MPRA

Predicting Elections from Biographical Information about Candidates

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Appendix 1: The cues

Cue No.	Cue	Coded as 1 if candidate (otherwise: 0)	Additional explanation
		Yes / no variables	
Family			
1	Ancestry	Descends from a presidential family	Descent from renowned families has been shown to have a positive impact on an individual's career chances (Simonton 1984).
2	Father (political office)	Has a father who held a political office	The role of a candidate's father may have an impact of a candidate's chances to be elected. Similar to Simonton (1981), we quantified whether a candidate's father held one of the following offices: public attorney, judge, state assembly, state senator, city mayor, state governor, U.S. Representative, U.S. Senator, ambassador, cabinet head, vice president
3	First born	Is the first-born child in his family	Simonton (1984) summarized research showing that first-born children tend to achieve more than later-born children.
4	Single child	Is the single child	Single children were found to have an advantage over children from larger families. For example, Simonton (1981) found a negative correlation between family size and political performance for the 38 U.S. presidents up to Jimmy Carter.
5	Last born	Is the last born child in his family	Youngest children tend to achieve more than middle children (Simonton 1984). Variable is used only if "first born" does not discriminate between the candidates.
6	Orphanhood	Is an orphan	Simonton (1984) reported on several studies that suggest that people who lost a parent during childhood are more likely to achieve more in life. Following Simonton (1981), we considered a candidate as an orphan if one (or both) of his parents died before the age of 30.
7	Marriage	Is married	It is the social norm to getting married.
8	Children	Has children	Being the social norm to have children, we expected that voters favor candidates who have children.
9	Adopted children	Has adopted children	See children. Voters might favor candidates who adopted children.
10	Divorce	Has *not* been divorced	Although divorces are common, they violate the social norm.
11	Loss of children	Has lost one or more children	See 'orphanhood'.
12	Loss of sibling	Has lost one or more siblings	See 'orphanhood'.
13	Loss of spouse	Lost a spouse	See 'orphanhood'.
Education			
14	College	Went to college	
15	College graduate	Graduated from college	
16	Law degree	Has a Law degree	Similar to Simonton (1981), we quantified the level of formal education and assigned values of 1, if a candidate went to college, graduated from college, obtained a Master's degree, obtained a PhD degree, obtained a Law degree, or was a professor. whether a candidate went to college to measure cognitive skills. Otherwise, we assigned values of 0.
17	Master's degree	Has a Master's degree	
18	PhD	Has a PhD / doctoral degree	
19	Professor	Has been a college or university professor	
20	Phi beta kappa	Is member of Phi beta kappa	Similar to Simonton (1981), we quantified whether a candidate was an in-course (not alumnus or honorary) member of Phi Beta Kappa to measure scholastic performance.
21	Prestigious college	Attended an Ivy-League college	To have an objective and unambiguous criterion for the reputation of a college, we considered all Ivy-League colleges as as well as the U.S. Naval and Military Academies as prestigious.
22	U.S. Naval / Military Academy	Went to U.S. Naval / Military Academy	
23	Fraternity	Was member of a fraternity	As a measure of cognitive skills, we quantified whether a candidate graduated from college.
Political life			
24	City major	Is / was a city major	Similar to Simonton (1981), we assessed prior political experience by assigning a values of 1 if a candidate had occupied one of the offices listed on the left (variable 24 to 34).
25	Election defeat	Has *not* been defeated in a political election	
26	Governor	Is / was a state governor	
27	Judge	Is / was a judge	
28	President	Is / was U.S. president	
29	Public Attorney	Is / was a public attorney	
30	State Representative	Is / was a state representative	

Cue No.	Cue	Coded as 1 if candidate (otherwise: 0)	Additional explanation
31	State Senator	Is / was a state senator	
32	U.S. Representative	Is / was a U.S. representative	
33	U.S. Senator	Is / was a U.S. senator	
34	Vice President	Is / was vice-president of the U.S.	
Others			
35	Actor	Was a famous actor	
36	Athlete	Is known as athletic	
37	Book author	Has authored one or more books	The number of books that a president published prior to be elected has been found to have a positive impact on his political performance (Simonton 1981). In addition, a publishing record should have a positive impact on the wide recognition of a candidate among voters.
38	Disease survivor	Survived a major life-threatening disease	
39	Military experience	Has military experience	Similar to Simonton (1981), we quantified whether a candidate has some military experience as wartime recruit, professional soldier, or military general.
40	Military honors	Has been awarded with military honors	
More / less variables			
41	Facial competence	Is more competent	Several studies have measured competence ratings based on people's assessments of candidates' headshots (Todorov et al. 2005, Antonakis & Dalgas 2009). It was found that candidates with higher ratings of 'facial competence' were more likely to win elections. Evaluations of facial competence were available for the 2004 (Little et al. 2007) and 2008 Election (Armstrong et al. 2008).
42	First name	Has the more common first name	We expected the candidate with the more common first name to have an advantage. Name popularity was obtained from 1990 U.S. census (http://names.mongabay.com).
43	Height	Is taller	In estimating factors to predict presidential greatness, both McCann (1992) and Simonton (1981) found a positive correlation between height and political performance.
44	Home state	Is from the state with more electoral votes	We expected that a candidate will win the votes of his home state. Thus, the candidate coming from the state with more electoral votes was assumed to have an advantage. The numbers for electoral votes by states in each election were derived from http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/votes/votes_by_state.html.
45	IQ	Is more intelligent	Simonton (2006) correlated IQ scores for all 42 U.S. Presidents before Barack Obama with evaluations of presidential leadership performance. He found that intelligence is positively correlated with political success. IQ scores for 42 presidents were obtained from Simonton (2006). Where available, we used information from polls by searching the iPoll Databank of the Roper Center.
46	Physical attractiveness	Is more attractive	Candidates that are seen as more attractive have been shown more likely to win elections. Attractiveness scores for 39 presidents were obtained from Simonton (1986). Where available, we used information from polls by searching the iPoll Databank of the Roper Center.
47	Religious affiliation	Is affiliated with the larger religion	We expected that voters would tend to endorse a candidate that identifies with their religious beliefs. Thus, we assumed the candidate that identifies himself with the larger religion to have an advantage.
48	Surname	Has the more common surname	See 'first name'.
49	Weight	Is heavier	For the 28 U.S. Presidential Elections from 1896 to 2004, a New York Times article suggested that heavier candidates were more likely to win the election (Open N.Y. 2008).