of the Trump phenomenon to (1) provide systematic empirical evidence about his personality reputation using well-established measures, (2) compare and contrast his profile with

1. See <https://psychnews.psychiatryonline.org/doi/full/10.1176%2Fpn.42.10.0002> (accessed December 11, 2018).

those of other contemporary candidates and especially with the profile of other populist leaders,² and (3) discuss the implications of his personality in terms of communication style and (future) performance.

Personality Matters

The 2016 presidential election and its aftermath will undoubtedly keep political scientists, sociologists, communication scholars, and social psychologists busy for the upcoming decades. Much has already been told about why and how Donald Trump was able to beat the odds and force out a nourished camp of GOP contestants in the primaries and ultimately win the presidency—and we do not pretend to provide any additional empirical evidence. Rather, we simply argue that the personality of political leaders (and, by extension, Trump's personality) is likely to matter. In an electoral context, candidates' orientations and record now overshadow issue orientations and even partisanship (Swanson and Mancini 1996; Van Zoonen and Holtz-Bacha 2000; Costa Lobo 2018); in addition, nonpolitical characteristics of a candidate (e.g., integrity, appearance, family circumstances, and personality traits) more and more dominate the overall evaluations of political leaders (e.g., Wattenberg 1991; Bittner 2011; Anderson and Brettschneider 2003; but see Wattenberg 2016). Due to the decline of party identification in modern democracies, an increasing number of voters are in urgent need of reliable and easy-to-access indicators serving as a heuristic in political decision making. For instance, several studies suggest that voters are more likely to like and support candidates with personalities that “match” their own (Caprara et al. 2003; Caprara and Zimbardo 2004; Fortunato, Hibbing, and Mondak 2018). Personality traits of political leaders are hard to hide (and often are covered by the media) and considered to be stable over time and closely related to behavior; they thus seem to be a perfect yardstick to predict what to expect from a candidate if elected.³ Indeed, beyond mere electoral dynamics, the personality of political leaders has been shown to drive their accomplishments once in office (Rubenzer, Faschingbauer, and Ones 2000; Lilienfeld et al. 2012; Watts et al. 2013; Joly, Soroka, and Loewen 2018), for instance, in terms of policy accomplishments, relationships with the legislative branch, use of executive orders, and likelihood of unethical behavior. We return to this issue in the conclusion.

The Big Five and Dark Triad Personality Traits

Increasing evidence exists that the personality reputation of public figures can be gauged by external observers in terms of known dimensions of human personality (Caprara,

2. We define this as promoting an ideology that advocates for people-centrism and anti-elitism (Mudde 2017) or more generally an opposition between the common “people” and the (corrupt, wicked) elites. See Appendix C online for the full list of populist candidates in our data and classification rules.

3. We explore more in detail elsewhere the relationship between candidates' personality and their success in elections (Nai 2018a).

Barbaranelli, and Zimbardo 2002; Rubenzer and Faschingbauer 2004; Caprara et al. 2007; Gallagher and Blackstone 2015; Visser, Book, and Volk 2017). Two of the most widely used inventories of personality traits are the Big Five (Goldberg 1990; Gerber et al. 2011) and the Dark Triad (Paulhus and Williams 2002; Jones and Paulhus 2014). Starting with the Big Five, people high in extraversion (or perceived to be high on this trait) show a tendency to enjoy a sociable and active life and to move away from withdrawal, passivity, and shyness (Mondak and Halperin 2008) and are often described as sociable, energetic, active, and assertive. Extraversion is a strong and consistent factor determining charismatic leadership (Bono and Judge 2004), which in turn drives electoral success (House, Spangler, and Woycke 1991); the retrospective analysis by Rubenzer, Faschingbauer, and Ones (2000) shows that former U.S. presidents score quite high, comparatively, in this trait. Individuals high in agreeableness are usually described as warm and sympathetic and can be expected to benefit from “enhance[d] marketability perceptions” (Wille, De Fruyt, and Feys 2013, 130). Conscientious people have a tendency to plan and organize all aspects of the individual and collective life and are often associated with responsibility, conformity, achievement orientation, and dependability (Judge et al. 1999; Seibert and Kraimer 2001). Unsurprisingly, this trait appears as the highest among U.S. presidents in the retrospective analysis by Rubenzer, Faschingbauer, and Ones (2000). Quite different are individuals low on emotional stability (or high on neuroticism), who are seen as being easily subject to negative feelings such as anxiety, sadness, tension, edginess, excitability, stress, and instability and as “view[ing] many developments as unfair and often unsatisfactory” (Mondak and Halperin 2008, 345). Finally, people high on openness show a tendency to experience fresh situations and an eagerness toward everything that is new, challenging, and stimulating. High openness to experience (vs. closed-mindedness) is associated “with increased creativity, curiosity, imagination and nonconformity” (Mondak and Halperin 2008, 342).

Turning to the Dark Triad, people high in narcissism exhibit a tendency toward grandiosity and flamboyant attention seeking; narcissists are prone to overconfidence and deceit (Campbell, Goodie, and Foster 2004), hypercompetitiveness (Watson, Morris, and Miller 1998; O’Boyle et al. 2012), reckless behavior, and risk taking (Campbell, Goodie, and Foster 2004) and are perceived as bold, aggressive, and often even as discourteous. Narcissists are confident enough in their capacities to boldly turn the odds in their favor, being particularly “adept at persuading others to agree with them” (Goncalo, Flynn, and Kim 2010). Watts et al. (2013) showed, for instance, that grandiose narcissism is associated, in U.S. presidents, with public persuasiveness, “presidential greatness,” and even winning the popular vote. On the other hand, excessive narcissism and bombastic ego-reinforcement behavior are usually slandered in the public arena; there is indeed some evidence that voters evaluate negatively candidates who display excessive levels of “overt positive self-description” (Schütz 1998). Once in office, a narcissist can see his “reality-testing capacities diminish. Fantasies held in check when his power is limited are apt to become his guides to action [...], his behavior becomes more erratic, he runs into difficulties in meeting his goals, and his paranoid defenses become more exaggerated” (Glad 2002, 1). In the same vein, Watts et al. (2013) showed that grandiose narcissism is associated in U.S. presidents with a higher incidence of impeachment resolutions and unethical behavior. Individuals high in psychopathy usually show “a cognitive bias

towards perceiving hostile intent from others” (Levenson 1990, 1074) and are impulsive, are prone to callous social attitudes, and show a strong proclivity for interpersonal antagonism (Jonason 2014); furthermore, they should be expected to more naturally adopt a confrontational, antagonistic, and aggressive style of politics. High psychopathy reflects dominance and risk aversion (Levenson 1990), traits particularly rewarded in “social niches” that promote high individualism and social boldness (or “fearless dominance”; Lilienfeld et al. 2012). Indeed, individuals high in psychopathy have been shown to perform well in business (Babiak and Hare 2006) and politics (Lilienfeld et al. 2012). Finally, people high in Machiavellianism are usually seen as prioritizing strategic behavior, ruse, and deception to increase direct and indirect benefits. Individuals high in this trait have been shown to be wary of actions that might harm their reputation and thus act strategically to preserve a good image (Jones and Paulhus 2014). Machiavellian individuals are “cynical, unprincipled, believe in interpersonal manipulation as the key for life success, and behave accordingly” (Furnham, Richards, and Paulhus 2013, 201). Evidence suggests that Machiavellians might easily suffer from a tarnished image (Ricks and Fraedrich 1999, 204) and can be judged as having lower integrity and trustworthiness (Silvester, Wyatt, and Randall 2014).

The Study

The aim of this article is threefold: (1) to provide systematic evidence about Trump’s personality style, described in terms of both the five socially benevolent traits (Big Five) and the three socially malevolent traits (Dark Triad); (2) to test the assumption that Trump is unique in his extreme personality not only when compared to other contemporary political candidates but also when compared to other populist candidates who often make the headlines for their provocative political style and brashness (e.g., the Netherlands’ Geert Wilders, the Czech Republic’s Andrej Babiš, France’s Marine Le Pen, and Germany’s Alexander Gauland); and (3) to discuss the implications of Trump’s extreme personality in terms of his adoption of a harsher and more negative campaigning style—a style that defined the 2016 electoral race and can potentially move the bar of what is a “normally acceptable” rhetoric during election campaigns. We pursue these aims by comparing Trump’s perceived personality with the profile of 103 other candidates (including 21 populists) who competed in elections across the world from June 2016 to October 2017. We rely on novel data gathered through expert ratings covering key elections such as the recent contests in the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Russia, the Netherlands, Spain, Austria, Australia, and beyond (Nai and Maier 2018; Nai 2018a).⁴ For Donald Trump, 60 national and international scholars provided ratings of his personality, which we use to assess his public profile in terms of the Big Five and Dark Triad.

4. Our data set contains information for each national election having occurred worldwide between June 2016 and October 2017 (excluding elections in microstates such as Palau or the Seychelles, and cases where the election was a façade, such as the 2017 election in Turkmenistan). A few elections also had to be excluded due to lack of sufficient answers (São Tomé and Príncipe in July 2016, and Haiti in November 2016).

After comparing the profiles of those candidates, we assess the extent to which personality matters when it comes to campaigning strategies. We focus here on two dimensions of modern electoral communication: negativity (i.e., the use of messages intended to attack the rivals instead of promoting one's own profile and agenda; Lau and Pomper 2004; Nai and Walter 2015) and emotionality (i.e., the use of messages intended to stir an emotional response in the audience; Brader 2006). The use of these two sets of communication strategies in contemporary campaigns has been documented extensively, and strong reasons exist to expect that their use matters. On the one hand, if the electoral effectiveness of negative campaigning techniques is still contested (Lau, Sigelman, and Rovner 2007), mounting evidence seems to suggest that negativity is associated with unintentional systemic effects, for instance, depressed turnout and mobilization (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995) or increased cynicism, apathy, and a gloomier public mood (Yoon, Pinkleton, and Ko 2005). On the other hand, the use of emotional elements in campaigning (Brader 2006; Ridout and Searles 2011) starts from the assumption that feelings and emotions act as powerful determinants of attitudinal behavior (Marcus and MacKuen 1993; Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000): anxious citizens are likely to pay more attention to information and campaigns, which makes them easier targets for persuasion (Nai, Schemel, and Marie 2017); enthusiastic citizens are more likely to get invested and participate (Marcus and MacKuen, 1993), but they do so by relying strongly on their previously held partisan beliefs and attitudes (Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000).

The rest of the article unfolds as follows: The next section introduces the data set we use to systematically compare the personality reputation of Trump and other (populist and nonpopulist) contemporary candidates. We provide special attention to the measures of (perceived) personality traits and discuss their validity and reliability; we also introduce the variables we use to measure the campaigning style of candidates (negativity and emotionality). The following section presents the empirical evidence, first by developing the full reputation profile of Trump according to the eight main traits, then by comparing his profile with the (average) profile of other populist candidates who are usually also portrayed as outsiders with a peculiar and disruptive political style, and finally by assessing to what extent personality matters for electoral campaigning. The last section concludes and develops several informed predictions for the trajectory of the Trump presidency based on his profile and what happened during the first years in office.

Measuring the Personality Reputation of Candidates: Data and Method

Personality is a multifaceted concept, and its measure is often an elusive matter. Even more so are the definition and measure of the personality of political figures. What do we mean by that? And how can this be measured in a systematic and reliable way? It is important to stress from the outset that we do not claim to measure the candidates' actual psychological profile—and, even less, the clinical components of their psyche—but rather

their perceived personality (reputation), that is, the way their public persona and style can be classified according to known dimensions of human personality. Like other scholars before us (Rubenzer, Faschingbauer, and Ones 2000; Rubenzer and Faschingbauer 2004; Lilienfeld et al. 2012; Gallagher and Blackstone 2015; Visser, Book, and Volk 2017), we did so by asking experts to evaluate candidates through systematic instruments that have been developed for the assessment of individual personality profiles. In this article, we describe the candidates' personality reputation in terms of both socially desirable (Big Five) and socially malevolent traits (Dark Triad).

The Data Set

To measure candidates' personality reputations, we used a new comparative data set about electoral campaign strategies in elections worldwide (NEG^{ex}; Nai 2018a; Nai and Maier 2018),⁵ covering national elections held across the world from June 2016 to October 2017. We gathered the information through a systematic survey distributed to election-specific samples of national and international scholars in elections in the weeks following each election. The survey asked scholars to evaluate the personality reputation of selected candidates via two sets of batteries used to measure both socially desirable and malevolent personality traits: one to measure the Big Five and another to measure the Dark Triad. For each battery, each expert had to evaluate only one candidate (e.g., Big Five for Trump and Dark Triad for Hillary Clinton). This procedure minimized learning effects and ensured that candidates were evaluated at face value and not by rationalizing the differences between them. Individual scholar ratings were then aggregated at the candidate level to provide systematic measures of perceived personality that are comparable across candidates.

Comparing expert judgments on political dynamics over extended periods of time is potentially hazardous, as the understanding, value, and weight of core political considerations may change over time. The fact that our study was carried out over a relatively brief period of time (15 months) should normally ensure that not many of those intervening factors exist.

In the absence of large-scale comparative mass surveys and the near impossibility of having self-rating (but see Dietrich et al. 2012; Joly, Soroka, and Loewen 2018), the personality of political figures is frequently deduced from textual secondary data (e.g., by content-analyzing speeches; e.g., Winter 1987). However, this approach suffers from at least three shortcomings. First, textual secondary data are usually extremely controlled and crafted and thus are likely to only indirectly represent the speaker's personality. Second, content analysis of textual archives requires extensive resources, although automated and machine-learning approaches show very promising results (Ramey, Klingler, and Hollibaugh 2016, 2017). Third, and perhaps more importantly, content analysis of political texts suffers from questionable cross-cultural comparability, as the discursive

5. See <https://www.alessandro-nai.com/negative-campaigning-comparative-data> (accessed December 11, 2018).

nature of political texts is often a function of the language and political culture (Reisigl 2008).

As an alternative approach, much research has relied in recent decades on the ratings of external expert observers to draw a psychological profile of political figures (Rubenzer, Faschingbauer, and Ones 2000; Rubenzer and Faschingbauer 2004; Lilienfeld et al. 2012; Gallagher and Blackstone 2015; Visser, Book, and Volk 2017; Nai and Maier 2018; Nai 2018a). Expert judgments are an efficient, yet reliable, approach to provide systematic information about how the reputation of candidates is perceived. Data can be gathered in a fast and cost-effective way, and interviewing scholars with proven expertise increases the chances that the main concepts tapped are understood in a similar fashion—thus reducing the risk of cross-cultural biases in comparison. Furthermore, relying on scholars allows us to dramatically expand the coverage of the data (e.g., in our case, 47 elections in 40 different countries). Issues such as linguistic expertise or knowledge of cultural dynamics are outsourced to the experts themselves, which ensures that virtually all contexts can be studied, providing that relevant experts are identified and that their collaboration can be secured. Finally, the quality of expert judgments can be assessed empirically and adjusted, for instance, to take into account each expert's familiarity with the topic studied, which increases the reliability of the aggregated scores. We discuss below why we claim that our measures of candidates' reputations are empirically reliable and theoretically valid—including preliminary evidence that shows that experts perceive candidates similarly to the public at large, thus suggesting that the trends described here can be translated into the general population.

Considering only candidates for whom at least two⁶ different experts provided independent evaluations, our data set comprised 104 candidates in total (including Trump) who competed in 47 elections worldwide. Information is based on answers provided by 875 experts, aggregated at the candidate level. Appendix A online lists all the elections and candidates in our data set and specifies the number of independent expert opinions gathered for each candidate.

The NEG^{ex} survey is aligned with the most well-known and developed expert surveys in terms of methodology, coverage, and respondents' numbers, such as the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Bakker et al. 2015), which provides information about the positioning of political parties on political ideology since the 1990s; its most extensive wave (2014) gathered responses from 337 political scientists in Europe. NEG^{ex} expands both the number of respondents (875 in our data set) as well as the geographical scope of the analysis, which includes in our case countries from around the world. Furthermore, the NEG^{ex} questionnaire efficiently complements and expands other studies on candidates' personality traits based on expert assessments, such as the one discussed in Visser, Book, and Volk (2017) in which the two U.S. candidates were compared.

6. The minimum number of experts to be included in any analysis is not a closed debate in the literature. Normally, the number of responses vary by study, and several studies rely on just a few cases. For example, Freedom House democracy scores for some countries are done based on one expert per case (see the methods section at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2016/methodology> [accessed December 11, 2018]), while others are more demanding and include five experts as a minimum threshold (Steenbergen and Marks 2012; Martínez i Coma and Van Ham 2015).

The Experts

We define an expert as a scholar with expertise in electoral politics, political communication (including political journalism), and/or electoral behavior, or related disciplines, for the country where the election was held. Expertise is established by the presence of one of the following criteria: (1) existing relevant academic publications (including conference papers); (2) holding a chair in those disciplines in a department within the country; (3) membership in a relevant research group, professional network, or organized section of such a group; or (4) explicit self-assessed expertise included on a professional webpage (e.g., bio on university webpage). The number of experts contacted for each election varied, depending on the specific case studied, from a minimum of 28 (Nicaragua) to a maximum of 626 (United States); the average response rate was approximately 20% (Table D2 in the online appendix presents the response rate for each election-related sample). Experts were contacted via a personalized e-mail during the week following the election and sent two reminders, respectively, one and two weeks after the first invitation. The invitation e-mail contained the link to the questionnaire, administered through Qualtrics.

On average, experts in the whole sample lean slightly to the left ($M = 4.32/10$, $SD = 1.79$), 74% are domestic (i.e., work in the country for which they were asked to evaluate the election), and 33% are female. Overall, experts declared themselves very familiar with the elections ($M = 7.95/10$, $SD = 1.82$) and estimated that the questions in the survey were relatively easy to answer ($M = 6.46/10$, $SD = 2.42$). For the U.S. experts, who were asked to evaluate the personality and campaigning style of the candidates in the 2016 presidential election only, 81% of the sample comprises domestic experts (i.e., about 20% of the experts live and work outside the United States) and 29% are female. The level of familiarity is even higher than the overall sample ($M = 8.97/10$, $SD = 1.11$), and experts found the questionnaire quite easy ($M = 7.44/10$, $SD = 1.96$). Finally, experts in the U.S. sample are also slightly skewed toward the left ($M = 3.60/10$, $SD = 1.58$).

Table D2 in the online appendix presents the composition of the sample of experts for each election surveyed. The profile of experts can, potentially, alter their assessments (Steenbergen and Marks 2007; Curini 2010; Martínez i Coma and Van Ham 2015). To assess the extent of these profile effects, we ran a series of models in which the experts' evaluations (i.e., how they evaluate the personality profiles of the candidates) is regressed on their profile. We ran two series of models; the first series of models (Tables D3 and D4 in the online appendix) assesses the effect of experts' profile on their evaluation of candidates for all experts in our data set, that is, regardless of the election and/or candidate evaluated: results show that expert ratings are very rarely driven by their profile, and even when a significant effect is shown, its magnitude is extremely marginal (this is, for instance, the case for the effect of familiarity on conscientiousness). The second series of models zooms in on the experts who evaluated Trump, looking for the presence of biases due to their profile (Tables D5 and D6); in this case as well, the existence of profile effects is extremely limited—with the exclusion perhaps of narcissism: experts on the left, experts self-reportedly more familiar, and international experts evaluated Trump more harshly than their counterparts (the last effect is perhaps due to a differential coverage of

Trump in international media). This being said, the extent of the bias at the sample level is questionable: given the composition of our sample for the U.S. election, the positive negative effect of left-wing ideology in the sample should be compensated for by the fact that 80% of the experts are domestic (and thus more likely to have lower scores for narcissism). Nonetheless, caution should be exercised when interpreting results concerning Trump's narcissism.

Measures of Perceived Personality

We describe the personality reputation of candidates in terms of (1) five socially benevolent traits that form the Big Five inventory (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness) and (2) three socially malevolent traits that form the Dark Triad inventory (narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism). The five socially benevolent personality traits (Big Five), as perceived by experts, are measured via the Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI; Gosling et al. 2003). For each trait, experts had to evaluate two statements (e.g., the candidate might be someone who is “critical, quarrelsome”), and the underlying personality trait exists as the average value for those statements. Compared to other measures, the TIPI is relatively short and thus less nuanced; however, it has been shown to provide satisfactory results in terms of convergent validity (Ehrhart et al. 2009; but see Bakker and Lelkes 2018). The battery of questions yields five variables ranging from 0 (*very low*) to 4 (*very high*).

The measure of the three malevolent personality traits is usually done through lengthy batteries of questions such as the 40-item Narcissistic Personality Inventory, the 20-item MACH-IV test for Machiavellianism, or the 31-item Self-Report Psychopathy III scale (Paulhus and Williams 2002). For pragmatic reasons, we designed a shorter version of the Jonason and Webster (2010) Dirty Dozen battery based on the principal component analyses described in their study (422); we selected the two items that correlate the highest with each trait and used them as a battery (see the Supporting Information online).⁷ As for the Big Five, the Dark Triad variables we obtained from this battery range from 0 (*very low*) to 4 (*very high*). Appendix B online provides more details about the measures of personality reputation.

Validity and Reliability

If we look at the personality reputation measures across all candidates in our data set ($N = 104$), we first observe that the internal validity of the eight traits, assessed through reliability checks, is high,⁸ and so is construct consistency (Tables B1 and B2). Comparing the two sets of traits, the relationship between the Big Five and Dark Triad

7. Our measure of narcissism assesses need for attention/admiration, and not the “bombastic grandiosity” also associated with this trait (indirectly captured by extraversion).

8. The reliability scores are, respectively, $\alpha = .72$ (extraversion), $\alpha = .65$ (agreeableness), $\alpha = .80$ (conscientiousness), $\alpha = .84$ (emotional stability), $\alpha = .69$ (openness), $\alpha = .86$ (narcissism), $\alpha = .89$ (psychopathy), and $\alpha = .77$ (Machiavellianism).

traits has been shown to be sometimes erratic (e.g., Lee and Ashton 2005), but several similar patterns are often reported—for instance, agreeableness has been shown to correlate negatively with all three Dark Triad traits, conscientiousness is negatively associated with psychopathy and Machiavellianism, and narcissism is positively associated with extraversion (Paulhus and Williams 2002). We find all those patterns in our data as well (Table B3).

A big question, of course, is whether our measures are able to effectively reflect the reputation and public personas of the candidates. This issue, external validity, is harder to assess than empirical reliability due to the absence of comparable data about the personality reputation, character, or public personas of candidates competing in elections worldwide.

However, we discuss here three pieces of information that suggest, individually and jointly, that our measures seem to reflect shared views on the reputation of the candidates.

First, we collected information about the public personas, character, and personality for 53 candidates as described independently in news media reports and scientific publications (see Table B5 in Appendix B online). For each candidate, we conducted an online search of news articles about him or her that refer in the title or body to the terms “personality,” “style,” “reputation,” “character,” and “profile.”⁹ All relevant articles (i.e., describing the personality of candidates along traits echoing the Big Five or Dark Triad—for instance, “charismatic,” “boring,” “narcissistic,” “reserved”) were reported in the table and used for comparison with our measures. Very often the image of those candidates as portrayed in the media and beyond converges closely with the measure of personality reputation we obtained from our experts through standardized questions. For instance, Angela Merkel is described in the media as uncharismatic, “reserved, rational and uninspiring” (Hung 2012), and having a public speaking style “as inspiring as the Eurozone quarterly growth figures” (Butler 2013) (we found in our data very low extraversion, but very strong conscientiousness and emotional stability); Theresa May is qualified as overall lacking personality and having “all the warmth of a wet weekend in Whitstable” (McLeod 2017) and “the emotional intelligence of the Terminator” (Kurd 2017) (we found very low extraversion and agreeableness and high psychopathy); Norbert Hofer is described as “a wolf in sheep’s clothing [...that learned] how to play nice” (MacKinnon 2017) (we found high Machiavellianism); Geert Wilders is accused of having “a controversial attitude and aberrant political style” (De Landsheer and Kalkhoven 2014) and “not trying at all to be agreeable” (McBride 2017) (we found very low agreeableness); and Emmanuel Macron is described as being “quite charismatic and [... leading a party with] a whiff of a personality cult” (Miller 2017) and as a “master of seduction” (Heyer 2017), but also as “politically savvy” (Miller 2017) (we found high narcissism and high conscientiousness).

Of course, this does not represent a systematic test of external validity. The information was only available for a subsample of candidates (53 out of 104), and although chosen

9. The search was mainly done in English, so English news outlets are overrepresented. In many cases we were, however, able to replicate the search in languages that we speak or understand: French, Spanish, and German.

following a systematic protocol, the media analyzed are not necessarily representative of all articles published about those candidates from a statistical standpoint. Nonetheless, the consistent overlap we found between the content of the articles retrieved and our measures suggests that our data are efficient in capturing the major reputation traits of those candidates.

Second, our scores for Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump overlap very strongly with trends described in a recent study by Visser, Book, and Volk (2017) that relies on ratings from a sample of experts having published on the psychology of personality. Their measures are extremely similar to the scores that both Clinton and Trump received from our experts (for more details, see Nai and Maier 2018).

Third, we asked undergraduate students at the University of Amsterdam (Netherlands)¹⁰ to evaluate four candidates using the same batteries as presented above: in the first study, 275 students evaluated the personality of Donald Trump, and in the second study, 200 students evaluated the personality of two main Dutch political figures, the current Prime Minister Mark Rutte and the populist leader of the Partij voor de Vrijheid (Party for Freedom) Geert Wilders, and the personality of Angela Merkel. Comparing the two sets of evaluations shows strong consistency. Some small differences between the two populations exist—for instance, the experts tended to see Trump as slightly less agreeable than the students, whereas the students on average saw Wilders as more Machiavellian, Rutte as less agreeable, and Merkel as more extraverted than the experts did. Nonetheless, the scores obtained by those candidates in the expert and student data sets are very strongly correlated (Trump, $R = 0.97$; Rutte, $R = 0.76$; Wilders, $R = 0.85$; Merkel, $R = 0.89$; see Table B4 in Appendix B online). This suggests that the two populations perceive the different candidates in a very similar way overall even across cultures, which we see as an additional confirmation of the external validity of our measures.

Campaigning Style

We measure the content of electoral campaigns—negativity and emotionality—also via aggregated expert judgments (Nai 2018b). Experts evaluated the tone of candidates' campaign on a scale ranging from -10 (*the campaign was exclusively negative*) to 10 (*the campaign was exclusively positive*) and were also asked to evaluate the type of attack candidates mostly used against their rivals on a scale ranging from 1 (*exclusively policy attacks*) to 5 (*exclusively character attacks*). Finally, the experts were asked to assess the extent to which candidates used anxiety and enthusiasm appeals, using a scale ranging from 0 (*very low use*) to 10 (*very high use*). These four variables, aggregated at the candidates' level, have been standardized to fit into a $0-1$ scale to allow comparison and simplify their interpretation in regressions.

10. Participants in convenience samples were given a modest incentive to participate (0.18 research credits). Student convenience samples cannot be expected to be representative of the whole population, but they have been shown to pose less problems than expected in terms of external validity (Druckman and Kam 2011; Garramone 1984).

Identifying Populists

To identify populist candidates in our data set, we assessed whether or not they were referred to as such in relevant published research. We relied on the few existing comparative works (Mudde 2007; Norris and Inglehart 2019), systematic collections of case studies (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008; Aalberg et al. 2017), and additional single-case studies for selected countries (e.g., Gurov and Zankina 2013; Bos and Brants 2014; Džankić and Keil 2017), all based on similar thin definitions of populism as an ideology that advocates for people centrism and anti-elitism (Mudde 2004) or more generally an opposition between the common people and the (corrupt, wicked) elites. To be sure, more complex definitions of populism exist (most notably a thick definition that also includes exclusion of particular groups or nations; Jagers and Walgrave 2007; Aalberg et al. 2017); however, the thin approach based on people centrism and anti-elitism can be seen as a minimal set of requirements for being classified as a populist. Some of the work we collected refers to populism in general (Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011; Aalberg et al. 2017), whereas other work focuses on particular types such as right-wing populism (Mudde 2007; Ennser 2012). We thus identified 22 candidates (including Trump) who can be qualified as populists. In the majority of cases, multiple independent scientific references per candidate were identified. More details about the classification of populist candidates, including all references used to establish the classification, are discussed in Appendix C online.

Empirical Evidence

Trump's Extreme Personality Reputation

Donald Trump's extreme personality reputation appears very clearly in Figures 1 and 2; the figures present, respectively, the average score for Trump on the five socially benevolent traits (Figure 1) and the three socially malevolent traits (Figure 2). In both figures, we report both the score on the trait (in black) and the average score on the two measured components for each trait (in gray). All measures vary from 0 (*very low*) to 4 (*very high*).

Looking first at the five socially benevolent traits (Big Five, Figure 1), we see that Trump is perceived as extremely extraverted (highly enthusiastic, not at all reserved or quiet), probably reflecting his spontaneous and unconventional approach to politics and his exuberant confidence. Trump scores then very low on perceived agreeableness, being considered simultaneously as extremely critical and quarrelsome, and as neither sympathetic nor warm. His aggressive rhetoric, personal attacks against opponents both in and outside politics, and bleak vision for the country can be read as expressions of this trait. These extreme levels of perceived extraversion and agreeableness echo the off-the-charts scores discussed in Visser, Book, and Volk (2017). Trump is often considered as thin skinned, mercurial, and impulsive; furthermore, his lack of political experience and generally unsophisticated approach to politics mean that his public persona is one of low conscientiousness, as confirmed by our data—poorly dependable or self-disciplined and highly disorganized and careless. His very low scores on emotional stability (high anxiety,

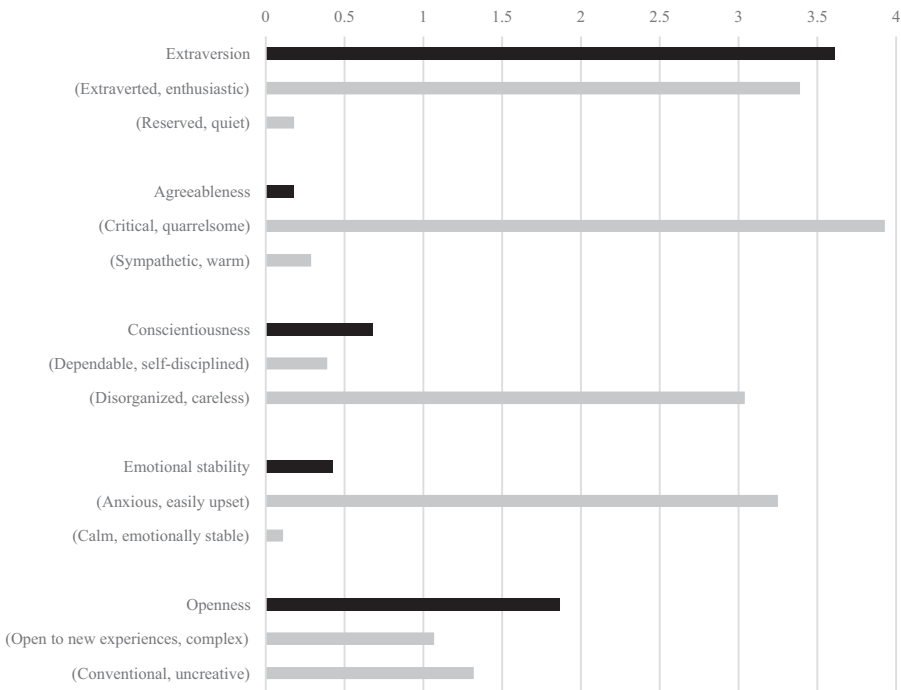


FIGURE 1. Trump’s Personality, Big Five.

Note: Average scores are based on ratings provided by 28 experts. All variables range from 0 (*very low*) to 4 (*very high*).

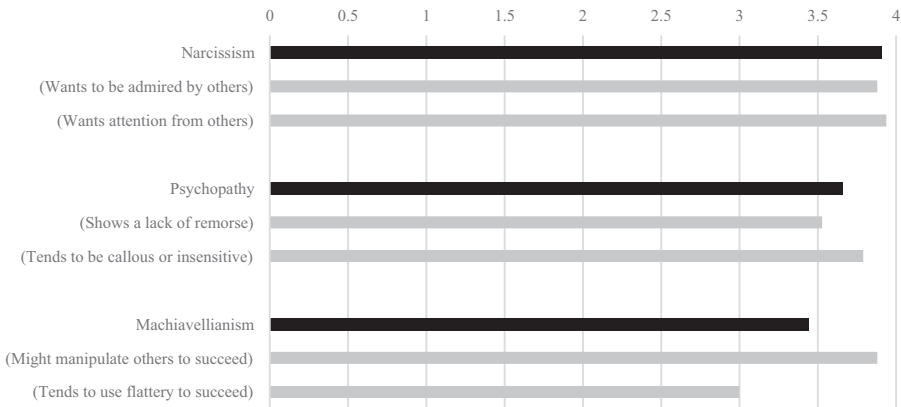


FIGURE 2. Trump’s Personality, Dark Triad.

Note: Average scores are based on ratings provided by 34 experts. All variables range from 0 (*very low*) to 4 (*very high*).

easily upset, low calm) are to be interpreted in the same sense, and again these trends match the candidate’s profile discussed in Visser, Book, and Volk (2017). Trump only scores averagely on openness (complexity, creativity, conventionality).

Moving to the dark personality traits, Figure 2 shows extremely high scores for narcissism (desire to be admired by and wanting attention from others) and psychopathy (tendency to show a lack of remorse and to display callousness and insensitivity) for Trump—our experts rated the candidate at 3.66 out of a maximum of 4 on psychopathy, and at 3.91 out of 4 for narcissism (probably slightly overestimated due to sample composition). Very high also are Trump's scores on Machiavellianism (tendency to manipulate and use flattery to succeed). All those scores are, again, perfectly in line with the profile discussed in Visser, Book, and Volk (2017).

The image that emerges from Figures 1 and 2 is one of a toxic and malevolent perceived public persona for Trump: his reputation is characterized by very low agreeableness and warmth, low conscientiousness and discipline, high extraversion and anxiety, low emotional stability, strong ego-reinforcement behavior, a clear tendency to seek admiration, insensitivity and lack of remorse, and a tendency to manipulate to meet his goals. Given the very negative tone of (most of) the media coverage of Trump both as a candidate and now as president, this probably comes as no surprise. What seems unique, however, is the extent of the extreme values on those traits. His narcissism is no mystery—but is he really unique in a social niche where self-promotion is a critical component of success? Similarly, his callousness and anxious rhetoric are well documented—but is he any different from any other contemporary populist candidate fustigating the corrupt elites and promising to defend the pure people against the evil of modernity and extreme liberalism? The question that we address now is whether or not Trump's profile diverges not only with regard to mainstream candidates (as it seems safe to expect) but also when comparing him with other political outsiders who usually receive bad press: other contemporary populist candidates, from Geert Wilders in the Netherlands to Marine Le Pen in France.

An Outsider among Outsiders: Comparing Trump with Other Populist Candidates

Is Trump unique in his extreme profile, or does he fit the mold of other political outsiders? To answer this question, we compare his personality reputation to the profiles of 21 other populist candidates in our data set. The personality profile of each one of those candidates is illustrated in Table 1.

At a glance, it appears that populists in general tend to score high on perceived extraversion (an exception being Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega, whom a former colleague described as having "a prison personality: Lonely, solitary, mistrustful, hard" [Vulliamy 2001]) but low on agreeableness, emotional stability, and openness—same as Trump. Furthermore, turning to the socially malevolent reputation traits, populists score quite high on all three—again, same as Trump.

Candidate Trump fits the overall mold of a populist reputation; however, his scores are those of an outsider even among populists. Table 1 also illustrates that Trump ranks as the second highest score in perceived extraversion (the highest score was found for Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, described in the press as "the insane clown prince of Russian

TABLE 1
Personality Reputation of Trump, Other Populists, and Nonpopulists (Average Scores)

		<i>Big Five</i>					<i>Dark Triad</i>		
		<i>E</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>ES</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>M</i>
<i>Populists</i>									
Andrej Babiš	Czech Republic	2.90	1.15	2.90	1.85	2.50	3.38	2.69	2.88
Boyko Borisov	Bulgaria	3.00	1.33	1.83	1.17	2.02	3.50	2.60	3.10
Milo Đukanović	Montenegro	2.75	1.00	3.38	1.75	1.25	3.36	2.85	2.93
Arlene Foster	Northern Ireland	1.73	0.85	2.17	1.71	1.29	2.54	3.69	2.66
Alexander Gauland	Germany	2.21	0.34	2.39	1.99	1.27	3.10	3.58	2.62
Nikola Gruevski	Macedonia	2.13	1.07	2.01	1.23	1.22	3.83	3.85	3.29
Norbert Hofer	Austria	2.33	1.45	3.16	2.20	1.31	3.06	2.84	3.28
Siv Jensen	Norway	2.67	1.00	3.00	2.00	2.08	2.39	2.57	1.68
Albin Kurti	Kosovo	3.08	2.13	3.58	2.92	2.88	2.83	1.33	0.67
Marine Le Pen	France	2.93	1.07	2.43	2.14	2.01	3.00	3.26	3.28
Jean-Luc Mélenchon	France	3.42	1.50	2.33	0.73	3.05	3.25	1.96	2.67
Paul Nuttall	United Kingdom	2.33	1.08	1.00	1.50	1.17	3.25	3.00	2.13
Michelle O'Neill	Northern Ireland	2.92	2.35	3.06	3.10	2.17	2.61	1.90	2.17
Tomio Okamura	Czech Republic	2.50	0.50	1.50	0.83	1.50	3.70	3.20	3.10
Daniel Ortega	Nicaragua	0.83	0.33	2.17	0.67	0.67	3.33	3.50	2.50
Ivan Vilibor Sinčić	Croatia	2.40	0.80	2.10	1.30	2.80	2.83	1.50	2.17
Heinz-Christian Strache	Austria	3.25	1.00	3.00	1.75	0.50	3.23	2.29	2.25
Aleksandar Vučić	Serbia	2.30	1.20	2.10	0.90	1.60	3.67	2.67	2.50
Geert Wilders	The Netherlands	2.50	0.41	2.73	1.63	1.50	3.11	3.58	1.86
Vladimir Zhirinovskiy	Russia	3.67	0.50	1.18	0.83	1.42	3.43	3.51	2.64
Gennady Zyuganov	Russia	1.63	1.00	2.57	2.53	0.94	2.25	2.63	2.50
Donald Trump	USA	3.61	0.18	0.68	0.43	1.88	3.91	3.66	3.44
Trump's ranking ^a		2H	1L	1L	1L	9H	1H	3H	1H
Average other populists ^b (N = 21)		2.55	1.05	2.41	1.65	1.67	3.13	2.81	2.52
Average nonpopulists (N = 82)		2.17	1.99	2.78	2.46	2.05	2.51	1.96	2.03

Note: All variables range from 0 (*very low*) to 4 (*very high*).

- E: Extraversion.
- A: Agreeableness.
- C: Conscientiousness.
- ES: Emotional Stability.
- O: Openness.
- N: Narcissism.
- P: Psychopathy.
- M: Machiavellianism.

^aThe ranking compares Trump scores with those of other populists; the number reflects the ranking, and the letter reflects the direction (highest or lowest). For instance, 1H means “First highest score,” 2H “Second highest score,” 1L “First lowest score,” and so on.

^bExcluding Trump.

politics" [Bruk 2013], "Russia's Trump" [Nemtsova 2016], and one of "the usual nut-jobs" [Simpson 2012]), and as the single lowest score in agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability among all other fellow populists.

Trump also has the highest scores on narcissism (although he is in good company there) and Machiavellianism and the third highest score on perceived psychopathy—only Macedonia's Nikola Gruevski (recently entangled in a scandal involving a conspiracy to manipulate elections and compromise both the judicial system and the media [MacDowall 2015]) and Northern Ireland's Arlene Foster (described as the "Iron Lady of Unionism [...with] a steely backbone" [Morris 2017] and as having an "abrasive personality" [Walker 2016]) score higher than him. Also scoring high on this trait are Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany) leader Alexander Gauland (known for frequently using an "inflammatory rhetoric" [Petzinger 2017] and for his "controversial, headline-grabbing statements" [Bleiker and Brady 2017]) and Geert Wilders ("Netherlands's most hated man [... that] has kept himself at the center of Dutch political life by testing the standards of permissible speech" [Traub 2017], "not trying at all to be agreeable" [McBride 2017], and a "right-wing rabble-rouser" [Meeus 2017]).

Trump not only frequently ranks higher (or lower) than his fellow populist candidates on several reputation traits, but his scores are also significantly higher (lower) than the average score of all other populists together—thus suggesting a truly unique and off-the-charts public persona. The comparison between Trump and the other populist candidates is illustrated in Table 2, which presents the scores for both the personality traits and their constitutive dimensions. The table also presents significance tests of the differences between the scores of Trump and the (average) score of the other populist candidates (*t* tests), as well as effect sizes to quantify those differences (Cohen's *d*).

Table 2 shows that Trump scores significantly higher than the average populist on extraversion and significantly and substantially lower on agreeableness, emotional stability, and especially conscientiousness. On this last trait, Trump scores almost two points (on a 0–4 scale) lower than the average populist ($d = 2.32$). Only on openness does Trump not differ significantly from the other candidates. Turning to the malevolent components of his perceived public persona, Trump scores significantly (and often substantially) higher than other populists in any traits and components in the Dark Triad—the difference is especially substantial for narcissism ($d = 2.38$).

Populists are often unusual political animals (Heinisch 2003; Arditì 2007; Moffitt 2016). We discuss elsewhere evidence suggesting that, indeed, populists and mainstream candidates differ quite substantially on the socially benevolent and malevolent traits of their perceived personality (Nai and Martínez i Coma 2018). It is thus logical to find that Trump's extreme public persona emerges even more clearly when compared to the average profile of mainstream (i.e., nonpopulist, $N = 86$) candidates; Table 3 presents this comparison, and the differences between the two profiles are often staggering.

TABLE 2
Comparing Trump and Other Populists

Reputation Traits and Components	Trump		Other Populists (Average)			Differences and Effect Size			
	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Diff Means ^a	Sig Diff ^b	Cohen's <i>d</i>
<i>Big Five</i>									
Extraversion	3.61	0.44	28	2.55	0.65	21	1.06	0.000	2.01
Extraverted, enthusiastic	3.39	0.74	28	2.25	0.72	21	1.14	0.000	1.59
Reserved, quiet	0.18	0.48	28	1.16	0.83	21	-0.98	0.000	-1.53
Agreeableness	0.18	0.39	28	1.05	0.52	21	-0.87	0.000	-1.97
Critical, quarrelsome	3.93	0.26	28	3.12	0.53	21	0.81	0.000	2.08
Sympathetic, warm	0.29	0.66	28	1.22	0.74	21	-0.93	0.000	-1.37
Conscientiousness	0.68	0.81	28	2.41	0.69	21	-1.73	0.000	-2.32
Dependable, self-disciplined	0.39	0.88	28	2.13	0.85	21	-1.74	0.000	-2.05
Disorganized, careless	3.04	1.00	28	1.32	0.64	21	1.72	0.000	2.03
Emotional stability	0.43	0.70	28	1.65	0.69	21	-1.22	0.000	-1.79
Anxious, easily upset	3.25	1.27	28	2.29	0.79	21	0.96	0.002	0.90
Calm, emotionally stable	0.11	0.31	28	1.59	0.69	21	-1.48	0.000	-2.98
Openness	1.87	0.77	27	1.67	0.71	21	0.2	0.356	0.27
Open to new experiences, complex	1.07	1.21	27	1.23	0.75	21	-0.16	0.577	-0.16
Conventional, uncreative	1.32	1.12	28	1.88	0.80	21	-0.56	0.047	-0.57
<i>Dark Triad</i>									
Narcissism	3.91	0.26	34	3.13	0.43	21	0.78	0.000	2.38
Wants to be admired by others	3.88	0.41	34	3.08	0.56	21	0.80	0.000	1.73

(Continues)

Table 2 (Continued)

Reputation Traits and Components	Trump			Other Populists (Average)			Differences and Effect Size		
	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Diff Means ^a	Sig Diff ^b	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Wants attention from others	3.94	0.24	34	3.17	0.44	21	0.77	0.000	2.38
Psychopathy	3.66	0.83	34	2.81	0.72	21	0.85	0.000	1.10
Shows a lack of remorse	3.53	1.16	34	2.86	0.70	21	0.67	0.010	0.67
Tends to be callous or insensitive	3.79	0.73	34	2.76	0.79	21	1.03	0.000	1.39
Machiavellianism	3.44	0.62	33	2.52	0.63	21	0.92	0.000	1.50
Might manipulate others to succeed	3.88	0.33	34	3.20	0.66	21	0.68	0.000	1.44
Tends to use flattery to succeed	3.00	1.15	33	1.83	0.83	21	1.17	0.000	1.15

Note: All variables range from 0 (*very low*) to 4 (*very high*). N for Trump refers to the total number of experts who provided answers for that candidate; N for "other populists" refers to the total number of candidates on which the average score is computed (knowing that each score for any given candidate comes from an aggregation of expert answers). Similarly, the standard deviation (SD) for "other populists" is computed as the deviation from the aggregated mean score for each candidate within this category.

^aMean difference is computed by subtracting the (average) score from the other candidates from Trump's score; thus, a positive score indicates that Trump was evaluated with a higher score on that trait/component than other candidates (on average).

^bScores represent *p* values, computed through independent samples *t* tests (two-tailed).

TABLE 3
Comparing Trump and All Nonpopulist Candidates

Reputation Traits and Components	Trump		Nonpopulists (Average)			Differences and Effect Size			
	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Diff Means ^a	Sig Diff ^b	Cohen's <i>d</i>
<i>Big Five</i>									
Extraversion	3.61	0.44	28	2.17	0.78	86	1.44	0.000	2.04
Extraverted, enthusiastic	3.39	0.74	28	2.19	0.90	86	1.20	0.000	1.40
Reserved, quiet	0.18	0.48	28	1.84	0.82	86	-1.66	0.000	-2.23
Agreeableness	0.18	0.39	28	1.99	0.60	86	-1.81	0.000	-3.28
Critical, quarrelsome	3.93	0.26	28	2.11	0.75	86	1.82	0.000	2.76
Sympathetic, warm	0.29	0.66	28	2.15	0.80	86	-1.86	0.000	-2.44
Conscientiousness	0.68	0.81	28	2.78	0.62	86	-2.10	0.000	-3.16
Dependable, self-disciplined	0.39	0.88	28	2.60	0.77	86	-2.21	0.000	-2.79
Disorganized, careless	3.04	1.00	28	1.04	0.63	86	2.00	0.000	2.74
Emotional stability	0.43	0.70	28	2.46	0.73	86	-2.03	0.000	-2.83
Anxious, easily upset	3.25	1.27	28	1.62	0.79	86	1.63	0.000	1.77
Calm, emotionally stable	0.11	0.31	28	2.55	0.81	86	-2.44	0.000	-3.41
Openness	1.87	0.77	27	2.05	0.76	86	-0.18	0.294	-0.24
Open to new experiences, complex	1.07	1.21	27	2.18	0.80	86	-1.11	0.000	-1.23
Conventional, uncreative	1.32	1.12	28	2.07	0.87	86	-0.75	0.002	-0.81
<i>Dark Triad</i>									
Narcissism	3.91	0.26	34	2.51	0.68	86	1.40	0.000	2.38
Wants to be admired by others	3.88	0.41	34	2.65	0.76	86	1.23	0.000	1.82

(Continues)

Table 3 (Continued)

Reputation Traits and Components	Trump			Nonpopulists (Average)			Differences and Effect Size		
	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Diff Means ^a	Sig Diff ^b	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Wants attention from others	3.94	0.24	34	2.47	0.79	86	1.47	0.000	2.17
Psychopathy	3.66	0.83	34	1.96	0.79	86	1.70	0.000	2.14
Shows a lack of remorse	3.53	1.16	34	2.16	0.88	86	1.37	0.000	1.43
Tends to be callous or insensitive	3.79	0.73	34	1.76	0.80	86	2.03	0.000	2.62
Machiavellianism	3.44	0.62	33	2.03	0.76	86	1.41	0.000	1.96
Might manipulate others to succeed	3.88	0.33	34	2.27	0.88	86	1.61	0.000	2.12
Tends to use flattery to succeed	3.00	1.15	33	1.79	0.76	86	1.21	0.000	1.38

Note: All variables range from 0 (*very low*) to 4 (*very high*). N for Trump refers to the total number of experts who provided answers for that candidate; N for “nonpopulists” refers to the total number of candidates on which the average score is computed (knowing that each score for any given candidate comes from an aggregation of expert answers). Similarly, the standard deviation (SD) for “nonpopulists” is computed as the deviation from the aggregated mean score for each candidate within this category.

^aMean difference is computed by subtracting the (average) score from the other candidates from Trump's score; thus, a positive score indicates that Trump was evaluated with a higher score on that trait/component than other candidates (on average).

^bScores represent *p* values, computed through independent samples *t* tests (two tailed).

Campaigning Style

We show elsewhere that populist candidates are significantly more likely to rely on negativity and emotionality in their campaigning efforts (Nai 2018b). Based on the evidence discussed above, the lingering questions are (1) whether Trump's profile is extraordinary also when it comes to the use of negativity and emotionality and (2) if the use of these campaigning techniques is associated with the candidate's personality profile.

Concerning first Trump's communication, we again find evidence of his extraordinary profile. Table 4 compares the profile of Trump with the ones of the 21 other populists in the data set in terms of the use of negative campaigning in general, character attacks in particular, fear appeals, and enthusiasm appeals. As previously for personality, we also compare with the average score of all other (nonpopulist) candidates in the data set. At a glance, it appears that populists are more likely to use a negative tone, character attacks, and fear appeals and less likely to use enthusiasm appeals than nonpopulist candidates (Nai 2018b). Looking more particularly at Trump, it appears again that his profile is one of extremes; he scores very high on the use of negative campaigning and fear appeals (in both cases, the fourth highest score among populists) and has the single highest score in the data set when it comes to the use of character attacks. Although his (limited) use of enthusiasm appeals did not qualify Trump for top ratings in this category, his score is still below the average use of this rhetoric of all the other populists.

With this in mind, are the candidates' personality profiles associated with their use of negativity and emotionality? Research on the strategic reasons for competing candidates to go negative (and emotional) is widespread (e.g., Nai and Walter 2015; Ridout and Searles 2011), but virtually nothing is known about whether campaigning is also driven by the personality of candidates. And yet, good reasons exist that it should, as growing evidence suggests that personality and communication behavior are strongly associated (de Vries et al. 2013). We test this assumption by regressing the use of negativity and emotionality on the candidates' profile in terms of personality. The models are presented in Tables 5 and 6 (for the Big Five and Dark Triad, respectively) and include controls for several "powerful alternatives" that have been shown to drive campaigning style, for example, the fact that incumbents are less likely to go negative (Lau and Pomper 2004). To be sure, the relationship could be more complex than what is discussed here. Given that our measures of personality are based on observers' assessments, we cannot exclude the possibility that the campaigning style used by candidates influenced the assessment of their personality; for instance, a harsher tone could lead to perceiving the candidate as less agreeable. In other words, campaigning could be the element that matches the candidates' reputation (how their personality is perceived) with their personality profile (what their personality is): less agreeable candidates are more likely to go negative and are perceived as less agreeable because they go negative. Regardless of this point, the argument we are trying to make here stands: personality and campaigning style are associated.

Looking first at the Big Five (Table 5), candidates scoring higher on agreeableness and openness are significantly less likely to use an aggressive and fearful rhetoric—that is, they are significantly less likely to go negative, use character attacks, and use fear appeals and more likely to use enthusiasm appeals. The use of character attacks—the harsher form

TABLE 4
Campaigning Style of Trump, Other Populists, and Nonpopulists

		<i>Negativity</i>		<i>Emotionality</i>	
		<i>Negative Tone</i>	<i>Character Attacks</i>	<i>Fear Appeals</i>	<i>Enthusiasm Appeals</i>
<i>Populists</i>					
Andrej Babiš	Czech Republic	0.63	0.60	0.59	0.59
Boyko Borisov	Bulgaria	0.48	0.68	0.53	0.50
Milo Đukanović	Montenegro	0.72	0.71	0.79	0.70
Arlene Foster	Northern Ireland	0.86	0.77	0.92	0.11
Alexander Gauland	Germany	0.87	0.55	0.89	0.09
Nikola Gruevski	Macedonia	0.81	0.75	0.79	0.45
Norbert Hofer	Austria	0.76	0.68	0.76	0.31
Siv Jensen	Norway	0.49	0.30	0.56	0.39
Albin Kurti	Kosovo	0.45	0.55	0.65	0.64
Marine Le Pen	France	0.73	0.54	0.86	0.27
Jean-Luc Mélenchon	France	0.54	0.34	0.60	0.41
Paul Nuttall	United Kingdom	0.76	0.44	0.78	0.13
Michelle O'Neill	Northern Ireland	0.58	0.58	0.53	0.32
Tomio Okamura	Czech Republic	0.81	0.73	0.97	0.21
Daniel Ortega	Nicaragua	0.44	0.63	0.40	0.83
Ivan Vilibor Sinčić	Croatia	0.73	0.38	0.71	0.15
Heinz-Christian Strache	Austria	0.59	0.51	0.77	0.27
Aleksandar Vučić	Serbia	0.61	0.69	0.73	0.60
Geert Wilders	The Netherlands	0.86	0.64	0.98	0.07
Vladimir Zhirinovskiy	Russia	0.63	0.65	0.65	0.34
Gennady Zyuganov	Russia	0.56	0.31	0.48	0.34
Donald Trump	USA	0.84	0.80	0.92	0.27
Trump's ranking ^a		4H	1H	4H	9L
Average other populists ^b (N = 21)		0.66	0.57	0.71	0.37
Average nonpopulists (N = 82)		0.46	0.40	0.48	0.53

Note: All variables range from 0 (*very low*) to (*very high*).

^aThe ranking compares Trump scores with those of other populists; the number reflects the ranking, and the letter reflects the direction (highest or lowest). For instance, 1H means “First highest score,” 2H “Second highest score,” 1L “First lowest score,” and so on.

^bExcluding Trump.

of negative campaigning—is negatively associated with conscientiousness and positively associated with extraversion. Emotional stability is not associated with any of the campaigning strategies. Turning to the Dark Triad (Table 6), one trait seems associated with the use of a harsher and overall negative campaigning style: psychopathy. The effect for this trait is present across the board, very strong, and significant ($p < .001$) in all models

TABLE 5
Big Five and Communication Style

	Negativity						Emotionality					
	Negative Tone			Character Attacks			Fear Appeals			Enthusiasm Appeals		
	Coef	Sig	SE	Coef	Sig	SE	Coef	Sig	SE	Coef	Sig	SE
Extraversion	0.03		(0.02)	0.06	*** ^a	(0.02)	0.02		(0.02)	0.03		(0.02)
Agreeableness	-0.10	*** ^a	(0.02)	-0.08	*** ^a	(0.02)	-0.10	*** ^a	(0.03)	0.10	*** ^a	(0.02)
Conscientiousness	-0.01		(0.02)	-0.04	*	(0.02)	0.00		(0.03)	-0.00		(0.02)
Emotional stability	-0.02		(0.02)	-0.00		(0.02)	-0.03		(0.03)	0.01		(0.02)
Openness	-0.08	*** ^a	(0.02)	-0.07	*** ^a	(0.02)	-0.06	** ^b	(0.02)	0.03		(0.02)
Populist candidate	-0.00		(0.04)	0.00		(0.04)	0.00		(0.05)	-0.03		(0.04)
Incumbent	-0.10	*** ^a	(0.03)	-0.06	** ^b	(0.02)	-0.10	** ^b	(0.03)	0.12	*** ^a	(0.03)
Success	0.00		(0.00)	0.00	** ^b	(0.00)	0.00		(0.00)	0.00	** ^b	(0.00)
Extremism	0.01		(0.02)	-0.01		(0.02)	0.04	†	(0.02)	-0.04	†	(0.02)
Left-right	0.01		(0.01)	0.00		(0.01)	0.02	* ^c	(0.01)	0.00		(0.01)
Female	-0.04		(0.03)	0.02		(0.03)	-0.05		(0.03)	-0.00		(0.03)
Year born	-0.00		(0.00)	0.00		(0.00)	0.00		(0.00)	-0.00		(0.00)
Electoral system: PR	0.01		(0.03)	0.03		(0.03)	-0.00		(0.03)	0.02		(0.03)
EN candidates	-0.01		(0.01)	-0.01		(0.01)	0.00		(0.01)	0.00		(0.01)
Election competitiveness	0.04	** ^b	(0.01)	-0.01		(0.01)	0.05	** ^b	(0.02)	-0.03	* ^c	(0.01)
Presidential election	-0.04		(0.03)	0.01		(0.04)	-0.05		(0.04)	0.06	†	(0.04)
Civil rights	0.00	** ^b	(0.00)	0.01	*** ^a	(0.00)	0.00		(0.00)	-0.00		(0.00)
OECD	-0.10	** ^b	(0.04)	-0.15	*** ^a	(0.04)	-0.09	†	(0.05)	0.01		(0.04)
Intercept	0.95		(2.30)	0.40		(2.12)	-1.74		(2.71)	1.35		(2.40)
N (candidates)	104			104			104			104		
N (elections)	47			47			47			47		
R ²	0.70			0.69			0.60			0.66		

Note: All models are random effects hierarchical linear regressions (HLM) in which candidates are nested within elections. All dependent variables range from 0 (very low) to 1 (very high).
^a*** $p < .001$; ^b** $p < .01$; ^c* $p < .05$; [†] $p < .10$.

TABLE 6
Dark Triad and Communication Style

	Negativity				Emotionality							
	Negative Tone		Character Attacks		Fear Appeals		Enthusiasm Appeals					
	Coef	Sig	SE	Coef	Sig	SE	Coef	Sig	SE			
Narcissism	-0.04		(0.03)	0.01		(0.02)	-0.03		(0.03)	0.05	†	(0.03)
Psychopathy	0.10	*** ^a	(0.02)	0.09	*** ^a	(0.02)	0.10	*** ^a	(0.03)	-0.09	*** ^a	(0.02)
Machiavellianism	0.02		(0.03)	-0.00		(0.03)	-0.00		(0.03)	0.02		(0.03)
Populist candidate	0.09	* ^c	(0.04)	0.07	†	(0.04)	0.07		(0.05)	-0.09	* ^c	(0.04)
Incumbent	-0.10	** ^b	(0.03)	-0.05	†	(0.03)	-0.09	** ^b	(0.03)	0.12	*** ^a	(0.03)
Success	-0.00		(0.00)	0.00		(0.00)	0.00		(0.00)	0.00	*** ^a	(0.00)
Extremism	0.01		(0.02)	0.01		(0.02)	0.05	* ^c	(0.03)	-0.03		(0.02)
Left-right	0.02	* ^c	(0.01)	0.00		(0.01)	0.03	** ^b	(0.01)	-0.01		(0.01)
Female	-0.08	* ^c	(0.03)	0.02		(0.03)	-0.08	* ^c	(0.04)	0.04		(0.03)
Year born	-0.00	†	(0.00)	-0.00		(0.00)	-0.00		(0.00)	0.00		(0.00)
Electoral system: PR	0.02		(0.03)	0.03		(0.03)	0.01		(0.04)	0.02		(0.03)
EN candidates	-0.02	* ^c	(0.01)	-0.02	†	(0.01)	-0.01		(0.01)	0.01		(0.01)
Election competitiveness	0.02	†	(0.01)	-0.01		(0.02)	0.03		(0.02)	-0.02		(0.01)
Presidential election	-0.03		(0.03)	0.01		(0.04)	-0.03		(0.05)	0.04		(0.04)
Civil rights	0.01	*** ^a	(0.00)	0.01	*** ^a	(0.00)	0.00		(0.00)	0.00	†	(0.00)
OECD	-0.13	*** ^a	(0.04)	-0.18	*** ^a	(0.04)	-0.11	* ^c	(0.05)	0.04		(0.04)
Intercept	4.87	†	(2.49)	3.91		(2.41)	0.89		(2.93)	-0.49		(2.58)
N (candidates)	104			104			104			104		
N (elections)	47			47			47			47		
R ²	0.61			0.57			0.53			0.58		

Note: All models are random effects hierarchical linear regressions (HLM) in which candidates are nested within elections. All dependent variables range from 0 (very low) to 1 (very high).
^a*** $p < .001$; ^b** $p < .01$; ^c* $p < .05$; [†] $p < .10$.

and including all controls. In this sense, our results confirm the image of psychopaths as impulsive and prone to callous social attitudes, showing a strong proclivity for interpersonal antagonism, social boldness, and “fearless dominance” (Lilienfeld et al. 2012; Jonason 2014).

Discussion: Looking Back and Looking Ahead

Trump: An Atypical Figure

As many have remarked, many elements of Trump’s personal life put him at odds with the typical figure of the contemporary politician. And yet, this is not what makes him unique. To be sure, before entering the presidential race he never held elected office or had prior military experience to speak of—but this is also the case for other notorious figures in contemporary politics, from Silvio Berlusconi to Emmanuel Macron. He claims a vast personal fortune—but many other heads of state are also quite wealthy (Berlusconi again and, of course, Vladimir Putin). Trump came to the job trailed by active investigations into alleged wrongdoings ranging from financial misconduct to corruption—but the same can be said for Benjamin Netanyahu and, once again, Berlusconi. Finally, Trump’s vitriolic discourse and explicit nativism seem to shock many observers—who probably forgot that Jean-Marie Le Pen, Jörg Haider, and Geert Wilders, to name just a few, went there (and perhaps beyond) a while ago.

What really sets Trump—the candidate and now the president—apart from virtually all other contemporary political figures is his off-the-charts public persona. Many have commented on his callousness, his thin-skinned and mercurial reactions to even mundane affairs, and of course his monumental adoration of himself. What was missing, however, is systematic empirical evidence showing that, indeed, Trump has a unique personality style (but see Visser, Book, and Volk 2017; Hyatt et al. 2018; Nai and Maier 2018). Based on ratings of national and international scholars in politics and elections, and relying on well-established measures of individual personality, we provided in this article a systematic profiling of Trump’s public persona. Our approach is innovative (1) in providing a methodical personality reputation profile based on well-established inventories of human personality (Big Five and Dark Triad) and (2) by applying the same measures to a wide palette of other candidates, thus allowing for consistent comparisons across candidates. Our data reveal that Trump scores very high in extraversion but extremely low on agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability; furthermore, he scores very high on the three components of the Dark Triad.

Systematic comparison between Trump’s public persona and the profiles of other mainstream and populist candidates shows that Trump is, indeed, off the charts. Compared with 21 other populists worldwide, Trump ranks as the second highest score in perceived extraversion and as the single lowest score in agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability. Trump also has the highest score of narcissism and Machiavellianism and the third highest score on perceived psychopathy.

Looking at the communication style of candidates, our analyses also suggest that, in general, high scores on the socially desirable traits (Big Five) are associated with more positive campaigns (both in terms of tone and emotionality), and vice versa, whereas high scores on the socially malevolent traits (Dark Triad) are more likely to be associated with more negative and fear-driven campaigns. Where does Trump fit in these results? Once again, his profile is one of extremes: he scores very high on the use of negative campaigning and fear appeals and has the single highest score in the data set when it comes to the use of character attacks. In this sense, Trump represents the extreme confirmation that candidates with callous and socially malevolent public personas are more likely to campaign in a negative and harsh way. Trump's extreme profile on both the eight personality traits and four communication elements appears clearly in Figure 3.

Looking back at the 2016 election, lacking any counterfactual evidence, it is of course hard to know if such extreme personality reputation helped Trump in winning the presidency. On its own, each election is a game of chess with endless variants, infinite pieces, and evolving rules. Did Trump's personality mobilize voters outside the GOP and persuade the "angry white men" in the Rust Belt to get out and vote? Did it alienate and demobilize other voters weary of rough and confrontational politics? And could his personality be the main driver of the extraordinary media coverage he benefited from all along the campaign, which undoubtedly increased his saliency and redefined the agenda? Much research is still needed to disentangle these dynamics, both at the voters' level and by looking at the relationship between media coverage, support, and political discourse during the 2016 election and beyond.

Looking Ahead: Predicting the Trajectory of the Trump Administration

Looking back at his years as the Roman emperor, Marcus Aurelius asked¹¹ his general and friend Maximus: "How will the world speak my name in years to come? Will I be known as the philosopher? The warrior? The tyrant?" One might wonder the same for Donald Trump. Will his time in the Oval Office be successful? Existing literature about the performance of past White House guests has suggested that his personality might have a role to play, and a few predictions can be advanced at this stage.

First, and perhaps counterintuitively, our results lead us to predict an undeniable potential to score policy wins for the Trump administration. Several studies have assessed the performance of past presidents in terms of "presidential greatness" (Simonton 1981; Winter 1987), which has been shown to be associated with higher conscientiousness (Rubenzer, Faschingbauer, and Ones 2000), on which Trump scores particularly low. However, the same study also suggested that extraversion (on which Trump scores extremely high) equally predicts greatness and even that "disagreeable presidents do somewhat better" (Rubenzer, Faschingbauer, and Ones 2000, 415). Joly, Soroka, and Loewen (2018) also found that Belgian politicians have more successful careers, for instance, a greater longevity in Parliament and reaching more prestigious positions, when they score comparatively lower in agreeableness, whereas Ramey, Klingler, and Hollibaugh (2017)

11. At least, he did so in Ridley Scott's Hollywood tale (*Gladiator* 2000).

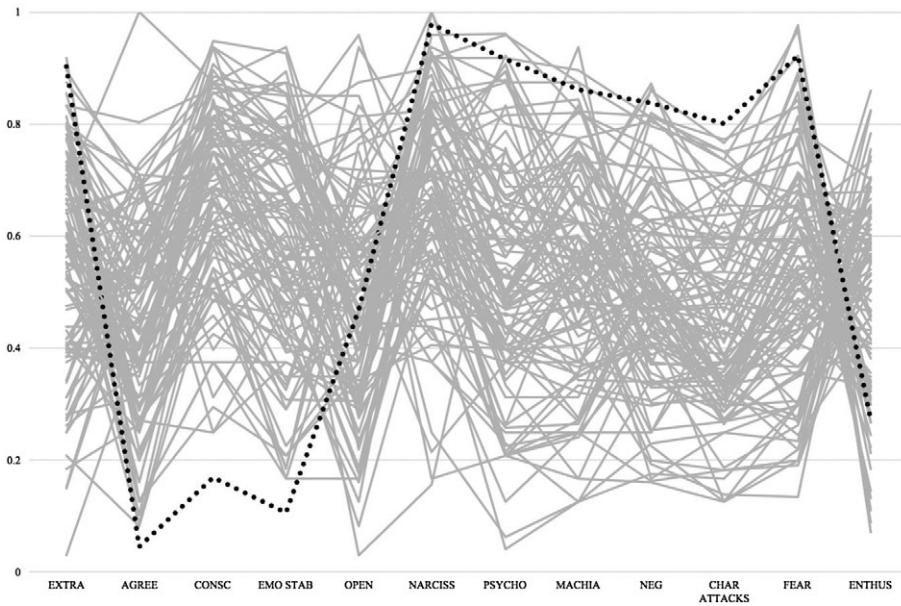


FIGURE 3. Trump's Personality and Communication Style, Compared to All Other Candidates. *Note:* The thick dotted line represents Trump's scores; all other lines in light gray represent scores for all remaining candidates. All variables range from 0 (*very low*) to 1 (*very high*). $N = 104$.

showed that agreeable members of the U.S. Congress are less effective in passing legislation. Similarly, recent evidence shows that presidents scoring high in “excitement seeking” (a central facet of extraversion) are more likely “to issue the kind of high-profile orders that are captured by the national media” (Gallagher and Blackstone 2015, 242). The recent Singapore meeting between Trump and North Korea’s Kim Jong Un fits this description both in terms of media hype and for its potential of major geopolitical significance. House, Spangler, and Woycke (1991) found that the “charisma” of the president drives overall better economic performance once in office, and Trump himself would not disagree with this assessment. There is not yet enough evidence that the unquestionably strong recovery of the U.S. economy can be attributed to Trump’s administration, but good performance of the country in terms of gross domestic product expansion and lower unemployment should be expected. Simonton (1988) showed that charismatic presidents promulgate comparatively more executive orders, and we should thus expect Trump to continue to do so in the future. Other potentially positive effects of Trump’s extreme personality could be driven by his sky-high narcissism, which has been shown to be associated in U.S. presidents with leadership abilities, willingness to take risks, boldness, and having a more active imagination (Watts et al. 2013). Lilienfeld et al. (2012) also found that presidents rated higher on boldness (a component of psychopathic personality) tended to perform better in terms of leadership and crisis management. In this sense, the results presented in this article advocate for caution when assuming that Trump will necessarily be a president without major achievements at the end of his term(s). Over the first

two years of the Trump administration, only a handful of major concrete policy successes can be accounted for—the overhaul of the U.S. tax code is the most significant one—but we see no reason to expect this to stop.

At the same time, our results could support the prediction that Trump will be a chaotic president. Watts et al. (2013) showed that grandiose narcissism increases the likelihood of tolerating unethical behavior in subordinates, “placing political success over effective policy” (2013, 2383), and having a higher chance of facing impeachment resolutions. Similar results have been found also for presidents high in psychopathy (Lilienfeld et al. 2012), another trait on which Trump scores particularly high. Looking back at Trump’s first couple of years in office, it is not hard to find evidence in this sense: explicit support for candidates embroiled in sex scandals (sometimes even with minors), massive leaks from the White House from senior officials, questionable hush money paid to porn stars and playmates in exchange of nondisclosure agreements over their alleged affairs with Trump, Cabinet officials accused of unethical behavior (e.g., the Environmental Protection Agency’s Scott Pruitt’s resigning over multiple alleged ethical and legal breaches), and more. The flag of impeachment has also been waved often—either in relation to the Department of Justice’s Russia probe over alleged collusion and obstruction of justice or by invoking the Twenty-Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution over alleged mental instability and unfitness for office. These issues will undoubtedly determine the future of the Trump administration as well. His profile could also suggest rocky relationships with members of Congress—for instance, Simonton (1988) showed that presidents scoring lower on courtesy, patience, and willingness to compromise are more likely to veto major bills, see their vetoes overturned, and have their Cabinet or Supreme Court nominees rejected. Even with a Republican-majority Congress, significant controversy surrounded the nominations of several of Trump’s Cabinet members (Betsy DeVos and Mick Mulvaney were both confirmed by 51 votes in the Senate and in the first case Vice President Mike Pence had to be the tie-breaking vote); similarly, the confirmation of Judges Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh in 2017 and 2018 for the vacant seats on the Supreme Court went undoubtedly less smoothly than many in the GOP and the Trump administration would have hoped. The results of the 2018 midterm elections, with the potential of major power shifts from the GOP to the Democrats, should not simplify the task of President Trump.

Overall, the comparison of his profile with trends described in the literature suggests that Trump will continue to be in campaign mode and be relatively successful in (short-term) crisis management, agenda setting, and the setup of new legislative initiatives. At the same time, his profile will undoubtedly drive impulsive decisions (e.g., as indicated by Trump’s management of the North Korea issue, from “Little Rocket Man” and the “Fire and Fury” rhetoric to the praise of Kim Jong Un as “terrific” and “very talented” in the space of a few months), unilateralism and anti-globalism (the “America First” doctrine and the recent U.S. withdrawals from the Iran deal and the Paris climate accord are perfect examples), and a lack of inclusivity (e.g., as demonstrated in various decisions on domestic politics that tend to further divide rather than to unify the nation—and, of course, the “very fine people on both sides” misstep regarding the events in Charlottesville). It is not a mystery that Trump’s management of the White House

is quite unusual (Pffiffner 2018), and numerous accounts of a chaotic presidency have already been published in books that flew off the shelves upon release. Although perhaps successful in setting conservative policies that could define the future of the country for many years, Trump's presidency will continue to be punctuated by scandals, reckless behavior, high staff turnover, volatile communication, and a dangerous tolerance for unethical behavior.

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