

How a candidate moves influences how you vote (w/ Video)

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(PhysOrg.com) -- The perceived health of an election candidate can predict how people will vote according to recently published research- and voters can form opinions about how healthy a candidate is based solely on the way that person moves.

The voters' conclusions may not be correct- and they may not even be aware that how the candidates moved influenced their decision to vote, but a clear link between how a candidate moves and subsequent voting patterns has been proven for the first time. Apparently, we are more likely to vote for someone who moves in ways that appear healthy to us.

The paper in *The Quarterly* [Journal of Experimental Psychology](#) also provides a clear illustration of how we form subconscious conclusions about other people based on how they move.

Psychologists at Bangor University asked people to view short video clips of Barak Obama and John McCain, or Gordon Brown and David Cameron- with the images converted to stick men - representing only the individual's movement and with the sound removed. People rated the 'stick men' for a range of characteristics including attractiveness, trustworthiness, leadership and physical health. They didn't know who the 'stick men' were, but were asked which one they'd vote for.

The outstanding finding was that the majority voted for the person they'd also rated as most healthy - based on clips of only nine seconds in length. The link between perceived health and voting pattern was far stronger

than between [leadership](#) and voting.

In an experiment run before the US presidential elections, 63% of those taking part voted for the unidentified 'Obama stick-man' (Obama won 52.7% of the popular votes), In the Brown-Cameron 'stick man run-off', there was no clear majority. This may be because the group as a whole rated both Brown and Cameron equally healthy, based on the clips selected.

The important finding is the link established between the candidate subconsciously perceived as the healthiest and the person's subsequent voting choice.

The paper's lead author, doctoral student Robin Kramer of Bangor University's School of Psychology explains: "It's our opinion about how healthy another person is that influences our voting choice."

"Our experiments focused on very short clips of each speaker. Removing appearance and using solely movement, we were still able to ask participants about their perception of the candidates. In real life people would have many more opportunities to see and hear candidates. They'd be taking on other already established influencing factors such as how the candidates sound and dress, as well as considering the policies and parties involved."

"Our results further emphasise that important decisions, like who we vote for, can be influenced by feelings we may be unaware of. Whether a politician appears to be healthy and vital may be completely irrelevant to what they would do in office, yet that appearance may still grab our [vote](#)," added co-author, Dr Robert Ward, of the Bangor University's School of Psychology.

More information: The paper can be read online [here](#).

Provided by Bangor University

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