

Report on the 1993 NES Pilot Study

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1 Summary

I look at four elements of the 1993 Pilot:

1. The Projection/Persuasion Experiment
2. Perception of Member of Congress' Roll Call Voting
3. Measurement and impact of Uncertainty
4. The Evolving Clinton Coalition

The findings can be summarized as follows:

- **Projection/Persuasion:** There is no evidence that question order serves to frame the liberal-conservative placements. The projection of the respondent's position onto that of Clinton is equally strong when Clinton position is asked first, followed by self location, as when self location is asked first. Likewise, there is no increase in persuasion effects (which are nil) due to question order. The practical conclusion is that no attention need be given to the question order of the liberal-conservative placements. The substantive implication is that respondents are sufficiently grounded in their self-perceptions that these perceptions serve to anchor the placements of other political objects even when the self-placement is not previously activated.
- **Incumbent's Roll Call Voting:** When asked how often their representative has supported the President, respondents rely on heuristics rather than objective member behavior. There are strong effects of party of House member and of perceived ideological distance between Clinton and the House Member. The objective roll call behavior of the member has no additional effect. This result contrasts with the case of liberal-conservative placement of the member. In that case, roll call behavior has a substantial effect, even when controlling for party and projection effects. This points up our need to develop a better understanding of which elements of member behavior penetrate to the public and which do not.
- **Uncertainty:** The experimental measures of uncertainty perform quite well. The uncertainty measures vary across objects (self, Clinton, Perot, House Member) in reasonable ways. The measures are substantially independent of one another, suggesting that they do not represent a single dimension of uncertainty, but are instead particular to the object of evaluation. The low correlations of uncertainty measures with political information also suggests that uncertainty is not simply a direct result of ignorance or attention to politics. Uncertainty appears to be related to the structuring of attitudes. As uncertainty increases, there is a marked decline in the stability of liberal-conservative placements. There is also a drop in the correlation of ideology with specific issues. Variation in uncertainty is also associated with variation in the structure of perceptions of House member positions. Again, these differences are not simply reflections of differing levels of information. Most importantly, uncertainty is found to be damaging to candidate support: greater uncertainty lowers support for the candidate, in keeping with theories which posit risk averse voters. Finally, uncertainty is found to have consequences for the survey response. It would be very useful to carry the uncertainty item on at least on additional issue item, preferably with a branching format, which would allow some of the survey response issues to be addressed.
- **Clinton Coalition:** There is clear evidence that support for Clinton is undergoing significant change, driven by the issues which he has chosen to emphasize, reactions to Clinton as a

person, and the role of the federal government in the economy. These findings point up the importance of being able to monitor the development of political perceptions between elections and argue for a continuation of the panel.

2 Projection and Persuasion

Every study which has considered the extent to which respondents may simultaneously project their preferences onto candidate positions while also being persuaded by candidates to modify their own positions has found that projection vastly outweighs persuasion. However, these studies have all relied on data which obtains self location followed by candidate location. If citizens have shaky grips on abstractions, such as ideology, then it seems likely that responses might be shaped to a significant degree by what object is asked first. The first object would serve to anchor the scale and define the relative positions. This would lead to the appearance of projection effects and the absence of apparent persuasion. If Presidents serve, in part, to define the ideological space, then asking Presidential position prior to self-location would be expected to provide a different anchor. If ideological self-perception is fragile we would expect substantially more persuasion in this case, and less projection.

The pilot allows a test of this hypothesis. Forms 1 and 2 asked ideological placement in the usual, self-first, manner. Forms 3 and 4 asked for Clinton's position first, followed by self. The test of the hypothesis is a simultaneous equation model (estimated by two-stage least squares) which compares the parameter estimates between the two forms. Lagged values of the endogenous variables are treated as exogenous and provide identification restrictions (another bonus from the panel— this model would be difficult to estimate without the lagged values). The model includes both placement and the interaction of placement with feeling thermometer for Clinton. This allows those with warm feelings to differ in both projection and persuasion from those with cold feelings about Clinton.

Tables 1 and 2 present the results. As with all previous studies, forms 1 and 2 (Table 1) show strong projection effects and no persuasion. So do the results from forms 3 and 4 (Table 2). There is absolutely no evidence that question order matters in this case.

This result confirms past work and rejects a plausible new hypothesis. It also suggests a substantive interpretation which is somewhat different from that in the literature. It seems that respondents are sufficiently attached to their ideological self-perception that they use it in placing Clinton even when self-location is not previously activated. This implies that rather than seeing the political world as defined by the current lead characters, respondents have substantial notions of their own positions and these serve to define (in significant part) the relative locations of political objects. That these self perceptions are relatively clear to the respondent will be seen when we get to the uncertainty measures below.

As for practical issues, we need not worry about the question order of the ideology items. The tradition of asking self placement first seems to cause no mischief.¹

3 Perception of House Member Roll Call Behavior

The Pilot includes several measures of House member's roll call behavior. Respondents were asked the Member's level of support for Clinton and their position on NAFTA, in addition to the usual

¹There were no statistically significant effects of question order on missing data or subjective uncertainty either. These tables are not reported here.

Table 1: Projection/Persuasion Experiment, Self First

FORMS 1 & 2
2SLS Estimates

Model: CLINTON

Dependent variable: V104 F12 Clinton L/C, 93

Variable	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	T for H0: Parameter=0	Prob > T
Constant	0.764642	0.578522	1.322	0.1872
BC Lib/Con, 92	0.294449	0.065603	4.488	0.0001
R-Lib/Con, 93	-0.160803	0.082383	-1.952	0.0518
BC Thrm*R-L/C 93	0.009069	0.001780	5.094	0.0001

N=333; R-square=.211

Model: SELF

Dependent variable: V103 F12 R-Lib/Con, 93

Variable	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	T for H0: Parameter=0	Prob > T
Constant	2.749798	0.454767	6.047	0.0001
R-Lib/Con, 92	0.553492	0.060854	9.095	0.0001
BC Lib/Con, 93	0.127598	0.322761	0.395	0.6929
BC Thrm*BC L/C 93	-0.005276	0.003286	-1.606	0.1093

N=333; R-square=.357

Table 2: Projection/Persuasion Experiment, Clinton First

FORMS 3 & 4
2SLS Estimates

Model: CLINTON

Dependent variable: V106 F34 Clinton L/C, 93

Variable	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	T for H0: Parameter=0	Prob > T
Constant	1.719655	0.535176	3.213	0.0015
BC Lib/Con, 92	0.148284	0.072414	2.048	0.0415
R-Lib/Con, 93	-0.218144	0.088450	-2.466	0.0142
BC Thrm*R-L/C 93	0.007467	0.001702	4.388	0.0001

N=288; R-square=.181

Model: SELF

Dependent variable: V105 F34 R-Lib/Con, 93

Variable	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	T for H0: Parameter=0	Prob > T
Constant	3.092337	0.724780	4.267	0.0001
R-Lib/Con, 92	0.525246	0.070316	7.470	0.0001
BC Lib/Con, 93	-0.249744	0.519248	-0.481	0.6309
BC Thrm*BC L/C 93	-0.001265	0.004523	-0.280	0.7799

N=288; R-square=.276

ideological location (though the latter does not specifically refer to particular votes). These are important items because we need to know more about how member's consequential behavior in office affects voter perceptions. Because members differ among themselves, and because much of their activity with respect to legislation can be objectively measured, it is inviting to use roll call behavior to examine the formation of perceptions.

The *Congressional Quarterly's* annual presidential support score provides us a measure of each member's support for Clinton in his first year. The measure is, not surprisingly, highly correlated with party ($r = .88$), though there is substantial variation within party. The model I estimate regresses perceived presidential support on CQ score, party of member and the absolute value of the difference between perceived Clinton liberal-conservative placement and that of the member. The results are presented in Tables 3–5. Table 3 uses the perceived support measure excluding respondents who guessed. Table 4 adds the guessers into the support variable. Table 5 looks at guessers only. Estimates are from an ordered probit model (Table 5 is a binary probit.)

Table 3: Perceived Presidential Support, 5 point, no guessers

	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	sig.
Party of MC	.659	.385	1.711	0.089
CQ Pres Support	.006	.009	0.727	0.468
abs(BC-MC Lib/Con)	-.340	.068	-4.988	0.000

$N = 170$; $\chi^2(3) = 83.21$; $Prob > \chi^2 = 0.0000$; Pseudo $R^2 = 0.1632$

Table 4: Perceived Presidential Support, 5 point, with guessers

	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	sig.
Party of MC	.902	.203	4.441	0.000
CQ Pres Support	.0004	.005	0.075	0.940
abs(BC-MC Lib/Con)	-.265	.037	-7.248	0.000

$N = 580$; $\chi^2(3) = 188.79$; $Prob > \chi^2 = 0.0000$; Pseudo $R^2 = 0.1263$

Table 5: Perceived Presidential Support, 2 point, guessers only

	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	sig.
Party of MC	1.317	.294	4.483	0.000
CQ Pres Support	-.008	.007	-1.176	0.240
abs(BC-MC Lib/Con)	-.252	.054	-4.679	0.000

$N = 410$; $\chi^2(3) = 102.44$; $Prob > \chi^2 = 0.0000$; Pseudo $R^2 = 0.1820$

In each case, there are significant effects of party and of ideological distance. In no case does the CQ support score have a discernable impact on perceptions. Respondents clearly perceive partisan differences in support for the President, and they differentiate among partisans according to perceived ideological differences. However, variation across members on the CQ measure has no additional impact. This shows that voter perceptions of support are far from random, but rely

more on generalization and heuristics than on behavioral details about members. It is interesting that this structure is as clearly visible among the guessers as it is among the non-guessers. Either they are all guessing, or are all capable of calling upon the same heuristic when required to do so.

In contrast to these results, perception of member ideology is significantly responsive to variation in roll call behavior, as well as to similar heuristics. Table 6 presents this analysis. The independent variables are *Congressional Quarterly* Conservative Coalition Score for 1993 (the usual ADA and ACU scores are not yet available), party of the member, and projection from the respondent's position captured by both self-location and an interaction of feeling thermometer for the member with self-location. In keeping with the findings above, I expect respondents to use themselves as reference in attempting to locate the member, and to vary in this according to sympathy for the member.

Table 6: MC Liberal-Conservative Placement

TOTAL SAMPLE

	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	T for H0: Parameter=0	Prob > T
Constant	3.874141	0.29804147	12.999	0.0001
CQ CC Score	0.008412	0.00290348	2.897	0.0039
Party of MC	-0.422810	0.18191650	-2.324	0.0205
R-Lib/Con	-0.211531	0.05153318	-4.105	0.0001
MC Therm*R-L/C	0.004566	0.00060524	7.544	0.0001

N= 508, R-square=.1930

These results in Table 6 demonstrate that citizens can develop perceptions which are influenced directly by roll call behavior. The CQ Conservative Coalition score has the correct sign and is nearly 3 times its standard error. This is all the more remarkable in light of the obvious fact that surely none of our respondents actually knows what this score is. The relationship we find therefore reflects the fact that member behavior is transmitted to constituents even when they are not specifically aware of particular votes. Citizens also respond to party and they use self-location as a guide.

I have not yet analyzed the perception of NAFTA positions. Even without that, however, I think the analysis argues pretty convincingly that we should discard (at least part of) the image of constituents as being massively ignorant of member behavior. While specific actions may not be known, it appears that there is reasonable and substantial structure to perceptions of members. This structure reflects the member's actual behavior and party affiliation, both key elements of life in the House. Citizens also call on other perceptions to make what appear to be inferences about where members are likely to be located.

In light of these results, I would recommend that the presidential support measure be retained for the '94 study. At the time of the survey, members had only had 9 months to establish their positions vis a vis Mr. Clinton. It may be that we will see larger effects of roll call support once the Congress has had more time to work its will. It is also possible that the coming election will help remind voters of who has supported Clinton and who not.

Beyond this item, we should work at developing new items which will measure how the behavior of members is transmitted to constituents. Normatively, this is a crucial issue. What is more, some work has found that member's efforts to sponsor particular legislation may trickle down to the constituency (Schiller, 1993). More refined efforts on this front could pay dividends.

4 Uncertainty

Uncertainty is ubiquitous in politics, and a number of theories suggest that it is consequential, yet little has been done to develop measures which would allow us to examine these alleged effects. Most work has relied on inventive use of indirect indicators or statistical models to estimate the impact of uncertainty (Bartels 1984; Franklin 1992; Alvarez 1993). While some progress has been made in this fashion, it is clearly desirable to develop direct measures which can then be validated and tested. The 1993 Pilot provides one such effort.²

The Pilot includes measures of uncertainty for ideological placement of self, Clinton, Perot and House member. These items immediately follow the seven-point placement and ask if the respondent is "very certain, pretty certain or not very certain" of the location just given. The issues I address below concern the properties of these measures and their effect on other relationships.

Table 7 presents the marginals of uncertainty for the four targets. The sharp differences in the distributions across objects is strong evidence that these measures are capturing real variation in the clarity of positions. The self location shows by far the highest level of certainty, with virtually half in the very certain category and less than 10% in the least certain group. This promptly changes when Clinton is the target. The most certain group drops by half and the least certain triples in size. Moving to Perot further increases uncertainty and the House member virtually reverses the image of the self, with half in the least certain and just over 10% in the most certain group. This is certainly the pattern we would expect, given the obvious variation in salience and visibility across the four targets. This variation also gives an initial indication that responses to the uncertainty items are tapping characteristics of the particular target and are not dominated by some generalized uncertainty common to all perceptions.

Table 7: Uncertainty Marginals Across Objects

	Self	Clinton	Perot	House Inc
Very Certain	49.3	22.8	16.4	13.2
Pretty Certain	41.3	50.1	44.7	37.1
Not Very Certain	9.4	27.2	38.9	49.7

Table 8 adds to this claim that the items are substantially independent. The highest inter-item correlation is .34 and most are under .30. This suggests that there may be some common factor, but it by no means can account for much of the variance. The table also provides correlations with political information (the familiar 5 point Zaller index, taken from the 1992 interview.) Here the correlations are negative, as would be expected, but are quite modest, with the largest reaching only $-.25$. This also demonstrates that uncertainty is not simply the recapitulation of information or involvement in politics.

We should expect uncertain respondents to be less able to consistently locate a target's position. Table 9 gives the correlation of 1992 ideological placement with 1993 placement, stratified by 1993

²See Alvarez and Franklin, 1994, for another attempt.

Table 8: Correlations among Uncertainty Measures and Information

	Self	Clinton	Perot	House Inc
Clinton	0.34352			
Perot	0.21360	0.24361		
House Incumbent	0.22722	0.29747	0.22191	
Information Index	-0.17989	-0.25277	-0.13771	-0.10890

uncertainty.³ The gradient of stability is dramatic. Self location shows a very robust .71 correlation among the most certain, but this figure is cut in half among the least certain. The Clinton and Perot locations show even more dramatic declines with uncertainty. Clearly the stability of responses is tied to the reported uncertainty.

Table 9: Stability of Lib/Con 1992-93 by Certainty (Pearson R)

	Very Certain	Pretty Certain	Not Very Certain
R-Lib/Con	.713	.595	.349
Clinton-Lib/Con	.581	.319	.152
Perot-Lib/Con	.412	.254	.073

Table 10 considers the structuring of issue positions in relation to ideology as a function of ideological uncertainty. A quick sampling of the Pilot's issue items resulted in the following table, which obviously draws disproportionately on the Gay items. Still, there is a consistent pattern over all the issues. In most cases, the correlation of ideological self-location with self-reported issue preference is substantial among the most certain and is cut about in half among the least certain. (Thanks to Michael Alvarez for providing this table.)

Uncertainty has implications for the perception of politicians as well. Table 11 reestimates the model from Table 6 above of ideological perception of House members, but stratifies by uncertainty of member's position. The coefficient on CQ Conservative Coalition score, our measure of roll call behavior, declines by half from the most certain to the least. The use of projection from self also declines. The coefficient on party of member is about the same for the very certain and pretty certain. It drops to statistical insignificance among the least certain. The goodness of fit also declines dramatically. Even so, there is some detectible structuring even among the least certain group, but it is considerably less than the other categories.

Tables 12 and 13 return to the issue of the difference between information and uncertainty. These tables reestimate the perception model, stratifying for information. Several interesting patterns emerge, but the major point is that these patterns are somewhat different from what we saw for uncertainty.

While uncertainty has some clear effects on perceptions and on the structure and stability of perceptions, the payoff is in the vote. Most formal models assume that voters are risk averse, and so should suffer from voter uncertainty. Empirical evidence on this score has been hard to come by (again, see Bartels 1984 for an exception). With the Pilot, however, we have a chance to

³The uncertainty groups are for the appropriate object: self for self placement, Clinton for Clinton placement, etc.

Table 10: Correlation of Lib/Con with Issues by Certainty

	Very Certain	Pretty Certain	Not Very Certain
Gays Job Disc	.397	.213	.126
Gays Military	.503	.174	.324
Gays Adopt	.460	.339	.201
Gays Choose	-.413	-.305	-.096
Gays Seduce	-.318	-.260	-.345
Gays Disgusting	-.475	-.271	-.207
Gays Natural	-.483	-.384	-.273
Gays Influence	-.565	-.263	-.087
Gays God's Will	-.404	-.262	-.126
Nafta Position	.144	.032	.035
Gov't Health Ins	.479	.318	.173
Gov't School Aid	.344	.185	.227
Pref. Hiring Blacks	.311	.176	.154

get a preliminary look at this payoff. The '93 wave includes a hypothetical vote among Clinton, Bush and Perot. I have recoded this to a dichotomy: support Clinton or not. I've combined the 1992 actual vote and preference among non-voters into a similarly coded measure of past support. Table 14 estimates the 1993 vote as a function of past support, partisanship, ideological distance between self and Clinton, and uncertainty of Clinton's position. All coefficients are in the expected direction, and the uncertainty coefficient is a shade over twice its standard error. It appears from this hypothetical vote, then, that uncertainty does play the expected role of reducing support for a candidate.

It is particularly desirable that this measure be carried in an actual election. The hypothetical presidential election can give us a tantalizing clue of what we might find, but it cannot replace an actual election.

The uncertainty measure also casts some light on the survey response. There is a pronounced tendency for more uncertain respondents to gravitate towards the middle of the seven point scale (not to 4 only, but to 3, 4 and 5). Table 15 shows this for Clinton placement. Similar findings emerge for each of the other targets. This response effect has been replicated in two additional national samples conducted by the Letters and Science Survey Center at Wisconsin. At the moment, it remains a puzzle why this results. If uncertain respondents answered at random, we would expect a more uniform distribution, which we certainly do not observe. One alternative is to think of respondents who are uncertain as perceiving the candidate as potentially anywhere on the scale, and reporting the expected value of this distribution. An alternative is to imagine that there is something "safe" about picking the middle, either to avoid an embarrassingly wrong answer, or because middle of the road is somehow more acceptable. Further work is needed to untangle the basis of this response effect. One possibility can be ruled out: information effects.

Table 16 shows the same responses for the levels of information. Here the pattern is more like a uniform spread across the scale as information is reduced. There is very little apparent affinity for the middle among the less informed.

Table 11: MC Liberal-Conservative Placement by Uncertainty

VERY CERTAIN

	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	T for H0: Parameter=0	Prob > T
Constant	5.053493	0.92986276	5.435	0.0001
CQ CC Score	0.018186	0.01071981	1.696	0.0944
Party of MC	-0.578476	0.69775637	-0.829	0.4100
R-Lib/Con	-0.457164	0.15114265	-3.025	0.0035
MC Therm*R-L/C	0.005026	0.00129865	3.870	0.0002

N=71; R-square=.3788

PRETTY CERTAIN

Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	T for H0: Parameter=0	Prob > T
Constant		3.448404	0.46496594	7.416	0.0001
CQ CC Score		0.010737	0.00429877	2.498	0.0133
Party of MC		-0.631851	0.26773431	-2.360	0.0192
R-Lib/Con		-0.172301	0.08296922	-2.077	0.0391
MC Therm*R-L/C		0.005241	0.00096160	5.450	0.0001

N=205; R-square=.3072

NOT VERY CERTAIN

Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	T for H0: Parameter=0	Prob > T
Constant		3.709387	0.38840719	9.550	0.0001
CQ CC Score		0.007035	0.00384585	1.829	0.0687
Party of MC		0.124227	0.24188480	0.514	0.6080
R-Lib/Con		-0.147661	0.07342246	-2.011	0.0455
MC Therm*R-L/C		0.002596	0.00101495	2.558	0.0112

N=230; R-square=.0471

Table 12: MC Liberal-Conservative Placement by Information

LOWEST INFORMATION (0)

Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	T for H0: Parameter=0	Prob > T
Constant		2.529241	1.45105155	1.743	0.1005
CQ CC Score		0.000366	0.01166882	0.031	0.9754
Party of MC		2.299881	0.90014512	2.555	0.0212
R-Lib/Con		-0.067360	0.20511806	-0.328	0.7469
MC Therm*R-L/C		0.003099	0.00227617	1.362	0.1922

N=20; R-square=.4778

INFORMATION=1

Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	T for H0: Parameter=0	Prob > T
Constant		4.105097	0.57294114	7.165	0.0001
CQ CC Score		0.005204	0.00605822	0.859	0.3916
Party of MC		-0.036368	0.35987575	-0.101	0.9196
R-Lib/Con		-0.179195	0.09414127	-1.903	0.0588
MC Therm*R-L/C		0.003832	0.00107496	3.565	0.0005

N=162; R-square=.0961

INFORMATION=2

Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	T for H0: Parameter=0	Prob > T
Constant		4.170333	0.47542873	8.772	0.0001
CQ CC Score		0.006513	0.00419984	1.551	0.1229
Party of MC		-0.695638	0.27048106	-2.572	0.0110
R-Lib/Con		-0.318025	0.08938681	-3.558	0.0005
MC Therm*R-L/C		0.005967	0.00101451	5.882	0.0001

N=166; R-square=.277

Table 13: MC Liberal-Conservative Placement by Information (Continued)

INFORMATION=3

Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	T for H0: Parameter=0	Prob > T
Constant		3.929971	0.69414406	5.662	0.0001
CQ CC Score		0.013315	0.00693370	1.920	0.0576
Party of MC		-0.822218	0.43590141	-1.886	0.0621
R-Lib/Con		-0.233679	0.10019797	-2.332	0.0216
MC Therm*R-L/C		0.003773	0.00137786	2.739	0.0073

N=108; R-square=.305

HIGHEST INFORMATION (4)

Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	T for H0: Parameter=0	Prob > T
Constant		3.353061	0.72773007	4.608	0.0001
CQ CC Score		0.020507	0.00725796	2.825	0.0071
Party of MC		-0.784003	0.45154078	-1.736	0.0895
R-Lib/Con		-0.042077	0.16179929	-0.260	0.7960
MC Therm*R-L/C		0.001148	0.00176864	0.649	0.5198

N=48; R-square=.545

Table 14: Effect of Uncertainty on Clinton Vote in '93

Variable	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	T for H0: Parameter=0	Prob > T
Constant		0.547579	0.05739521	9.541	0.0001
Clinton Supporter 92		0.518849	0.03676349	14.113	0.0001
Party ID		-0.050549	0.00916631	-5.515	0.0001
Dist, R-BC Lib/Con		-0.054627	0.00992476	-5.504	0.0001
Uncertainty BC Lib/Con		-0.020481	0.00983998	-2.081	0.0379

N = 566; R-square = .605

Table 15: Uncertainty and Affinity for Middle Values, Clinton Lib/Con

Clinton Lib/Con Placement	Very Certain	Pretty Certain	Not Very Certain
1	40.7	11.4	6.0
2	31.4	22.7	13.8
3	15.0	31.8	29.9
4	2.1	16.2	22.2
5	3.6	9.4	19.8
6	2.9	5.5	7.2
7	4.3	2.9	1.2

Table 16: Information and Affinity for Middle Values, Clinton Lib/Con

Clinton Lib/Con Placement	Information Level				
	0	1	2	3	4
1	8.0	14.0	13.8	18.9	8.2
2	18.0	27.1	27.2	30.1	41.0
3	8.0	17.4	27.6	27.3	36.1
4	16.0	16.1	9.6	16.1	8.2
5	12.0	11.9	9.2	5.6	4.9
6	30.0	10.2	10.5	2.1	1.6
7	8.0	3.4	2.1	0.0	0.0

Alvarez and I are actively working on this response effect, using both our own two national surveys and the Pilot. We hope to be able to shed some light on this phenomena in time to help design a sensitive test for the basis of it. We think the effect is strong enough to merit continued investigation.

5 The Evolution of the Clinton Coalition

Perhaps the most important aspect of the 1992-93 panel is that it allows us for the first time to observe the development of perceptions of a new President. All of our previous panel studies have fallen in the second term, when it seems unlikely that major change would occur (granted, Nixon resigning was a pretty major change!) The pilot gives us a first look at this time, and the possibility of extending the panel to 1994 and perhaps beyond is an exciting opportunity.

I've been developing a line of argument which claims that the period between elections is crucial for our understanding of reelection bids. The argument is slightly heretical, but let me quote just a bit of it to set the stage for the analysis to come. The quote below refers to the "long campaign", meaning the time between elections when incumbents are hard at work attempting to build support, and the "short campaign" of the fall election period.

Studies of voting behavior in presidential and congressional elections have relied heavily on surveys of voters taken during the short campaign. The earliest major academic study of campaigns was conducted by Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet in 1940. They studied how citizens made their vote choices over the period of May to November of the 1940 presidential campaign. While their study was intended to show how voters were affected by the campaign, they actually found surprisingly little change. It seemed that most voters entered the election campaign with their minds pretty well made up.⁴ Lazarsfeld and colleagues explained this as being the result of stable partisan predispositions which largely determine political preferences.

Our interpretation is somewhat different. In 1940, Franklin D. Roosevelt sought his third term as President, having presided over the most devastating depression of the century and the beginnings of a gradual recovery. Roosevelt had truly reinvented government, giving it a role in social and economic affairs unimagined previously in American history. None of these changes were uncontroversial, arousing passions among both supporters and opponents. If we view his eight years in office as the long campaign leading to the 1940 election, it is far less surprising that preferences were well set before the fall contest. It is difficult to imagine how even an inattentive voter could fail to have reached a judgment of Roosevelt as President after eight years in office. If we wish to understand the 1940 election, therefore, we would be better rewarded by asking how,

⁴To be sure, some people did change their vote intention during the campaign, but Lazarsfeld and his colleagues found that most of this change was due to people returning to their partisan "home" after flirting with the opposition. To explain both the stability of most voters and this homing tendency, the authors developed the notion of a "partisan predisposition", defined by social class and other demographic factors. In their words, "A person thinks, politically, as he is, socially. Social characteristics determine political preference" p. 27. In the half century since they wrote, this verdict has been modified by a much greater emphasis on psychological factors, which are more malleable than are social characteristics, and by theories of rational choice, which assume voters make calculations of the expected benefits and costs of political alternatives and choose the option with the highest net benefit. Even modern theories, however, continue to acknowledge that social characteristics play a major role in the structuring of political preferences, though perhaps not as deterministic a role as Lazarsfeld and colleagues envisioned.

over eight years, judgments of Roosevelt were formed, rather than focusing only on the events of the last few months before the election.⁵

—Box-Stefensmeier and Franklin, Forthcoming, 1994

With the 1992-93 panel, we can begin to see the long campaign at the Presidential level. The following tables take the same approach, so let me describe them once and then present the tables quickly. In each case, the dependent variable is 1993 support for Clinton, measured by the hypothetical vote variable (dichotomized). The independent variables are 1992 support for Clinton (actual vote or preference among non-voters, dichotomized), party identification, and a set of items of interest. The items of interest are variables which we might expect to play an important role in leading to adjustments in support. Since we have included past support in the model, the coefficients of these interesting variables can be seen as leading to changes in support since 1992. If none of the interesting variables have significant coefficients, then that says that Clinton support has stabilized and that little is going on. If many of the coefficients are different from zero, then that tells us there is an ongoing evolution of support for Clinton and it gives us a hint at least as to where the action is coming from.

For variables of interest, I've picked four sets: issues Clinton has associated himself with, the Clinton traits battery, the Clinton feelings battery, and a set of economic evaluations. The first set are obviously important because a President defines himself by the issues he chooses to address. That has certainly been the case in the first year of the current administration. Traits and feelings go to the issue of the evolution of personal assessments. These surely are subject to change as the nation becomes acquainted with the President thought the hot glare of the media. Finally, the economy remains the standard explanation for electoral success and failure, so I include several different aspects of such economic evaluations.

The results are presented in Tables 17-20. In every case, not surprisingly, prior support and current party identification are potent predictors of current support. What is striking is that even with these variables included in the model, the variables of interest have generally strong effects.

Table 17 shows the effects of issues which Clinton has associated himself with. The variables are disapprove Clinton's tax measures, disapprove Clinton's budget cuts, support NAFTA, oppose Gays in the military and oppose government health insurance. The tax, budget and NAFTA measures all have significant effects. Given the volume of discussion, it is surprising that Gays and health care fall substantially short of statistical significance. One might suppose that the former had receded in the public memory, and that NAFTA dominated health care as an issue during the period of the survey. Such speculation simply points to the value of having repeated measures during the course of a President's term, which would allow us to test such musings.

Tables 18 and 19 show the effects of traits and feelings. Most of the traits have discernable effects. Honesty does not, but it would be interesting to monitor this in the wake of Whitewater. (By 1996 the special prosecutor *may* have brought a case.) It is also interesting that "gets things done" does not have a noticeable effect. Could it be that later in the term, when the record is more complete, that this will emerge as a more important factor?

⁵This argument is somewhat at odds with another of the classic works on voting behavior, *The American Voter* (Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes 1960). Campbell *et al* argue for viewing elections as the results of "proximal forces" which are captured by the attitudes, perceptions and preferences voters hold at the moment of the election. These proximal forces may themselves be the result of past political events, but the past is assumed to affect vote choice only through them, and not directly. Our model is compatible with theirs on this point, but we differ in arguing that understanding how the proximal attitudes were formed, and relating them to the past political events of the long campaign, is more important for understanding the origins of the vote choice.

Table 17: Clinton Support 93 by Salient Issue Preferences

Dependent Variable: V246

Clinton Voter in 93

Variable	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	T for H0: Parameter=0	Prob > T
Constant	0.433390	0.06235190	6.951	0.0001
Clinton Supporter 92	0.487801	0.03458285	14.105	0.0001
Party ID	-0.048283	0.00883235	-5.467	0.0001
Disapp. BC Tax	-0.167070	0.02912341	-5.737	0.0001
Disapp. BC Cuts	-0.087561	0.03159278	-2.772	0.0058
Support NAFTA	0.040537	0.01162587	3.487	0.0005
Anti-Gay Military	-0.003614	0.01078431	-0.335	0.7376
Anti-Gov't Health	-0.016276	0.01159796	-1.403	0.1610

N = 596; R-square = .615

Table 18: Clinton Support 93 by Clinton Traits

Dependent Variable: V246

Clinton Voter in 93

Variable	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	T for H0: Parameter=0	Prob > T
Constant	0.887907	0.06244920	14.218	0.0001
Clinton Supporter 92	0.453584	0.03300634	13.742	0.0001
Party ID	-0.032033	0.00821065	-3.901	0.0001
BC Honest	-0.023899	0.02051859	-1.165	0.2445
BC Leadership	-0.099895	0.02285424	-4.371	0.0001
BC Care about People	-0.068962	0.01981872	-3.480	0.0005
BC Knowledgeable	-0.036303	0.01891780	-1.919	0.0554
BC Gets Things Done	-0.001330	0.02066061	-0.064	0.9487

N = 668; R-square = .619

Each of the emotions in Table 19 packs a punch. This might signal the importance of feelings in evaluations, and that feelings may exert independent influence because they are so difficult to ignore and can arise more or less independently of other opinions.

Table 19: Clinton Support 93 by Clinton Feelings

Dependent Variable: V246

Clinton Voter in 93

Parameter Estimates

Variable	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	T for H0: Parameter=0	Prob > T
Constant	0.242600	0.04391414	5.524	0.0001
Clinton Supporter 92	0.461795	0.03283487	14.064	0.0001
Party ID	-0.033856	0.00804536	-4.208	0.0001
BC Angry	-0.064469	0.02632617	-2.449	0.0146
BC Hopeful	0.149576	0.03069742	4.873	0.0001
BC Afraid	-0.081483	0.02832979	-2.876	0.0041
BC Proud	0.132557	0.02898879	4.573	0.0001

N = 690; R-square = .610

The economic evaluations in Table 20 show a familiar pattern. Personal circumstances play a small role, though with the important exception of the impact of income tax changes. Perhaps surprisingly, the general economy also has modest effects. What has a clear and strong effect is the evaluation of the impact of federal government policy on the economy. If we are looking for attributions of responsibility, this would be good evidence for it. Clinton may not be held responsible for the entire economy (at least not yet) but where he is clearly involved (and that would be true of the tax increase as well as federal policy) there is a significant effect on support.

These tables have only scratched the surface of what is possible with the 92-93 panel. If we can extend the panel, we will open up the opportunity to study the development of a Presidency, as well as the efforts of members of Congress to secure the district. I think it is too good a chance to miss.

Table 20: Clinton Support 93 by Economic Evaluations

Dependent Variable: V246

Clinton Voter in 93

Parameter Estimates

Variable	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	T for H0: Parameter=0	Prob > T
Constant	0.541661	0.08756394	6.186	0.0001
Clinton Supporter 92	0.498547	0.03427709	14.545	0.0001
Party ID	-0.049428	0.00825542	-5.987	0.0001
US World Position	0.008851	0.02045068	0.433	0.6653
Fam Worse than Yr Ago	-0.018536	0.01355279	-1.368	0.1719
Fam Worse of Next Yr	-0.011734	0.01655316	-0.709	0.4787
Lower Inc Tax Nxt Yr	0.050892	0.01657542	3.070	0.0022
Econ Worse in Past Yr	-0.010452	0.01806438	-0.579	0.5631
Effect Fed Econ Polcy	-0.039637	0.01266075	-3.131	0.0018
Expect Econ Nxt Yr	0.037074	0.02152159	1.723	0.0854

N = 658; R-square = .584