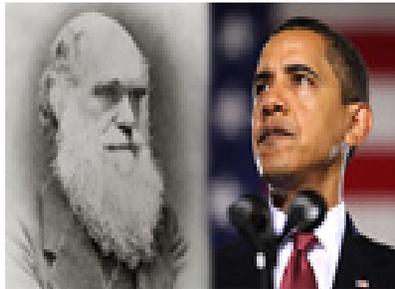




# Selected: Why Some People Lead, Why Others Follow and Why it Matters (From Darwin to Obama)



Mark Van Vugt  
Department of Social and  
Organizational Psychology  
VU University Amsterdam



*Institute for Cognitive and Evolutionary Anthropology  
University of Oxford*

[m.van.vugt@psy.vu.nl](mailto:m.van.vugt@psy.vu.nl)

[www.professormarkvanvugt.com](http://www.professormarkvanvugt.com)

# Who would you rather work?

CEO Larry who is perennially on the list of most highly compensated chief executives in the world and who earns roughly 1000 times the average salary of the people working for him,. He is an avid collector of luxury cars and yachts and has just started his third marriage.

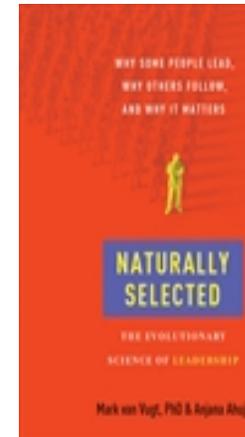
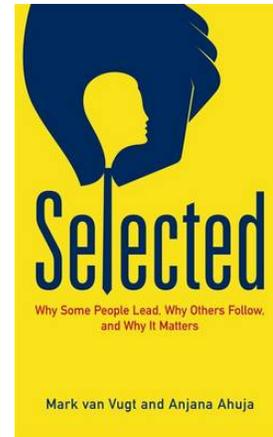
CEO John who has just given himself an annual salary of 1 dollar because the success of the company has already given him more than he needs. John's aim is now to make a difference in the lives of his employees and the world.



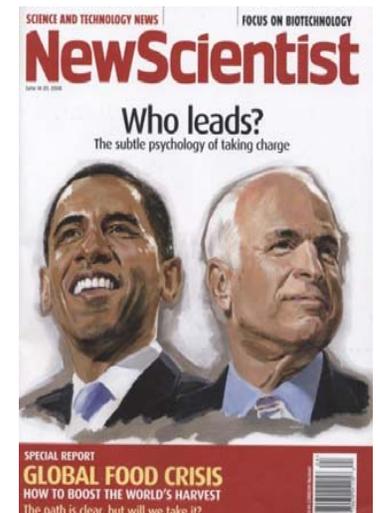
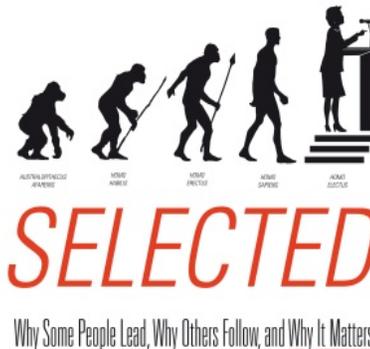


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DR. MARK VAN VUGT & DR. ANJANA AHUJA





VU University Amsterdam

# What do we know about leadership?

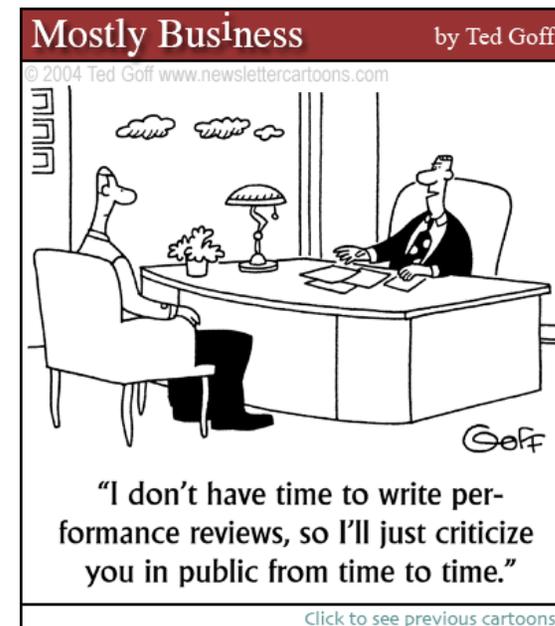


# Leadership is a human universal

- All cultures have leadership (Brown, 1991)
- Good leadership saves lives and bad leadership kills people (Amundsen vs. Scott Antarctic expeditions)
- The “romance” of leadership
  - We often attribute great importance to leadership.... even when it is not warranted: An evolutionary legacy?

...Yet leadership often fails:

- **The failure rate of managers in corporate America is about 50%**
- **Two-thirds of employees report that the most stressful aspect of their job is....their boss!**



# Leadership emerges spontaneously and very quickly....in about 25 seconds!

(Gillet, Cartwright, & Van Vugt, 2010)

|          | X  | Y  | coordination |
|----------|----|----|--------------|
| You      | 11 | 4  | 2            |
| Player A | 4  | 4  | 9            |
| Player B | 4  | 11 | 1            |
| Player C | 6  | 6  | 12           |

Player A hasn't chosen yet

Player B hasn't chosen yet

Player C hasn't chosen yet

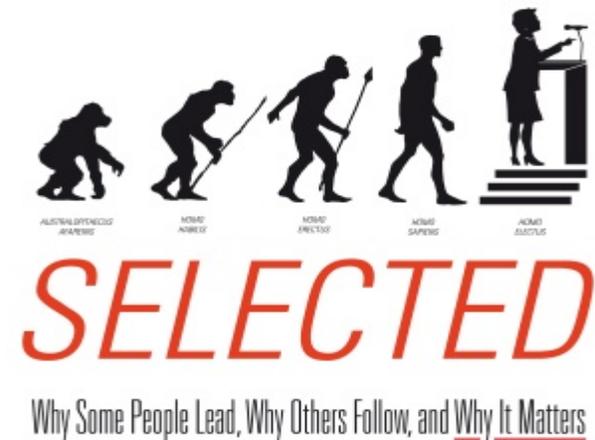
Your choice  X

Y

# What we don't know...

- After more than 2 million publications on leadership, there are so many unanswered questions about leadership:
  - Why do tall leader candidates usually beat shorter ones in elections?
  - Why does power corrupt?
  - Why do good athletes become mediocre coaches?
  - Why do women CEO's attract so much hostility?
- There is no universal theory of leadership that explains why humans lead and follow so easily
- Integration needed of insights from psychology, economics, political science, biology, anthropology, and neuroscience.

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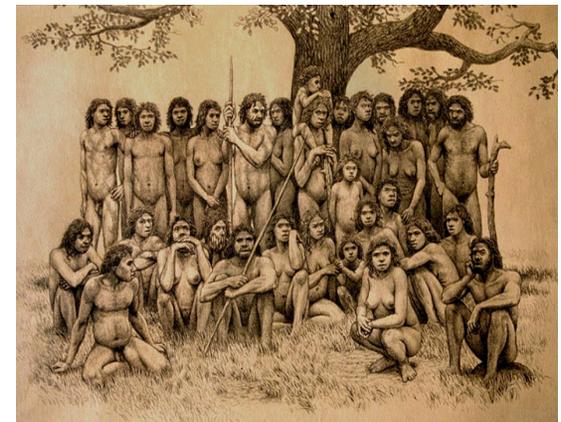
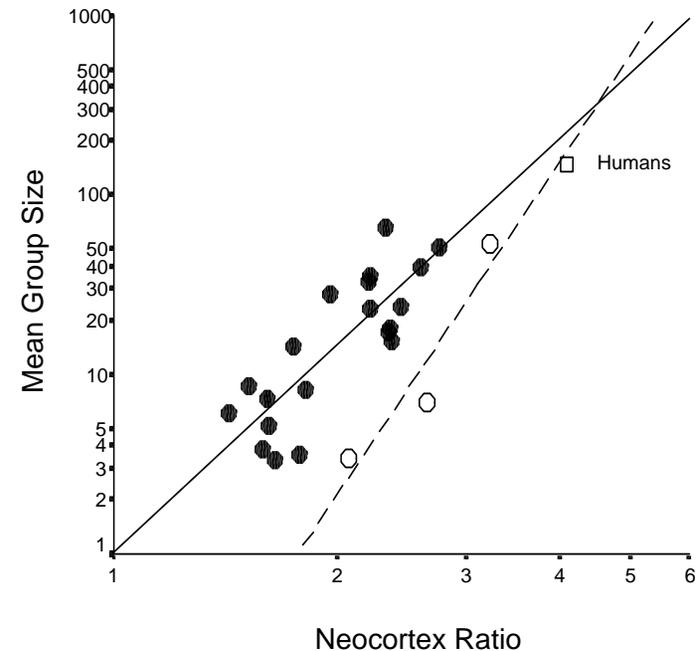


"The practical lessons from Selected are worth to be taken seriously. The book contains the ingredients of a social leadership model. Finally a scientific treatment of leadership, something this important subject has long been lacking for long."

- Nature (2010)

# Evolutionary Leadership Theory

- Humans are a social species (a member of the primate family) – Darwin, 1859
- Humans have big brains to live in large, socially complex groups
  - Dunbar's number 150
  - Hunter-gatherer bands, neolithic villages, religious communities, facebook social networks
- Leadership (and followership) evolved as strategies to coordinate group activities – a thought experiment

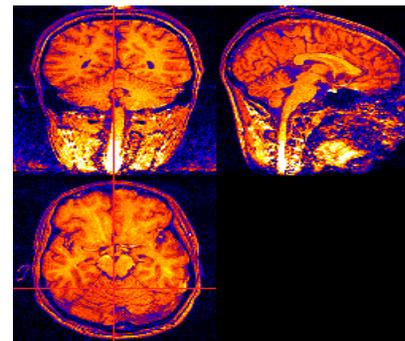


# Evolutionary Psychology

- The human brain (and mind) is the product of evolution through natural selection
- Our brains have evolved to be good at solving problems that threaten our survival and reproductive success
- EP involves search for psychological mechanisms underlying followership (and leadership)
- Examples of evolved decision rules:
  - “If I am being threatened I follow a physically strong individual”
  - “If I am uncertain I follow a more experienced individual”



“And now, Randy, by use of song, the male sparrow will stake out his territory . . . an instinct common in the lower animals.”



# Some Lessons from Nature

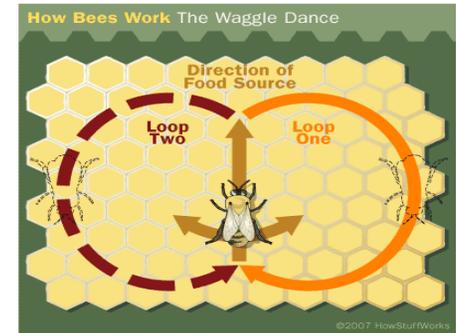
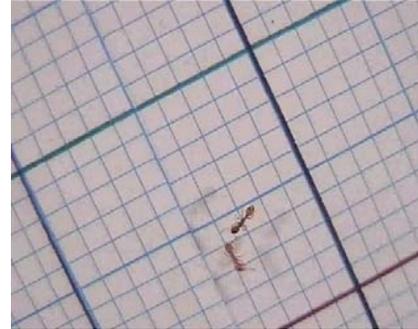
Leadership is NOT  
uniquely human

# Leadership does not require much brain power

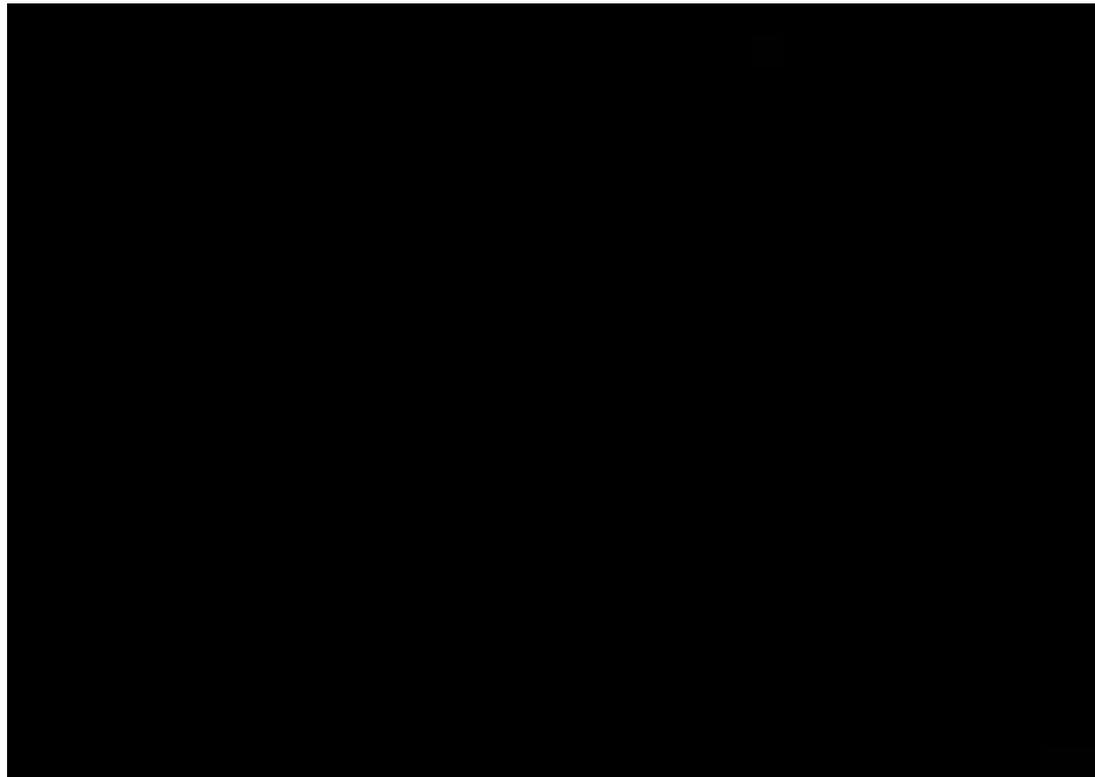
- Leadership is abundant in the animal kingdom:
  - Scout leaders to bees
  - Teachers in ants
  - Bold leaders in Guppies
  - Wise leaders in elephants
  - Warrior Leaders in chimpanzees

Which animal emerges as leader?  
(King, Johnson, & van Vugt, 2010)

The hungriest  
The most dominant  
The boldest  
The most experienced



# The scout leader among honeybees



# Leadership is inevitable in any social species (Van Vugt, 2006)

**Table 1. A pure coordination game**

|       |              | Pat    |        |
|-------|--------------|--------|--------|
|       |              | Hole A | Hole B |
| Jamie | Water Hole A | 1, 1*  | 0, 0   |
|       | Water Hole B | 0, 0   | 1, 1*  |

*Note.* Payoffs are for Pat and Jamie, respectively; Hole A and Hole B represent alternative game strategies (underpinned by gene alleles); game equilibria are indicated with asterisks

# Yet conflicts may emerge!

**Table 2. A leader game (Battle of Sexes)**

|       |              | Pat    |        |
|-------|--------------|--------|--------|
|       |              | Hole A | Hole B |
| Jamie | Water Hole A | 9, 1*  | 0, 0   |
|       | Water Hole B | 0, 0   | 1, 9*  |

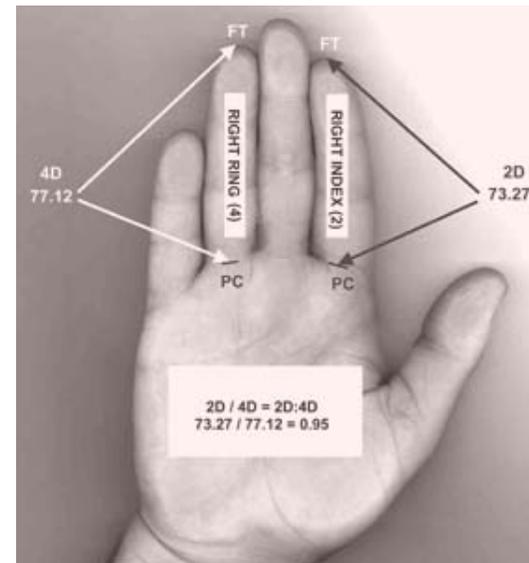
*Note.* Payoffs are for Pat and Jamie, respectively; Hole A and Hole B represent alternative game strategies (underpinned by gene alleles); game equilibria are indicated with asterisks

# Leadership as Ultimatum game

You have 10 Euros, any amount you can keep or give to another person. The other person can either accept or reject the offer.

**If your offer is rejected nobody gets anything**

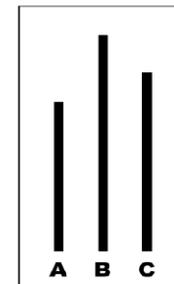
- How much do you offer?
- What minimum offer would you accept as recipient?



# We are Born to Follow

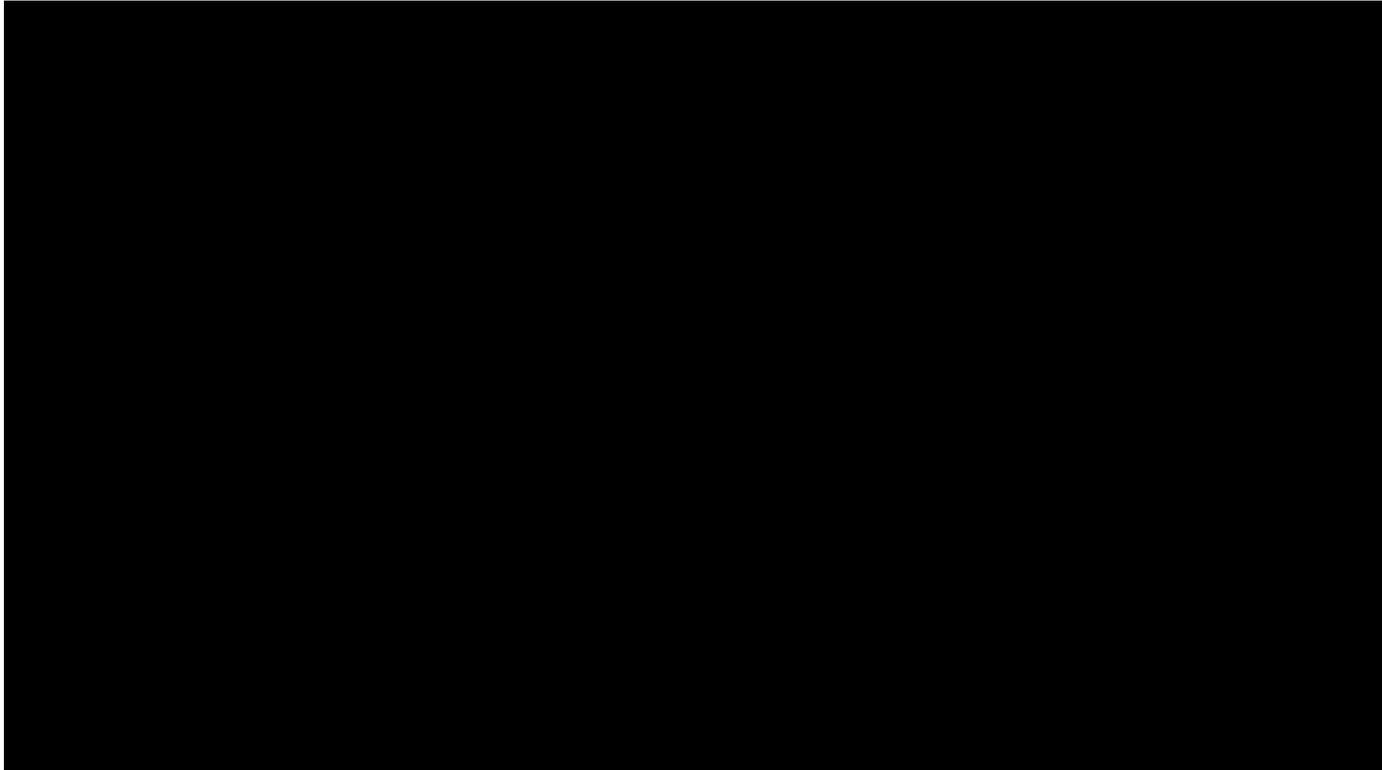
- Followership is the default setting in our brain:
  - 3 months' old children follow eye gaze of their parents
  - Pointing comes naturally in humans (and dogs)
- Why follow the leader?
  - Desire to be a leader one day
  - Getting valuable information
  - Sticking with the group

x





# No leaders without followers



# Understanding the personality and motivation of the first followers

|          | X  | Y  | coordination |
|----------|----|----|--------------|
| You      | 11 | 4  | 2            |
| Player A | 4  | 4  | 9            |
| Player B | 4  | 11 | 1            |
| Player C | 6  | 6  | 12           |

Player A hasn't chosen yet

Player B hasn't chosen yet

Player C hasn't chosen yet

Your choice  X

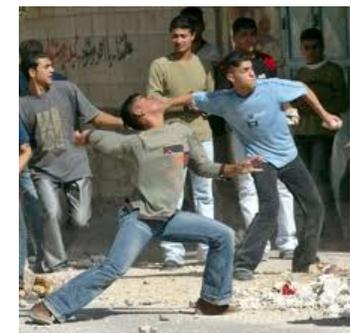
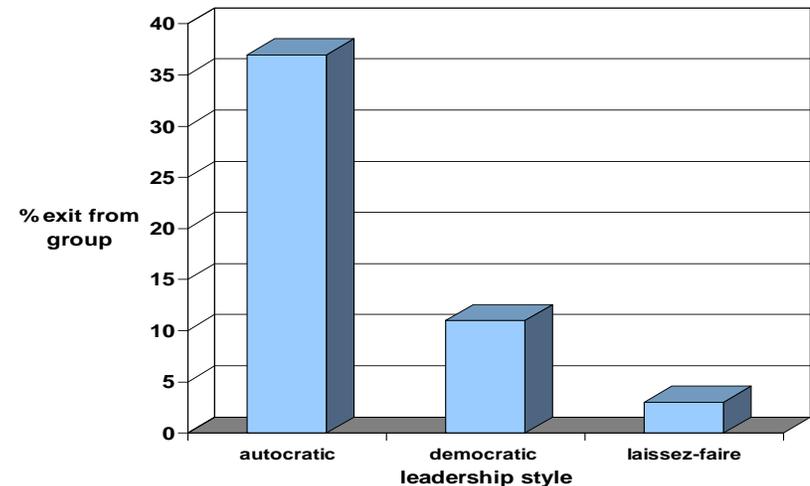
Y



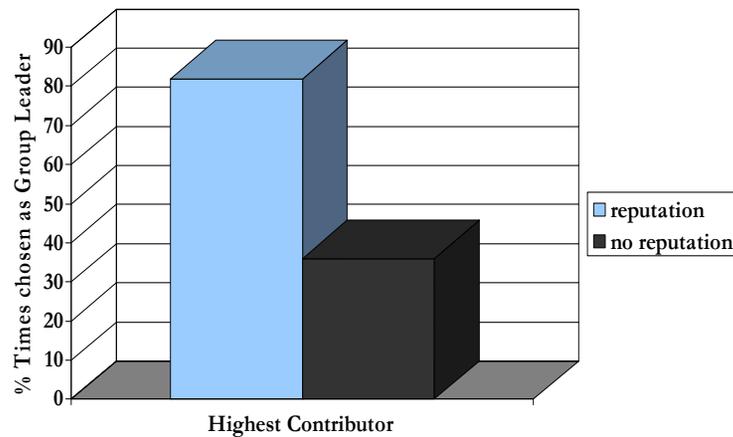
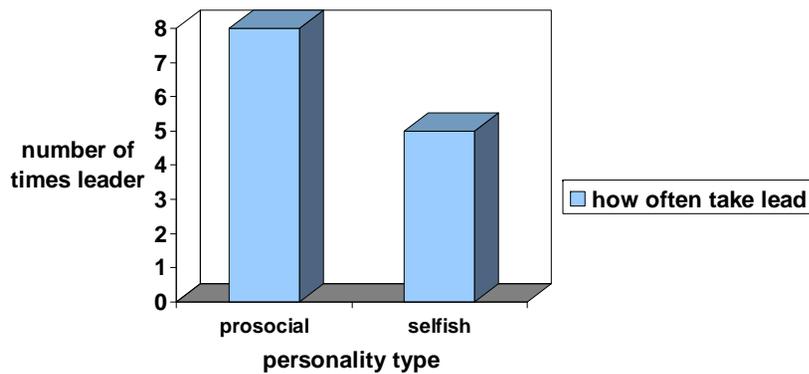


# We are democratic apes

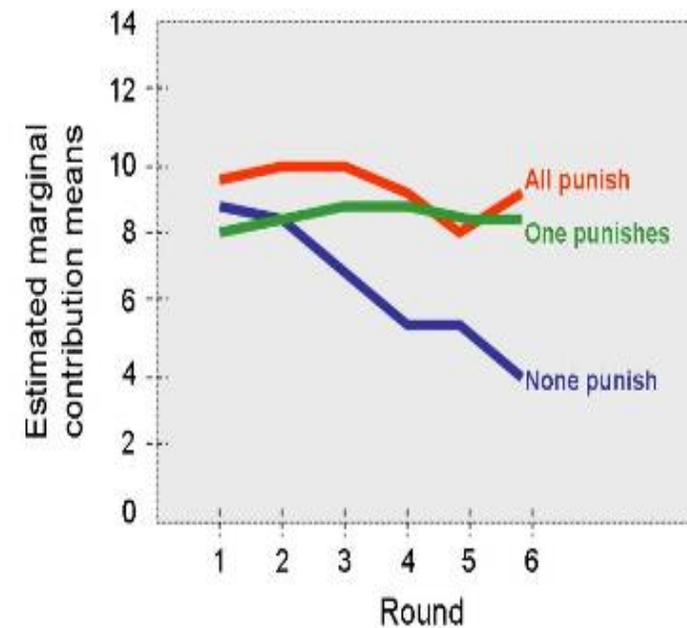
- The anthropological literature suggests that our ancestors were fiercely egalitarian (reverse dominance hierarchy; Boehm, 1999)
- Democracy did not start in Athens, but on the African Savannah!
- Emergence of democracy in the lab (Van Vugt, De Cremer et al., 2004)
- Various STOPs: Strategies to Overcome the Powerful
  - Gossip and ridicule
  - Public meetings
  - Replacing leaders
  - Disobedience or rebellion
  - Desertion
  - Assassination (Stoning)



# The Evolution of Servant Leadership



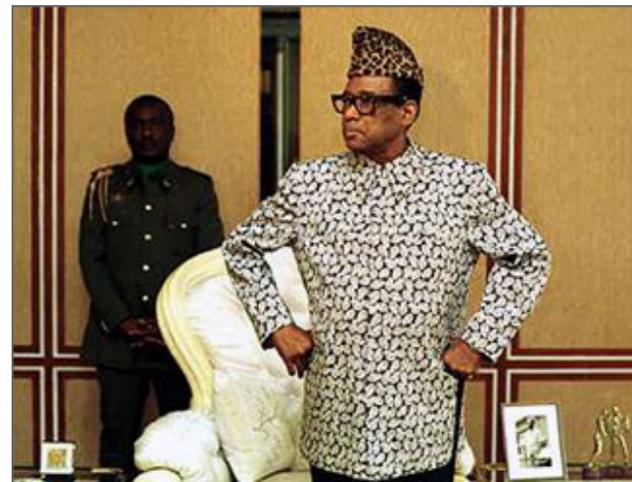
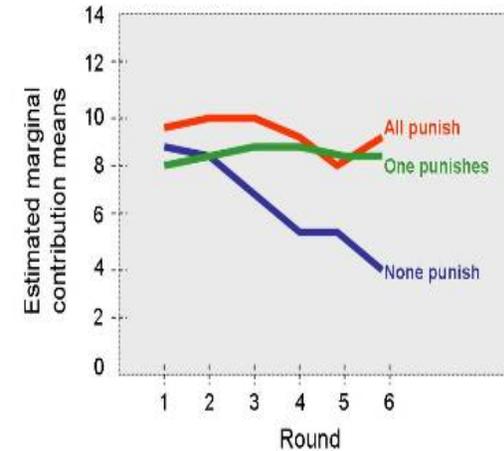
Punitive leaders can raise cooperation in group



O'Gorman, R. O., Henrich, J., & Van Vugt, M. (2008). *Proceedings of Royal Society-B*

# But there is a dark side to leadership

- Dominance is part of our primate heritage
- Greater rewards select for selfish leadership
- “Dark Triad” or toxic leadership
  - Machiavellianism
  - Narcissism
  - Psychopathy



# 7 STEPs to become a despot

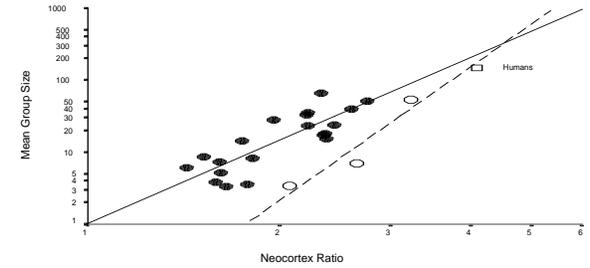
- Nepotism and corruption
- Provide public goods
- Monopoly on use of force
- Exterminate rivals
- Defeat a common enemy
- Manipulate the hearts and minds of followers
- Create an ideology to justify your position



NON SEQUITUR

Monday  
27  
FEBRUARY

# Likely evolved mechanisms to foster group cohesion



language



laughter



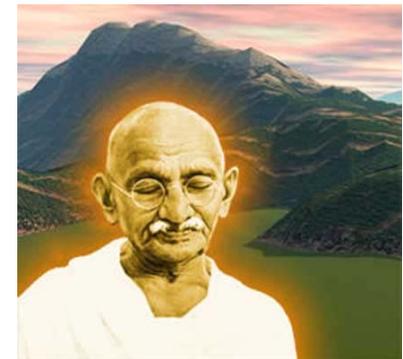
singing



dancing

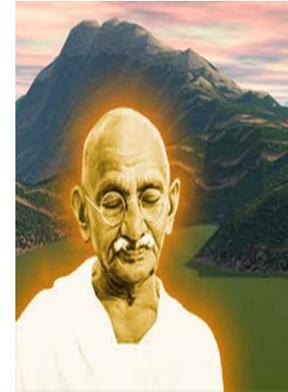
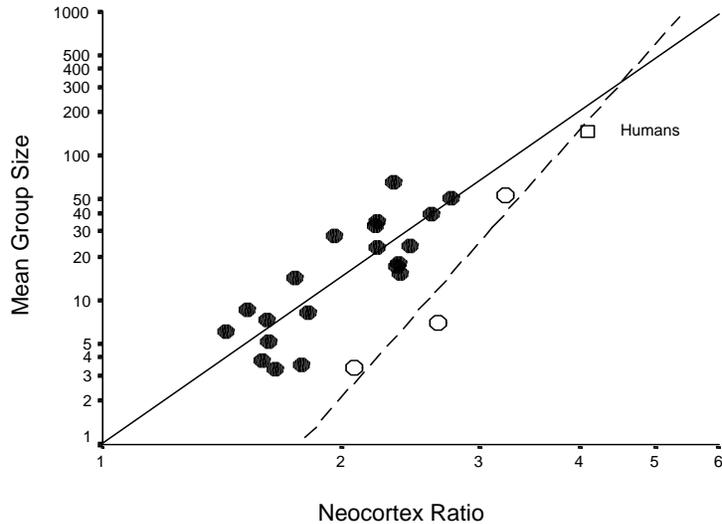


religion



(charismatic)  
leadership

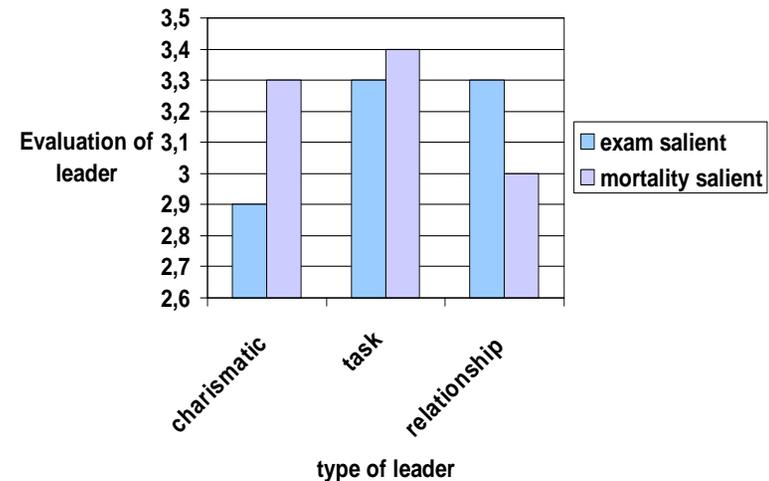
# The emergence of charismatic leadership



Charismatic leadership as a device to connect large groups of people

Charismatic leadership and:

- The evolution of language
- (a) Metaphors
- (b) Articulating vision
- Bonding groups in times of threat or uncertainty
- The charisma of the "outsider"



# Which person looks most like a leader?



**John Tall:**  
Name: John Lewis  
Age: 44  
Sex: Male  
Height: 1.95 meters (6.4 feet)  
Hobbies: Swimming, painting



**John Small:**  
Name: John Lewis  
Age: 44  
Sex: Male  
Height: 1.65 meters (5.4 feet)  
Hobbies: Swimming, painting



**Mary Tall:**  
Name: Mary Taylor  
Age: 46  
Sex: Female  
Height: 1.85 meters (6 feet)  
Hobbies: Reading, cycling



**Mary Small:**  
Name: Mary Taylor  
Age: 46  
Sex: Female  
Height: 1.55 meters (5 feet)  
Hobbies: Reading, cycling

# The savannah or mismatch hypothesis

- Leadership choices are based on adaptive decision rules in ancestral environments



**John Tall:**  
Name: John Lewis  
Age: 44  
Sex: Male  
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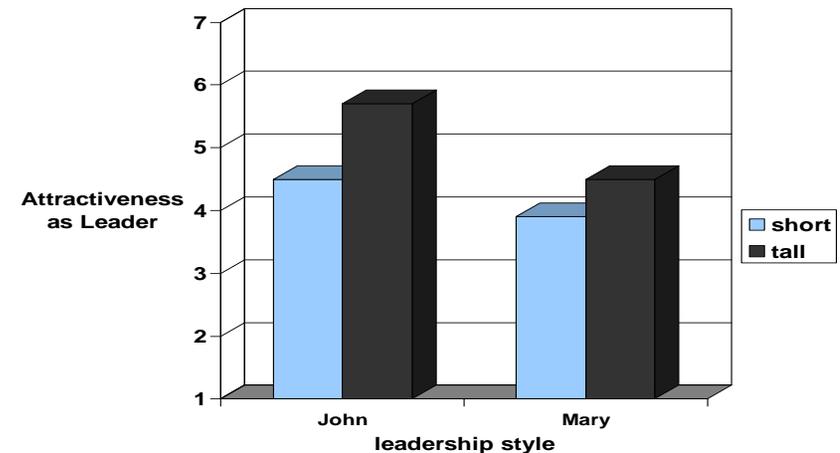


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**Mary Small:**  
Name: Mary Taylor  
Age: 46  
Sex: Female  
Height: 1.55 meters (5 feet)  
Hobbies: Reading, cycling

- Savannah traits
  - Height: Cue for physical health, strength
  - Age: Cue for wisdom



# Who would you vote for?

- Who would you vote for as the new leader of your country?

## War

Your country of Taminia is at war with the neighbouring country of Robania. It has been an aggressive and costly war and no side is willing to concede.

## Peace

Your country of Taminia has a longstanding peaceful, relationship with the neighbouring country of Robania. This alliance must be preserved.



A



B

# The Face as Leadership Cue

- Masculine faces preferred as warrior leaders but feminine faces as peacekeepers

(Israeli author David Grossman: “Time and again we choose warriors to lead us, but maybe by always choosing warriors, we doom ourselves to always be in wars”)

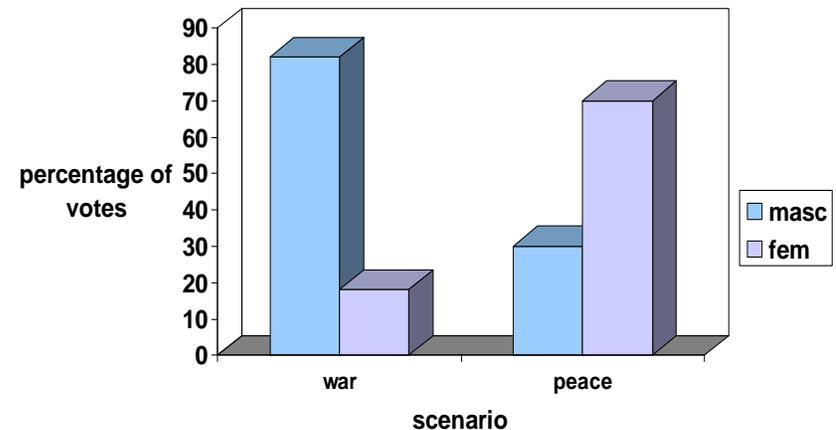
- Children can predict outcomes of elections based on the face of the candidates

- Role for elder (post-menopausal) women in politics and business
  - Similar to chimpanzees (Frans De Waal)



A

B



# From Savannah to Boardroom: How to be a natural leader

- ❑ Keep it small, informal and egalitarian
  - ❑ Find new ways to bind followers
- ❑ Distribute leadership practice
  - ❑ About warriors, diplomats, arbiters, scouts, managers, and teachers
- ❑ Mind the (pay) gap
  - ❑ 3XS (salary, status, sex) may select for the wrong leaders
- ❑ Cherish followers
  - ❑ Promote STOPS and Prevent STEPS to limit the power of leaders
- ❑ Do not (just) judge a leader on his or her jaw line

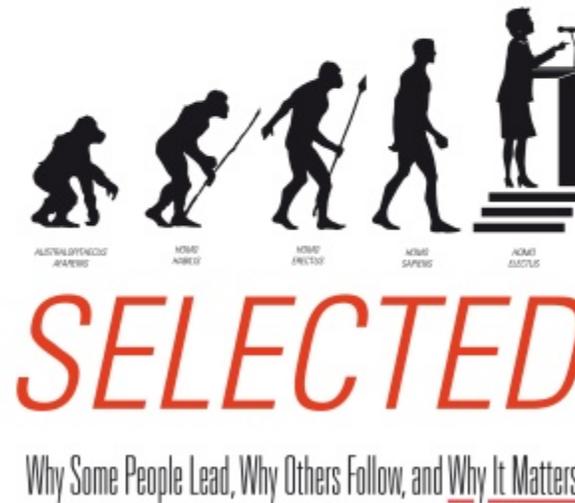


VU University Amsterdam

# Merci!

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**Blog Psychology  
Today “Naturally  
Selected:  
Understanding the  
Human Animal in  
the Work place”**



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