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Leadership in Social Movements: The Personality Factor

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Summary

For many decades, psychologists and political scientists have reasoned about the proposed link between specific personality traits and leadership emergence. Most projects, however, have addressed this issue either with regard to more global trends (e.g. with respect to personality traits that leaders usually inherit) or in the context of rather practical implications, with particular reference to job performance or leadership effectiveness, for example. This project, then, sets out to examine to what extent the personality dimensions of the so-called Big Five - Openness, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, and Extraversion - relate to leadership role in the context of a specific environment: social movements. In order to examine this issue, we collected a sample of 51 participants that subsequently indicated their assumed role in a given social movement and assessed their scores on the personality dimensions mentioned above. Results indicated statistically significant differences between leaders and non-leaders on rankings of extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism, thereby lending support to previous studies.

Introduction

The concept of leadership, and the question whether human beings have natural tendencies to either lead or follow, has been discussed since antiquity. Likewise, psychologists have been trying to address the question of whether we can develop leadership traits under given circumstances and with the right provision of expertise. Previous to the emergence of cognitive measures of personality traits in the 1930s, the debate had long been dominated by the so-called Great Man Theory, which assumes that certain individuals are equipped with strong charisma, wisdom, and intelligence, and that it is a 'personalized magnetic appeal' that allows leaders to charm and influence others. While this approach stresses rather superficial attributes, such as charisma and attractiveness, and their tendency to mobilize others into action, trait and personality theories likewise assume that certain people inherit qualities that make them particularly well-suited to be good leaders. With the advent of cognitive psychology, those traits have been subjected to thorough investigation, and have yielded diverse scales and models for their assessment.

One such model is the five-factor model of personality, commonly referred to as the Big Five. It distinguished between five fundamental personality traits - Neuroticism,

Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness - and has been subjected to wide and thorough academic debate. Whereas previous well-known trait theorists have suggested a various number of possible personality trait dimensions, including, most notably, Gordon Allport's list of 4,000 personality traits, Raymond Cattell's 16 personality factors and Hans Eysenck's three-factor theory, many contemporary personality psychologists believe that the Big Five accurately summarized the building blocks of personality (e.g. Eysenck, 1990; Funder & Ozer, 2010).

Personality trait theory seems particularly interesting in the context of leadership. If particular traits are common to leadership, how do we explain that some people might possess those qualities, yet they do not establish themselves as leaders? How many of those traits does a person need in order to qualify as a good leader? And how do we explain cases in which people have taken on the role of influential leaders, even without possessing some or all of these trait dimensions? These questions highlight the importance of using trait theories, such as the Big Five, to explain leadership emergence. While personality traits can be studied in a wide range of different environments, the context of social movements seems to be a particularly interesting laboratory for the assessment of personality differences between leaders and non-leaders. That is, "by looking at a range of different leaders in a variety of situations over time, [we can] seek to identify particular personality or behavioural characteristics that leaders share". By doing so, "research on leadership emergence identifies the factors associated with someone being perceived as leaderlike" (Hogan et al., 1994, p. 496).

Despite Judge et al.'s (2002) call for future research to "explain the linkages between the Big Five traits and leadership" (p. 774), very few studies have set out to examine the theoretical mechanisms that link personality traits and leader effectiveness. One reason for this phenomenon is the nature of the concept of personality and its somewhat ambiguous relationship to leadership role. As with many other psychological constructs and despite a long-standing and well-documented tradition of personality research, the relationship between personality traits and leadership emergence has often been inconsistent. Hence, we set out to enhance the theoretical validity and precision of the trait theory of leadership by recruiting participants from various social movements.

A great deal of contemporary political analysis revolves around social movements, as they are an important building block in democratic civil societies. A social movement can be

broadly defined as a type of group action in which a large group of individuals¹ focuses on carrying out a plan for social change - most commonly through a series of campaigns, demonstrations, organized protests and resistance, public meetings, use of the media, to only name a few. In short, they are held to “emerge as a result of the efforts of purposeful actors (individuals, organizations) to assert new public values, form new relationships rooted in those values, and mobilize the political, economic, and cultural power to translate these values into action” (Ganz, 2008, p. 2). While classifications can be established on a variety of characteristics of social movements, one of them distinguishes between new and old movements. New social movements can be characterized by several attributes: they are inclusive, keep distance from established political institutions, and are often driven by post-materialistic values. Another hallmark is their fluid and open structure (Hermann, 1996, pp. 39-67). It is this particular feature of social movements that we want to employ in this study.

Our assumption is that in a fluid and less hierarchical structure, managers in the organization would have to be equipped with certain leadership traits, which in turn contribute to their ability to manage the movement, mobilize participants to engage in activities, and maintain such position in a flexible context over a long period of time. In addition to that, we aimed to extend findings from previous research on personality dimensions in various areas related to leadership (e.g. job performance and leadership effectiveness) into the realm of social movements. The leaders are the architect of the organization, it's ideology and mobilization resources. Their presence is the key for the movement success and hence their important for the research of social movements (in *ibid.* p: 91). Our goal in this essay is to show that by taking the Big Five personality model into account, we can improve explanations of key issues in leadership theory in the context of social movements, especially by highlighting differences between leaders and non-leaders.

In the following, we will define and review personality- and trait-based theories of leadership and the structure of social movements, and provide a literature overview regarding research on the so-called Big Five personality factors and their suggested relationship with leadership emergence. It is in this context that we first provide a brief summary of the five specific traits, some of which have consistently been connected to leadership.

¹ Sometimes in the form of an organization

Theoretical Underpinnings

The Five Factor Model

As mentioned above, over the past few decades, a general consensus has emerged that a five-factor model of personality - the so-called Big Five - most accurately accounts for a description of our underlying aspects of personality (e.g. Goldberg, 1990). Evidence of this theory has been growing over the past few decades (Goldberg, 1981; and McCrae & Costa, 1987). While a vast array of personality measures are available, Judge et al. (2002) have concluded that the “Big Five typology is a fruitful basis for examining the dispositional predictors of leadership” (p. 773). Leadership, then, has been defined as “accepting responsibility to create conditions that enable others to achieve shared purpose in the face of uncertainty [...] Leaders accept responsibility not only for their individual ‘part’ of the work, but also for the collective ‘whole’ (Ganz, 2008, p. 2). Leaders have to cope with a variety of challenges, some of which can emerge rapidly and unpredictably: the breaching of traditional practices; the looming of structural or organizational threat; the appearance of sudden changes and options; the transformation of social and technological transformations that challenge the status quo, to only name a few (Ganz, 2008).

Personality- and trait-based approaches to leadership basically argue that “certain individuals have innate characteristics that make them ideally suited for leadership, and these traits or characteristics are what differentiate these leaders from everyone else” (Bligh, 2011, p. 639). There might be several explanations as to why specific traits are linked to leadership role. Extraversion, for example, may be related to leadership because extraverts are generally more sociable, outgoing, and talkative, all of which are features that are connected to the emergence of leadership (Bass, 1990). Other explanations suggest this phenomenon in the context of self-fulfilling prophecy: “it may be that individuals implicitly expect leaders to be extraverted” (Judge et al., 2002, p. 774), thereby fuelling implicit theories of leaders that include various aspects of both sociability and assertiveness (Lord et al., 1984). That is, individuals with a natural tendency to be more extravert might find those characteristics perpetuated in environments in which people or colleagues express their views regarding that person’s leadership qualities. In a similar vein, “is Neuroticism negatively related to leadership because neurotic individuals are less likely to attempt leadership, because they are less inspirational, or because they have lower expectations of themselves or others?” (in *ibid.*, p. 774). Bligh (2011) has noted that “open individuals may be better leaders because

they are more creative and are divergent thinkers, because they are risk takers, or because their tendencies for esoteric thinking and fantasy (McCrae, 1996) make them more likely to be visionary leaders” (in *ibid.*)

In his vast work on the topic, Bass (1990) has posed two additional, fundamental questions on trait theories of leadership: First, what traits distinguish leaders from other people? And, second, what is the magnitude of those differences? Similarly, several authors, such as Hogan et al. (1994), have addressed the somewhat problematic conceptualization of leadership. They noted that leadership itself can be conceptualized and measured in a variety of ways. Stogdill goes even further and insists that “leadership is not a matter of passive status or of the mere possession of some combination of traits” (1948, p. 66), thereby rendering any studies combining the two inconclusive. This somewhat pessimistic outlook about the relationship of personality variables to leadership continues in contemporary strands of psychology. Conger and Kanungo (1998), for example, have described the trait approach as “too simplistic” (p. 38), and House and Aditya (1997) concluded that “it appear[s] [...] that there were few, if any, universal traits associated with effective leadership” (in Judge et al., 2002, p. 765). While a general opinion has surfaced in parts of the community of leadership scholars that the search for universal traits was futile” (p. 410), most of the studies mentioned above have - despite their negative predictions - acknowledged that the dimensions of the Big Five relate, at least to some extent, to leadership roles. Altogether, despite considerable research on this topic in the past century and several influential reviews on the issue (Lord et al., 1986), surprisingly little consensus has emerged in answering the two questions.

All in all, Cowley (1931) has summarized well the view of trait theorists in commenting that “the approach to the study of leadership has usually been and perhaps must always be through the study of traits” (p. 144). This is why, from the various personality measures that are currently available to psychological research, it is reasonable to employ the theoretical underpinnings of the Big Five. There are several reasons for such choice. First, and most importantly, it has long been established that the Big Five dimensionality exhibits high cross-cultural generalizability (McCrae & Costa, 1997). Second, research has suggested that the Big Five personality traits are heritable and stable over time (Costa & McCrae, 1988; Digman, 1989). Third, the Big Five model has proven to be a valuable tool in the context of the study of job performance and other fields with rather

practical implications. Hence, it has been suggested that it might lead to new conclusions in other realms of leadership studies. In our case, we tried to examine the realm of social movements. A study by Judge et al. (2002), for example, has shed some light on general patterns between leadership and the Big Five personality measures. Here, the authors found that neuroticism was negatively correlated with leadership role, whereas extraversion, openness, and conscientiousness were positively correlated with leader effectiveness. More concrete predictions, together with hypothesis regarding each of the five dimensions, are specified below.

1. First, Extraversion is defined as “the tendency to be sociable [...], assertive, and have positive energy”. Previous research has found that extraversion is, compared to the other personality dimensions, most strongly associated with leadership, and social leadership in particular (Costa & McCrae, 1988). Besides that, it has been widely considered as the most important personality trait of effective leaders. It is reasonable to assume that extraverts are more likely to emerge as leaders in groups, which has been confirmed by Hogan et al. (1994). This general tendency is reflected on a more personal, subjective level: it has been noted that Extraversion is related to being perceived as leaderlike (in *ibid*). In line with this, Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) have argued that “leaders are more likely than non-leaders to have a high level of energy and stamina and to be generally active, lively, and often restless” (p. 50). These characteristics of individuals with a high score in extraversion measures become particularly evident when seen in context of adjectives used to describe those who emerged as leaders in leaderless group discussions, such as “active, assertive, energetic, and not silent or withdrawn” (Gough, 1988; in Bligh, 2011, p. 640). Even more so, Gough (1990) found that “both of the major facets of Extraversion - dominance and sociability - were related to self and peer ratings of leadership”.

2. The second dimension of the Big Five, Conscientiousness, is defined as “an individual’s tendency to be organized, thorough, controlled, decisive, and dependable.” Of the other Big Five factors, this personality factor has been related to leadership second most strongly in previous research. Bass (1990) has commented on the link between these personality characteristics and their advantage for leader emergence, in that “task competence results in attempts to lead that are more likely to result in success for the leader, effectiveness for the

group, and reinforcement of the tendencies” (p. 109). Others have hypothesized a strong link between measures of job performance and leadership traits, and have subsequently shown that Conscientiousness is related to the former (Barrick & Mount, 1991), which suggests that Conscientiousness will be related to leadership traits. Other attributes that account for leadership qualities are, amongst others, initiative taking and persistence. In line with this, Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) have argued that “leaders must be tirelessly persistent in their activities and follow through with their programs” (p. 51). From a more process-oriented view, Conscientiousness has been suggested to relate to leadership because conscientious individuals exhibit high levels of integrity and engender trust (Hogan et al., 1994). According to Judge et al. (2011), the link between Conscientiousness and leadership might either be due to their ability to “excel at process aspects of leadership, such as setting goals; or because they are more likely to have initiative and persist in the face of obstacles” (p. 774).

3. Openness (sometimes referred to as openness to experience), the third dimension of the Big Five, refers to an “individual’s tendency to be curious, creative, insightful, and informed”. Openness shows high correlations with divergent thinking and is strongly related to both personality-based and behavioural measures of creativity (Feist, 1998; McCrae & Costa, 1997). Since Openness has only exhibited moderate relations with leadership, it has been suggested that leaders tend to score somewhat higher on measures of openness than non-leaders. It has been shown that individuals in leadership positions score higher on rankings of creativity, which naturally appears to be a hallmark skill of effective leaders (e.g. Sosik, Kahai, & Avolio, 1998).

4. Agreeableness, or “an individual’s tendency to be trusting, nurturing, conforming, and accepting”, has been only weakly associated with leadership, and the link between the two has not been defined or illustrated unambiguously. It can generally be assumed that related personality strands, such as altruism, tact, and sensitivity, can give more insight about an agreeable personality. In this context, Bass (1990) has shown that cooperativeness tends to be related to leadership. Likewise, Zaccaro et al. (1991) found that interpersonal sensitivity was related to leadership. On the one hand, agreeable individuals tend to be more modest (Goldberg, 1990), a quality that intuitively would seem rather unrelated to leadership

qualities, and which has been shown Bass (1990, p. 70). Other reasons to assume a rather ambiguous link between Agreeableness and leadership stem from studies that consider affiliation as an indicator of Agreeableness (Piedmont, McCrae, & Costa, 1991). Several scholars, however, has reasoned that Agreeableness may be correlated with leadership because “it is both a hindrance (agreeable individuals tend to be passive and compliant; Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997) and a help (agreeable individuals are likeable and empathetic; Hogan & Hogan, 2000) to leaders” (in Judge et al., 2002, p. 774).

5. Neuroticism, the last trait identified in the framework of the Big Five, refers to “the tendency to be anxious, hostile, depressed, vulnerable, and insecure”, and has been moderately and negatively related to leadership, suggesting that most leaders tend to be low in neuroticism. On the one hand, Bass (1990) has noted that “almost all studies on the relationship of self-confidence - indicating low Neuroticism - to leadership were uniform in the positive direction of their findings” (p. 69; in Judge et al, 2002, p. 766). In addition to that, research by Hill and Ritchie (1977) has shown that self-esteem, which is seen as yet another indicator of low Neuroticism, predicts leadership: “it appears that there is convincing evidence for the inclusion of self-esteem as an important trait of both superior and subordinate in analysing leadership effectiveness” (Hill & Ritchie, 1977, p. 499). On the other hand, however, a number of meta-analyses have failed to reveal statistically significant correlations between measures of adjustment and leadership perceptions (e.g. Lord et al., 1986). Further, “evidence also indicates that neurotic individuals are less likely to be perceived as leaders” (Hogan et al., 1994 in Judge et al., 2002, p. 768).

As mentioned earlier, the Big Five seems to be well-suited for a study of the relationship between personality traits in leaders and non-leaders. This essay, then, builds upon this dominant framework. It does so in an environment which does not depend on rather subjective perceptions of leadership and its qualities, but in which we can identify leaders and distinguish them from individuals assuming other roles. One such environment is a social movement, which most often consist of one or more identified leaders, their supervisors, peers, and subordinate, and hence allows for more consistent comparisons. Whereas subjective ratings of someone’s leadership qualities might be potentially contaminated, identifying concrete organizational roles can be a powerful tool for the study

of leadership function and personality traits, and hence justifies our choice of this natural laboratory.

Assumptions

Extraversion: Hypothesis (H1a): Considering this brief review of literature, we suppose extraversion to be positively related to leadership emergence. Further, leaders are hypothesized to score higher on levels of extraversion compared to those individuals assuming other roles in a given social movement.

Conscientiousness: Hypothesis (H1b): In line with Goldberg (1990), we argue that - due to higher levels of tenacity and persistence - conscientious subjects are more likely to correlate with leadership positions in social movements.

Openness: Hypothesis (H1c): Based on previous research, we suggest that Openness is positively correlated with leadership role.

Agreeableness: Hypothesis (H1d). In light of these conflicting directions, the possible relationship between Agreeableness and leadership is ambiguous. Yet, given the theoretical underpinnings, we assume a positive relationship between scores on Agreeableness for leaders and non-leaders.

Neuroticism: Hypothesis (H1e). In light of the evidence portrayed above, we assume that Neuroticism is negatively related to assuming a leadership role in a social movement.

Method

Data was collected using an online Hebrew questionnaire distributed digitally to member of social movements by means of various social platforms, during the month of april, 2013. The questionnaire contained three parts - the BFI questionnaire (see below); professional details for measuring the leadership like role, motivation in choosing this role and professional training; and several demographic variables - gender and age.

Sampling: In order to reach a relatively large number of respondents that are active in social movements in a short time, we used the snowball sampling method, a form of non-probability sampling which begins by identifying an individual perceived to be an appropriate respondent. This respondent, in turn, is then asked to identify another potential respondent. The process yielded sufficient data for subsequent analysis. The 51 respondents work in at least 42 different organizations in roles varying from CEOs and chairmen, to project managers, team leaders, professional advisors, educational instructors, and general workers.

Big Five: The Big Five traits were measured using the Hebrew version of the 'Big Five Inventory' (Etzion & Laski, 1998)². The inventory consists of 44 items, each assessed on a 7-point scale, where 0 means 'disagree strongly' and 6 means 'agree strongly'. Different items were then merged into the Big Five.

Leadership Role: Mostly, leadership is measured by measuring the perception of an individual by other, which may lead to a bias, as it is hard to distinguish between "leadership" and "job performance", for example (Judge et al, 2002: 767). In this research we try to overcome this problem by measuring leadership as it is being practiced in real life, giving the fluid structure of new social movements, as explained above. An individual could identify himself with a broad array of different functions in the context of his chosen social movement. As the N is somewhat small (N=51), we created a dichotomous 'leadership' variable with two values - zero and one, where medium-level (or higher) managers and also respondents who served in senior roles in the organization were marked as 1 (n=25). The rest - regular employees, professional or low-level managers - were marked as 0 (n=26). In order to assess the validity of our measure, we performed a discriminant/convergent validity tests.

Discriminant Validity: Evidence of discriminant validity is obtained from very low correlations with theoretically unrelated constructs. According to this, a construct that theoretically should not be related to role in social movement is age. Subsequent testing confirmed discriminant validity between the factors with Cramer's $V = 0.765$ and $\text{Chi}^2(23) = 29.85$ ($p > 0.05$).

² Tel Aviv University, Faculty of management, the Institute of Business Research.

Convergent Validity: As mentioned above, each respondent was asked to describe what had led him to choose the specific role in a given social movement. A binary ‘leadership motivation’ measure subsequently extracted from the respondent’s answer, where references to managing or leadership were marked as 1, while every other reference was marked as 0. For example, statements like “Willing to be a leading character” or “I believe that what I do contributes to the empowerment of the girls and lead them to a better position in their lives” were marked as 1, while “willing to help people” or “tendency to work with people” were marked as 0. Out of 42 respondents who replied to this question, 9 individuals reported a motivation for leading, whereas 33 did not make such reference. Upon analysis, correlations between leadership and motivation to lead was statistically significant ($V = 0.57$, $\chi^2(1) = 13.86$, $p < 0.001$). In sum, we were able to demonstrate high convergent validity and low discriminant validity. Hence, we can assume that we established the empirical validity of our measure for leadership.

Control Variables. We controlled for gender and academic education. The total sample ($n=51$) consisted of 36 female respondents and 15 respondents who finished at least their undergraduate studies. Males ($N = 14$, $M = 32.07$, $SD = 10.9$) and females ($N = 36$, $M = 31.01$, $SD = 8.6$) were about the same age. 10 males (71%) finished at least their undergraduate studies, compared to 30 females (83.3%).

Results

As can be shown in table 1, results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between mean Extraversions score for leaders ($M = 4.76$, $SD = .12$) and non-leaders ($M = 4.56$, $SD = .14$). This difference reached statistical significance, albeit marginally, with $t(49) = -1.67$, $p = .05$. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis. On average, participants that were ranked as leaders exhibited higher levels of agreeableness ($M = 5.2$, $SD = .15$) than non-leaders ($M = 4.64$, $SD = .14$). This difference was statistically significant ($t(49) = -2.74$, $p < 0.05$). There also was a statistically significant difference ($t(49) = 3.34$, $p < 0.01$) for scores on neuroticism between leaders and non-leaders, with $M = 2.43$, $SD = .14$ and $M = 3.26$, $SD = 0.2$, respectively.

Leadership	Non-Leaders (n=26)	Leaders (n=25)	Diff	Degrees of Freedom	T
extraversion	4.56 (0.14)	4.76 (0.12)	-0.39	49	-1.67*
agreeableness	4.64 (0.14)	5.2 (0.15)	-0.55	49	-2.74**
Conscientiousness	4.98 (0.15)	5.1 (0.19)	-0.12	49	-0.49
neuroticism	3.26 (0.2)	2.43 (0.14)	0.83	49	3.34***
openness	4.96 (0.14)	4.94 (0.09)	0.02	49	0.12

Table 1: T tests results for BFI and leadership. Values are mean score for each BFI. Values in parentheses are SDs. Diff values represent Non-Leaders mean minus Leaders mean (negative values mean that Leaders' mean is higher than Non-Leaders). * $p = 0.05$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

On average, participants that were characterized as leaders exhibited slightly higher levels of rankings of conscientiousness ($M = 5.1$, $SD = .15$) as compared to non-leaders ($M = 4.98$, $SD = .15$). This difference, however, failed to reach statistical significance, with $t(49) = -0.49$, $p > 0.05$. The scores for openness exhibit similar results, with $M = 4.94$, $SD = .09$ for leaders and $M = 4.96$, $SD = .14$ for non-leaders. This difference was not significant ($t(49) = .12$, $p > 0.05$). Hence, we do not reject the null hypothesis. Regarding the control variables, no significant correlation was found either for gender (Cramer's $V = -0.08$, $\text{Chi}^2(1) = 0.39$, $p > 0.05$) or having an academic degree (Cramer's $V = -0.01$, $\text{Chi}^2(1) = 0.004$, $p > 0.05$).

Conclusion and Discussion

In this study, we examined the relationship between the Big Five leadership traits and various roles (leaders vs. non-leaders) in social movements. We did so in order to address an interesting environment with particular characteristics - such as fluid structure - in the context to enhance our knowledge of trait theory of leadership and at the same time extend our understanding of social movement leaders. Findings of our analysis, which were based on field data from a questionnaire, revealed significant differences on mean scores of Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism between leaders and non-leaders, yet we were unable to replicate the theoretical assumptions of previous research on the relationship between Conscientiousness and Openness and leadership role. Regarding the latter, the literature itself has suggested ambiguous results, hence this finding is not surprising. The statistically significant results between some of the Big Five traits and leadership role suggest

that the Big Five typology is a fruitful basis for examining the dispositional predictors of leadership, and they provide support for the general relevance of the five-factor model in leadership research. Notwithstanding previous research and our small study, however, there remains a relatively big gap of knowledge as not only to which traits are relevant in particular contexts, but why. While we were not able to address these questions in this project for reasons of brevity, future research should attempt to explain these linkages between the Big Five traits and leadership.

Another branch of criticism has emerged in the context of more practical implications of the trait or personality approach to leadership. Critics have argued that “it discourages individuals from believing they have the ‘right stuff’ to become effective leaders” - that is to say, if leadership qualities are inherent to our personality structure, there is not much room for change or improvement. It has subsequently been suggested that leadership should rather be conceptualized as a “relationship between leaders and followers or as a set of behaviours and competencies that anyone can develop provides a much more optimistic, democratic, and inclusive picture of leadership.” (Bligh, 2011, p. 664). Further, such view would communicate that “given the right experiences, circumstances, and training, each of us has both the capacity and the ability to enact effective leadership, regardless of the specific traits and personality characteristics with which we were born” (in *ibid*). In this context, we also have to keep in mind the famous statement that ‘correlation does not imply causation’ - that is, the causal arrow might run into reverse directions as those hypothesized. Therefore, one of the greatest challenges for future studies that seek to determine the effects of personality traits on assumed leadership role is to effect the direction of causality, and to control for other possible confounding factors, such as amount of friends active in social movements and political ideology, to only name a few.

We also believe there are many situational factors that may moderate the validity of personality in predicting leadership. That is, we have to bear in mind that behaviour is always the result of interplay between a person’s underlying personality and a variety of situational variables. While these factors play a major role in how a person reacts, in most cases, we would expect him to act in accordance with broad underlying personality traits. Since personality is a highly complex construct, each person may exhibit behaviours across several of the dimensions put forward in the Big Five.

Further, various criticisms have emerged regarding the Big Five as a valid theoretical framework for investigating and measuring personality traits. One such critic was prominent psychologist Eysenck (1992), for example, argued in favour of a personality theory including fewer than five dimensions, which would - according to him - be more accurate. As Block (1995) noted, “for an adequate understanding of personality, it is necessary to think and measure more specifically than at this global level if behaviours and their mediating variables are to be sufficiently, incisively represented” (p. 208; in Judge et al., 2002). Other researchers and personality psychologists, however, have “criticize[d] the number of factors [...] on the basis of too few factors” (in *ibid.*, p. 772), and have attempted to make their case against the idea of narrowing down the five dimensions. Instead, they have pledged for a larger amount of dimensions than suggested by the Big Five, as “broader and richer personality traits will have higher predictive validity than narrower traits” (Judge et al., 2002, p. 768). Yet other scholars have criticized the Big Five model on a much more fundamental level. Trait approaches of personality, they emphasize, are outdated and “are generally regarded with little esteem by leadership theorists” (Zaccaro, Foti, and Kenny, 1991, p. 308). Similarly, it has been argued by some that the Big Five dimensions are too broad to capture true facets of personality traits. This issue can easily be extended into the sphere of leadership research. Considering the proposal of some scholars that Extraversion could be split into two factors, dominance and sociability, and that Conscientiousness might consist of achievement dependability (e.g. Hogan et al., 1994, Mount & Barrick, 1995), it might be reasonable to assume that those sub-components relate uniquely and differently to leadership. Future research, then, could play an important role in identifying their individual predictive validity, and to address the other questions raised in this section.

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