

Identity, Politics and Authentic Leadership.  
Spanish Youngsters' Perceptions of J. L.  
Rodríguez Zapatero and M. Rajoy

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**Abstract**

This article presents a framework for the analysis of audience's perceptions about political leaders. Specifically, we focus on the perceptions of two Spanish leaders: José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, the former Prime Minister, and Mariano Rajoy, the current Prime Minister. We wanted to test how young people perceive and evaluate the identity of these two political leaders. We also tried to determine the role played by media in the formation of these complex images. After the analysis of data collected from

a sample of 108 participants, significant differential effects concerning the way people perceive both leaders have not been found. Results indicate that in crisis periods leaders lack authenticity, thus voters have a negative perception of them. It has also found some positive correlation between the authentic leadership's variables and the Big Five personality factors. Throughout this paper, theoretical and methodological problems of such an approach are discussed.

*Keywords:* political leaders, perception, identity, authentic leadership.

**T**RADITIONALLY, there have been numerous research projects in social science that study the impact of leaders in audience's decisions, opinions or behaviours. For example, companies may want to know the relationship between managerial skills and the efficiency of a particular group of workers, or even how the fact of using a celebrity in their advertising campaigns may influence the consumption of their brands. Besides, there are also studies focusing on the impact that these 'outstanding' individuals have on different social groups. Thus, it can be concluded that, because of their status, political leaders might have far-reaching consequences on audiences. In this sense, the identity of political

leaders and the perception that people have about them will be analyzed in this study. We understand identity as a relational process that allows leaders to define themselves, as well as to perform and behave in a specific way in the public arena, which is composed of different elements as we will see throughout this article. By the term public figures we refer to people who perform in the field of politics, either because they are part of the current government team, they aspire to achieve that position in the future, or because they governed in the past.

In this regard, it is assumed that these individuals' performance especially affect those who define themselves as followers and, not only identify with them (Avolio *et al.*, 2004), but also establish a powerful narcissistic net with them (Fanny Elman, 2010). However, they can also have some influence on their opponents, who categorized leaders as responsible for the current situation.

## **Media Perception: a theoretical approach**

While viewers may react differently to mediatic personalities, we cannot confuse the media perception with other processes such as parasocial relationships, homophily, fandom, empathy, identification, affinity, similarity or attachment with characters. However, there is certain similarity between all these phenomena, since all of them promote a certain social and affective response to the characters among the viewers. Media perception involves a series of evaluations and subjective interpretations that include not only cognitive but also affective and emotional implications (Abelson, Kinder & Peters, 1982). Thus, the term perception is used here to refer to a viewer's overall conception of what a character is like (Hoffner y Cantor, 1991, p. 63). Furthermore, perceptions of media characters' identity provide important information on how audiences interpret media pieces.

Numerous researchers have shown that the perception of media contents can influence the viewers' mental processes, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours (Potter, 1988). In fact: "Perceptions of media characters are considered important because understanding how viewers form impressions characters promotes an understanding of viewers' responses" (Hoffner & Cantor, 1991, p. 64). Above

all, we cannot forget that: “Impressions that people form about the personalities of their political leaders can have important consequences” (Pancer y Brown, 1999, p. 346). In fact, the way subjects perceive political leaders’ identity can exert great influence on voting intention, as previous research has suggested. (Graetz & McAllister, 1987; Shanks & Miller, 1990; Brown, 1992; Clarke *et al.* 1994; Crewe & King, 1994; Jones & Hudson, 1996; Stokes, 1996; King, 2002).

By 1967, the social psychologist Muzafer Sherif showed that social judgments and perceptions always occur through certain frames of reference. By framing, Robert Entman means to “select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and or treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). So news coverage or the way in which some topics are configured can affect how audiences perceive, understand and interpret certain issues, as many scholars have shown (Iyengar, 1991, Nelson & Kinder, 1996; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

Although people have never met political leaders in real life, they feel as if they “know” them because they “meet” regularly on television or in the Web. In this sense, social media and networks have managed to take one more step in bidirectional communication between politicians and the electorate. That is because these channels allow all subjects to communicate under the same conditions, at the same time and instantaneously. This is a new way of understanding politics through media because most participants have the illusory feeling that they have a real conversation with their leaders and other citizens. So, participants feel that they have a true knowledge about political leaders. In light of this argument, we suggest the following hypothesis:

*H1: Citizens who use social networks to be informed about current issues have a closer image about their leaders and they believe that they know them best.*

## **Framing and other key dimensions in the perception of political leaders' identity: the notion of authentic leadership**

Although research on framing (Goffman, 1974; Entman, 1993) is not limited to politics or the media, scientific literature has focused precisely on the convergence of both disciplines in recent years. (Lakoff, 2004, 2006). Broadly speaking, frames are mental structures that can be said to be similar to the concept of cognitive schema proposed by Frederic C. Bartlett in 1932. This notion is both individual and shared; moreover, it allows people to develop their own knowledge of reality, which is modified by their experience at the same time.

In general, knowledge would be the result of a game between the individual's expectations and the information taken from other sources. When both processes coincide, the individual would receive (and accept) the message without problems; this phenomenon is known as cognitive consistency. However, if they differ, the individual enters into a state of cognitive dissonance that would force him to make a choice between two options: to either change their frames of reference, or to alter the new data in order to meet their previous schemes. In this regard, although a person may have to alter his frames as the result of successive frustrated expectations, he will likely choose the second option since it requires less cognitive effort.

This will undoubtedly be a problem for political leaders and political organizations in general, who will have to make an over-effort to get the approval from those members of the public who generate negative expectations to their messages and actions. This task will get more difficult the closer those subjects are to the opposition; therefore, knowing which the common frames are, becomes of great importance for these organizations. However this might be problematic because these processes are partly unconscious (Lakoff, 2004, 2006). Thus, the most we can do is to rebuild the frames, based on the way people think. In short, as long as a political leader remains faithful to his personal trajectory and his party or organization, the frames may facilitate or hinder the task of transmitting positive or wished images. In fact, the image that viewers have about a leader might match the political objectives of the party. So, the

further away is this public figure of the receptor's environment, the greater the importance of mass media in shaping his image. In this regard, we start from the premise that media plays a crucial role in how viewers perceive foreign political leaders (Seo, Johnson & Stein, 2009, p. 4).

But, what influence the way in which leaders are perceived? Some researchers suggest that the perceptions of a leader are related to the culture, stereotypes, expectations or preconceived notions about the leader's culture (Chong & Thomas, 1997; Ensari & Murphy, 2003).

However, most researchers have chosen to define a number of key dimensions that influence how individuals perceive political leaders (Campbell, Converse, Miller & Stoques, 1960; Brown, Schneider, Hastorf, & Ellsworth, 1979; Lambert Kay & Curtis, 1988; Pancer, Brown, & Barr, 1999; King, 2002; Hyunjin, Johnson & Stein, 2009). Thus, while some of the proposals are very similar and many of them have to do with physical appearance or charisma, we cannot forget that there are other features such as intelligence, character and political style (King, 2002, p. 7) or emotional, financial, cultural or diplomatic appeal (Hyunjin, Johnson & Stein, 2009, p. 16) that influence perception strongly.

Nevertheless, we cannot state that there is a cause and effect connection between the leaders' personality and the effects they provoke. In fact, the context plays an important role as King has noted: "Characteristics and qualities of leaders and candidates are important under some circumstances and unimportant, or considerably less important, under others." (King, 2002, p. 37). In this regard, the potential role of new digital communication tools that enable political leaders (as well as other public figures) to hold direct conversations with individuals, building a more reliable look, is especially significant. In addition, new platforms allow more instantaneous ways of communication permitting leaders to give their point of view about different events at the same time; moreover, said technology forces them to take special care in the management of certain conflicts. Thus, leaders must be able to express a wide range of emotions depending on the situation; however, they should not be perceived as pretenders, since that would adversely affect both authenticity and confidence (Schaubroeck and Shao, 2012), the main features of leadership, as discussed below. So, against the idea that it is better to express positive emotions, as these will consequently

result into positive attitudes and behaviors (Avolio *et al.*, 2004), it is suggested here that this will depend on the context.

In short, the perception of leaders depends on the way they handle situations. This fact downplays the leadership prototype theory (Schaubroeck & Shao, 2012; Offermann, Kennedy & Wirtz, 1994) - which suggests that people build an idealized leader figure who would score high on charisma, attractiveness or sensitivity. This theory is used as a basis to assess real leaders, so that the further away they are from said ideal leader, the worse the assessment will be. In opposition to this proposal, the authentic leadership theory (Williams *et al.*, 2011; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008; Gardner *et al.*, 2005; Avolio *et al.*, 2004) by which the public evaluates leaders in relation with quotidian expectations seems particularly relevant. This theory takes into account values such as trust, transparency and, in particular, the need to have high levels of cognitive, emotional and moral attitudes (Gardner *et al.*, 2005). Thereon, Avolio *et al.* define these authentic leaders as: "Persons who have achieved high levels of authenticity in that they know who they are, what they believe and value, and they act upon those values and beliefs while transparently interacting with others" (2004, p. 802). Walumbwa *et al.*, on the other hand, suggest that an authentic leader should be transparent and promote positive feelings, among other qualities (2008, p. 95).

In summary, authentic leadership is based on certain values shown by these leaders such as trust, credibility, integrity and adherence to ethical and moral principles. However, Williams *et al.* (2011) claims that further research on this phenomenon is needed, since it is possible that other variables such as the Big Five personality factors -Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism- (McCrae & Costa, 1987; McCrae & John, 1992) or emotional intelligence also influence the perception people have about authentic leadership. Regarding the latter, it should be noted that it is not always convenient for a leader to express positive emotions (Schaubroeck & Shao, 2012), as it might happen in certain situations such as natural disasters, terrorist attacks or economic crises. At any case, what does seem clear is that authentic leaders have a clear advantage over the rest: the greater resistance of their public image in adverse contexts. So even though a period of crisis may damage a "charismatic" leader's image, as it happened to former New York Mayor Rudy

Giuliani after the September 11 attacks, it won't be like this if the leader remains coherent with his/her values (2012, p. 13). In fact, in crisis periods, charisma would become a feature that fluctuates from the government leader to the opposition leader (Pillai and Meindi, 1998; Williams *et al.*, 2009, 2011), since the former would be seen as the cause of the problem and the second as the possible solution (Emrich, 1999). Based on this, we can make the following assumptions:

*H2: In the current context of economic crisis, a charismatic leader is considered worse than an authentic leader, by the general public.*

*H3: Authentic leadership can be correlated positively with the Big Five personality factors and with high emotional intelligence.*

In short, the perception that audiences have about a political leader will depend on: first, the media discourse; second, the leader's proposals and actions; and third, the public's expectations generated as the result of the leader's words, promises and past behaviour. In other words, the perception that general public has about a political leader depends on the difference between his image and his identity, or better yet, between the expected image and his real image. In this regard, it should be noted that expectations may vary from one population segment to another, and that depends on the characteristics of said sector, as well as on the degree of closeness/ remoteness between the person and the leader in question. In this sense, Angela Merkel will never be equally perceived and valued by German, Spanish or American citizens, for example. As Zillamnn, Taylor and Lewis have stated (1998), media personalities are well developed, so that individuals can generate a solid image about them, but by no means unique. In any case, it is clear that perception will fluctuate in terms of valuation, which suggests that it is possible to quantify how a political leader is perceived by a particular population segment, by using a number of variables.

This study focuses on Spanish political context and, specifically, on the perceived image of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, Ex-Prime Minister, from the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) and Mariano Rajoy, current Prime Minister, from the Popular Party (PP). Both presidents have been forced to deal with the crisis in two different moments. As already mentioned, a crisis period tends to tilt the balance towards the opposition leader, since he might be conceived as

the “savior” of the disaster. This would mean that Rajoy did not win General Elections on November 20, 2011 because he was considered a better leader, or due to his authentic leadership, but because he was seen as the “other”, instead. However, based on previous data, we could also imply that if Zapatero had been considered a true leader, the crisis would not have affected his popularity. Therefore, we can deny the quality of authentic leadership in the case of Zapatero, and we question it in the case of Mariano Rajoy.

However, we cannot forget that our perception about a person is not constant, but changeable, capable of being influenced by different contextual facts, such as the leader’s actions or discourses. Thus, although it is expected that a crisis would be more damaging to a charismatic leader than to an authentic one, it ends up damaging the perception of both leaders equally. That is the reason why Zapatero could have been originally considered an authentic leader, at least by those who sympathize with his ideas or by the undecided ones. Although the crisis started when Zapatero was in the government, Rajoy has begun to govern with such a crisis as the main problem to be solved. Consequently, we can expect his image to be negatively affected as well; moreover, this might mean that he would not be perceived as an authentic leader<sup>1</sup>. This leads us to propose the following hypothesis:

*H4: José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and Mariano Rajoy are not considered authentic leaders.*

In this study, we tested how José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and Mariano Rajoy are perceived as political leaders in relation to the items proposed by the theory of authentic leadership. In order to test the proposal expectations by Williams *et al.* (2011) we have also attempted to evaluate the Big Five personality factors and the level of emotional intelligence attributed to both characters by using questionnaires. Finally, we asked participants which media form they used in

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1. In fact, Rajoy tries to defend the pejorative implications of the crisis and justify his own policies continuously –e.g., <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZ2psfC5yCE> [Accessed 20 Nov 2012]–. Moreover, he talks about the “inheritance received” by the previous government and, above all, accuses them of cheating in the Senate –e.g., <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2012/05/08/espana/1336492686.html> [Accessed 20 Nov 2012]–. In short, he tries to defend their image by damaging the opponent. Or what is the same, he makes what is called a fallacy *ad hominem*.

order to be informed about politics and political leaders. They were also asked about which social agents influence them the most in the way they form their own political opinions. All these elements have provided interesting results about the consequent mediatization of several areas, especially politics.

## Method

### Participants

For the present study we performed a questionnaire to a sample of 126 students of the Faculty of Communication at the University of Seville. The final sample consisted of 108 younger adults of the last years of Communication Studies degree (81 women, 27 men, *Mage* = 22.2 years, age range: 21–26 years) and they have participated voluntarily. In the questionnaires, they were asked, or by both leaders or by one of them. Thus, finally 88 students issued their opinion about Mariano Rajoy, and 86 students about José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero.

### Materials and Procedure

The questionnaires were designed and distributed in two ways. We used one model with comparative questions, where students were asked about both political leaders, and a simple model in which they were asked to answer only about Zapatero or Rajoy. This division was performed in order to rule out possible biases in the responses when subjects had to make the effort of comparing both personalities.

Altogether, 27 questions were raised. Most of them were based on a Likert scale (1-5), except those seeking information about the media or other cultural variables. In order to measure the Big Five, participants were asked to select from a total of 40 adjectives (no more than 15) to define political leaders' identity. These concepts were taken from those proposed by McCrae & Costa (1987). However, an exhaustive analysis of these personality variables was not intended;

in fact, it was avoided since it would have been exhausting for the participants, resulting in the alteration of the rest of the results. We only tried to collect data to foresee some correlation, either positive or negative, between authentic leadership and the Big Five.

Data collection was conducted between 12 and 23 March 2012. This period was marked by the debate over labor reform (Royal Decree Law 3/2012 of February 10), validated by the Congress on March 8, as well as by general strike called for March 29, after only 100 days from the Popular Party's arrival. A strike that Rajoy has already announced to his Finnish counterpart, Jyrki Katainen, in an informal chat previous to the European Council<sup>2</sup>.

However, these statements, off the record should be compared with the cuts made in Spain and the delay in the State Budget presentation. These evidences are opposed to the idea of justice and equity policy that broadcasts the PP. This can be contextualized in an interview with EFE Rajoy made in 2012<sup>3</sup>, damaging presumably, the credibility and image of government transparency.

Finally, although the questionnaires revolved around José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and Mariano Rajoy, this study was conducted in Andalusia, the biggest region in Spain, where the elections to Regional President were held the 25th of March, 2012. It is interesting to know that while polls predicted a clear success for Javier Arenas (PP), he did not reach the absolute majority required to govern, and José Antonio Griñán (PSOE) was reelected.

## Results

*Politics trough media.* In a study like the present one, focused on the link between media and politics, a number of issues beyond the perception of leaders need to be taken into account. Among these factors, we can firstly underline the importance of establishing which are the most relevant items to media receivers;

2. [http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2012/01/30/actualidad/1327941459\\_233015.html](http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2012/01/30/actualidad/1327941459_233015.html) [Accessed 21 Nov 2012].

3. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bC9b6MEbV3E> [Accessed 21 Nov 2012].

secondly, which information channels are usually checked to stay informed on current affairs, and thirdly, which social agents influence them the most when forming a political opinion. Regarding the former, there is a clear predominance of cultural issues (87.96%), and politics is the third item (40.74%), as shown in Table 1. With regard to channels of information, except in the case of television which continues to strengthen its position as a socializing means, the majority of people chose the web, especially social networks, to be informed (66.67%).

Such data, which are shown in Table 2, agree with the answers to the question: *What does influences you the most in shaping public opinion?* Although the family is still conceived as the main socializing institution, social media has acquired a prominent place above reporters or publishers, as shown in Table 3. Thus, it appears that virtual contacts are recognized as the new opinion leaders, although many times their speech is just a reworking of previous mass-mediatic speeches. In short, it might be possible to distinguish a new two-step flow (Lazarsfeld *et al.*, 1960) in social networks forms.

**Table 1. Media's issues of interest**

<b>Media item</b>	<b>N = 108</b>
Culture	87.96%
Social Conflicts	55.56%
Politics	40.74%
Events	28.70%
Gossip Press	7.41%
Sports	21.30%
Technology	39.81%
Terrorism	21.30%
Others	1.85%

**Table 2. Channels used by interviewees to keep abreast of current affairs**

<b>Information Channels</b>	<b>N=108</b>
Press (Newspapers)	29.63%
Digital Press	69.44%
Radio	26.85%
Digital Radio	0.00%
Television	79.63%
Online Video Channels	8.33%
Blogs	4.63%
Social Networks	66.67%
Others	2.78%

**Table 3. Factors influential in shaping political option**

<b>Social Agents</b>	<b>N=108</b>
Family	60,19%
Friends	22,22%
Work Colleagues/ University Mates	12,96%
Publicity	7,41%
Press	42,59%
Social Networks	46,30%
Blogs	6,48%
Debates Broadcasted by the Media	35,19%

**Table 4. Votes in the last General Elections (November 20, 2011)**

<b>Political Election</b>	<b>Rajoy Evaluations (N=88)</b>	<b>Rodríguez Zapatero Evaluations (N=82)</b>	<b>Sample (N=108)</b>
PP	12.50%	17.44%	14.81%
PSOE	25.00%	17.44%	21.30%
UPyD	20.45%	20.93%	20.37%
EQUO	3.41%	5.81%	4.63%
IU	11.36%	9.30%	11.11%
Otros	1.14%	1.16%	.93%
En blanco	4.55%	4.65%	4.63%
Nulo	6.82%	5.81%	6.48%
No votó	9.09%	12.79%	12.04%
NS/NC	5.68%	4.65%	3.70%

*Voting decision in the last elections.* Taking into account that the political leaders analyzed in this study represent the two big parties in Spain, we asked participants about their political choice in the last elections, held on November 20, 2011, and won by the current President, Mariano Rajoy (PP). The three most voted options by the interviewees were, in order: the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), Union, Progress and Democracy (UPyD) and Popular Party (PP). However, as it is represented in Table 4, the sample is distributed evenly among the different parties.

*Extent of knowledge about the leader and use of social networks.* One hypothesis of this study argued that those subjects who use social networks as one of their main sources of political information believe they have greater knowledge about said leaders. This assumption would be justified by the idea that social networks foster a more direct conversation among all users, regardless of their political or social status. To test this hypothesis the data collected in Table 1

and 2 have been used as an independent variable, while the degree of knowledge that interviewees claim to have about the political leader in question has been taken as a dependent variable. The results, which are shown in Table 5, do not corroborate this approach, since the degree of knowledge claimed was virtually the same for all cases.

**Table 5. Declared Degree of knowledge about the leaders**

**Degree of knowledge in relation with the channels used to keep abreast of current political affairs.**

	Press (Paper)	Press (Digital)	Radio	Tele- vision	Online Video Channels	Social Net- works	Blogs	Others
Rajoy (N=88)	3.30	3.45	3.59	3.10	3.71	3.29	3.50	4.00
Rodríguez Zapatero (N=86)	3.28	3.41	3.23	3.14	3.75	3.14	3.50	4.00

**Degree of knowledge in relation with social agents**

	Family	Friends	Work Colleagues/ University Mates	Publi- city	Press	Social Net- works	Blogs	Debates Broad- cast by the Media
Rajoy (N=88)	3.00	3.16	3.33	3.40	3.49	3.33	3.50	3.28
Rodríguez Zapatero (N=86)	2.90	3.17	3.15	3.20	3.46	3.26	3.33	3.18

*Analysis of authentic leadership.* Through a series of questions related to ethics, empathy, coherence and purpose pursued by the actions of both politicians,

it has been attempted to analyze whether these are seen by interviewees as authentic leaders. As the personal political conviction can be a determinant factor when assessing a leader, we have decided to take into consideration the vote decision in the last elections as an independent variable. However, in the second case, we do not find notable differences, maybe due to the fact that, when analyzing a particular leader, people may have another one in mind. In short, one is valued in terms of itself and its direct competitor. Furthermore, we have also analyzed the different scores depending on whether the survey asked only for a leader, Rajoy or Zapatero, or for both simultaneously.

Based on past voting behavior, as reported in Tables 6 and 7, the most interesting data are those provided by the voters who chose other political groups or those who did not vote anyone. The interviewees generally evaluated positively the leader of the political party they voted for. We found only an exception in relation to the general satisfaction that citizens have about leaders' management. In this case, all of those who cast a valid vote in the past elections, agree that citizens are more satisfied with Rajoy's management than with Zapatero's administration. As for the benefit arising from the management of both leaders, most participants agree. Thus, voters of both parties understand that their leader is most concerned by citizens in general and by their own interests, as a member of this group. However, this search for the collective benefit is subject to the interests of the party itself. Besides, while PSOE voters believe that Zapatero's last interest was his own benefit ( $M = 2.67$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ), PP voters have a different perception, since they give him a high score on this item ( $M = 3.36$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ), in comparison to Rajoy.

As for the other two groups (those who voted for other parties), they define Zapatero as a more ethical and empathetic leader, while claiming at the same time that people are not very satisfied with his management. Also, they see Mariano Rajoy as more consistent. Although neither of them is well evaluated in relation to the management or the concern about citizens, Zapatero is the best rated in this regard. In general terms, as we can see in Table 8, Mariano Rajoy is seen as a more coherent political leader ( $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = .87$ ), whose main interest is getting the benefit of his party ( $M = 3.93$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ). By contrast, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero excels in terms of ethics ( $M = 2.74$ ,  $SD = 1.1$ ) and

empathy ( $M = 2.36$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ), although in none of the cases the values reach 3. Thus, the data indicate that the citizens' degree of satisfaction does not reach the rank of "very dissatisfied."

**Table 6. Evaluation of Mariano Rajoy according to the variables of authentic leadership and the voting decision ( $N=83$ )**

	Blank/null/ no vote		Other political parties		PP		PSOE	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Ethical levels of their actions	2.11	.90	1.94	.84	3.36	.81	1.73	.83
Degree of similarity with the citizens	1.56	.78	1.19	.47	2.45	1.44	1.00	.00
Degree of empathy	2.06	1.35	1.72	.85	2.91	1.14	1.50	.67
Degree of citizens' satisfaction with their management	1.67	.84	2.19	.90	2.36	.92	1.73	.70
Coherence with its path	2.94	1.06	2.84	1.27	3.55	.82	2.36	1.05
Coherence with its party	3.39	1.20	3.59	1.07	3.73	1.35	3.59	1.26
Coherence with its ideology	3.83	1.20	3.91	1.06	4.18	.87	3.64	1.33
General Coherence	3.39	.89	3.45	.85	3.82	.85	3.20	.86
Does he pursuit his own benefit?	3.17	1.50	3.26	1.39	3.36	1.12	2.91	1.69
Does he pursuit his party's benefit?	3.56	1.25	4.13	.88	4.09	1.04	3.82	1.14

Does he pursuit the benefit of his voters, in particular?	2.50	.99	2.58	1.09	3.45	1.13	2.50	1.19
Does he pursuit the benefit of his voters, in general?	2.11	.83	1.65	.75	3.10	1.45	1.73	.70
Does he pursuit the benefit of the participants?	1.78	1.00	1.32	.54	3.18	.98	1.36	.73
Is he able to pull the country out of crisis?	2.77	1.24	2.09	1.28	2.90	1.29	1.78	1.17

**Table 7. Evaluation of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero according to the variables of authentic leadership and the voting decision ( $N=82$ )**

	Blank/null/no vote		Other political parties		PP		PSOE	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Ethical levels of their actions	2.58	1.07	2.94	1.03	1.67	.72	3.67	.62
Degree of similarity with the citizens	2.00	.88	2.03	0.95	1.33	.62	3.00	1.13
Degree of empathy	2.68	1.42	2.15	1.06	1.67	.90	3.20	.86
Degree of citizens' satisfaction with their management	1.68	0.67	1.42	.61	1.40	.63	1.47	.64
Coherence with its path	2.74	1.10	2.18	1.18	1.87	1.06	3.27	1.03
Coherence with its party	2.95	1.03	2.58	1.09	2.47	1.25	3.80	.94
Coherence with its ideology	2.89	1.29	2.58	1.20	2.87	1.30	3.53	1.06
General Coherence	2.86	.98	2.44	0.96	2.40	1.11	3.53	.76

Does he pursuit his own benefit?	3.26	1.24	3.06	1.32	2.80	1.57	2.67	1.05
Does he pursuit his party's benefit?	3.47	1.12	3.34	1.21	3.07	1.62	3.67	1.18
Does he pursuit the benefit of his voters, in particular?	2.42	.90	2.34	0.97	2.00	.93	3.47	.74
Does he pursuit the benefit of his voters, in general?	2.21	.92	2.06	1.08	1.79	1.12	3.27	1.10
Does he pursuit the benefit of the participants?	2.05	1.03	2.13	0.83	1.40	.63	3.33	.82
Is he able to pull the country out of crisis?	1.75 <sup>o</sup>	.86	1.71	1.00	1.30	.95	2.38	1.19

As outlined before, these data are consistent with those obtained when participants were asked about their general assessment for both political leaders. In this regard, as shown in Table 9, Zapatero was evaluated more positively than his opponent, but in both cases, the evaluation was negative. Despite all this, most interviewees agreed that, if both leaders were candidates at the same time, (Table 10), Mariano Rajoy would win ( $M = 3.60$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ).

**Table 8. Evaluation of political leaders according to the variables of authentic leadership**

	Rajoy (N=88)		Rodríguez Zapatero (N=86)	
	M	SD	M	SD
Ethical levels of their actions	2.13	.98	2.74	1.10
Degree of similarity with the citizens	1.39	.82	2.05	1.03
Degree of empathy	1.91	1.06	2.36	1.19

Degree of citizens' satisfaction with their management	1.97	.87	1.49	.63
Coherence with its path	2.86	1.16	2.50	1.22
Coherence with its party	3.60	1.15	2.88	1.15
Coherence with its ideology	3.84	1.11	2.87	1.22
General Coherence	3.42	.87	2.73	1.03
Does he pursuit his own benefit?	3.16	1.45	2.96	1.29
Does he pursuit his party's benefit?	3.93	1.05	3.42	1.26
Does he pursuit the benefit of his voters, in particular?	2.66	1.12	2.53	1.03
Does he pursuit the benefit of his voters, in general?	1.95	.96	2.27	1.13
Does he pursuit the benefit of the participants?	1.69	.97	2.19	1.02
Is he able to pull the country out of crisis?	2.25	1.28	1.76	1.03

**Table 9. Overall rating of political leaders**

	<b>Rajoy (N=83)</b>		<b>Rodríguez Zapatero (N=82)</b>	
	M	SD	M	SD
Blank/Null/No Vote	1.78	1.00	2.26	.87
Other Political Parties	1.32	.65	2.06	.90
PP	3.09	.94	1.27	.46
PSOE	1.18	.40	3.47	.74
Total	1.64	.98	2.20	1.04

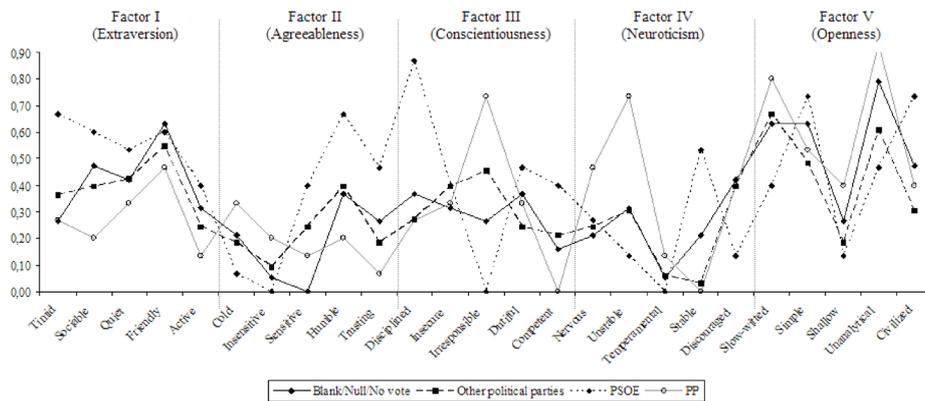
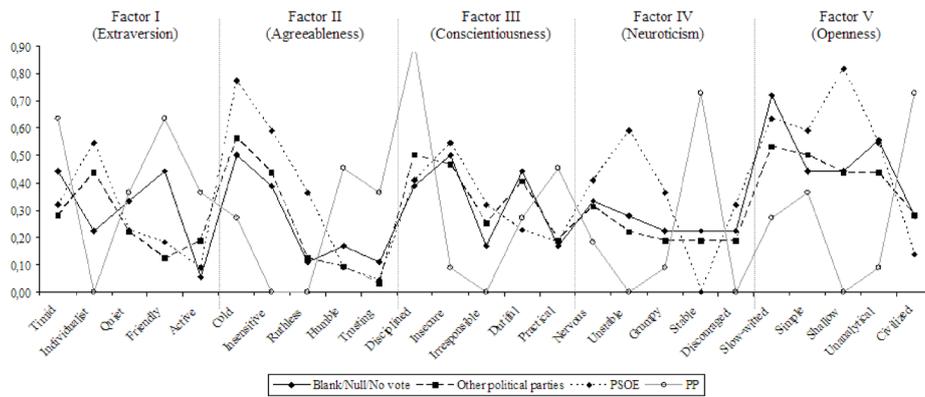
**Table 10. Chance of getting elected in hypothetical elections**

	<b>Rajoy (N=83)</b>		<b>Rodríguez Zapatero (N=82)</b>	
	M	SD	M	SD
Blank/Null/No Vote	3.50	1.30	1.32	.58
Other Political Parties	3.45	1.34	1.38	.71
PP	4.18	.75	1.20	.41
PSOE	3.41	1.60	1.73	.80
Total	3.60	1.33	1.41	.68

*Correlation between the Big Five and authentic leadership.* In order to check the correlation between the Big Five personality Factors and the features of an authentic leader, we asked participants to point out, from a total of 40 concepts, those that define a political leader's personality. From all the adjectives selected by the interviewees, we have taken the 20 most popular ones (5 for each factor); moreover, we have compared their values in terms of the policy option chosen in advance. The results, which can be found in Figures 1 and 2, demonstrate, once again, how the preference for one party or another affects the opinion that people have about the leader in question. In fact, the curve that draws data from PP voters in relation with Mariano Rajoy is equivalent to the responses of PSOE voters over José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, and vice versa.

However, all the participants, even his own voters, consider that José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero lacks openness (factor V); this might be due to the fact that people blame him for his inefficiency in managing the crisis. The fact that interviewees used the same adjectives to define both characters is also remarkable. Actually, the only difference refers to an attribute factor: individualist versus sociable in the factor I; ruthless versus sensitive, in factor II; practical versus competent, in factor III; and grumpy versus temperamental, in the factor IV. In short, the two political leaders are basically conceived in the same terms. However, to empirically test the difference between the leaders' score in the five factors the following formula has been applied:

- Pa = positive attribute;
- Na = negative attribute;
- Fn = factor;
- nn = number of individuals who have selected this attribute;
- N = total number of participants for the leader analyzed.



As can be seen in Table 11, Zapatero is perceived as more extrovert and agreeable, while Rajoy would be evaluated as more conscientious. These

data would agree with the answers given by participants in terms of authentic leadership. That is because factors I and II may be related to empathy and concern for the problems of citizens, while factor III would be typical of people consistent with their personal and professional career. As for the similarity between IV and V factors for both leaders, it could be justified by arguing that these two dimensions require a closer knowledge of the person who's being tested.

**Table 11. Difference between positive and negative attributes in the Big Five factors**

	<b>Mariano Rajoy (N=88)</b>	<b>José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (N=86)</b>
Factor I - Extroversion	0.18	0.91
Factor II - Agreeableness	-0.65	0.57
Factor III - Conscientiousness	0.88	0.30
Factor IV - Neuroticism	-0.90	-0.99
Factor V – Openness	-1.43	-1.48

## Discussion

Once the results obtained in our study have been presented, it is time to review the main assumptions of our work. The first hypothesis stated that those individuals, who use social networks as a means of political information, declare to possess a greater degree of knowledge about the leader compared to the rest of citizens. This assumption arose in connection with the idea that social networks allow a full two-way communication, putting the political leader and the citizen in a communicative common level, overcoming several problems such as space-time

differences. However, no evidence to support this hypothesis has been found, so it would be refuted.

The second hypothesis was proposed in the framework of the economic crisis; according to it, a charismatic leader will be considered worse than an authentic leader in critical periods. The first thing to say is that, according to our findings, there is no trust in the management of any of the two leaders concerning the economic crisis. This fact must relate to the data collection period, weeks after adoption of the controversial labor reform, and a few days before of general strike. If anything, results show more confidence in Mariano Rajoy, which is logical considering that Rodríguez Zapatero had to leave his post due to his apparent inability to solve the problem. In any case, the second hypothesis cannot be validated because, on the one hand, the value of any charismatic leader cannot be confirmed, and, on the other hand, none of them meets the requirements to be considered an authentic leader. Thus, the second hypothesis is neither refuted nor confirmed, but it is impossible to contrast.

Speaking of authentic leadership, which is the core of our study, Williams *et al.* (2011) suggest that this may correlate positively with the Big Five personality Factors and /or high value on emotional intelligence. This possibility confirms our third hypothesis, which has been verified by asking participants to choose among some features to describe Rajoy's and Zapatero's identity. Based on these results, it seems that the current Prime Minister has higher ratings than his opponent in factor III, while Zapatero is valued as being more extrovert (factor I) and more agreeable (factor II). Although further work is required to gain a more complete understanding of this issue, our findings indicate that the third hypothesis can be confirmed. The current study provides further evidence that true leadership variables correlate positively with the size of the Big Five personality.

Finally, the fourth hypothesis, proposed in a negative way, rejected the idea that Zapatero and Rajoy were considered authentic leaders. This hypothesis has also been confirmed. The results obtained suggest that both leaders are, in general, poorly valued. And in any case, when they stand out at a specific variable (ethics), they fail at another one (for example, their concern about the citizen's problems).

From all these data, one may conclude that no Spanish political leader can be considered an authentic leader in the current situation. The reason for this lies, in first instance, in the personality of these characters and in the way they manage their political parties. However, its consequences may have something to do with the current apathy shown by citizens with concerning institutional policy. Not only said indifference is reflected in an increasing nonparticipation in elections, but also in the ongoing demonstrations seeking real change in management. People see politicians in an undifferentiated way. They perceive that their leaders are more interested in their own benefit than in the citizens' problems, and that they are able to break with their ideology or their own principles, as long as they can maintain the power. On the whole, the economic crisis turns into a political crisis, and this feeds a social crisis. Thus, the authentic leadership, at least in the Spanish current political context, looks like an illusion.

Future research should expand and diversify the number of participants, and even complete the study with a qualitative method such as focus groups. It should also be convenient go deeper into the relationship between Big Five personality factors and authentic leadership's variables.

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