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ORIGINAL PAPER

# Has Television Personalized Voting Behavior?

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**Abstract** Scholars and political observers have suggested that television has "personalized" voting behavior in American presidential elections by encouraging citizens to cast ballots on the basis of candidate image and personality. Though an oft-heard assertion, little solid evidence exists that this is true, and the reinvigoration of partisanship and the persistence of ideological conflict suggest personalization may be less pervasive than supposed. In this paper, I use National Election Studies data to examine whether voters are more concerned with candidates' personal characteristics now than they were at the outset of the television era. I find, however, that voters are no more likely today to mention candidate personality as a reason for their vote choice than they were in the 1950s and 1960s. Moreover, while personality affects voting behavior, its influence on candidate choice is not significantly larger than it was a half-century ago. The results are not contingent on exposure to television or political awareness and are insensitive to different measures of perceptions of candidate image. The findings are consistent with the resurgence of partisan voting in American elections and suggest that some concerns about TV's effects on political judgment are exaggerated.

**Keywords** Voting · Presidential elections · Mass media · Candidate personality · Candidate traits · Candidate image

## Introduction

Many voters profess to cast ballots for "the person, not the party." This claim is so frequently heard as to become a "widely proclaimed American norm" (Beck 1992,

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p. 322). But while this approach to democratic choice has support among the citizenry, most scholars are not convinced of its wisdom. Implicit in voting for "the person" is an emphasis on personal characteristics—charisma, leadership, empathy, and the like. These considerations are often seen as inferior to partisan loyalty, with parties serving as proxies for a constellation of policy priorities and issue positions. And since for most political scientists "the policy-oriented vote is a defining characteristic of that mythical specimen, the classic democratic citizen" (Carmines and Stimson 1980, p. 79), candidate personality is taken as a substandard criterion for a vote choice.

The concern about the "personalization" of voting behavior has become acute in recent decades, as television has literally placed the focus of political debate on candidates themselves. During election season, candidates arrive in voters' homes in electronic form on a nightly basis. Television encourages politicians to become "confessional," baring their souls as a way of connecting with their constituents (Hart 1999, p. 24). And in high-profile races, candidates' personal backgrounds, character traits, and physical attributes are subjected to scrutiny by the political punditry. "The effect of television's melodramatic imperative," writes Mendelsohn (1994, p. 86), "may be that viewers evaluate political candidates not based on what they say, but on how they act, move, behave and whether they are exciting."

While the arguments about "candidate-centered politics" (Wattenberg 1991) and TV's personalization of politics have been profuse (e.g., Glasser and Salmon 1995; Hart 1999; Keeter 1987; Lang and Lang 2002; McAllister 2007), the empirical evidence that voter decision-making has become more personalized has not. To be sure, research shows voters' perceptions of candidates' personal characteristics can affect vote choice (e.g., Bishin et al. 2006; Hayes 2005), but few studies have examined whether candidate personality has indeed become more important over television's lifespan.[1] At the same time, a growing body of work points to the resurgence of partisanship in American politics (Bartels 2000; Hetherington 2001) and enduring elite, media, and public attention to issues (Gilens et al. 2007), cross-cutting trends that should work against the personalization of voting behavior. As it stands, we simply do not know whether voters have become more intently focused on candidate personality, and whether the related concerns over television's effects are justified.

In this paper, I put the personalization hypothesis to an empirical test, examining the salience of candidates' personal qualities and their influence on vote choice over 52 years of presidential elections. Contrary to the common argument, personal attributes are no more likely to be mentioned now as reasons to vote for or against a candidate than they were a half-century ago. Moreover, while personality consistently affects voting behavior, its influence is not significantly larger than it was in the 1950s. Candidate image is not irrelevant, but the findings of the paper bolster arguments that partisanship and ideological conflict remain the driving forces in American electoral behavior. Television has profoundly affected American

[1] Keeter (1987) provides evidence that TV has promoted image-based voting, but the study is now two decades old. Druckman's (2003) findings are based on an experiment in which subjects listened to or watched a broadcast of the 1960 presidential debate between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon.

politics, but there is no evidence that voters have become increasingly likely to cast ballots on the basis of a charming personality.[2]

## Voting Behavior and Candidate Personality

Candidate personality is but one of a number of influences on voters' choices. Long-term factors, such as party identification, ideology, and social group characteristics, are argued to have a much more substantial effect on voting behavior than a candidate's character traits or physical features (see Berelson et al. 1954; Campbell et al. 1960; Enelow and Hinich 1984). Short-term factors, too, can affect voting behavior, especially for the roughly 10% of Americans who claim true political independence, leaning toward neither party. The economy, depending on its health, can boost support for, or endanger the chances of, the incumbent (Fiorina 1981; Hetherington 1996; Key 1966). And political scandal (Abramowitz 1988; Welch and Hibbing 1997) or changes in the salience of issues (Petrocik 1996) can also affect voters' preferences.

But a large body of work suggests voters see politicians' personal characteristics, both inside and out, as relevant. Perceptions of candidates' character traits—whether they are believed to be strong leaders, caring and compassionate, moral and decent, honest and trustworthy—have a strong influence on voting (e.g., Funk 1999; Hayes 2005; Kinder et al. 1980; Stokes 1966; though see Bartels 2002a for a more skeptical view). A candidate's physical appearance, too, can affect his chances. In a much-publicized *Science* paper, Todorov et al. (2005, p. 1623) find that people make "unreflective trait inferences" from candidate photographs, and that those inferences quite accurately predict election outcomes. The favorability of visual portrayals of candidates also affects evaluation and vote choice (Barrett and Barrington 2005; Rosenberg et al. 1986), as do their facial displays (Sullivan and Masters 1988). Image, in other words, may not be everything, but it matters.

## Television and the Salience of Personality

Scholars have argued that television "primes" candidate image by making personal attributes a central component of political evaluation. While many voters may be resistant to persuasion, the criteria they use in making political judgments appear to be more malleable (Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Druckman 2004; Miller and Krosnick 2000; though see Lenz 2008 for an alternative interpretation of priming effects). Increased attention to a candidate's personal attributes, for example, can make them more accessible in a person's mind, causing the individual to weigh candidate traits more heavily when making a political judgment, such as a candidate evaluation or vote choice (Druckman 2004; Druckman et al. 2004; Jacobs and Shapiro 1994).

[2] For stylistic purposes, I use the both the words "personality" and "image" interchangeably in the paper. In both cases, I am referring to candidates' personal characteristics, traits, and attributes.

Ultimately, the judgment is a reflection of the criteria that were most cognitively accessible, not a census of the information the voter acquired during a campaign.

By focusing on image in a way that radio or print media cannot, television, the argument goes, has made candidate personality a more salient consideration for voters (Keeter 1987; Lang and Lang 2002). In showing how TV can encourage trait-based evaluations of candidate debate performance, Druckman (2003, p. 561) writes that unlike consumers of other media "television viewers have access to visual imagery and nonverbal cues that often play an important role in shaping personality evaluations of others." Hart (1999) argues that television, with its facility in creating false intimacy between viewers and politicians, encourages voters to evaluate candidates on the basis of personality—to judge them, as Gould (1972, p. 21) puts it, "on the same terms a man greets any new acquaintance." Indeed, Keeter (1987, p. 344) finds in a study from 1952 to 1980 that personal characteristics weighed more heavily in the vote choice of people who relied on television for political information than for those who got most of their news from newspapers. He concludes that "television has facilitated and encouraged vote choices based upon the personal qualities of candidates."

Image-based evaluations have presumably been encouraged by changes since the 1950s in the content of political news coverage and political advertising. Political news on TV is intensely image-focused, a characteristic driven by the demands of an inherently visual medium (Graber 2006; Owen 1991). For example, Graber (2001, p. 113) notes that 70% of television stories include facial close-ups, which in election news places the focus squarely on the candidates themselves (see also Mutz 2007). Hart (1999, p. 36) argues that such a "character model" of political journalism sends a clear message to voters: "Watch television. Issues confuse, character endures." Meanwhile, because of time constraints—most stories run less than 3 min, and one-third are less than 30 s (Graber 2001, p. 112)—TV news lacks depth and is unlikely to encourage issue voting. All of these developments have taken place as television has become the public's dominant source of political information (Graber 2006).

Changes in campaign communication, some work suggests, have also encouraged a focus on candidate attributes. Candidates now use television commercials and, increasingly, appearances on entertainment programs (Baum 2005), to shuttle themselves into voters' living rooms. Most TV ads use a combination of the spoken word, text, dramatic music, and images to make their point. Today's spots are "visually enticing" (West 2001, p. 5), and it is the visual imagery that viewers remember best. Not only do the images often focus on the candidates, but messages are used to burnish candidates' character traits, especially in presidential campaigns, by emphasizing their ability to empathize with voters, their leadership abilities, and so forth. In doing so, presidential ads have the effect of "stipulating the attributes that a president should have" (Jamieson 1996, p. 518). These changes present a marked contrast to the advertising of the 1950s, which often featured bland citizen testimonials or even cartoon parades in support of a candidate.[3] According to John

[3] Examples of early presidential ads can be seen at the Archive of the Museum of the Moving Image (http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us).

Geer's publicly available data on presidential campaign advertising (see Geer 2006), the proportion of "appeals" devoted to candidates' traits increased substantially between 1960 (20%) and 1980 (38%).[4] Though the trend has not continued since that time, the overall proportion of trait appeals in campaign advertising has been somewhat higher in more recent elections than it was in the 1960s.

These developments undergird the personalization hypothesis—that voting behavior has become more personality-based—but there is also reason to doubt that television has fundamentally reoriented voters' political judgments. If features of the political environment have worked against the personalization of American campaigns, then the importance and influence of candidate personality in voter decision-making may not have increased. Three developments suggest that politics may have actually become less personalized in the last half-century.

First, while TV news does indeed place a visual focus on candidates, candidate characteristics get less attention than the "horse race" and "game" frames that dominate political news reportage (Farnsworth and Lichter 2006; Hershey 2001, pp. 56–66; Patterson 1994). While viewers might be exposed to more personality-focused coverage, news continues to be heavily framed in terms of strategy and the horse race (Sigelman and Bullock 1991). Moreover, print outlets have a tendency to personalize the news in the same manner as the broadcast media (Bennett 2009).

Second, political advertising may have actually become less explicitly personal in its focus since the 1950s, turning with greater frequency to issue-based appeals. Analyzing "prominent" presidential ads since 1952, West (2001, p. 50) finds that the proportion of commercials focusing on personal characteristics has declined since a peak in 1960. In 2000, 31% of Bush and Gore's ads focused on personality, only slightly more than the 24% in 1952 and substantially less than the 69% of 1960 and the 50% of 1976. At the same time, the percentage of ads about a specific policy bottomed-out in 1960 but has generally risen since. In 2000, 43% of the ads were issue-focused, the second-largest proportion in the entire time series. Rather than becoming more image-obsessed, there is some evidence that political commercials have become more issue-conscious, perhaps serving to prime policy considerations in voters' minds (Gilens et al. 2007).[5]

Third, and most importantly, the rise of televised politics has coincided with an increase in partisanship and issue-based conflict in the United States. Where scholars once sounded the death knell for political parties (Burnham 1970; Wattenberg 1998), recent research suggests that mass partisanship is resurgent (Hetherington 2001; Stonecash 2006), with party identification affecting voting behavior as strongly at the end of the 20th century as it did at its midpoint (Bartels 2000). At the same time, scholars have documented a growing congruence between party affiliation and issue positions (Carsey and Layman 2006), as the relationship

[4] These figures are based on my calculations from Geer's data, available at http://www.vanderbilt.edu/psci/johngeer/Downloads. I calculated the proportion of all appeals in an ad coded as trait appeals, and averaged those numbers for all advertising in a single election year.

[5] Of course, just because an ad fails to mention a personal characteristic does not mean the images don't promote candidate personality. But it should give pause to note that personal characteristics have not come to dominate political commercials, as some depictions of campaigns might suggest.

between partisanship and ideology has become tighter (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998).[6] As the parties have polarized (McCarty et al. 2006), the ideological differences between presidential candidates have become more clearly drawn (Fiorina et al. 2006), making their issue positions—whether on abortion, taxes, or national security—potentially more relevant to voters. One potential consequence is that the personalizing effects of television might be overwhelmed by the growing issue cleavages between the two parties and between their presidential candidates.

Given this backdrop, in the analysis that follows, I test the hypothesis that TV has contributed to an increasing personalization of voting behavior, making candidate image a more salient concern for the electorate. Using National Election Studies data from presidential election years (1952–2004), I first examine whether voters are more likely now than in the past to mention candidates' personal characteristics as reasons to vote for or against them. The expectation is that personality will be an increasingly important reason to vote for a candidate. Second, I explore whether the impact of candidate image has grown over time, with the expectation that it will exert a larger influence on vote choice than in the days when TV was a less dominating political force. Third, I examine whether the effects are contingent on individuals' media consumption patterns and levels of political awareness. If personality effects grow stronger over time, then the personalization hypothesis would be supported. If not, it suggests that the concern of voters being taken for a ride by televised imagery might be overdrawn.

## Data and Measures

Each election year since 1952, the NES has asked voters to list any reasons for supporting or opposing the Republican and Democratic presidential candidates. The question takes this form: "Now I'd like to ask you about the good and bad points of the major candidates for President. Is there anything in particular about John Kerry that might make you want to vote for him?"[7] Voters are asked to list up to as many as five reasons to vote for the candidate, and to then give as many as five reasons to vote against him.[8] Respondents are queried about both candidates.

The "likes/dislikes" batteries form the foundation for my analysis. They serve as measures of what voters consider salient in making a vote choice. Because the questions are open-ended, voters can say anything they choose, indicating, at least in theory, what they truly think is important. Much research in political science has shown that voters make political judgments—such as vote choices—based on the

[6] For my purposes, it is not critical whether citizens are updating their party identification to match their issue positions or changing their issue positions to match their party affiliation, which Carsey and Layman (2006) show is a product of individual-level characteristics. What matters is that the relationship between issues and partisanship has grown tighter in recent years.

[7] There are slight variations in the wording in different years. Before 1996, the question asked about "the two candidates" for president rather than the "major" candidates.

[8] The exception is 1972, when respondents had the opportunity to give only three reasons. Because the analyses in this paper focus on proportions of mentions and the comparative assessments of candidates—not raw counts of mentions—the comparability problem is minimal.

considerations that are most cognitively accessible (e.g., Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Zaller and Feldman 1992). This "top of the head" processing (Taylor and Fiske 1978) reflects the considerations that are easily retrieved and that may have been recently primed. Ultimately, the open-ended responses should reflect the criteria that voters will use in making a vote choice.

The use of the open-ended measures as predictors of vote choice is not without its critics. Some scholars (Rahn et al. 1994; Smith 1989) have argued that the responses to the likes/dislikes batteries represent not antecedents of a voter's decision, but mere rationalizations of the choice. This is particularly likely if voters form their evaluations of candidates "on-line," encoding campaign information as they acquire it and integrating the information into a "running tally" of candidate evaluation, forgetting the specific information that led to it (Hastie and Park 1986; Lodge et al. 1989; Lodge 1995). Under such a model, voters' responses to the questions are unlikely to accurately capture the considerations that led them to their choice. If the argument is correct, then the measures cannot be used to determine whether candidate personality has become more important in shaping voting behavior.

Though the concerns have some validity, I choose to rely on the measures for three reasons. First, the rationalization critique is not universally accepted (Gilens et al. 2007). Most prominently, Kelley's (1983; Kelley and Mirer 1974) voting model rests on the premise that a citizen's Election Day choice reflects a summation of what she likes and dislikes about each candidate; the candidate receiving the highest net favorability score then gets her vote. Moreover, Lau (1989) and Blais et al. (1998) have found that voters' responses to the open-ended questions are substantively meaningful, stable over time, and add predictive power to vote choice models. Thus, they cannot be dismissed as mere rationalizations.

Second, Lau and Redlawsk's (2006; Redlawsk 2001) recent work shows that the portrayal of electoral choice as "memory-less" is wrong. What voters learn about candidates during a campaign does indeed affect their decisions, even as on-line processing also takes place. Their findings, bolstered by other work in political psychology (e.g., McGraw et al. 2003), underscore the point that what voters recall when asked what they like and dislike about candidates is not necessarily uncorrelated with their actual decision criteria—they are also drawing on stores of relevant information, not completely at odds with what "top of the head" models of processing posit.

The third reason is practical. The open-ended batteries are the only measures approximating why voters make the choices they do that span the period since the inception of television. If we want to test the personalization hypothesis, they are the best data at our disposal. More recent surveys have included better, closed-ended, measures of perceptions of candidate traits, but they cover only the last two decades. I draw on those measures below to try to address some of the concerns raised by the use of the open-ended batteries.[9]

[9] An analysis of the voting behavior of "late deciders" also suggests that the likes/dislikes batteries have validity. At the helpful behest of an anonymous reviewer, I investigated whether patterns of personality effects found in my full-sample analyses also appear among those who had not settled on a candidate preference at the time of their NES pre-election interview. The logic is that these individuals' responses to

## Coding

Coders at the NES place the open-ended responses into a number of categories, based on their content. From 1952 through 1968, there were 10 categories, including "character and background," "personal attraction," a variety of codes for issue mentions, and others. The codes changed in 1972, and since that year there have been 13 categories, including "candidate leadership qualities" and "candidate personal qualities," along with issue mentions and other topics.

I collapse these codes into five broad categories of responses, the most important being "Personal Characteristics," which captures likes/dislikes dealing with candidate appearance, personality, or image. For 1952–1968, this comprises responses identified as dealing with a candidate's "character and background" or his "personal attraction"—mentions of a candidate's physical appearance. For 1972–2004, it contains responses concerning "candidate leadership qualities" and "candidate personal qualities."

Among the responses that fall into my "Personal Characteristics" category are comments that describe a candidate as "a man of humility," "a good speaker," or that he "makes a good appearance." Respondents have noted a candidate "has the people's interest at heart" or "has a nice personality." On the less flattering side, voters also noted that a candidate "jokes too much" or "doesn't mean what he says." Candidates have also been described as "stupid" or "dumb" or "lacking dignity." Each of these items reflects a personality-based evaluation of a candidate, the sort of consideration that should have become more prominent since the 1950s if television has encouraged citizens to focus on a candidate's personal attributes.

I created four other categories, grouping together comments about a candidate's level of experience, policy issues, party connections, and a residual category for mentions not accounted for by the other four. "Experience" captures references to a candidate's prior record or other offices he has held. "Issues" accounts for mentions of any specific policy—Social Security, Medicare, taxes, war, and so forth—as well as vague comments about "performance" issues (Petrocik 1996), such as the state of the economy. The "Party" category includes references to a candidate's party affiliation or to members of his party. The "Other" category includes likes/dislikes

Footnote 9 continued
the likes/dislikes questions could not be rationalizations, since they did not yet possess a choice to rationalize. If the same pattern of effects emerges among these voters, I would have a stronger justification for the use of the open-ended measures. To explore this, I restricted the analysis to individuals who said in the post-election survey that they made up their mind within the last 2 weeks of the campaign, but whose pre-election interview had occurred at least 2 weeks before election day. For each of the 13 election years since 1952, I regressed vote choice (from the post-election survey) on a control for party identification and a measure of evaluations of the candidates' personal characteristics created from responses to the likes/dislikes questions. Just as with the full-sample analysis, in every case the coefficient for personality mentions was in the expected direction. The effect was statistically significant in just five of the models, but that is not surprising given the small number of individuals (between 70 and 248, depending on the year) in the analysis. Not coincidentally, it would seem, four of the five years in which the coefficient was significant were the four years with the largest number of cases. Moreover, the Pearson correlation between the coefficients for candidate attributes for late deciders and the coefficients in the full-sample models (Table A-3) was 0.84. These results offer evidence that the open-ended measures indeed represent more than post-hoc rationalizations.

that did not fall into one of the other groupings. The specific codes from the NES Cumulative Data File that fall into each category are shown in Table A-1.[10]

## Have Voters Become More Concerned with Personal Characteristics?

Using this categorization scheme, I can address the initial question of whether voters are more likely now to mention personal characteristics as reasons to vote for or against a candidate than when television was in its infancy. Figure 1 displays the percentage of mentions in each category (excepting "Other") for each presidential election year from 1952 through 2004.[11] The results say "no," and unequivocally so.

Personal characteristics comprised slightly more than one-quarter of the likes/dislikes responses in 1952, and a similar proportion in 2004. Voter concern with candidate personality peaked at 39% in 1960 when a young, charismatic John F. Kennedy defeated a comparatively staid, and decidedly untelegenic, Richard Nixon (Druckman 2003). Their salience fell over the next three elections before a substantial uptick in the post-Watergate election of 1976 and a subsequent decline to a low of 19% in 1988.

Since then, voters in the Clinton-Bush era have become more concerned with candidate image and character, but no more so than citizens in the 1950s and 1960s. In the first seven elections in the time series, the average proportion of responses about candidate characteristics was 31%; in the seven most recent elections, that figure is 23%. If TV has increasingly personalized voters' evaluations of candidates, it is not evident in these data.

The most striking feature of Fig. 1 is the increase in the relevance of issues. Not once in the 1950s and 1960s did the proportion of responses mentioning issues eclipse one-third. By contrast, not once since the 1980 election has the percentage of issue-based likes/dislikes fallen below 40%. The data appear to demonstrate that the party sorting that began in the 1960s and continued into the 1980s has made cleavages between the parties more evident to voters (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998). As the party's presidential candidates have taken increasingly distinct stances on social issues, taxes, foreign policy, and other issues, voters have found themselves more concerned with such matters (Gilens et al. 2007).

It may, of course, be that television's personalization effects are present only among people who consume political news from TV. Figure 2 displays the same information as in Fig. 1 for individuals who reported watching television programs about the election campaign and those who did not. Presumably, TV watchers will be more likely to mention personal characteristics than citizens who get their news from non-visual media. I code respondents who answered "yes" to the question, "Did you watch any programs about the campaigns on television?" as television

[10] In each year, between 5% and 13% of respondents gave no answers to the likes/dislikes batteries. In the vote choice models reported below, I exclude these individuals from the analyses. When they are included in the analyses, the substantive findings are unchanged.

[11] "Other" is omitted from Fig. 1 to ease the data presentation. The proportion of responses in that category has changed little since 1952, fluctuating from 8% (1952) to 21% (1968) to 13% (2004).

**Fig. 1** The salience for voters of personal characteristics, issues, experience, and party, 1952–2004. *Note*: Figures display the percentage of responses to the NES likes/dislikes questions in each category for each election year. "Other" is omitted for presentation purposes

viewers, and those who answered "no" as non-viewers.[12] The measure obviously cannot distinguish between people who get their campaign information exclusively from TV from those who use TV as one of multiple news sources. But it does allow for an examination of possible differences between people who report seeing some TV programs about the campaign, and those who report seeing none at all. If TV encourages a focus on candidate personality, then there should at least be differences between viewers and non-viewers.

There is very little evidence in Fig. 2 that candidate assessments differ for TV watchers and non-watchers. For 10 of the 13 elections for which the measure was available, the proportion of responses about personal characteristics was the same for viewers (lighter line) and non-viewers (darker line). Only in 1952, 1956, and 1968 were the responses of TV viewers significantly more personality-focused. For the last 40 years, the salience of candidate attributes has largely been the same for voters, regardless of their viewing habits. The graphs for issues, experience, and party also fail to find differences among TV viewers and non-viewers.

## Has the Impact of Candidate Personality on Vote Choice Grown?

Figures 1 and 2 cast doubt on the personalization hypothesis, but the patterns do not mean voters weigh personal characteristics less heavily in making a vote choice today than in the 1950s. Even if relatively fewer personality-based responses are

[12] Table A-2 displays the distribution of viewers and non-viewers. I use this dichotomous measure (NES Cumulative Data File variable VCF0724) because it is available for every campaign except 1988. Other fine-grained measures of the frequency of TV news consumption are available only in recent elections. As a check of the validity of this strategy, I have also examined the relationship between the mention of personal characteristics and the number of days a respondent reported watching national television news (NES Cumulative Data File variable VCF9035). This measure is available for 1984–2004. Only in 1996 does the proportion of personal characteristics mentions increase with the frequency of national news viewing. Thus, the results are not substantively different than when using the dichotomous TV viewing measure.

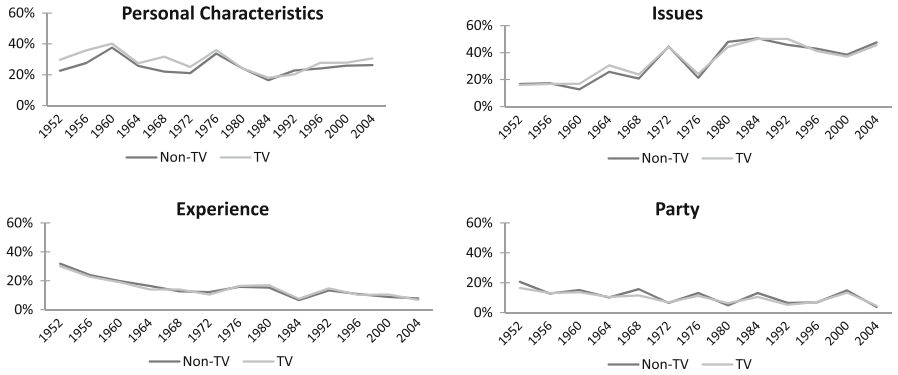


**Fig. 2** The salience among TV watchers and non-TV watchers of personal characteristics, issues, experience, and party, 1952–2004. *Note*: Figures display the percentage of responses to the NES likes/dislikes questions in each category for each election year. "Other" is omitted for presentation purposes. The TV-watching variable was not available in the 1988 survey

given to the likes/dislikes questions, it is possible that the characteristics that are mentioned have taken on greater importance for their choices.[13]

To explore that possibility, I specified probit regression models for each election year. The dependent variable is the respondent's vote choice, coded 1 if she cast a ballot for the Republican candidate, 0 for the Democrat.[14]

The key covariates are derived from respondent's answers to the likes/dislikes questions. Following Keeter (1987), I first calculated the favorability score for each candidate within the five categories described above. The favorability score is the number of negative comments a respondent made about a candidate subtracted from the number of positive mentions. I then subtracted the score for the Democratic candidate from the score for the Republican candidate, creating a measure of the difference in the perception of each candidate. Thus, the measure is:

[13] A prominent concern in the candidate traits literature is that personality assessments may simply be the result of projection, in which voters assign positive attributes to the candidate they already support, rather than reporting an unbiased evaluation (see Bartels 2002b). If that is the case, then evaluations of candidate personality are not valid as predictors of vote choice; they are derivations of that preference. There is evidence in the data, however, that trait assessments represent more than mere projection. Pooling the data across the fourteen election years, I find that 41% of voters had a Personal Characteristics score that indicated they evaluated more favorably the candidate for whom they did *not* vote than the candidate they supported. The breakdown was similar across party preference: 22% of Republican voters scored the Democratic candidate's personal traits more favorably, and 19% of Democratic voters rated more favorably the GOP candidate's personality. Thus, while projection inevitably occurs, it is not so rampant as to eliminate the possibility that personality assessments play an important role in shaping voting behavior.

[14] I note two things about the models. First, only major-party voters are included. Second, because the confidence intervals of estimates generated from different samples are not directly comparable, I have also modeled the relationship among television, personality assessments, and voting by pooling the data across election years and estimating a single equation. In that equation, I include dummies for each election year and interact each dummy with Personal Characteristics to determine whether the impact of personality evaluations has changed over time. The results conform to the patterns in the analyses I present here—no increasing "personalization" of voting behavior.

$$\text{Net favorability score} = (N \text{ of Republican likes} - N \text{ of Republican dislikes}) - (N \text{ of democratic likes} - N \text{ of democratic dislikes})$$

I did this for each of the five categories to create comparative candidate assessment variables. For stylistic reasons, I simply call these net favorability measures Personal Characteristics, Issues, Experience, Party, and Other. The variables can run from −10 (most favorable for the Democrat) to +10 (most favorable for the Republican), but the vast majority of respondents' scores fall in the middle of the range.[15] The model also includes a variety of controls: Party Identification,[16] Education, Income, Age, White, and Southerner. If the personalization hypothesis is correct, the effect of perceptions of the candidates' personal characteristics should have increased over time. (Full results for the models are presented in Table A-3).[17]

Figure 3 presents the predicted effect of a respondent's Personal Characteristics score.[18] The figure displays for each election the change in the probability that an individual voted for the Republican presidential candidate based on a shift from a slightly pro-Democratic evaluation (−1) to one slightly more favorable toward the Republican (+1). Since the higher value represents the more pro-Republican assessment, the probability of voting for the GOP candidate should increase with the shift. For example, looking at 1952, the difference in the probability of voting for Eisenhower was 0.14 between an individual whose Personal Characteristics rating was −1 and a respondent whose evaluation +1. The shaded lines are 95% confidence intervals around the predicted change in probability.[19]

Of chief interest is the longitudinal change in the influence of the Personal Characteristics measure. The personalization hypothesis predicts an increasing effect since the 1950s, when television first became part of presidential campaigns. But the pattern is not at all supportive of that contention, and considerably more complicated. The effect on vote choice rose in 1960, fell slightly in the following two elections, and rose again in 1972. For the next four elections, candidate

[15] Pooling the responses across years for Personal Characteristics, 80% fall between −2 and +2. The distributions are similar for all of the net favorability measures.

[16] I use the standard NES 7-point party identification measure. Alternative measures—using dummies for Republican and Democratic identifiers or the 5-point scale with "leaners" coded as partisans—do not change the results of the models. Education and income are categorical variables, age is the precise age of the respondent, race is coded as white (1) and non-white (0), and southern residents are coded as 1, with non-southerners coded 0.

[17] In a separate analysis, I included a control for the respondent's self-reported ideological placement in the 1968–2004 models, the years for which the measure is available. Those models produce no substantive differences in the effect of candidates' personal characteristics.

[18] The probabilities are estimated using Clarify (Tomz et al. 2001) in STATA 9.0, with all other variables held at their median values. All simulations presented in the paper are produced by Clarify.

[19] Seventy-one percent of respondents have a Personal Characteristics score between −1 and +1. The range represents individuals who have slightly pro-Democratic and pro-Republican evaluations, respectively, and thus captures a shift that could reasonably occur during a campaign. It would be less useful to examine shifts to the extremes of the distribution, since few people are likely to undergo an attitude transformation of that magnitude. Nevertheless, I have also examined the patterns based on more dramatic shifts—as large as from −6 to +6. While the effects are, of course, larger, the longitudinal patterns are the same as in Fig. 3.

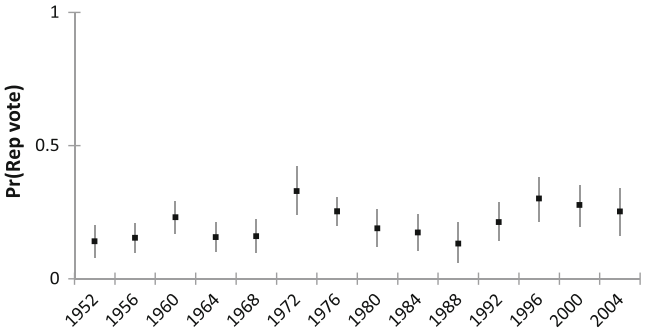


**Fig. 3** The effect of perceptions of candidate personal characteristics on the probability of voting Republican, 1952–2004. *Note*: Each data point represents the difference in the probability of a Republican vote between a respondent with a score of −1 and +1 on the personal characteristics scale. Simulations are generated from probit models shown in Table A-3, calculated using Clarify (Tomz et al. 2001). Shaded lines are 95% confidence intervals around the estimates

personality exerted an increasingly weaker influence on presidential vote choice, with the effect bottoming out in the 1988 contest between George H.W. Bush and Michael Dukakis. In that year, a two-unit shift in Personal Characteristics yielded a 0.13 increase in the probability of a respondent voting for Bush, smaller than its effect in 1952. In the very era that the "hyperconsciousness of television image making" was becoming remarkably "pervasive" (Adatto 1993, p. 31), candidate personality mattered no more than it did 30 years earlier.

The Clinton-Bush era has seen a slightly more prominent role for candidate personality. In 1992, the boost in probability of a Republican vote rose to 0.21, and in 2004 settled at 0.25. But just as with the proportion of mentions shown in Figs. 1 and 2, these data suggest no dramatic "personalization" of the vote decision as a result of the pervasiveness of televised campaigning. The story of the effect of candidate personality on vote choice is not one of inexorable growth.[20]

## Do TV Exposure and Political Awareness Make a Difference?

There are, however, reasons to believe that television's effects would not be evenly distributed across the population. People with different patterns of media consumption or levels engagement with politics may be differentially likely to focus on the personal characteristics of candidates, as some research has suggested (Keeter 1987; Miller et al. 1986). Assuming all individuals are equally likely to be affected by television, as the analysis in Fig. 3 does, could obscure change among relevant sub-groups of voters. There are two important individual-level attributes that could mediate television's effects.

First, people not exposed to a political message cannot be influenced by its content (McGuire 1968; Zaller 1992), so television's personalizing effects should not apply to

[20] Because of the sizeable increase in the frequency of issue mentions in Fig. 1, I also examined changes in the influence of Issues. Just as with personal characteristics, the effect of a two-unit shift in issue mentions waxes and wanes across the time series, and does not exhibit a dramatic increase.

voters who do not learn about politics from television. Thus, people who watch television are more likely to have candidate personality primed as a consideration for judgment than those who do not—and this difference may have become more pronounced as television has taken on a greater role in presidential campaigns. While Fig. 2 casts doubt on that hypothesis, it does not rule out the possibility that personal attributes play a more influential role in shaping TV watchers' candidate preferences.

Second, voters who are more engaged in and knowledgeable about politics possess larger stores of political information and are likely to have more stable attitudes (Converse 1964; Zaller and Feldman 1992). As a result, those attitudes, and the criteria by which candidates are judged, are less likely to be affected by media content than are the considerations of people who pay less attention to politics. Political awareness, then, could mediate the effects of television's personalizing influence on voters, so that politically unaware individuals are more likely to vote based on personal characteristics than their politically aware counterparts.

Taken together, these two factors suggest an interactive relationship, if television's personalizing effects are to be found: Exposure to TV coverage should increase the weight voters give to candidate personality, but an individual's level of political information should condition the effect, with less politically aware individuals being more likely to vote based on candidates' personal attributes.

I explore the role of exposure and awareness in three separate vote choice analyses. First, I examine whether the influence on vote choice of candidate personal characteristics is stronger for TV watchers than non-TV watchers. Second, I examine whether the effect of candidate personality is different for people with varying levels of political awareness. And finally, to test the interactive hypothesis concerning exposure, awareness, and assessments of candidate attributes, I present the results of a three-way interactive model. Exposure to TV coverage about the campaign should increase the weight voters give to candidate personality, but that effect should be conditioned by an individual's level of political awareness. The step-by-step approach is necessary because a consistent measure of political awareness is not available in the NES until 1968. The TV watching variable, however, covers the entire time series (except 1988). So I first explore for the full 52 years whether exposure to television matters, and then consider the role of political awareness across the last 36 years.

I specified vote choice models with all of the controls and net favorability scores for each category, just as in the previous models. In the first model, estimated separately for each election, I included a dummy variable for TV Watcher, coded 1, and interacted it with Personal Characteristics. For space reasons, the model's results are not presented, but I simulated the effects of the interaction term across a range of personal characteristics evaluations (Brambor et al. 2006). The results of the simulations are presented in Fig. 4, which displays for each year the probability of voting for the Republican, given different values on the personal characteristics measure. The darker line represents non-TV watchers, and the lighter line shows TV watchers.

In almost every year, the slopes of the lines are nearly identical, showing that TV exposure does not affect the influence of voters' assessments of candidates' personality. And in the only cases where there are statistically significant

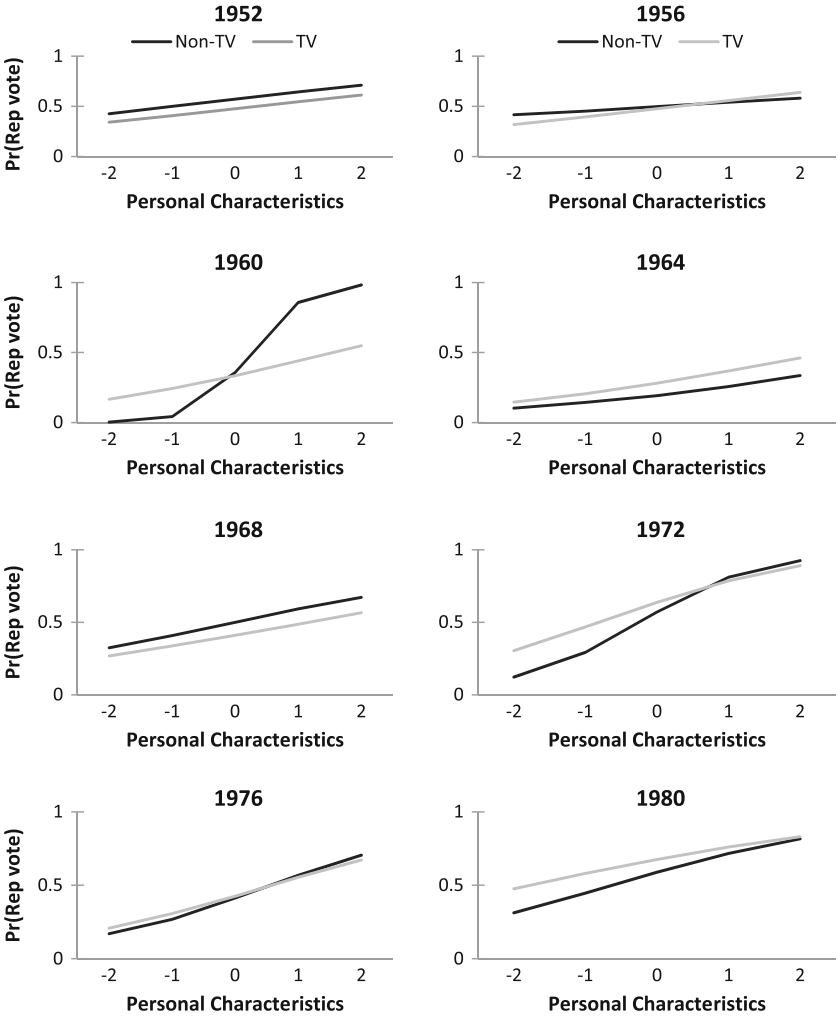


**Fig. 4** Simulations of the effects of the interaction between TV watching and perceptions of candidates' personal characteristics, 1952–2004. *Note*: Each panel presents the probability of a Republican vote based on simulations of the interaction between TV watching and perceptions of the candidates' personal characteristics. Simulations are generated from probit models, calculated using Clarify (Tomz et al. 2001)

differences at some level of personality assessments—in 1960 and 1992, for individuals with more polarized candidate assessments—the effect of personality evaluations is actually larger for non-watchers.[21] There is no evidence that TV

[21] I have omitted confidence intervals around the estimates for presentation purposes. With confidence intervals included, the graphs, necessarily small because each year requires a separate panel, would be virtually impossible to read. More importantly, the differences between the TV watcher and non-watcher estimates at any point on the x-axis are statistically different only at the values of 1 and 2 in 1960, and at 2 in 1992. In every other case, they overlap. Full results of the models, including figures with confidence intervals, are available from the author on request.

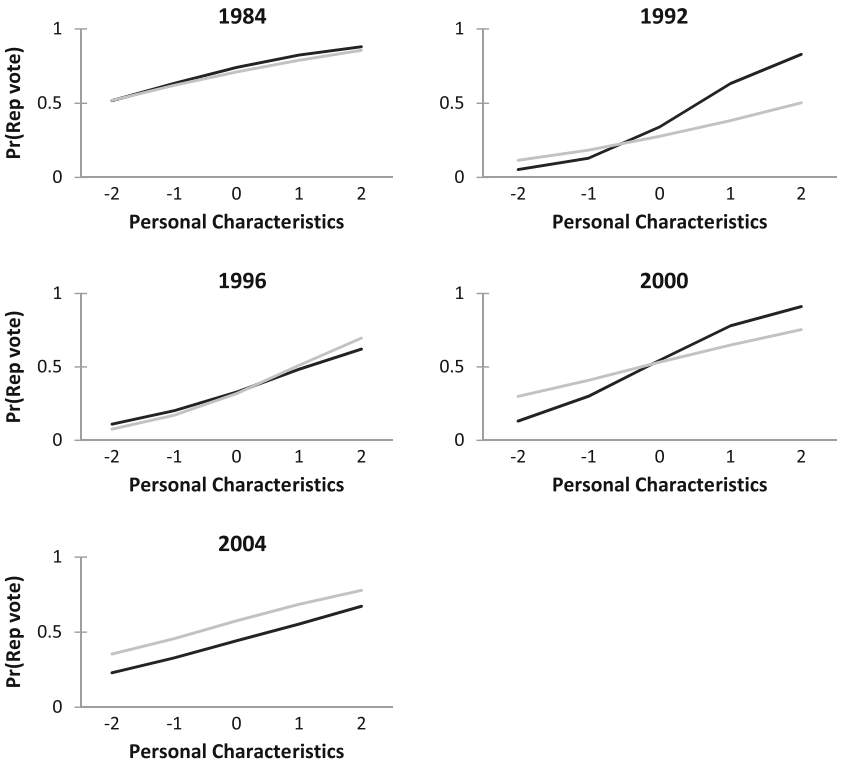


**Fig. 4** continued

viewing significantly alters the vote choice criteria used by voters, in contrast to Keeter's (1987) findings.[22]

I ran a second set of models that replaces TV watching with a measure of political awareness—the interviewer's assessment of a respondent's level of

[22] There are several potential explanations for my inability to replicate Keeter's findings, even for the period from 1952 to 1980. First, his study used questions that asked respondents from which medium they got most of their campaign information and from which they received most of their information about politics and current events. People who answered "television" to these questions—the latter was used only in 1976 and 1980—were identified as "television viewers." Those who answered "newspapers" were coded as "newspaper readers." All other respondents were omitted from the analysis. Those questions were not asked in recent surveys. Second, my identification of responses that indicate concern with "personal characteristics" is different than his. Keeter creates a separate category for mentions of "executive capacity and experience" that includes several statements I code as referring to "personal characteristics." For example, Keeter (1987, p. 347) assigns the statement "He's a patriot" into the former category, while I regard that as an assessment of the candidate's personality. Third are differences in modeling techniques. He uses ordinary least squares regression to estimate a model with a dichotomous dependent variable (Keeter 1987, p. 348). Keeter also splits the sample into "newspaper readers" and "television viewers" and then runs two regressions for each election year. He then compares the size of the coefficients in the two groups (Keeter 1987, Table 1). While this is common, it is a less accurate technique than specifying interactive models that capture the relationship between two variables, which does not require separating the sample.

political information (see Zaller 1985, 1992)—available beginning in 1968. Recoding the five-point information scale, I created a three-point measure that categorizes respondents as having low, moderate, or high levels of political awareness (Zaller 1992).[23] The model also includes an interaction between political awareness and Personal Characteristics, which tests whether people with differing levels of political awareness are more likely to base their vote choice on candidate attributes. The measure also serves as an alternative test of whether higher media exposure leads to greater personality-based voting, since political knowledge is a superior measure of the reception of political news than self-reported exposure (Price and Zaller 1993; Prior 2005).

The effects of candidate personality on vote choice for individuals with differing levels of political awareness are presented for each year in Fig. 5. The lines represent voters with low, moderate, and high political awareness, shaded light to dark. Though I have again omitted confidence intervals to keep the graphs readable, there are few significant differences across levels of political awareness. Specifically, the effects of candidate personality are not consistently stronger for unaware individuals—the effects vary across election years. Only in 1976 is there a significant difference between voters at different levels of awareness, where the effect is actually stronger for highly aware people. There simply is no discernible pattern to suggest the effect of candidates' personal attributes is more or less pronounced depending on a voter's level of political awareness.

Taken together, the TV watching and political awareness models cast doubt on the proposition that television's personalizing effects might be found by exploring the role of media usage and political awareness. But it is possible that the effect might occur only among TV watchers (the exposed) who lack political awareness (the susceptible). To test for this possibility, I pooled the observations across the election years from 1968 through 2004 and ran a model that includes both the TV watching and political awareness measures, a three-way interaction among the two variables and Personal Characteristics, and the appropriate constituent interaction terms.[24]

The simulated effects of the interactions are presented in the three panels of Fig. 6. As is evident from the similarity of the three plots—and the nearly identical slopes of each line—there is virtually no evidence that the effect of candidate personality is different for TV watchers at different levels of political awareness. Again, confidence intervals have been omitted to keep the figures uncluttered, but it is clear that television's personalizing effects are not contingent on an individual's

[23] To do so, I trichotomized the five-point political information variable by dividing it into thirds, based on the distribution. Thus, roughly one-third of respondents are defined as having low awareness, one-third are moderate, and one-third are high.

[24] I pool the observations for three reasons. First, because the data in Figs. 4 and 5 reveal no consistent time trend in the effects of TV watching or political awareness, aggregating the data for the three-way interaction does not obscure longitudinal change. Second, because the number of non-TV watchers in each election year is relatively small, the three-way interaction in any single election produces estimates that are fairly imprecise. Third, pooling the data simplifies the presentation of the results. I have also run the analysis separately for each election year and obtained the same pattern of null findings.

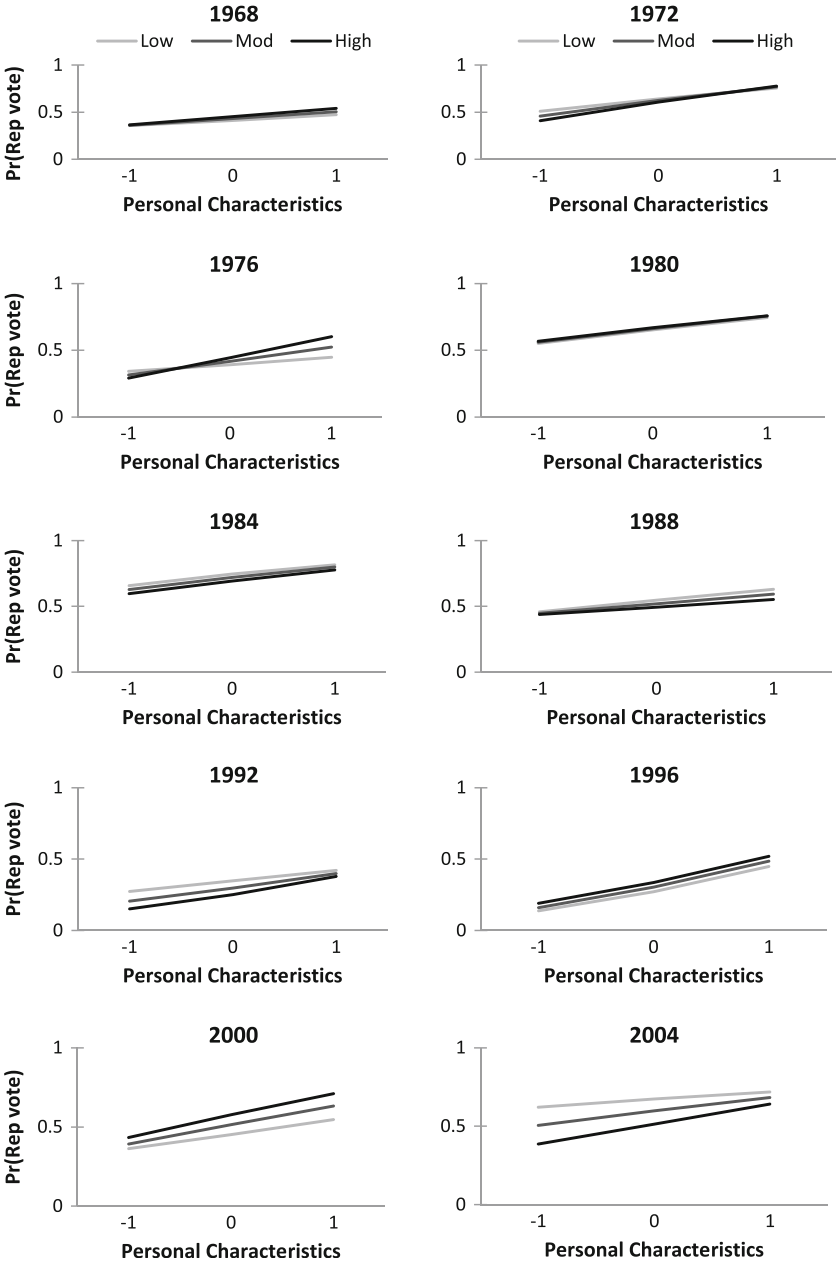


**Fig. 5** Simulations of the effects of the interaction between political awareness and perceptions of candidates' personal characteristics, 1968–2004. *Note*: Each panel presents the probability of a Republican vote based on simulations of the interaction between political awareness and perceptions of the candidates' personal characteristics. Simulations are generated from probit models, calculated using Clarify (Tomz et al. 2001)

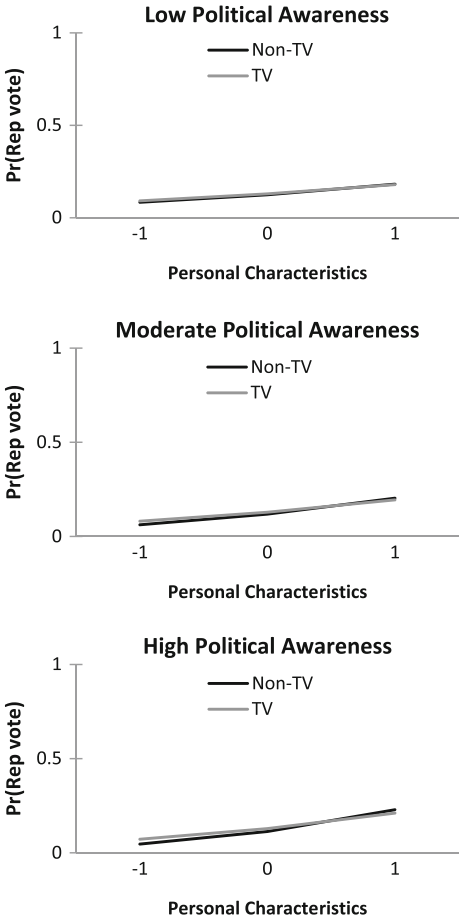


**Fig. 6** Simulations of the effects of the interaction among political awareness, TV watching, and perceptions of candidates' personal characteristics, pooled model (1968–2004), *Note*: Each panel presents the probability of a Republican vote based on simulations of the interaction among TV watching, political awareness, and perceptions of the candidates' personal characteristics. Simulations are generated from probit models, calculated using Clarify (Tomz et al. 2001)

level of political awareness or media consumption habits. Television, it seems, has simply not personalized presidential choice, regardless of who the voter is.[25]

[25] As noted earlier, political communication scholars have argued that television is not the only medium that personalizes the news (Bennett 2009). If political coverage as a whole has become increasingly personalized, then heavy news consumers—not just television viewers—would be more likely to weigh candidate attributes more heavily than citizens who are exposed to less political news. I have also explored whether heavy news consumers are more likely to base their vote choice on personal characteristics than those who pay less attention to the news. Using an NES measure that queries respondents about their use of a variety of media (NES Cumulative Data File variable VCF0728), I specified vote choice models with an interaction between the media exposure count and Personal Characteristics. Just as with the analysis of television viewers, there is no evidence that an increase in media consumption contributes to personality-based voting. I have also run the same analysis using a measure of a respondent's level of education, and again find no differences, confirming the results of Glass' (1985) work.

## An Alternative Analysis: Closed-Ended Trait Measures

Because of the concerns about the use of the open-ended likes/dislikes batteries, I ran a final set of analyses using closed-ended measures of perceptions of candidate traits from the most recent NES studies. The surveys in the 1980s began asking a series of candidate trait questions that are less reliant on a memory-based model or subject to the same concerns raised by the open-ended measures (Rahn et al. 1994). The data do not predate that decade, so any analysis can cover only an attenuated time span. Still, the 1980s marked the decade in which the "hyperconsciousness of television image making" became especially intense (Adatto 1993, p. 31), which makes the last quarter-century a useful sub-period in which to test the personalization hypothesis. If the same patterns in the 1984–2004 period are found with the closed-ended measures, that provides some added evidence for the absence of personalization.

Perceptions of candidates' personal characteristics are measured with a series of questions in which respondents are asked to rate the major party presidential candidates on a variety of traits. The questions take the following form: "Think about George W. Bush. In your opinion, does the phrase 'provides strong leadership' describe George W. Bush extremely well, quite well, not too well, or not well at all?" The format for each trait question is the same, and respondents are queried about both major party candidates. Responses range from 1 to 4, which I have recoded so that 3 represents "extremely well," and 0 represents "not well at all." Higher ratings represent more favorable assessments.

Because the particular trait measures included in the NES have fluctuated from year to year, I use only those that appeared in each of the six surveys from 1984 to 2004: "provides strong leadership," "really cares about people like me," "moral," and "knowledgeable." To create a measure of comparative candidate perception—analogous to the net likes/dislikes variables in the previous models—I subtracted the trait score a respondent assigned to the Democrat from the score for the Republican. I then summed the differences for each of the four traits to create an index ranging from −12 (the most pro-Democratic assessment) to +12 (the most pro-Republican assessment). The changes in the effect of this variable measure whether candidate personality has increased in influence since the mid 1980s.

The dependent variable in the model again is two-party vote choice, coded 1 for the Republican, 0 for the Democrat. The control variables are the same as in the previous models, with the addition of a control for a subject's issue positions.[26]

The results are presented in Table A-4 and Fig. A-1. The figure displays the effect on the probability of a respondent voting Republican of a shift from −2 to +2 on the composite trait variable for each of the six election years.[27] As before,

[26] The issue measure is a scale constructed from five questions in the NES tapping a respondent's beliefs about the government's responsibility to provide health care, jobs, and aid to blacks; whether government spending should be increased or decreased; and whether defense spending should be increased or decrease. The measure ranges from −15 to +15, with the higher scores indicating more conservative attitudes.

[27] Roughly 40% of respondents have a trait score between −2 and +2. Just as with the open-ended likes/dislikes analysis, I use this range because it represents a shift that could conceivably occur in a real campaign. Analysis of larger shifts produces no change in the longitudinal trend presented in Fig. A-1.

the differences in the coefficients are not large across time, and the personalization hypothesis again is not supported. Even in 1988, which, according to Geer's (2006) data, saw the highest proportion of trait appeals in candidate advertising in this period, the trait effect is no greater than in the less personality-focused elections.[28] Candidate traits have influenced voter choice in the last six contests, but there is no hint that the increasing image-centric nature of televised campaigns has turned presidential voting into a personality or beauty contest.[29] The analysis confirms the conclusions drawn from the results of the open-ended likes/dislikes models.[30]

## Discussion and Conclusion

Why have the advent of television and its embrace by presidential campaigns not altered the way voters make their choices? One likely explanation is that the intensification of televised politics in the last three decades has coincided with a similarly substantial reinvigoration of partisanship in the United States. Where American politics once was seen as "candidate-centered" (e.g., Wattenberg 1991), the evidence suggests that parties today are not confined to the periphery. Instead of loosening, party attachments since the 1970s have been tightening (Hetherington 2001). And while the parties' roles in campaigns have changed (Aldrich 1995), their influence on the way citizens see the political world—and, critically, candidates (Bartels 2002b)—has waxed, not waned. Evidence of this can be seen in Figs. 1 and 2, with the rise and sustainment of issue concern among voters, who may now find it easier to sort themselves into increasingly ideologically distinct parties (McCarty et al. 2006).

In a widely cited study, Bartels (2000) shows that party identification began in 1972 to exert a stronger influence on voting, a trend that continued through the 1996 presidential election. In Fig. 7, I present similar evidence, estimating from the models in Table A-3 the influence of party identification on vote choice from 1952

[28] According to my calculations from Geer's data, which stop in 1996, the proportion of trait-focused appeals in 1988 was 35%. The figure was 19% in 1984, 24% in 1992, and 20% in 1996.

[29] Even if the overall influence of traits has not grown over time, it is possible that particular traits may be more conducive to TV-based priming. To determine whether this hypothesis has merit, I ran a separate series of analyses in which I examined the effect on vote choice of respondents' perceptions of the four traits that have been asked consistently since 1984. The effects of candidate leadership, empathy ("cares about people like me"), and morality, have largely remained flat. The one exception is knowledge, which was insignificant as a predictor of vote choice in 1998, 1992, and 1996, but was significant in 2000 and 2004. One reason may be the questions raised in 2000 about George W. Bush's intelligence (Jamieson and Waldman 2003), in particular as contrasted with Al Gore's wonkishness. (Unfortunately, the NES did not ask about the candidates' honesty, a characteristic that may have had unusual influence in 2000 (Johnston et al. 2004).) But this small finding does nothing to challenge the basic results discussed in the text. It does not appear that candidate traits—even when disaggregated—have become significantly more important in presidential voting.

[30] I have also run interactive models with the closed-ended trait batteries to discern whether media usage, political awareness, or education has any influence on the use of candidate attributes as a criterion for judgment. As in the models using the open-ended likes/dislikes categories, I find no significant interactive relationships. These results are available from the author.

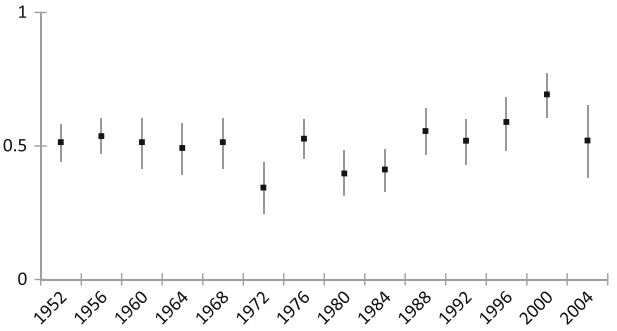


**Fig. 7** The effect of party identification on the probability of voting Republican, 1952–2004. *Note*: Each data point represents the difference in the probability of a Republican vote between a respondent in the 25th percentile of the 7-point party ID scale and a respondent in the 75th percentile. Simulations are generated from the probit models shown in Table A-3, calculated using Clarify (Tomz et al. 2001). Shaded lines are 95% confidence intervals around the estimates

through 2004. Partisanship's role in shaping voters' choices reached its nadir in 1972, but has moved upward since, reaching its peak in the 2000 campaign (though with a decline in 2004). For the last 30 years, partisanship has increasingly driven presidential voting.

In such an environment, it is not surprising that the importance to voters of candidate personality, while remaining central to campaign discourse, has not grown. Candidates' attributes are by no means irrelevant. But given the growing ideological distance between the parties, it is not stunning that little evidence exists of the kind of "personalization" of voting behavior that might have been expected in an era where television has come to dominate the media landscape. Even though candidates spend considerable time attempting to burnish their personal images, personalities mean less to voters than do party labels. The medium's power to prime candidates' personal attributes has been diluted by a rising tide of partisan politics, and perhaps by the fact that issues have continued to be a prominent feature of candidates' political advertising (Freedman et al. 2004; Gilens et al. 2007).

To be sure, television has brought about a metamorphosis in electoral politics—altering the presidential primary system (Patterson 1994), revolutionizing the way candidates campaign (West 2001), and changing the way citizens learn about politics (Prior 2007). But a fundamental reshaping of the criteria voters use in making their choices is not one of television's effects. Voters are no more likely today to mention a candidate's personality as a reason to support or oppose him than they were 50 years ago. The impact of candidate personality on vote choice remains strong, but it is not more influential than it was in the 1950s. This finding holds true for TV-watchers and non-watchers alike, as well as for individuals with varying levels of political awareness.

The absence of significant change does not diminish the significance of the results. In this case, the null finding challenges the view that electoral behavior has become increasingly dependent on a candidate's televised image. Political observers

regularly lament the influence of television on the political process, and consultants routinely are criticized for prizing charisma and character over substance, for using "calculated strategy to 'humanize' the candidate in settings that make for positive television imagery" (Witcover 1999, p. 49). Implicit in much of the criticism is that voters are being duped, voting for candidates based on their character traits or, worse, a flashy smile.

Some of the consternation appears unwarranted. Voters do care about candidate image, and electoral decision-making no doubt sits far from the ideal of democratic theory. But its shortcomings are not the product of television's personalization of the process. The origins of the votes of the U.S. electorate lie elsewhere, just as they did at the time of the writing of *The American Voter*. As they traditionally have, Americans tend to vote more for the party than the person.

**Acknowledgments** A previous version of this paper was presented at the 2007 meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association. I thank Brian Arbour, Ben Bishin, Noah Kaplan, John Sides, Mary Slosar, Jeff Stonecash, Jeremy Teigen, three anonymous reviewers, and the editors for helpful comments and suggestions.

## Appendix

**Table A-1** Codes for categorizing likes/dislikes from ANES cumulative data file

| Category | 1952–1968 | 1972–2004 |
|---|---|---|
| Personal characteristics | 22. Character and background | 22. Candidate leadership qualities |
| | 23. Personal attraction | 23. Candidate personal qualities |
| Experience | 21. Experience and abilities | 21. Candidate experience, ability |
| Issues | 24. Issues—NA whether domestic or foreign | 31. Government management |
| | | 32. Government activity/philosophy |
| | 25. Stand on domestic policies | 33. Domestic policies |
| | 26. Stand on foreign affairs | 34. Foreign policies |
| Party | 29. Candidate as party representative | 11. People within party |
| | | 12. Party characteristics |
| | | 24. Candidate party connections |
| Other | 27. Bad for/anti/keep in check/ cease favoring group or interest | 35. Group connections |
| | | 40. Miscellaneous |
| | 28. Good for/better for/help to/ made up of/fair to group or interest | 50. Events unique to one campaign |
| | 30. Other | |

1952–1968 codes refer to variables VCF0476d-VCF0480d and VCF0482d-VCF0486d

1972–2004 codes refer to variables VCF0476b-VCF0480b and VCF0482b-VCF0486b

**Table A-2** Distribution of TV watchers and non-TV watchers in the NES, 1952–2004

| | Non-TV watchers | TV watchers |
|---|---|---|
| 1952 | 48.6% (805) | 51.4% (851) |
| 1956 | 26.2% (461) | 73.8% (1,297) |
| 1960 | 12.4% (137) | 87.7% (972) |
| 1964 | 10.9% (158) | 89.1% (1,290) |
| 1968 | 10.8% (145) | 89.2% (1,196) |
| 1972 | 11.7% (131) | 88.3% (985) |
| 1976 | 11.0% (209) | 89.0% (1,698) |
| 1980 | 14.1% (198) | 85.9% (1,208) |
| 1984 | 14.0% (271) | 86.0% (1,672) |
| 1988 | n/a | n/a |
| 1992 | 11.1% (249) | 88.9% (2,000) |
| 1996 | 24.3% (372) | 75.7% (1,162) |
| 2000 | 17.2% (268) | 82.8% (1,287) |
| 2004 | 13.9% (148) | 86.1% (918) |

*Note*: Cells show the percentage (and, in parentheses, the number) of respondents reporting they had or had not seen television programs about the campaign (NES cumulative data file variable VCF0724)

**Table A-3** Full model results for the effect of open-ended likes/dislikes on probability of voting Republican

| | 1952 | 1956 | 1960 | 1964 | 1968 | 1972 | 1976 | 1980 | 1984 | 1988 | 1992 | 1996 | 2000 | 2004 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Party identification | 0.38** (0.03) | 0.39** (0.03) | 0.35** (0.04) | 0.27** (0.03) | 0.36** (0.04) | 0.26** (0.04) | 0.37** (0.03) | 0.35** (0.04) | 0.32** (0.03) | 0.38** (0.04) | 0.36** (0.04) | 0.42** (0.05) | 0.52** (0.05) | 0.37** (0.05) |
| Personal characteristics mentions | 0.18** (0.04) | 0.19** (0.04) | 0.31** (0.04) | 0.24** (0.04) | 0.20** (0.04) | 0.45** (0.06) | 0.33** (0.04) | 0.27** (0.05) | 0.26** (0.05) | 0.17** (0.05) | 0.32** (0.05) | 0.44** (0.06) | 0.36** (0.05) | 0.33** (0.06) |
| Issue mentions | 0.35** (0.06) | 0.25** (0.06) | 0.28** (0.07) | 0.34** (0.05) | 0.28** (0.05) | 0.29** (0.04) | 0.32** (0.04) | 0.33** (0.04) | 0.32** (0.03) | 0.34** (0.03) | 0.40** (0.04) | 0.41** (0.05) | 0.31** (0.04) | 0.30** (0.05) |
| Experience mentions | 0.20** (0.04) | 0.36** (0.05) | 0.39** (0.08) | 0.22** (0.07) | 0.28** (0.07) | 0.45** (0.11) | 0.30** (0.06) | 0.37** (0.08) | 0.47** (0.10) | 0.40** (0.06) | 0.39** (0.06) | 0.26** (0.09) | 0.29** (0.09) | 0.12 (0.14) |
| Party mentions | 0.39** (0.07) | 0.42** (0.07) | 0.27** (0.09) | 0.56** (0.11) | 0.23** (0.08) | 0.18 (0.11) | 0.45** (0.07) | 0.17 (0.11) | 0.56** (0.09) | 0.22** (0.07) | 0.60** (0.13) | 0.24 (0.13) | 0.26** (0.09) | 0.18 (0.19) |
| Other mentions | 0.51** (0.11) | 0.26** (0.07) | 0.21* (0.09) | 0.36** (0.07) | 0.32** (0.07) | 0.42** (0.08) | 0.32** (0.06) | 0.52** (0.11) | 0.30** (0.05) | 0.31** (0.07) | 0.30** (0.09) | 0.31** (0.08) | 0.45** (0.11) | 0.43** (0.11) |
| Education | 0.06 (0.04) | −0.00 (0.04) | 0.09* (0.04) | 0.12** (0.04) | 0.09* (0.04) | −0.08 (0.04) | 0.01 (0.03) | 0.04 (0.04) | 0.00 (0.04) | 0.01 (0.04) | −0.00 (0.04) | 0.14** (0.05) | −0.01 (0.05) | 0.00 (0.07) |
| Income | −0.06 (0.05) | 0.02 (0.05) | 0.05 (0.07) | −0.01 (0.05) | −0.17* (0.07) | 0.02 (0.06) | 0.12** (0.04) | −0.08 (0.06) | 0.10* (0.05) | −0.00 (0.05) | 0.07 (0.05) | 0.01 (0.06) | 0.06 (0.05) | 0.03 (0.06) |
| Age | 0.00 (0.00) | −0.00 (0.00) | 0.01 (0.01) | 0.01* (0.00) | 0.00 (0.00) | 0.00 (0.00) | −0.00 (0.00) | −0.00 (0.00) | −0.00 (0.00) | 0.01 (0.00) | 0.00 (0.00) | 0.00 (0.01) | 0.00 (0.00) | 0.00 (0.01) |
| White | 0.61* (0.30) | 0.08 (0.26) | 0.35 (0.29) | 0.77 (0.43) | 0.51 (0.29) | 0.70** (0.23) | 0.33 (0.19) | 0.85** (0.22) | 0.58** (0.16) | 0.65** (0.19) | 0.18 (0.17) | 0.73** (0.23) | 0.39 (0.20) | 0.49 (0.25) |
| Southern | 0.10 (0.15) | 0.08 (0.13) | 0.23 (0.16) | 0.23 (0.17) | 0.10 (0.18) | 0.49** (0.17) | 0.13 (0.13) | 0.12 (0.15) | 0.29* (0.14) | 0.42** (0.16) | 0.01 (0.14) | 0.06 (0.17) | 0.14 (0.16) | 0.13 (0.19) |
| Constant | −1.86** (0.40) | −1.26** (0.35) | −2.46** (0.50) | −2.73** (0.52) | −1.71** (0.42) | −1.43** (0.39) | −1.92** (0.31) | −1.56** (0.37) | −1.47** (0.32) | −2.43** (0.36) | −1.80** (0.35) | −3.28** (0.48) | −2.68** (0.43) | −1.96** (0.48) |
| $N$ | 1,122 | 1,214 | 850 | 1,085 | 889 | 784 | 1,258 | 808 | 1,310 | 1,105 | 1,280 | 979 | 1,023 | 683 |
| Pseudo $R^2$ | 0.57 | 0.57 | 0.61 | 0.61 | 0.62 | 0.54 | 0.58 | 0.61 | 0.68 | 0.66 | 0.73 | 0.76 | 0.73 | 0.72 |
| Log likelihood | −762.22 | −818.79 | −588.89 | −682.99 | −613.04 | −510.98 | −871.95 | −551.71 | −891.12 | −762.96 | −867.17 | −668.11 | −707.82 | −473.40 |
| $\chi^2$ | 869.69 | 928.43 | 713.12 | 836.00 | 758.14 | 552.34 | 1003.06 | 677.89 | 1216.16 | 1013.97 | 1262.21 | 1021.58 | 1030.12 | 684.41 |

Standard errors in parentheses

* Significant at 5% level; ** Significant at 1% level

**Table A-4** Full model results for the effect of closed-ended trait assessments on the probability of voting Republican, 1984–2004 (see Fig. A-1)

| | 1984 | 1988 | 1992 | 1996 | 2000 | 2004 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Party identification | 0.32*** (0.07) | 0.34*** (0.05) | 0.50*** (0.06) | 0.32*** (0.05) | 0.41*** (0.07) | 0.33*** (0.07) |
| Trait index | 0.40*** (0.06) | 0.44*** (0.05) | 0.39*** (0.04) | 0.40*** (0.04) | 0.40*** (0.06) | 0.37*** (0.06) |
| Issue scale | 0.05 (0.03) | 0.06*** (0.02) | 0.04 (0.02) | 0.08*** (0.02) | 0.03 (0.03) | 0.08** (0.03) |
| Education | −0.12 (0.09) | −0.00 (0.06) | −0.02 (0.05) | 0.09 (0.06) | 0.13 (0.09) | 0.02 (0.10) |
| Income | 0.12 (0.10) | −0.07 (0.07) | −0.06 (0.07) | −0.06 (0.07) | 0.01 (0.08) | 0.02 (0.08) |
| Age | 0.01 (0.01) | 0.00 (0.01) | 0.00 (0.01) | 0.01 (0.01) | 0.03** (0.01) | −0.00 (0.01) |
| White | 0.54 (0.33) | 0.53 (0.27) | 0.22 (0.25) | 0.85** (0.31) | −0.10 (0.33) | 0.36 (0.35) |
| Southern | 0.33 (0.29) | 0.10 (0.22) | −0.08 (0.20) | 0.14 (0.19) | 0.17 (0.28) | 0.31 (0.28) |
| Constant | −2.91** (0.89) | −2.84*** (0.58) | −3.29*** (0.56) | −4.98*** (0.76) | −3.91*** (0.93) | −3.24*** (0.80) |
| *N* | 392 | 663 | 792 | 712 | 373 | 462 |
| Pseudo $R^2$ | 0.69 | 0.70 | 0.76 | 0.74 | 0.72 | 0.77 |
| Log likelihood | −261.29 | −455.31 | −537.58 | −493.18 | −258.51 | −320.08 |
| $\chi^2$ | 362.92 | 633.56 | 820.30 | 729.64 | 372.52 | 495.47 |

Standard errors in parentheses

* Significant at 5% level; ** Significant at 1% level

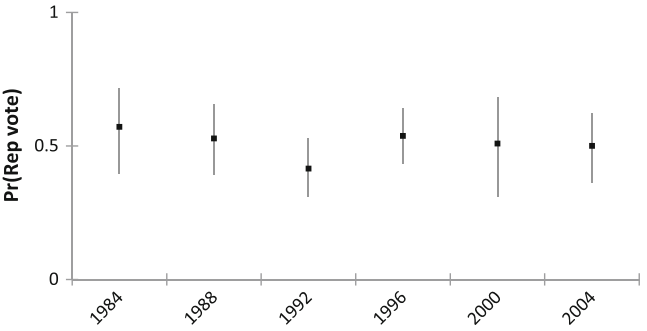


**Fig. A-1** The effect of candidate trait assessments on the probability of voting Republican, 1984–2004, closed-ended trait measures. *Note*: Each data point represents the difference in the probability of a Republican vote between a respondent with a score of −2 and +2 on the composite closed-ended trait measure. Simulations are generated from the probit models shown in Table A-4, calculated using Clarify (Tomz et al. 2001). Shaded lines are 95% confidence intervals around the estimates

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