CONSTRUCTING CANDIDATE IMAGES:

Candidate Self-Presentations, Media Coverage And Voter Considerations In the 1992 U.S. Presidential Campaign

Ann N. Crigler, University of Southern California

Marion R. Just, Wellesley College

Paper prepared for delivery at the World Congress of the International Political Science Association, Berlin, August 21-24, 1994.

CONSTRUCTING CANDIDATE IMAGES: Candidate Self-Presentations, Media Coverage And Voter Considerations In the 1992 U.S. Presidential Campaign

Ann N. Crigler, University of Southern California

Marion R. Just, Wellesley College

Early voting literature in the United States tended to dismiss the impact of campaigns and other "short-term forces," as compared with more powerful long-term forces, especially partisan orientation and group identification (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944; Berelson, et al., 1954; Campbell et al, 1960). Since then, the preponderance of voting research has highlighted four sets of voting criteria: partisanship, issues that cut across party lines, retrospective evaluations of the incumbent's performance, and constructs of the individual candidates.[1] While partisanship, with its attendant issue cues, and retrospective evaluations of the preceding government (Fiorina, 1981) fit neatly with democratic theories of accountability, the emphasis on personal leadership (Brody and Page, 1972; Kelley and Mirer, 1974) is not so easy to parse.

American voters' reliance on candidate assessments in the United States is understandable in the light of the weak party system (Wattenberg, 1990), political structures which divide accountability, a somewhat ambiguous class system, and a political culture that is profoundly anti-party (Schattschneider, 1969).

With declining partisanship has come increasingly candidate-centered elections (Wattenberg, 1991), in which television plays a major role (Robinson, 1983). The parasocial experience of television, makes it possible for American voters to judge candidates much as they would other people. Given the fact that some candidates are virtually unknown to the majority of the electorate at the outset of the U.S. presidential campaign, one could argue that only the length of the campaign (approximately ten months, including primaries, for president, and often six months for statewide and Congressional offices) and the coverage of the campaign on television makes it possible for candidate considerations to play such an important role in the U.S. vote. Candidates with relatively little political experience can enter and win early primary contests. Television coverage during the long campaign makes it possible for voters to see the candidates in a variety of political contexts. Interestingly, however, candidate factors in elections have become more significant in other, very different democratic systems, such as Italy, in tandem with the development of television. An analysis of the role of candidate constructs in American presidential elections, therefore, has implications for contemporary democracy that extend beyond a single nation.

While scholars have often deplored the emphasis of the voting decision on candidates' personal qualities, they have devoted less attention to the meaning of these constructs. Political scientists have been critical of candidate advertisements, campaign news, and

voting decisions that are largely based on candidate personality, scandal, or character as opposed to substantive issue positions. The gold standard for political scientists is issue-based campaign communication. A great deal of the literature on American elections and voting has, therefore, been forced to reconcile this theoretical demand for issue voting assessments, with the empirical observation that personality and character, rather than issue positions, play a larger role in electoral choice. In The American Voter, Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes (1960, p. 26) reported that Eisenhower's personal characteristics accounted for his popularity with the electorate. Regarding the 1956 election, they argued that:

> it was the response to personal qualities -- to his sincerity, his integrity, and sense of duty, his virtue as a family man, his religious devotion, and his sheer likableness -- that rose substantially in the second campaign. These frequencies leave the strong impression that in 1956 Eisenhower was honored not so much for his performance as president as for the quality of his person.

The astonishment in Campbell et al.'s account reflects the bias against personal considerations in voting decisions. Even when subsequent researchers found evidence of issue-based voting, they have worried about the influence of personal factors. Brody and Page (1972), for example, cautioned that their results showing voter/candidate issue conformity could be the result *either* of persuasion -- voters taking on the views of a candidate -- or rationalization -- reading their own preferences in the candidate they favor. Some scholars argue that candidates are so vague about

their positions that citizens are essentially precluded from voting on anything but personal and partisan grounds (Key 1964; Page 1978).

In their acclaimed work on "issue voting," Nie, Verba and Petrocik (1976) analyzed a series of responses to questions about "likes" and "dislikes" of candidates. They found that, beginning in 1964, reference to candidates' issue positions rose and reference to party ties fell. The authors were less inclined to note, however, that reference to "the personal traits and characteristics of the candidate" was the most frequent type of response and relatively constant over time (between 72 and 84 percent of all respondents made some reference to personal attributes in the elections from 1952 through 1972). In another place, Nie et al. showed that the association between party evaluations and the vote declined starting in 1964 while the association of issue evaluations and the vote rose. But here they note that "... the correlation of personal evaluations with the vote remains relatively steady throughout, reflecting the fact that both the proportion making such evaluations and the correlation of the evaluations with the vote are steady" (p. 171).

In other words, many of the most important works on partisanship and issue voting granted that constructs of the candidates have a strong influence upon the vote, but failed to examine what those constructs might mean. A similar case in point is Fiorina's work on retrospective voting. Fiorina argued that what he termed "the textbook trinity" of party, issues and

candidates was actually far less clearly separated than many would contend. Fiorina argued, though that he could leave candidate evaluations out of his equation, because images "overlap" with other independent variables. He worried that these evaluations might involve a number of dimensions, specifically "candidate personality... retrospective judgments, party influence, [or] issue positions" (p. 154). A significant empirical finding that underscores the prevalence of candidate evaluations in voting is that more politically sophisticated voters in the United States are even more inclined to use candidate-based assessments than less sophisticated voters (Neuman, 1986; Bennett, 1993).

We think Fiorina was right, and that candidate evaluations do involve a range of considerations that voters bring to bear in arriving at electoral decisions, and we believe Nie et al.'s evidence that candidate evaluations are the most important factor in voting. The problem is not demonstrating the importance of candidate constructs, but squaring the role of constructs with the way democracy is supposed to work. Democratic theory asks us to believe that in casting their votes for one candidate as opposed to another, citizens are endorsing a set of future policies and rendering an account on past leadership. The argument is that if people endorse a sincere recitation of the pledge of allegiance or a blow-dried hair-do, then they are unlikely to find satisfaction in what government does, or does not do for them.

It is not necessary to believe, however, that candidate constructs are empty of political meaning. Our premise is that

during their exposure to an information-rich presidential campaign -- lasting nine or ten months -- American voters integrate what they have learned about the candidates' issue agendas, previous political experience, and personal qualities to make evaluations of candidates and to reach voting decisions. The dovetailing of issue, performance, and character, which is typical of campaign advertising (Kern, 1989) applies to voting as well. The images of candidates that individuals construct, reflect what they think is important in politics and leadership.

We will show that the weighing of candidate considerations captures elements of partisanship, issue preference, and retrospective judgments, as well as a sense of where the candidate might lead the country in the future. By the time of the election, these weighted considerations are highly integrated as an evaluative judgment which is a logical precursor to the vote itself. We have borrowed the term "considerations" from the work of Kelley and Mirer (1974) and Zaller (1993). As Zaller defines it, a consideration is "...any reason that might induce an individual to decide a political issue one way or the other." (p. 40) In our use of the term, considerations encompass the full range of information that citizens use in making decisions about candidates.[2]

We will show here that, at least in 1992, the evaluation of the performance of the incumbent president was a central aspect of the early campaign discourse. By performance we mean the President's demonstrated ability to lead the country --

characteristics which Miller, Wattenberg, and Malanchuk (1986) categorize under headings of "competence" and "reliability." As the campaign progressed, however, and as voters offered assessments of the campaign, they increasingly referred to the candidates' personal qualities and character rather than the president's performance in office. This shift in emphasis occurred as citizens used assessments of the president's ability as a leader and the candidates' specific issue positions as key indicators of character. This shift in emphasis, from issue to personal qualities, however, does not follow a shift in news coverage of the campaign or the candidates' advertising messages. Contextual evidence suggests that the increasingly personal assessment of the candidates reflects an integration of the considerations that citizens brought to bear in their voting decisions.

The media coverage featured the candidates' personal qualities as well as their leadership ability and issue positions and, most of all, the candidates' chances of winning. In the last month of the campaign there was a slight tilt toward personal qualities and away from issues, but this effect was overwhelmed by a great increase in horserace coverage. As for the candidates, their self-presentations in ads rarely addressed personal qualities alone, but rather personal qualities in the context of issue positions and political accomplishments.

In the 1992 U. S. election, a key element in the evaluation of the president's performance was, not surprisingly, the economy, which the public considered the most important issue facing the

country. The media emphasized the economy over other issues in news reports about the campaign. The candidates' discourse paralleled public preoccupation with the economy, featuring economic issues in their ads. In Clinton's case, the more he concentrated on popular concerns on the economy, the more positively the public assessed his personal qualities. Thus, although people describe their vote choices in terms of the candidates' personal qualities, these personal assessments emerge from considerations of the candidates' past performance, how they choose to focus their discourse, and their interactions with other candidates and the press in a variety of campaign contexts.

Our view of the campaign complements Popkin's (1992) "investment theory of voting." Given that voters are interested in finding a candidate who will perform well in the future, they can reasonably view personal qualities to be at least as useful a predictor of what the candidates will do as what they have done in the past, or as what they promise to do in the future. We argue, however, that the focus on personal qualities or character which marked the citizens' discourse at the end of the campaign represented a cumulative assessment of the candidate, which incorporated considerations about performance, issue positions, and character.

Data and Methods

This paper is part of a larger study of campaign news coverage, political advertising, and public understanding of the 1992 presidential election campaign which we are undertaking with our colleagues, Dean Alger, Timothy Cook, Montague Kern, and Darrell West. The aim of the study is to understand the information and ideas that citizens bring to and take from the campaign process. We are interested in how citizens interpret campaign messages and construct candidate images. Therefore, our study involves several methods for assessing what people know and believe, as well as careful monitoring of the citizens' information environments.

We have focused our research on news media, ads, and citizens in four diverse communities: Los Angeles, California; Boston, Massachusetts; Winston-Salem, North Carolina; and Moorhead, Minnesota (next to Fargo, North Dakota). The four communities we have chosen represent media markets ranging from very small (Moorhead) to very large (Los Angeles), a range of ethnic and racial representation, different educational and income levels, as well as each major geographic region: the Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, and West.

How voters construct candidate images is addressed with a variety of methods, including: national election surveys, local public opinion polls around the time of the state primaries and the general election, focus group responses to news coverage and political advertising, and a series of four in-depth interviews

conducted across the election season with panels of potential voters in each of the four media markets.

The citizens' media environments were assessed by means of parallel content analysis of network and local television news, as well as newspapers and political advertising aired in each community. Four national television networks were monitored: the nightly news programs of ABC (World News Tonight with Peter Jennings), CBS (CBS Evening News with Dan Rather), NBC (NBC Nightly News with Tom Brokaw), and CNN (World News). In the four localities, the principal metropolitan daily newspaper(s) were monitored: The Los Angeles Times, The Boston Globe, The Boston Herald, The Winston-Salem-Journal, and the Fargo Forum the most highly-rated early evening local news program was also videotaped and analyzed. Monitoring began on February 1 and continued daily through November 8. In previous papers, we have reported our preliminary comparisons of network and local television coverage (Crigler, Just and Cook 1992) and described the content of the ads and their linkage with public opinion survey results (West, Kern and Alger 1992). In this paper we are concerned with the factors that led individual voters to form the images of the candidates, compare them, and reach an electoral decision.

To begin, we explore the evaluations of President Bush that our interviewees expressed at the start of the campaign in January, and how their assessments of the President and his opponents changed over the course of the campaign. We focus on the criteria of candidate assessments of two groups of citizens -- those who

evaluated the performance of President Bush in a positive way and those who evaluated it negatively. We look to local and national public opinion polls to identify the issues that people were concerned about during the campaign. To demonstrate the relationship between issue concerns and candidate evaluations, we use: the tracking question from the Harris poll asking which two issues were of greatest importance to the voter in deciding how to vote; local polls in each of the four communities in our study; and the monthly New York Times/CBS News Poll tracking candidate favorability. Next, we turn to the campaign coverage on the four network evening news programs and the newspapers in our study, and consider discourse about issues as well as the presentation of the candidates' performance, issue positions and personal qualities. To understand the candidates' contribution to the discourse we analyze the messages in the candidate ads that aired each month during the campaign. To what extent did the candidates focus on their personal qualities or issue positions? Which issues did they emphasize? We compare popular considerations with the news and candidate discourse and indicate the relationship between the discourses of the campaign and electoral choice.

Because our data cover the whole period of the election, we can plot the changes in the discourse over time.[3] What did the news media emphasize in their presentation of the candidates? Did the candidates' advertising messages concentrate on personal qualities and character, or performance and issues? Did candidate and media attention to the economy coincide with public attention?

How was the public's concern about the economy related to evaluations of the candidates? Did the public assess the candidates primarily on personal qualities or issue positions or did the emphasis shift in tandem with changes in the campaign discourse?

Assessing the Candidates Or, "If I Love You in January, Will I Still Love You in November?": Evidence from In-Depth Interviews

To illustrate the importance and function of the campaign discourses in 1992, we examined how citizens' descriptions and evaluations of candidates changed during the election year. In order to do this, a series of in-depth interviews was conducted. Approximately 12-15 interviews were held with a panel of prospective voters in each of the local communities at four points during 1992: a baseline interview at the end of January, a second interview prior to the primary elections in each state (March in Massachusetts, April in Minnesota, May in North Carolina and June in California), a third wave was conducted at the end of September and final interviews were held during the last weekend before the election.

The sample in each metropolitan area was constructed to be roughly representative of the population in terms of income, education, race, age, partisanship and gender. We took particular care to represent the minority groups in three of our sites with significant minority population -- Boston, Winston-Salem and Los Angeles -- and have them interviewed by someone of a similar racial

and ethnic background. Each interview lasted between 30 minutes to, in a few cases, several hours.

The interviews were loosely structured and stressed the interviewee's own language, ideas, and reasoning. Although we asked particular questions about politics and the campaign, we sought, whenever possible, to follow Mishler's (1986) advice and not provide the interviewee with narrow topics or categories. Nor did we discourage seeming tangents, which helped to illustrate connections that we would otherwise not have considered. Consequently, our probing was general rather than specific: "tell me more about that;" "how do you feel about that?" etc. In that way, we hoped to achieve the contrast mentioned by Hochschild:

> In opinion polling, the researcher infers the links between variables; in intensive interviewing, the researcher induces the respondent to create the links between variables as he or she sees them. (1981: 24; emphasis in original).

These interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Since the strength of these interviews lies in the richness of their details and since the small sample makes generalization to the larger population highly problematic, we have charted trends, but have not engaged in extensive quantitative analysis of these data (McCracken 1988).

In this paper, we examine the interviews to see the ways in which these voters assessed the three major candidates (Bush, Clinton and Perot) over the four waves. We concentrated our effort on two dimensions of candidate images: performance, issue

positions, and personal qualities. Assessments of candidate performance included statements about the candidates' issue positions and handling of or potential to handle the presidency (these categories are similar to Miller, Wattenberg, and Malanchuk's (1986) "competence" and "reliability"). Statements about candidate character dwelt on personality, style, and other character traits, (similar to Miller, Wattenberg, and Malanchuk's "integrity" and "charisma" as well as personal background, scandals.

In analyzing the stability and change in candidate images over time, we divided the interviewees into three groups based on the views that they held of President Bush in January 1992 -- well before the campaign had shifted into high gear. At this point, information about the other candidates was low, although somewhat higher in Boston, where the coverage of the New Hampshire primary had already begun. The three groups consisted of 1) those people who were unfavorable to Bush, 2) those who felt ambivalent or neutral, and 3) those who felt positively toward Bush. The groups were fairly evenly divided: fifteen interviewees disliked Bush in January, sixteen felt neutral or ambivalent, and sixteen liked the President. We will focus here on the two extreme groups.

The interviewees who were anti-Bush in January crossed the partisan spectrum (seven Democrats, two Republicans, and six Independents). Individuals who spoke unfavorably about the Bush record in January were extremely unlikely to change their opinions during the year. By the end of the campaign, ten out of the

fifteen supported Clinton, four supported Perot, and only one supported President Bush. (The switcher was a Republican woman with a low level of interest in politics who chose him as the least of the three evils and only after much consideration of Perot.)

But although their overall assessments of Bush remained the same during the campaign, people who were anti-Bush in January, changed the criteria by which they judged the President. In January, the interviewees who disliked Bush focused their attention on his poor performance in office. Their discourse was filled with comments, such as: "he hasn't done anything for us," "he's broken his promises," "he vetoed the unemployment extension," and "he is not for blacks." By contrast, they did not start the campaign with negative views of Bush's character. Rather, these interviewees had made retrospective judgments about the incumbent's performance in office and found him lacking. This was true regardless of who the challengers were or might be, since at this point in the campaign, few people could name, much less describe, any of the other candidates.

As the campaign proceeded into the fall, these early anti-Bush people expanded the range of criticisms which they levelled against the President. Some interviewees added to the list of negative performance assessments, referring to "bank scandals," and "not helping on AIDS," and questioning Bush's shifting position on abortion and his "stupid no new taxes promise." Many of these negative performance assessments had been mentioned, and in some cases (e.g. the tax pledge) were highlighted in opponents' ad

campaigns. But by November, the early anti-Bush interviewees not only made negative policy assessments but also attributed negative personal characteristics to Bush. These criticisms ranged from "he's not nice" and "seems dull" to observations that he "can't be trusted," "he's a mudslinger," and that he is like a "chicken," or a "cesspool." See Figure 1.

These negative assessments of Bush were occasionally, but rarely counter-balanced with positive statements, such as: "he wants to clean up his mistakes," or "he's a nice man, probably." Among the early anti-Bush voters, the negative statements about Bush were generally offset by positive impressions of the opponents, especially Clinton. The positive statements about Clinton centered on his personal characteristics, rather than on performance or issue positions, although some of these were also mentioned. Clinton was seen as "honest and relaxed," "very nice," a "regular guy" with a "boyish" "middle-American look." He cared about blacks and the middle class, was "Presidential" and a Rhodes Scholar.

In short, people who disliked Bush in January did so largely on the basis of his performance. As the campaign continued, they maintained their negative assessment of President Bush, but the criteria shifted to problems of character as well as to his job performance. Given that they were able to find favorable evidence of Clinton's character -- often by dismissing attention to Clinton's alleged infidelities and his avoidance of the draft as Republican dirty tricks -- the retrospective evaluation of Bush at

the beginning of the year became transformed into a choice between two candidates as persons.

People who liked President Bush in January followed a somewhat different pattern. Pro-Bush interviewees had various partisan orientations. There were eight Republicans, six Democrats, and two Independents. However, unlike the anti-Bush interviewees, many of the early pro-Bush people changed their allegiances during the campaign. By November, the original sixteen Bush supporters were now divided among Bush (6), Clinton (8), and Perot (2). The changes were not simply reflections of partisan predilections, as candidates had supporters from different parties. Bush maintained support from Republicans (4) and Democrats (2); we shall call these "the Bush stickers." Clinton gained support from Republicans (2), Democrats (4), and Independents (2); and Perot gained his support from two Republicans. These Clinton and Perot supporters will be called "the Bush switchers." See again Figure 1.

In January, in contrast to early Bush opponents who focused almost exclusively on his performance, early Bush supporters made positive references to his performance in the White House and his personal qualities. This was true for both Bush "stickers" and "switchers." The job performance evaluations tended to be summative and general. "He's done a good job," with some people replacing "good" with "very good," "pretty good," etc. There were only a few references to any specific topics and these were to foreign policy or the Persian Gulf. Somewhat more specific references were made to the President's personal characteristics.

He was reported to be a "family man," "all-American," "very moral," "genuine," with "good character."

By November, those interviewees who had "stuck" with Bush no longer talked much about his job performance. Instead, they emphasized his positive character traits, values, and integrity and paired these with very negative character evaluations of Clinton. Clinton was called "a weasel," "Slick Willie," "insincere," "a man who cheated on his wife," and had "a weird look in his eyes."

In contrast, those people who switched from Bush to support Clinton or Perot by the end of the campaign no longer focused on Bush's positive personal qualities or character traits. Instead, the "switchers" concentrated on "Bush's inability to get anything done in Washington" and their dislike for Quayle. Moreover, the "switchers" saw viable alternatives in Perot and especially Clinton. The "switchers" who ended up supporting Clinton were favorably impressed with his personal characteristics: He is "bright," "self-assured," and "cares about people." Clinton would change things in Washington and could relate to "common people."

For our interviewees at least, it seems that the discourse of the campaign contributed to how they evaluated the candidates. Individuals who were unfavorable to Bush in January had formed retrospective judgments of the incumbent President's performance in office; but these retrospective evaluations were not the sole or even principal basis for their negative evaluations of Bush at election time. People who were favorable to President Bush in January and stayed with him (the "stickers"), eliminated

performance as a criterion for evaluating the President during the course of the campaign and instead focused on the President's positive personal qualities. Early Bush supporters who ended up switching to Clinton or Perot ("switchers") formed increasingly negative evaluations of Bush's handling of his office and increasingly positive evaluations of Clinton as a viable alternative with good character. Clinton was transformed from an unknown, to an un-named womanizer and draft dodger who seemed to be winning the nomination, to the Democratic nominee who was in touch with the people and could be considered a serious contender for the Presidency. The common thread running through each of these patterns was a shift over the course of the campaign to an emphasis on character.

But did this shift in the voters' reported assessments coincide with a trend in the discourse of the whole campaign? Were other participants (candidates in their advertisements, reporters in news stories) focusing on the character issue to the exclusion of performance and issue criteria? Was a focus on personal qualities the only resource on which voters could draw in evaluating the candidates?

Our analysis of the substance of the discourse does not support that view. We turn now to examine the discourse of the campaign, to see what information resources were available to the public in weighing the candidates -- what considerations were most prominent in the news coverage and candidate advertising. We also explore how the public's concern about economic issues appeared to

have been integrated into the voting decision. The first question we ask is whether the news coverage and the candidates' ads were predominantly about issues and performance or candidate personal qualities.

Dimensions of Candidate News Coverage: Issues Vs. Personal Qualities/Character

A common criticism (Patterson, 1980) of television coverage of elections has been the emphasis on dramatic events, horserace factors, and personality questions at the expense of candidate issue positions (Patterson, 1980; Kern, 1989). Figure 2 shows that for the challengers, the horserace was the most common dimension of coverage, far outstripping issues in most months of the campaign. Despite the good intentions expressed in advance of the election, the networks paid far more attention to each of the challenger's chances than to their issue positions.

This was not the case for President Bush. Figure 2 shows that the proportion of the coverage devoted to Bush's issue positions was about equal to his issue coverage -- around half the stories that mentioned issues referred to Bush's position -- and that figure held throughout the length of the campaign until October. The emphasis on Bush's issue positions is not surprising, since an incumbent president is necessarily required to address a broad range of issues in his official capacity, and the incumbent's record is a continual reference point for the campaign. In addition to heavy coverage of his issue positions, network news coverage of the President emphasized his leadership ability and

experience. Even when we exclude news stories about actions the president was taking in his official capacity, coverage of Bush's leadership varied between a third and a half of stories in which he was mentioned. The emphasis on leadership and professional experience was half again as great as for the challenger, Governor Clinton (who had a long political record in Arkansas), and much greater than the coverage of Perot (who did not have political experience). It is interesting that this emphasis on what is widely regarded as "substance" in the coverage of President Bush, appeared to be at the expense of coverage of Bush as a person.

The consistently high levels of coverage about Bush's issue positions were not mirrored in the coverage of challengers, however. For Clinton and Perot the amount of issue coverage varied with the intensity of the horserace. Apparently in their cases, the limited news hole resulted in a trade-off between issue and horserace coverage. The low points for Clinton's issue coverage were in March, April and October, when the nomination and election were most in doubt. Perot's issue coverage also dropped when he temporarily left the race.

Figure 2 shows that coverage of the candidates in five newspapers in different regions of the country was strikingly similar to network television, except that inter-candidate differences are considerably flattened. Newspapers covered President Bush far more than the challengers, in terms of his leadership and issue positions, while the challengers were covered

far more in terms of their chances and their personal qualities than was the President.

Examination of the network and newspaper news coverage over the course of the campaign makes it clear that the public's shift in emphasis from issues and performance at the outset of the campaign to personal qualities at the end, does not draw on a similar weighting of news priorities. In particular, the media discourse about candidates' personal qualities did not increase substantially in the final months of the campaign as it did in the interviews, while coverage of the horserace certainly did. It may be, however, that candidate discourse, rather than news, provided the critical resource on which the voters relied in re-weighting personal considerations of the candidates; we now turn to an analysis of the ads of the candidates, the most widely available form of candidate-controlled campaign discourse.

Dimensions of Candidate Advertising Messages: Issues Vs. Personal Qualities/Character

The emphasis in candidate advertising is very different from network news. Throughout the primary and general election campaigns, the three leading candidates stressed issue positions more than personal qualities. We coded the ads as addressing issues alone, personal qualities or character alone, and both issues and character. By this measure, 61 percent of the Bush ads addressed both issues and character, as did 52 percent of the Clinton ads and 82 percent of the Perot ads. For those ads that

emphasized one or the other, 27 percent of the Bush ads focused on issues alone and only 12 percent on character. Likewise 34 percent of the Clinton ads focused on issues compared to 14 percent on character. Eighteen percent of the Perot ads centered only on issues and none concerned only personal qualities or character.

To achieve a more precise measure of what the candidates were projecting about themselves and their competitors, we further analyzed the ads in terms of all of the messages (a sentence or single idea) in the text. The topics of the messages were coded for addressing either issue or personal qualities. Figure 3 shows that all three candidates paid more attention to performance and issues than to personal qualities in their advertising messages. In the last month of the campaign there is only a slight decrease in issue messages, accompanied by an increase in personal messages, but the issue messages continue to outweigh the personal by more than two to one. These results lead to the conclusion that if people were moving from an assessment of President Bush based on leadership and personal qualities, to an assessment that mostly addressed character, they were not simply responding to any short term focus on personal qualities in advertising.

An alternative explanation for the shift in candidate evaluation may lie in the interaction between a candidate's responsiveness to the public's concerns and the considerations voters brought to bear in their decisions. The issue that dominated the discourse, not only of the public and the news media but candidate advertising, was the economy broadly defined.

The Public's Issue Concerns: The Economy and Its Discontents

Even before the election campaign began, and before any candidates except George Bush were widely known, public concern focused squarely on the economy. By November 1991, 66 percent of those responding to the Gallup poll's "most important problem" question, mentioned the economy. In Gallup's next three quarterly surveys the proportion identifying the economy as the most important problem never fell below that figure. Our in-depth interviews with voters conducted in late January illustrated the depth and breadth of concern for the economy. Interviews revealed a range of voter concerns, but the economy was far and away the most consistent across regions and demographic groups. In response to the question, "What do you think is the most important problem facing the country today?" a Los Angeles resident said:

> The economy. Unemployment. Do you want me to keep going? [Sure] Well, there's a lot of people out of jobs, and a lot of businesses are going under. And there's a lot of worried people out there when it comes to work. [In what ways?] Seems like a lot of people are tightening their belts. They're not spending as much. They're not making as much, and the economy is asking for more money. Prices are going up on everything. Food, clothing, gasoline -- it's all going higher, and people aren't getting paid as much as they used to. So -- a lot of layoffs, a lot of companies, the bigger companies are tightening their belts too.

A Boston resident also mentioned the economy in January, saying:

> The economics, I just, when I look at how many people are homeless and it's not just -- it used to be homeless people were poor people and that's not the case any more. I tell my friends that it's like our two paychecks are hopeless and I work every day, you know? And it's just that if I lose my job tomorrow and I can't pay my rent, they're going to put me out, you know, so economics are just so hard. When I look at all the people losing their jobs it gets really depressing and I don't know what the country is going to do -- what the president is going to do to try to change and turn this around. When I see places like Woolworth's laying off people and you think Woolworth's is not a big-time job, you know, and they're laying off and they're closing places, we're really hurting, we're really in a lot of trouble when a place like Woolworth's is having to close their doors after so many years of being here.

A man from Moorhead agreed:

> Today is the economy, it's affecting each and every one of us, you know from the low end of the spectrum all the way up to the high end of the spectrum. So the economy is in my opinion the number one issue.

These individuals were typical of the responses in all four sites that we studied at the beginning of the campaign.

Pre-campaign surveys make clear that the economy was the key to the public's evaluation of the Bush presidency even before the campaign got under way. The President's approval ratings were more highly correlated with his economic performance (which was judged lacking) than with his management of foreign policy (which was regarded positively). As the economy became more important in people's minds prior to the election campaign, Bush's favorability began to decline -- most noticeably in the period between October and November, 1991. Throughout the campaign, the economy was not only the most important issue facing the country, but in the view of members of the public, the economy was the

issue that was most important in the voting decision. Table 1 presents the responses to a series of Harris Poll surveys, which asked people to name the two issues that would be most important in deciding how to vote. The Table shows that other considerations were given some emphasis during the campaign, but the public put the greatest weight on the economy and jobs.

The public's concern about the economy had an immediate impact on candidate strategies. Candidates campaigning in New Hampshire, the first primary state, were greeted coolly unless they were willing to address economic issues. Patrick Buchanan's advertising consultant claimed that their group had prepared ads on the NEA funding of ostensibly obscene art (the ads which eventually aired in Georgia), but found the folks in New Hampshire only wanted to talk about the economy. President Bush, battling the intra-party challenge was forced to revise his plans to postpone campaigning. He went to New Hampshire and broadcast a series of ads acknowledging the pain of the recession -- not a happy note on which to begin a reelection campaign. In the end, fully 37 percent of the candidates' primary ads -- which represents the portion of the campaign discourse most directly controlled by the candidates -- talked about the economy, making it the single leading issue in that form of candidate discourse, ahead of education (29 percent), morality (15 percent), the military (10 percent), the environment (9 percent), families (7 percent) and foreign policy (3 percent).

Table 2 correlates the messages of Bush and Clinton ads with public opinion and news coverage. As we can see, there is a very high correlation between the Clinton ad messages about the economy, public concern about the economy and mention of the economy in news reports. The table shows that all three are intercorrelated both simultaneously and lagged, but the same is not true for Bush ad messages. In fact, there is no significant relationship between the Bush ad messages, public opinion, or news coverage about the economy. But, interestingly, there are very strong relationships between *lagged* public opinion and *lagged* news coverage of the economy and the Bush ads. The evidence suggests that the Bush ad campaign was generally responding to, rather than closely tracking, concerns about the economy as the Clinton ads did.

We suspect that these associations better explain Bush's declining fortunes than the tone of news coverage. During the campaign, a number of voices were raised concerning negative coverage of the candidates, especially President Bush. Our evidence shows, however, that there is no direct relationship between the tone of coverage of the President and his favorability ratings with the public (see Appendix, Table I). There was, however, an intriguing relationship between issues, media coverage of those issues, and candidate favorability. While news tone was not significantly associated with favorability, we found that the prominence of the economy in campaign coverage did have an impact on the candidates' standing with the public. Network emphasis on the economy in campaign stories was correlated with the public's

increased emphasis on the economy and candidate integrity. And the more the public was concerned about the economy and integrity, the more favorably the public viewed Bill Clinton. See Table 3. There appeared to be a spiraling effect in which network coverage of the economy fed off public concern about honesty and integrity of politicians and the economy, and these boosted public favorability ratings of Bill Clinton. The economic theme in campaign news is strongly associated with favorable ratings of Bill Clinton (r = .78), but not at all correlated with favorability of George Bush. Likewise, the public's considerations of the economy and integrity are highly correlated with favorability of Clinton (r = .75 and .66, respectively). The public's priorities, however, did not benefit President Bush. His favorability is not significantly correlated either with the public's concern about the economy or integrity. Furthermore these concerns about policy and character were closely linked in peoples' minds (r = .62). See again Table 3.

Our polls of the four communities in which our interviews took place show that the considerations about issues, performance, and character, were increasingly integrated over time and more strongly for the winning candidate, Bill Clinton. Table 4 shows the intercorrelations of judgments about candidate leadership, honesty, ability to improve the nation's standing in the world, and ability to improve the economy. When we compare the correlations in our late September poll with our last poll before the election, we see that the overall correlations are somewhat higher for Clinton than

Bush in both polls, but the intercorrelations are higher for both candidates in the later poll. For example, leadership and honesty were correlated at .5 and .6 for Bush and Clinton respectively in late September, and at .6 and .7 for the two opponents the week before the election.

Interestingly, Table 4 shows that these correlations are made up of both positive and negative components. Respondents were inclined to hold highly integrated views both of the opponent as well as the candidate they supported. As time went on, not only were individuals inclined to favor their own candidate more, but they were also inclined to disfavor the opponents. Analysis of variance shows highly significant differences of means among supporters of different candidates on virtually all of the considerations highlighted in our public opinion survey, with slightly more significant differences in October than in September among those who had a distinct candidate preference. (See Table 5). The integration of considerations about the candidate one supports, as well as the opposing candidate, may reflect a process of rationalization towards consistency among those who hold a preference. Whether integration represents a rationalization of a choice, an attempt to bolster a decision with evidence, or a verbal explanation of a cognitive process, we argue that it is the *strength* of the integrated construct which is important to the vote, not the mechanism by which it occurs.

Our data show that information about a candidate's personal qualities, competence, and issue positions are integrated in all

forms of campaign discourse -- from the news media, the candidates, and the voters. In the case of voters, it appears that personal criteria epitomize how people feel about the candidates, although this judgment may have been shaped by a variety of considerations having to do with the candidates' leadership ability, performance in office, skill in raising or dealing with issues of concern to the voters and their sense of what is needed in government. Judging from our interviews, individuals do not necessarily convey the precise information that led to the overall evaluation. After all, people do not need to remember what goes into their evaluation when it comes time to vote, since voting is just an up or down decision on the candidates.

The results also suggest an important function for campaign discourse. As the campaign progresses, the media and the candidate discourses provide voters with a multitude of potential considerations which they can call upon and weight in their evaluation of the candidates. For example, interviewees who liked President Bush in January and continued to support him in the fall, weighted performance and character considerations about equally early in the campaign year, but shifted their emphasis to character as election day drew near. Interviewees who were antipathetic to President Bush throughout the year, drew on performance and issue considerations in January, but weighed performance, issue, and character considerations fairly equally in November. The news coverage of the campaign and the candidates' advertising messages offered a resource for voters in the process of updating or

changing their assessments of candidates (e.g. the Bush "switchers") or finding support for their original preferences (e.g. the anti-Bush voters who voted for Clinton).

All voters had to deal with some dissonant information. Voters supporting Bush had to cope with the barrage of negative information about the President's handling of the economy, while voters considering Clinton had to deal with negative information (and his explanations) about his marital problems, draft record, and use of marijuana.

It appears that the Bush "stickers" took in the negative information about Clinton which helped them to reject the alternative and thus shore up their support for President Bush. But in the process, they also stopped talking about Bush's performance in light of the unremitting evidence offered by the news media and by Bush's opponents that things were bad and that Bush, the man in charge, had to bear some responsibility. The Bush "switchers" and the anti-Bush voters took in the Clinton economic message of change, and revised their assessment of Clinton and his personal qualities in light of his performance and responsiveness to issues. It is not that voters were unaware of the negative information about their chosen candidate, which was so widespread as to be impossible to ignore. Instead of selective perception, voters often exercised creative interpretation, even as the "facts" were widely agreed upon. For example, we interviewed an unemployed veteran, who was originally troubled by Clinton's draft history. As the campaign went on he gave greater weight to considerations

about the economy. He eventually decided that Clinton's record was not a problem, but he developed doubts about George Bush's military service. He asked rhetorically: "What do we know about Bush's military record anyway?" (Bush was a decorated veteran of the Second World War).

The Construction of Candidate Images

The results of a multi-method study of the 1992 presidential campaign, drawing on in-depth interviews, national and local public opinion polls, candidate advertising, newspapers, network and local news coverage of the campaign suggests a positive function for campaign discourse. In the 1992 campaign, the public found that candidates (more or less promptly) addressed their concerns about the economy. In fact, candidate advertising messages were largely dominated by discourse about issues. While the news media could be faulted for giving more attention to the horserace, candidates' personal qualities and character than to their issue positions, they covered candidates' issue positions throughout the campaign. From the standpoint, then, of providing voters with useful information about the candidates' positions on issues of concern to the electorate, the news and candidate discourse in the 1992 presidential campaign appeared to meet some standard of satisfaction.

Our findings about the way voters used that information illustrates some intriguing aspects of both the discourse and the public's decision process. In particular, we suggest a way to

reconcile the public's initial assessments of the candidates in terms of their character and issue positions, their persistent concerns about the economy, and the fact that their verbal discourse at the end of the campaign centered on the candidates' personal qualities. The evidence drawn from our depth interviews and public opinion polls indicates that the more the candidates discussed the economy, the more positively the public evaluated the candidates. The more significant the economy was in the public's thinking, the greater priority that was given to candidates' honesty and integrity. The linkage among the public's concerns about the economy, their emphasis on candidate integrity, and the vote choice, all favored Clinton (and to some extent Perot).

The economy/integrity/favorability nexus hurt George Bush on the very point he thought was his strength. The Bush campaign rightly believed that Clinton was vulnerable on the trust issue, given public evaluations of Clinton during the primary season. What they failed to recognize was considerable weakness on the trust issue for the President as well. The campaign discourse (particularly of Bush's opponents -- Buchanan, Clinton and Perot -- emphasized how the President had dissembled on the issue of taxes and failed to recognize the length and gravity of the recession. Those who eventually voted against Bush linked these policy considerations (Bush's management of the economy) with his character (his insensitivity to the impact on the public). The President's supporters, however, did not weigh these policy

considerations heavily. As the campaign progressed, the public generally thought less well of Bush's integrity and better of Clinton's. The explanation that is best supported by the data is that views about candidates as caring, honest persons are evaluative judgments which incorporate the candidate's performance and issue positions.

These findings should give comfort to the more optimistic students of politics -- those who believe that the news media can offer substantive discussion of issues, that candidates cannot always determine the campaign agenda and ignore issues of concern to the electorate, and that the public can learn new information during the course of an election campaign and take into account issues of substance to make a voting decision. We do not put forward the view that these factors can or do emerge in every election. The 1992 election in the U.S. is an example of a campaign in which the public was preoccupied with the substantive issues, refused to be distracted, and could choose among candidates with distinct records, styles, and issue positions. The possibility for effective political action was there, and the public responded with increased levels of interest, increased participation and satisfaction in the election process.

References

Bennett, W. Lance. 1992. The Governing Crisis. New York: St. Martin's Press.

---. 1993. Constructing publics and their opinions. Political Communication 10: 101-120.

Berelson, Bernard R., Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and William N. McPhee. 1954. Voting. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Brody, Richard A. and Benjamin I. Page. 1972. The assessment of policy voting. American Political Science Review 66: 450-458.

Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. The American Voter. New York: Wiley.

Crigler, Ann, Marion Just and Timothy Cook. 1992. "Local News, National News and the 1992 Presidential Election." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago.

Davis, James. 1988. The Logic of Causal Analysis. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Fiorina, Morris P. 1981. Retrospective Voting in American National Elections. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Gaventa, John. 1980. Power and Powerlessness. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Graber, Doris. 1984. Processing the News: Taming the Information Tide. New York: Longmans.

Hochschild, Jennifer. 1981. What's Fair? Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kelley, Stanley Jr. and Thad W. Mirer. 1974. "The Simple Act of Voting," American Political Science Review 68 (June): 572-591.

Kern, Montague. 1989. Thirty-Second Politics: Political Advertising in the Eighties. New York: Praeger.

Key, V.O. 1964. The Responsible Electorate. New York: Vintage.

Lazarsfeld, Paul F., Bernard R. Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet. 1944. The People's Choice. New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pierce.

McCracken, Grant. 1988. The Long Interview. Newbury Park: Sage.

Miller, Arthur H., Martin P. Wattenberg and Oksana Malanchuk. 1986. "Schematic Assessments of Presidential Candidates" American Political Science Review, 80:521-540.

Mishler, Elliot. 1986. Research Interviewing. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Neuman, W. Russell. 1986. The Paradox of Mass Politics. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Nie, Norman, Sidney Verba and John Petrocik. 1976. The Changing American Voter. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Page, Benjamin I. 1978. Choices and Echoes in Presidential Elections. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Patterson, Thomas E. 1980. The Mass Media Election: How Americans Choose Their President. New York: Praeger.

Popkin, Samuel L. 1992. The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Robinson, Michael J., and Margaret A. Sheehan. 1983. Over the Wire and on TV: CBS and UPI in Campaign '80. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Schattschneider, E. E. 1969. In Search of a Government. NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Wattenberg, Martin. 1991. The Rise of Candidate-Centered Politics. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

West, Darrell, Montague Kern and Dean Alger. 1992. "Political Advertising and Ad Watches in the 1992 Presidential Nominating Contests." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago.

Table 1
THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES IN DETERMINING SUPPORT IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION (OPEN-ENDED)[a]

Month[b] Issue[c]	Feb	Apr	Jun	Jul	Aug	Oct 2-4	Oct 20-22
Economy[d]	50	37	32	36	49	56	57
Health Care	25	17	13	16	13	19	18
Jobs	8	13	16	22	14	17	18
Deficit	3	10	14	11	8	13	13
Taxes	11	11	9	19	19	12	12
Integrity/ Candidate Character	1	5	4	3	5	6	12
Abortion	4	17	14	21	18	13	11
Eduction	7	9	9	11	8	8	8
Foreign Policy	5	6	4	5	6	6	6
Social Issues	8	7	7	8	6	5	5
Environment	2	4	8	6	3	4	3

[a] "The Presidential election will be in November. What two issues do you think will be of most importance to you in determining who you will support?" Harris Poll, 1992.

[b] Data for February through July based on all adults. Data from August to end based on "likely voters."

[c] Issues averaging three percent or fewer mentions include: human/civil/women's rights, peace/world peace/neclear arms, defense, crime, welfare, programs for the poor, farm issues, gun control, and drugs.

[d] Percent mentioning one or more economic issues (the economy, deficit, jobs, or taxes) was 79 percent in the October 2 survey and 81 percent in the October 20 survey.

Table 2
Correlations of News, Ads, and Public Opinion on the Economy

	Public Opinion Economy	TV News Economy	Bush Ads Economy	Clinton Ads Economy	Public Opinion Economy Lagged	Bush Ads Economy Lagged	Clinton Ads Economy Lagged	TV News Economy Lagged
Public Opinion Economy	xxx	.92** (p<.00)	.35 (p=.25)	.94** (p<.01)	.80** (p<.01)	-.25 (p=.29)	.70* (p<.05)	.87** (p<.00)
TV News Economy	.92** (p<.00)	xxx	.30 (p=.31)	.86* (p=.03)	.67* (p=.02)	-.44 (p=.19)	.85* (p=.02)	.68* (p=.03)
Bush Ad Economy	.35 (p=.25)	.30 (p=.31)	xxx	-.85* (p=.03)	.91* (p=.02)	.87* (p=.03)	-.99** (p=.04)	.89* (p=.05)
Clinton Ad Econ	.94** (p<.01)	.86* (p=.03)	-.85* (p=.03)	xxx	.89* (p=.02)	-.33 (p=.29)	.30 (p=.31)	.86* (p=.05)
Public Opinion Economy Lagged	.80** (p<.01)	.67* (p=.02)	.91* (p=.02)	.89* (p=.02)	xxx	.35 (p=.25)	.94** (p<.01)	.90** (p<.01)
Bush Ad Economy Lagged	-.25 (p=.29)	-.44 (p=.19)	.87* (p=.03)	-.33 (p=.29)	.35 (p=.25)	xxx	-.85* (p=.03)	.30 (p=.31)
Clinton Ads Economy Lagged	.70* (p=.04)	.85* (p=.02)	-.99** (p=.04)	.30 (p=.31)	.94** (p<.01)	-.85* (p=.03)	xxx	.86* (p=.03)
TV News Economy Lagged	.87** (p<.00)	.68* (p=.03)	.89* (p=.05)	.86* (p<.05)	.90** (p<.01)	.30 (p=.31)	.86* (p=.03)	xxx

* p < .05 ** p < .01

Table 3
Correlations of News and Public Opinion on the Economy and Trust with Candidate Favorability

	Public Opinion Economy	TV News Economy	Favor Clinton	Favor Bush	Public Opinion Integrity
Public Opinion Economy	xxx	.92** (p<.00)	.75** (p=.01)	.24 (p=.27)	.62* (p=.03)
TV News Economy	.92** (p<.00)	xxx	.78** (p=.01)	-.01 (p=.50)	.61* (p=.04)
Favor Clinton	.75** (p=.01)	.78** (p=.01)	xxx	-.19 (p=.31)	.66* (p=.03)
Favor Bush	.24 (p=.27)	-.01 (p=.50)	-.19 (p=.31)	xxx	-.27 (p=.23)
Public Opinion Integrity	.62* (p=.03)	.61* (p=.04)	.66* (p=.03)	-.27 (p=.23)	xxx

* p < .05 ** p < .01

Table 4
SEPTEMBER, 1992: CORRELATIONS ON POOLED SAMPLE
LOS ANGELES, BOSTON, WINSTON-SALEM

CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT BUSH

ALL VOTERS

Correlations: BUSH	Lead	Honest	World	Economy
Lead	1.0000	.4986**	.5251**	.3144**
Honest	.4986**	1.0000	.4749**	.2655*
World	.5251**	.4749**	1.0000	.4085**
Economy	.3144**	.2655*	.4085**	1.0000

Minimum pairwise N of cases: 1241

LIKELY BUSH VOTERS ONLY

Lead	1.0000	.3041**	.2080**	.1692**
Honest	.3041**	1.0000	.2875**	.1378*
World	.2080**	.2875**	1.0000	.2692**
Economy	.1692**	.1378*	.2692**	1.0000

Minimum pairwise N of cases: 420

LIKELY CLINTON VOTERS ONLY

Lead	1.0000	.3699**	.2781**	.1009*
Honest	.3699**	1.0000	.2671**	.1423**
World	.2781**	.2671**	1.0000	.1686**
Economy	.1009*	.1423**	.1686**	1.0000

Minimum pairwise N of cases: 779

CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT CLINTON

ALL VOTERS

Correlations: CLINTON	Lead	Honest	World	Economy
Lead	1.0000	.5600**	.5596**	.4169**
Honest	.5600**	1.0000	.4973**	.4032**
World	.5596**	.4973**	1.0000	.5302**
Economy	.4169**	.4032**	.5302**	1.0000

Minimum pairwise N of cases: 1241

LIKELY CLINTON VOTERS ONLY

Lead	1.0000	.4302**	.2733**	.1621**
Honest	.4302**	1.0000	.2911**	.2200**
World	.2733**	.2911**	1.0000	.3100**
Economy	.1621**	.2200**	.3100**	1.0000

Minimum pairwise N of cases: 655

LIKELY BUSH VOTERS ONLY

Lead	1.0000	.4020**	.3114**	.1492**
Honest	.4020**	1.0000	.1915**	.2538**
World	.3114**	.1915**	1.0000	.2612**
Economy	.1492**	.2538**	.2612**	1.0000

Minimum pairwise N of cases: 372
1-tailed Signifance: * - .01 ** - .001

Table 4 (cont'd)
OCTOBER, 1992: CORRRELATIONS ON POOLED SAMPLE
LOS ANGELES, BOSTON, WINSTON-SALEM

CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT BUSH

ALL VOTERS

Correlations: BUSH	Lead	Honest	World	Economy
Lead	1.0000	.6124**	.5219**	.3285**
Honest	.6124**	1.0000	.5003**	.2910**
World	.5219**	.5003**	1.0000	.4013**
Economy	.3285**	.2910**	.4013**	1.0000

Minimum pairwise N of cases: 1364

LIKELY BUSH VOTERS ONLY

Lead	1.0000	.4621**	.2041**	.1386**
Honest	.4621**	1.0000	.2305**	.1039*
World	.2041**	.2305**	1.0000	.1638**
Economy	.1386**	.1039*	.1638**	1.0000

Minimum pairwise N of cases: 489

LIKELY CLINTON VOTERS ONLY

Lead	1.0000	.4418**	.2789**	.1078*
Honest	.4418**	1.0000	.2311**	.0799
World	.2789**	.2311**	1.0000	.1439**
Economy	.1078*	.0799	.1439**	1.0000

Minimum pairwise N of cases: 653

CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT CLINTON

ALL VOTERS

Correlations: CLINTON	Lead	Honest	World	Economy
Lead	1.0000	.7307**	.6488**	.5242**
Honest	.7307**	1.0000	.6257**	.4933**
World	.6488**	.6257**	1.0000	.5883**
Economy	.5242**	.4933**	.5883**	1.0000

Minimum pairwise N of cases: 1364

LIKELY CLINTON VOTERS ONLY

Lead	1.0000	.4673**	.1536**	.1335**
Honest	.4673**	1.0000	.1636**	.1916**
World	.1536**	.1636**	1.0000	.2297**
Economy	.1335**	.1916**	.2297**	1.0000

Minimum pairwise N of cases: 604

LIKELY BUSH VOTERS ONLY

Lead	1.0000	.5400**	.3261**	.0992
Honest	.5400**	1.0000	.3867**	.0664
World	.3261**	.3867**	1.0000	.2675**
Economy	.0992	.0664	.2675**	1.0000

Minimum pairwise N of cases: 429
1-tailed Signifance: * - .01 ** - .001

Table 5
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE ON POOLED SAMPLE
LOS ANGELES, BOSTON, WINSTON-SALEM

SEPTEMBER Supporters:	Bush	Clinton	F	N
Bush honesty	2.02	2.90	410.657**	(1380)
Clinton honesty	2.90	1.99	370.703**	(1302)
Bush economy	1.77	2.43	271.392**	(1394)
Clinton economy	2.23	1.32	510.237**	(1358)

OCTOBER Supporters	Bush	Clinton	F	N
Bush honesty	1.97	2.81	532.718**	(1268)
Clinton honesty	3.11	2.00	1107.488**	(1220)
Bush economy	1.66	2.35	345.464**	(1293)
Clinton economy	2.34	1.26	922.247**	(1257)

Signif: * - .01 ** - .001

FIGURE ONE

ELEMENTS OF CANDIDATE IMAGES EMPHASIZED BY INTERVIEWEES

	JANUARY '92	FALL '92
EARLY ANTI-BUSH	BUSH: PERFORMANCE -	BUSH: PERFORMANCE - and CHARACTER - CLINTON: CHARACTER +
EARLY PRO-BUSH (STICKERS)	BUSH: PERFORMANCE + and CHARACTER +	BUSH: CHARACTER + CLINTON: CHARACTER -
EARLY PRO-BUSH (SWITCHERS)	BUSH: PERFORMANCE + and CHARACTER +	BUSH: PERFORMANCE - CLINTON: CHARACTER +

Figure 2
Candidate Characteristics by Media:
March to November

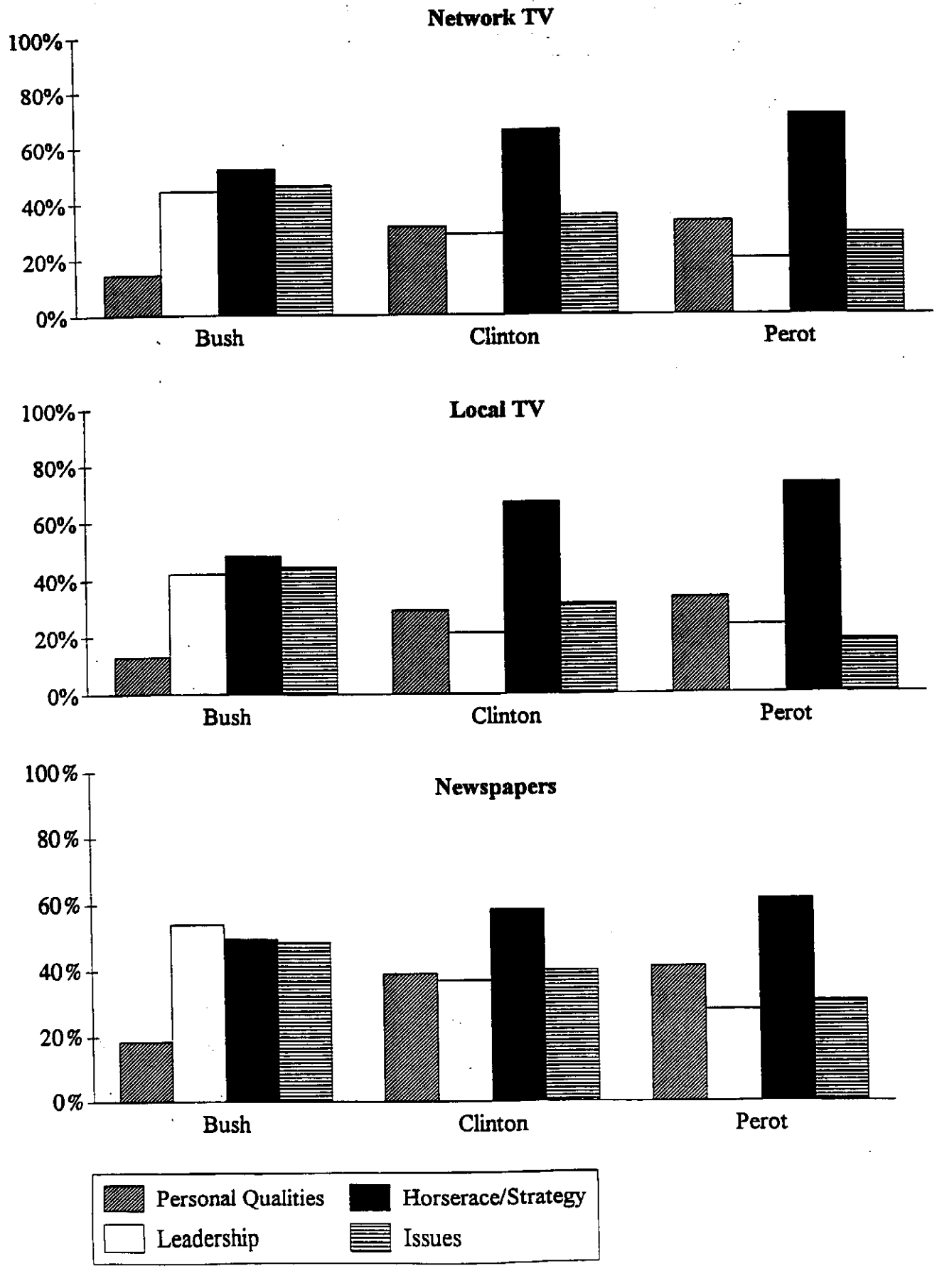
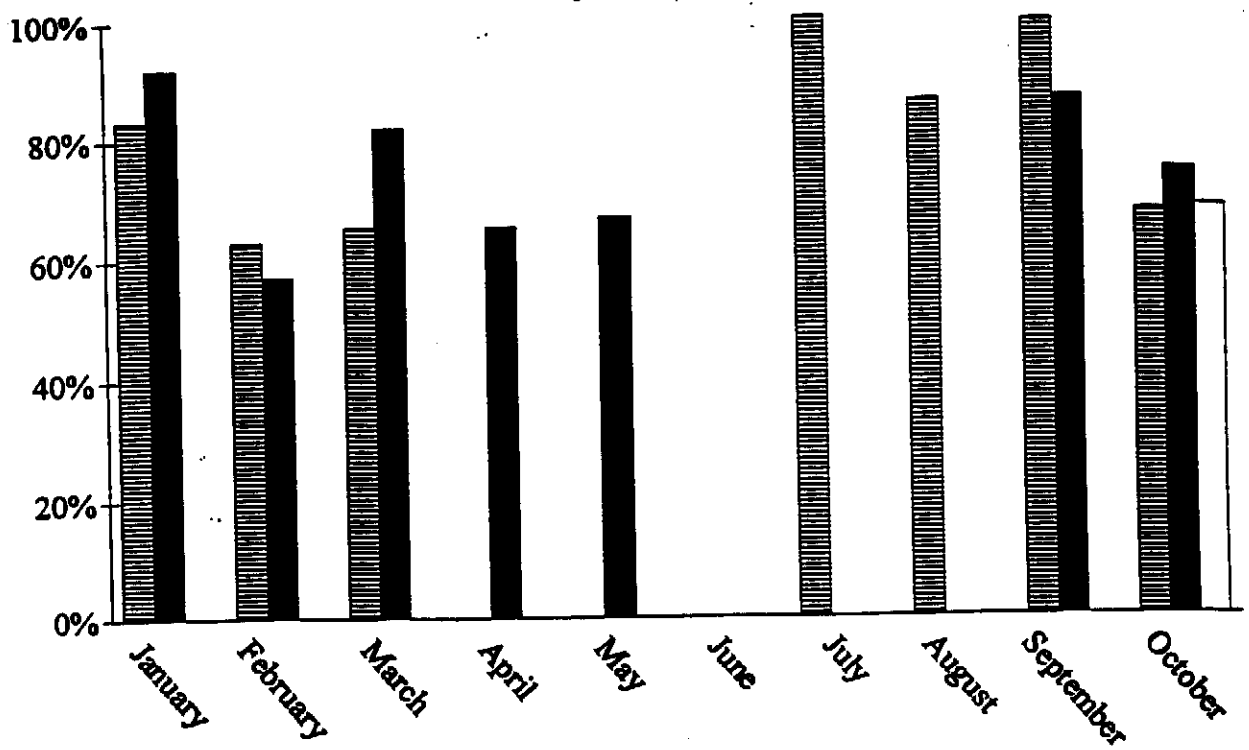
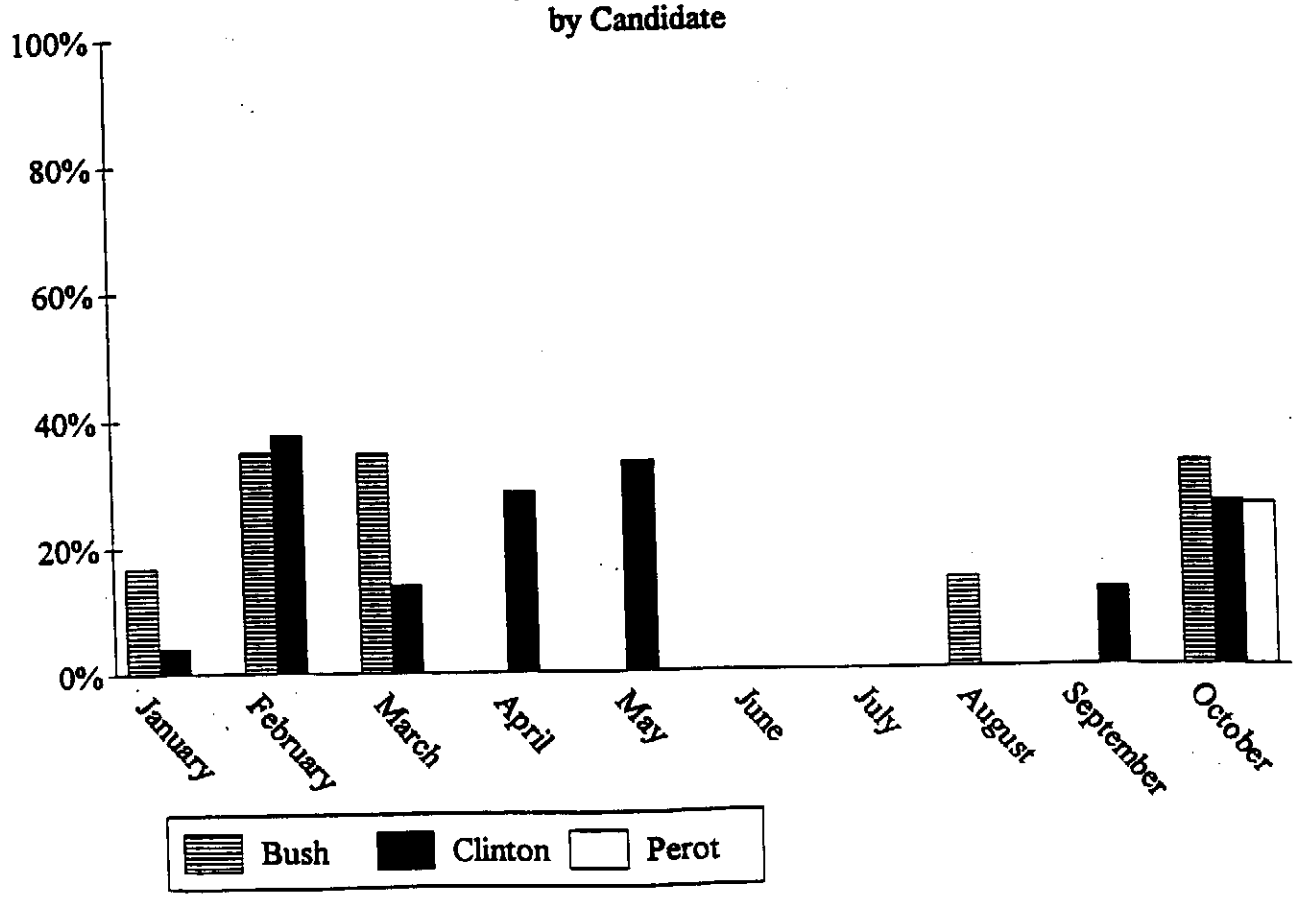


Figure 3

Ad Messages about Candidate Leadership and Issue Positions
by Candidate



Ad Messages about Personal Qualities,
by Candidate



APPENDIX

Table I
Correlations of News, Ads, and Public Opinion on the Economy

	Favor Clinton	Tone TV News to Clinton	Lagged Tone to Clinton	Favor Bush	Tone TV News to Bush	Lagged Tone to Bush
Favor Clinton	xxx	-.20 (p=.31)	.06 (p=.43)	-.19 (p=.31)	-.47 (p=.10)	-.06 (p=.44)
Tone TV Clinton	-.20 (p=.31)	xxx	.34 (p=.18)	-.64* (p=.03)	-.19 (p=.30)	-.12 (p=.38)
Lagged Tone to Clinton	.06 (p=.43)	.34 (p=.18)	xxx	-.69* (p=.03)	.17 (p=.34)	.00 (p=.50)
Favor Bush	-.19 (p=.31)	-.64* (p=.03)	-.69* (p=.03)	xxx	.45 (p=.11)	.21 (p=.31)
Tone TV Bush	-.47 (p=.10)	-.19 (p=.30)	.17 (p=.34)	.45 (p=.11)	xxx	.72* (p=.02)
Lagged Tone to Bush	-.06 (p=.44)	-.12 (p=.38)	.00 (p=.50)	.21 (p=.31)	.72* (p=.02)	xxx

* p < .05 ** p < .01

Endnotes

1. There has, of course, been disagreement on the meaning of these cues. Partisanship, for example, is alternatively viewed as a learned early predisposition or an overtime summary of differences in party issue positions; retrospective evaluations are either a form of holding politicians accountable for mistakes they have made or a combination of accountability and future promise; personal assessments are either apolitical images or attempts to predict which candidate represents the best future "investment."

2. Kelly and Mirer's research was based on the "like" and "dislike" questions of election surveys: "Is there anything in particular about (name of candidate) that might make you want to vote (for him, against him)? What is that?" Their method limits considerations to factors that citizens are willing to give as reasons for voting for or against a candidate and may push people to offer rationalizations of their previous choices. Using data from a more open interview situation, our definition of "considerations" is more global, referring to factors (whether known or inferred) that a voter takes into account when thinking or talking about a candidate.

3. Because Ross Perot entered the race late, dropped out in July before he had officially declared, and then re-entered in early October, it is difficult to trace the ebbs and flows of his campaign discourse with any statistical precision. We began the campaign with the presumption that the best indicator for candidate discourses were their paid advertisements -- which Perot did not air until October. We do, however, have evidence from the news media coverage of Perot beginning in April, and did ask questions about Perot in the Los Angeles survey before the California primary and in the third set of surveys at the end of October. Finally, our in-depth interviews provide further evidence of the development of Perot's image, but even there, the third wave was held just as he was beginning to suggest htat he might re-enter the race.