Rhetoricizing Habermas: The Restoration of Legitimacy as a Theme in the 1992 Televised Presidential Debates.

Kevin Travis Jones

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RHETORICIZING HABERMAS: THE RESTORATION OF LEGITIMACY AS A THEME IN THE 1992 TELEvised PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Speech Communication

by

Kevin Travis Jones
B.A., Biola University, 1981
M.A., California State University, Fullerton, 1987
December, 1995
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ABSTRACT

During the past twenty years, scholars have posited the emergence of a legitimacy crisis in the American political system. Symptoms of the crisis were low voter turnout and a culture of withdrawal, cynicism, alienation, and a widespread perception of institutional incompetence and indifference. At the very least, the widespread mood of apathy and decline have been seized upon by various candidates seeking political office, in particular the presidency, who routinely engage in discourse targeting legitimacy restoration. This discourse echoed the general theme of the Jeffersonian Myth. This myth, which predates Jefferson in its old Roman roots, targets the citizen as the primary source of political power and moral authority.

Working from Habermas' writings regarding legitimacy crises and his ideal speech situation, this study developed three legitimacy topoi which were used as a critical method for understanding candidate discourse. These topoi were used to explore the discourse of the 1992 televised presidential debates. The debates were selected because of their economy of statements and voter impact, and because legitimacy had become a central theme of the 1992 elections.

The study found that the third party candidate indicted the legitimacy of the system and argued for restoration far more than the other two candidates. The
incumbent used legitimacy appeals the least. The exhaling Democratic challenger affirmed and vilified the legitimacy of the government showing that rhetorical strategy and logic do not always coincide.
CHAPTER ONE
THE CRISIS OF LEGITIMACY IN THE AMERICAN POLITICAL ORDER

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation deals with two subjects that have become increasingly related in scholarly literature: public debate and political legitimacy. In recent years political communication scholars as ideologically diverse as Kathleen Jamieson and J. Michael Hogan have lamented the death of genuine civic discourse. According to these scholars citizen deliberation has been replaced by media coverage of spin doctors and campaign managers. Extended argument and exposition has been replaced by advertising slogans, images, and sound bites. Polling has replaced public opinion. Further, they argue that commentary by journalists has preempted public discussion. Finally, they conclude that the vast bulk of citizenry have been shut out of meaningful participation in the political process. The dominance of mediated communication and the intersection of politics, marketing and advertising has threatened the legitimacy of the American political system, whose mandate to act rests upon the perception of the participation of the people and the expression of their will.

Since many scholars see the threat to political legitimacy as a communication problem, they seek answers in terms of improved communication. Their solutions are diverse, but they usually feature some means of directly
involving citizenry in discussion or presenting the candidates in ways that subvert mediated formats and minimize the selective power of mass advertising and marketing. Hence it is no surprise that several of these same scholars should endorse some form of presidential debate as a vehicle for restoring political legitimacy. Despite heavy broadcast mediation political debating remains closer to the old ideals of civic discourse than any of the newer formats; it features rationality, extended argument, and open competition before an audience that appears to act in judgement.

This dissertation wishes to explore the connection between political legitimacy and debate in an even more organic way. It is a common place that presidential candidates are also knowledgeable about and sensitive to the perception of a crisis in political legitimacy. As early as 1976 the restoration of legitimacy became a major theme in President Carter's town meetings and "spontaneous visits" outside Washington. Carter professed to enjoy getting away from the experts of the capital in order to draw wisdom and virtue from the people. Accordingly, this dissertation proposes to study the attempts to restore legitimacy by analyzing the communication behavior of candidates within presidential debates.
RISE OF DEBATES

In 1960, the first televised presidential debate took place between John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon. Sixteen years would pass before the American electorate would witness televised presidential debates again. Since 1976, however, televised presidential debates have become a regular part of the presidential election process. The U.S. electorate has witnessed televised debates between presidential hopefuls in 1976, 1980, 1984, 1988, and most recently in 1992. While each series of debates has differed in number, format, participants, and content, one consistent fact regarding televised presidential debates has emerged - they are an expected part of the election process. As early as 1986, with few televised debates having yet taken place, Auer (1986) stated that "the public has grown to expect candidates . . . to engage in debates" (p. 216). Six years later Friedenberg (1994) wrote of the developing presidential debate tradition: "Debates have become an expected feature of our presidential elections" (p. 239). Jamieson and Birdsell (1988) noted that debates are more than just "expected" and

---

1The total number of televised debates in each election have ranged from 4 debates in 1960, 3 in 1976, only 1 debate in 1980, 2 in 1984, 2 in 1988, and 3 in 1992.

2Formats have ranged through the years from a single moderator, to a panel of journalists asking questions, to a town hall meeting with citizens asking "anything goes" questions.
have come to play a major role in election campaigns:

"Debate" has become a buzzword for serious politics . . . when debates are announced, movement in the polls slows, in anticipation, the electorate suspends its willingness to be swayed by ads and news. (p. 5-6)

Further, Jamieson and Birdsell contend that the increase in debate popularity and the documented effect on voters demonstrates that they have become the single most significant event of the presidential campaign.

LEGITIMACY CRISIS

Crisis Emerges

At least since Watergate, political leaders have been developing a legitimacy rhetoric, replete with vilification and warnings. On July 15, 1979, President Jimmy Carter delivered a dramatic television Jeremiad to the American people on the subject of the energy crisis. After a brief technical exposition, he expanded the scope of his topic and drew attention to "a subject even more serious than energy or inflation. . . a fundamental threat to American democracy." That threat, he said, was a "crisis of confidence that strikes at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will." He pointed to a growing disrespect for government and emphasized that "the gap between our citizens and our government has never been so wide" (Lipset & Schneider, 1987, p. 13). In his address, President Carter referred to a legitimacy crisis in the American political system which had been growing for the
past twenty years. Lane (1965) explained that between the mid 1930's and 1965, with the growing prosperity and an increase in the proportion of the population that had completed high school or had gone on to college, more and more Americans said they liked their society and believed its political system was honest, effective, and responsive. However, between 1965 and 1980, Watergate, the deep division over Vietnam that ended in ignominious defeat, the constant scandals, the perception of governmental incompetence on the one hand and intrusive governmental intervention on the other, the decline of real wages, and the end of the social contract, led to a crisis of confidence in the state. However, while they assigned material cause to the decline of legitimacy, ordinary Americans defined the symptoms of decline and the solutions to the problem in terms of exclusivity and of closed communication behavior. Lipset and Schneider (1987) identified the rise in discontent through a series of extensive interviews and questions. The authors noted that from 1964 to 1970, the percentage of Americans who felt that "the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves rather than for the benefit of all the people" increased from 29 to 50 percent (p. 16). Support for the comment "people like me don't have any say about what the government does" rose from 36 percent in 1970 to 45 percent in 1978 (p. 16). When asked
the question "over the years, how much attention do you feel the government pays to what the people think when it decided to do something?" those citizens who responded "A good deal of the time" declined from 32 percent in 1964 to 11 percent in 1974, and those responding "Not much" increased from 24 percent in 1964 to 28 percent in 1974 (p. 24). The authors reported that in the fall of 1980, the highest level of mistrust appeared with an average of 67 percent -- that is two out of every three Americans -- who distrusted the government (p. 18).

Yankelovich (1977) provided similar data and arguments regarding the distrust of the government by the public. Yankelovich explained:

We have seen a steady rise of mistrust in our national institutions. Trust in government declined dramatically from almost 80 percent in the late 1950's to about 33 percent in 1976. More than 80 percent of voters say they do not trust those in positions of leadership as much as they used to. In the mid-60's a one-third minority reported feeling isolated and distant from the political process; by the mid 1970's a two-thirds majority felt what they thought "really doesn't count." Approximately three out of five people feel the government suffers from a concentration of too much power in too few hands, and fewer than one out of five feel that congressional leaders can be believed. (p. 2-3)

Voter Discontent

One index of discontent is silence; another index is withdrawal. Evidence of the voters feelings of powerlessness is documented by their absence from the
ballot box. From 1958 to 1992, voter turnout at the polls had steadily declined with only 50 percent of Americans of voting age casting a vote in the 1988 presidential election (Pear 1992, B4). Dionne (1991) opined that the distrust of government is so severe that Americans have grown to "hate politics":

Over the past three decades, the faith of the American people in their democratic institutions has declined, and Americans have begun to doubt their ability to improve the world through politics. Americans view politics with boredom and detachment. For most of us, politics is increasingly abstract, a spectator sport barely worth watching. Election campaigns generate less excitement than ever . . . Voters doubt that elections give them any real control over what the government does, and half of them don't bother to cast ballots. (p. 10)

The political system is viewed as causing more strife and divisiveness then it solves. Dionne (1991) stated:

Americans hate politics as it is now practiced because we have lost all sense of the public good. Over the last thirty years, politics has stopped being a deliberative process through which people resolved disputes, found remedies and moved forward. (p. 332)

Rising voter discontent over the past three decades has been caused by the belief that American political institutions are less competent then formerly believed. Voters believe that the government is not providing services with the resources it consumes. However, as incidents such as the increase in crime and violence in the country, the unstable economy, and the growing number of corrupt politicians increase, voters no longer believe
that the political institution is looking out for their good and making their lives better. The public wants a political system that is committed to the public good. Dionne (1991) explained: "In the 1990's Americans are seeking a politics that restores a sense of public enterprise and mutual obligation" (p. 334). Finally, the unique American faith in problem solving seems abated. Many no longer believe questions of race, poverty, and social order will ever be "solved" or even meliorated.

The decline in public confidence of the government, combined with voter apathy at the ballot box, has led many scholars to argue that the American political system is facing a legitimacy crisis of substantial proportions. Lipset and Schneider (1987) argued that the crisis exists as a result of a damaged system. The authors contend:

Implicit in the decline of public confidence is a potential crisis of legitimacy. Severe critics of the American system believe that the decline in public support for government is a manifestation of a much deeper loss of institutional legitimacy that has resulted from basic flaws in the structure of our society. (p. 375)

The major thinker who coined the phrase, Jurgen Habermas (1973a), has argued that the United States government is merely suffering from the common disease of the West, a crisis of legitimacy. Earlier than most intellectuals, Habermas linked the fragmentation of popular culture with the seizure of governance by professional elites (marketing, advertising, law, etc.) and the rise of mass
communication as the triple pillars of the assault on legitimacy.

Dye (1990) noted that "legitimacy is a belief that a system of decision making is 'right,' or 'proper,' or 'just,' and therefore, one is morally obligated to accept its decisions" (p. 3). Thus, if more and more American citizens see the political "system" of the United States as being uninterested in what the people think and that most politicians are self-serving, then they no longer believe the system is "right" or "just." Habermas (1984) explained that a "crisis suggests the notion of an objective power depriving a subject of part of his normal sovereignty" (p. 134). His diagnosis of the American case follows: The U.S. public views the government -- in conjunction with media consultants and political professionals -- as depriving them of their normal sovereignty -- a democratic system designed to be controlled by the people -- resulting in a legitimacy crisis for the American political system.

Jeffersonian Myth

Much of our sense of what is right and good (legitimate) is embodied in our cultural myths. Those myths act as morals exemplars, embodying communed order in a form that is coherent and dramatic. Thus, this crisis can be understood in terms of the folk myth that undergirds the principles upon which the Constitution of the United States was drafted. The American public believes that they
elect representatives to office who will serve as agents of
the community. The welfare and moral ethos of the people
is supposed to guide their decisions and may be withdrawn
periodically. Lipset and Schneider (1987) identified the
source of this mandate: "The great majority of Americans
still adhere to views that can be traced to the Founding
Fathers and to events surrounding the creation of the
Republic" (p. 5). Because of the extensive role of Thomas
Jefferson in the framing of the Declaration of
Independence, the myth of the Democratic process of
representation by the people is often referred to as
"Jeffersonian ideology." Thomas Jefferson's Agrarian myth
articulated the ideal political process. Citizen farmers
discuss local problems, frame them through their
spokesperson who takes them to Congress for further
deliberation and action. The citizen originates and
initiates while government reacts and serves. Koch (1976)
noted that Jeffersonian ideology is based upon "the
principle that ultimate power, decision, and control should
belong to the people" (p. 43). And it is the hallmark of
democracy that all power not ultimately located in or
delegated by the people is illegitimate. Peterson (1976)
further explained:

Its primary purpose [Democratic governance]
was to secure individuals in their natural
rights and thereby to liberate them for action
in society . . . Government should be absorbed
into society, becoming truly self-government.
(p. 20)
Since the Constitution was framed, the Jeffersonian myth has created the expectation of a social contract between the people and the elected officials that the will of the people should dictate the public agenda. In recent decades, the public no longer believes that "their will" generates political action or that politicians even feel accountable to their needs. Consequently, the myth has been challenged, the social contract broken, and with it the weakening of institutional legitimacy.

Voters no longer feel assured that the government is an extension of their will, but they have become a resource base of an unaccountable government. However, despite this perception of a reversal of roles, the public still clings to a restoration of the myth. The original system remains the norm, yet despite its gold standard stature it is simply being ignored by corrupt and power hungry politicians. Lipset and Schneider (1987) explained: "Americans still believe in the legitimacy and vitality of the American system. What bothers the public is the apparent growth of concentrations of power and the cynical, self-interested abuse of power by government officials" (p. 409). The power of the political system has corrupted the elected officials and made them an elite group of "insiders" who claim to know what the people need. Kateb (1984) noted: "In the background of the legitimacy crisis is the theory of democratic elitism" (p. 185). Elected
officials become the elite, the insiders, who believe that democracy is best when many do not participate and the true democrats are the few upon whom democracy rests. Ironically, voter apathy at the ballot box feeds the elitist theory. It also reduces the perception of legitimacy by reducing voter participation.

**Political Rationality**

The legitimacy crisis presents an exigence for any potential elected official, and especially for the presidential hopeful who must gain the trust of the American public. Candidates must achieve political legitimacy to pacify voter discontent. Political legitimacy is achieved when the candidate can establish a relationship with the electorate which demonstrates a commitment to the Jeffersonian myth. Barker (1990) explained: "Political legitimacy is defined as an historically observable set of justified relationships rather than a normatively awarded status" (p. 29). The candidate must eschew the image of elitism and create the image of an amicable relationship. As Barker (1990) has opined, "The conduct of government cannot be separated, though it may be distinguished, from that of those who are governed. Legitimate government is a relationship between state and subjects" (p. 2). Political legitimacy is achieved, therefore, when the candidate can convince the electorate that he/she is one of the people and will uphold...
the social contract of the Jeffersonian myth. Candidates must also possess a working knowledge of the political system into which they wish to be elected. The candidate must possess the expert knowledge of the political elite, but must be able to convey that knowledge to the general public without appearing to be a member of the elite. That is, the candidate must attempt to educate and empower the public and he/she must elucidate terms of accountability (i.e. at what point will a goal be achieved or a need addressed?). The candidate must develop what I will call a discourse of "political rationality." I derive this term from previous research in which former politicians' abilities to communicate "expert" scientific information to the lay electorate has been referred to as "technical rationality". This study of televised debates examines the merger of two similar principles -- the political expert, with the lay electorate. Thus the term "political rationality" is appropriate. Political rationality attempts to express the communication norms of the Jeffersonian myth, thereby attempting to restore political legitimacy for the candidate.

STUDY QUESTION

The subject of legitimacy predates Habermas. Like so many enduring concepts it was pioneered by the great

sociologist Max Weber⁴. Despite its long history, however, it appears to have assumed a special importance today. Although scholars like Kenneth Cmiel (1990) assert that political legitimacy has been declining through the rise of scientific elites and the populist attack on citizenship for more than 100 years, and while Richard Davis (1994) lays the blame on the media as recent destroyers of civic discourse, there is a growing scholarly consensus that political legitimacy (its apparent decline and its possible restoration) is a central issue of our time because it is probably a result of a vast congeries of causes and related as much to urbanization and economics as to perceived failure of political behavior.

I will argue in this dissertation that legitimacy, long a significant theme in American politics, achieved central importance in the 1992 election. So constant were messages concerning the loss of institutional legitimacy and promises of its restoration that legitimacy could be said to be the "representative anecdote" of the campaign. In Kenneth Burke's (1945) typology, the promise of perceived legitimacy repeated in many contexts would form a "text" or an admonitory representative anecdote⁵. This


admonitory text would give us a warning and a call to return government accountability to the will of the people. Accordingly, this dissertation has taken as its central task the study of the rhetorical construction of legitimacy among the three principle candidates: Incumbent (George Bush), Challenger (Bill Clinton) and Outsider (Ross Perot). The campaign created a hermeneutic struggle over the saliency and substance of the time. Further, a careful study of competing messages will tell much about the rhetorical skill of the candidates and, beyond that, the ways in which a dominant text affected the presentation of presidential image and the format and stylization of presidential issues.

I will argue the most economical way of studying the campaign text is through the televised presidential debates, a format seen by Kathleen Jamieson and James Birdsell as a vehicle through which civic discourse, having legitimacy, might be increased. The debates provide a unique opportunity to compare the legitimacy of rhetorical construction strategies of each candidate in a single forum. The debates also represent a direct clash of messages and ideas. The candidates are forced in the debates to define issues and give their fullest exposition of their positions. The debates also provide the most coherent look at the rival images of the candidates as well as insight into how direct conflict defines the candidates'
images. Finally, the debates allow for the distillation of each candidate's basic defining messages.

THE 1992 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Unique Campaign

The 1992 presidential campaign warrants examination because of the significant impact which the election had upon the American political process. Unique campaign events and fluid polls encouraged rhetorical experiments in abundance in the 1992 election. First, an Independent candidate, Ross Perot, who claimed that he was running for the presidency only because he had been placed on the ballot by the American people, dropped out of the race in July, and returned to the race in October, just one month prior to the election. While his actions would normally be considered political suicide, Perot was still able to collect 19 percent of the popular vote.

In addition to the Perot factor, the electorate appeared both confused and disillusioned by their options. Prysby and Scavo (1993) explained this disillusionment:

Public opinion polls conducted in June [of 1992] showed that none of the candidates was a clear favorite. Each of the three [candidates] had between one-fourth and one-third of the electorate preferring him, depending on the poll. At least one poll had Perot first and Clinton third while another poll had Clinton first and Bush last. (p. 4)

Past Voting Trends

A prevailing scholarly portrait of the American voter is that he/she is poorly informed and apathetic. In
addition, voters are said to feel shut out of participation. As in earlier elections, the prognosis for voter turn out looked grim. According to Sundquist (1987) the prior patterns of voter apathy could be accounted for in this way:

About 38 percent of American citizens are "core" or regular voters for major national and state office; another 17 percent or so are marginals who come to the polls only when stimulated by the dramas of presidential campaign politics; and 45 percent are more or less habitual nonvoters. (p. 98)

Jamieson and Birdsell (1988) expressed similar concern regarding voter apathy trends in former elections:

The United States hovers near the bottom when its voter turnout is compared to that of other developed countries . . . In 1984, for example, 44.8 percent of the citizens of voting age opted to let others decide whether Mondale or Reagan would inhabit the White House in 1985. (p. 178)

Pear (1992) noted that 50 percent of the electorate stayed away from the election booth in 1988 (p. B4). But 1992 was to be different. The legitimacy crisis became a central theme of campaign discourse, and perhaps because of this, the long term decline was reversed.

1992 Voter Turnout

Given the dissatisfaction of candidate choice by the electorate as early as June, combined with the history of low voter turn out, a prediction might have seemed justified that the 1992 presidential election would draw few voters to the ballot box. The exact opposite took
place. As Pear (1992) observed, "55 percent of the voting age population cast a presidential ballot" ending a 30 year decline in presidential election voter turn out (p. B4). An election which appeared headed for disaster at the ballot box, attracted voters quite successfully.

The large voter turnout placed Bill Clinton in the White House. Clinton won 43 percent of the popular vote to Bush's 38 percent and Perot's 19 percent (New York Times, November 5, 1992, p. B4). While Clinton "won" the election, Prysby and Scavo (1993) argued that his victory was slightly tainted when compared to the 1988 election where Dukakis lost the election but still carried 46 percent of the popular vote. Political pundits are quick to cite the presence of Ross Perot as the reason for the low victory percentage. Post election polls, however, challenge this argument. A general election exit poll conducted on November 3, 1992 by Voter Research and Surveys indicated that the Perot voters would have split evenly between Clinton and Bush if Perot had not been in the race. Prysby and Scavo (1993) noted that if the vote for Clinton and Bush was recalculated as a percentage of the two-party vote (i.e. exclude the Perot vote) Clinton received 53 percent of the two party vote to Bush's 47 percent. The

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The authors note, however, that the electoral college vote count was more decisive. Clinton captured 370 of the 538 electoral college votes. Bush won the remaining 168 votes, as Perot failed to carry a single state. (p. 9)
presence of Ross Perot in the election did not necessarily place Clinton in the White House as many political critics claimed.

The 1992 presidential election contained some of the most unique variables in U.S. presidential election history. The American voter went from dissatisfied with their choices, to engaging in the largest voter turn out in 30 years for a presidential election. Of the many variables involved in this unique election, the televised presidential debates served as one of the most important influences in the entire election.

THE 1992 TELEVISIONED PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

Influence Upon Voters

The 1992 televised debates had a significant impact upon the campaign efforts by each candidate. CBS election coverage on November 3, 1992 reported that of all the possible influences on voters decisions, the presidential debates were the most important element. Researchers Sandell, Mattley, Evarts, Langel, and Ziyati (1993) agreed with the findings in the CBS report. In their study of the impact of the 1992 debates upon the electorate, the authors reported that when asked what influenced their decision in selecting a candidate, the most often cited response by voters was the economy (the central focus of all three debates) with the second most mentioned influence being the actual debates (p. 16-17).
The influence of the 1992 debates upon the overall election is quite noteworthy since the 1960 debates are the only other series of televised presidential debates to receive similar recognition. While the full extent and exact role the 1960 debates played in the election are subject to dispute, Windt (1994) has claimed that "the belief that without the debates Kennedy could not have won has been firmly established" (p. 1). Neither the 1976, 1980, 1984, nor the 1988 televised presidential debates have attracted similar notoriety.

Large Numbers of Voters Who Watched Debates

The 1992 televised presidential debates also received a great deal of attention from the electorate. According to Carmody (1992), there was a significant increase in debate viewers over past televised debates: the first 1992 debate was viewed by 81 million people and the second debate increased to 93 million viewers. This was a substantial increase over the 1988 debates where only 74 million viewers watched the first debate, dropping down, to 72 million viewers for the second debate (p. D1, D3).

The viewers of the 1992 debates watched with a specific agenda. Since television had brought the election into their homes and had made the candidates more personal, the members of the electorate turned to personal character traits as the overriding criteria for candidate selection. Sandell et al. (1993) noted that when asked what they were
looking for in a candidate, voters leading response was personal qualities or attributes (p. 18). Winkler and Black (1993) explained that the most frequently mentioned reasons for determining winners . . . of the [first] October 11 presidential debate were confidence, presence, honesty and trustworthiness (p. 84). All of the mentioned criteria are personal character qualities and attributes. Russakoff and Morin (1992) argued the increased emphasis upon candidate character and personal attributes by the electorate when they provided one viewer's response to the debates as "I'd like a deep feeling in my heart that I could trust somebody - that the person I vote for, they'll do good for this country" (p. A1). The electorate was clearly looking for a candidate who was a human being first and a politician second. They wanted a president who would give them an "image of themselves." The centrality of the debates as a source of influence and the voter concern with trust argue for the importance this sample of discourse is as an object of analysis. First, they were the single most important source of voter information. Second, they contained appeals about the restoration of trust for an audience dispelled to seek out trust.

DEBATES AND THE POLITICAL PROCESS

Candidate Image

Candidate image has become the most powerful influence in presidential elections for two reasons: 1) public
involvement in the election process, and 2) the growing role of the media. Prior to 1832, members of the Electoral College were selected by members of Congress or elected through a state district plan. Since 1832, however, all members of the Electoral College have been elected by popular vote (McClure 1905). As a result, the Electoral College has become more reflective of the popular vote and has gradually changed the character of presidential campaigns. Since the president is elected by both the Electoral College and the popular vote, candidates must pay close attention to the desires of the people.

In addition to the influence of public involvement in the election process, the importance of candidate image has been affected by the growing role of the media. Media involvement in early presidential elections was limited to newspapers and periodicals. Campaign rhetoric was often printed in newspapers and debated by surrogates. Presidential candidates seldom debated an opponent publicly, and were rarely seen by large numbers of people. The candidates' platform and ideas were widely discussed without the candidate ever having met most of the general public. His communication behavior and personal style remained largely unknown. However, the introduction of the electronic media altered that focus. Campaign speeches over the radio brought a human voice and glimpses of his personality to the minds of each listener. As television
usage increased in political campaigns, a candidate's physical characteristics affected the candidate's image for the public. When presidential debates made their way onto the television screen, candidate image quickly overshadowed even the most important campaign issues. Televised debates brought each presidential candidate directly into the homes of the electorate. Even the most politically uninformed person was now able to evaluate and assess each candidate on the one thing that most individuals felt confident in assessing, personality. Lanoue and Schrott (1991) explained:

> In reality, [televised debate] viewers are far more likely to use debates to gain insight into each candidate's personality and character. A superior 'personal' presentation appears to be more important to voters than accumulation of issue-oriented debating points. (p. 96)

Thus the old indices of issues and personal style were reversed, a candidate's personality became an important basis upon which the electorate determined whether or not an individual was presidential material. Jamieson (1987) argued that as a result of this media-driven shift in voter priorities, the image of the candidate has become the litmus test for most voters. The author explained:

> "Speaker image becomes central to the assessment of viewer response. So central in fact that one can say the candidate image is the issue in the campaign, the one and only criterion every American voter feels qualified to apply" (p. 74). Consequently, as Ansolabehere, Behr, and
Iyengar (1993) have argued, "a politicians' ability to govern is increasingly intertwined with his or her public image" (p. 125)

**Candidate Personality**

What are the constituents of the newly important image? As voters evaluate candidates based upon image, personality traits such as honesty, warmth, and caring become central criteria for candidate selection. Leo (1984) discovered that "the communication of 'warm feelings' is three to four times more powerful than traditional candidate preference criteria such as party identification or issues" (p. 37). The electorates' "feelings" dictate decisions. Keeter (1987) explained: "Citizens may be forced to 'vote by feeling' because they feel they lack adequate information in an atomized political system and the search for 'truth' becomes a search for 'trust'" (p. 356). Scholars see this focus on emotion and personality as signs of the pathology of discourse. If no attempt is made to educate the voter, the voter will not participate in a meaningful way. And there are other problems with image politics. Candidate "trust" can be quickly violated as the electorate discovers that political campaigns and political governance can be two different issues. What candidates say, or the image they portrayed to gain the trust of the electorate, can often be abandoned by candidates out of necessity to function within
the political system to which they were elected. As a result, voters develop a distrust for the entire American political process, something very vital to the democratic system. Finally, excessively mediated communication will continue to keep them out of the process and even of expressing their alienation.

**Viewers Opinions Of Winners And Losers**

The results of the debates indicated that no single candidate was able to persuade the electorate that they were the consistent winner of all three debates. Table 1 shows the discrepancy in whom viewers determined to be the winner of each debate (Hahn 1994 pp. 194-207).

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<th>Debate 1</th>
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<th>Debate 3</th>
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<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>58%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perot</td>
<td>47%</td>
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Perot was clearly perceived to be the winner of the first debate. Clinton, however, made a substantial jump in the polls to win the second debate. Bush was able to use the third debate to improve upon his rating from the first two debates. However, Bush still scored poorly in all three debates. If any conclusions can be drawn from the debate results, it is that Bush performed poorly in all three debates.

It is not, however, the purpose of this dissertation to determine the "winner" of the debates in any traditional
sense. The debates are a particularly ideal format for studying legitimacy appeals. First, the campaign is comprehensive and offers a comparison of all three candidates across all major issues. Second, the campaign offers a distillation of the messages and hence of the primary legitimation strategies of the candidates. Third, the debate not only features explicit attempts at the restoration of legitimacy but the implicit appeals - those that are embedded in the exposition of issues, analysis of solutions, and the refutation of counter proposals by the candidates.

STUDY SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of the results of a study of this nature are numerous. First, a better understanding of the contemporary meaning and experience of political legitimacy can be determined. Second, the status of the clash between expert and Jeffersonian dialogue can be determined. Third, the outcome of this struggle has important consequences for our political system and our image of America as a polity. Fourth, as a result of the validation and support of the methodological criteria used in the study, critics are provided with additional tools for assessing future televised debates. With a wider and much stronger repertoire of critical filters to use, researchers can better isolate and critique those variables unique to their specific study. The larger selection of filters will
result in better and more complete studies of televised debates. As a result of better studies, a better understanding of the phenomenon of presidential elections will transpire.

Fifth, political pundits and consultants will have an increased knowledge base to work from when preparing future political candidates. Prior knowledge of what constitutes an effective debate in the minds of the electorate will allow campaign strategists to prepare candidates for those debates.

The final benefit of a study of this nature is that voters can become more critical and informed decision makers while engaging in the political process. The inoculation of the electorate regarding candidate strategies allows for greater listener discernment when watching televised debates. Increased knowledge in potential candidate tricks or event manipulation will allow the voter to have a better informed, much more intelligent assessment of the debate as well as the overall election process.

STUDY OUTLINE

Chapter one of this study has provided an overview of the current legitimacy crisis in the American political system. The use of "political rationality" as an ideal type of discourse reflecting Jeffersonian political ideology was described and argued to constitute a set of
discourse categories through which the 1992 televised debates could be evaluated. The significance of the study was also argued.

Chapter two will explain the larger rhetorical form in which the appeals are elucidated. It will acquaint the reader with the rhetorical form in which the legitimacy appeals are embedded. Accordingly it will present a general overview of relevant scholarly literature regarding televised presidential debates. The literature which will be reviewed will include research regarding physical delivery, the effects of television coverage on debates, arguments that debates are not true debates, content analysis of several debates, and the formation of issues and images in televised debates.

Chapter three will provide a much more detailed examination of how televised debates function in presidential election campaigns and how their enactment is related to legitimacy. The expected nature of debates, the impact of debates upon elections, the effects of televised debates upon voters, the effects of journalist's comments on perceived debate outcome, the negative effects of debates upon political campaigns, and the overall effects of debates on elections will be reviewed.

Chapter four will outline a critical filter for this study based upon Habermas's theory of legitimacy crisis and its application to rhetoric. A set of legitimacy topoi,
derived from Habermas' ideal speech situation, will be introduced and explained.

Chapter five will provide an analysis of the attempts at political rationality by the candidates in the 1992 televised presidential debates in order to restore legitimacy.

Chapter six will evaluate the rhetorical constructs of legitimacy and determine its effects upon the 1992 election and its legacy for subsequent political elections.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have proposed a study of political rationality in the 1992 televised presidential debates. This proposal was precipitated by an explanation of the significant influence which the 1992 televised debates had upon the 1992 presidential election. A brief outline/summary of each of the five chapters were presented to provide a brief theoretical overview of the study. Finally, several future benefits and contributions to political communication research resulting from this study were provided to identify the potential significance for a study of this nature. In the next chapter, I will review relevant literature regarding televised presidential debates. From this review, a framework for the study of televised presidential debates will be established.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE
INTRODUCTION

As I noted in Chapter One, some scholars see the mere staging of debates as a step toward the restoration of legitimacy. Thus, it is important to situate this form in contemporary political discourse as an established genre before going on to analyze legitimacy appeals embedded in particular specimens of discourse. Further, before examining the 1992 televised presidential debates (a micro perspective), the role of televised debates in all presidential elections (a macro perspective) warrants attention. An understanding of the macro research, will provide the foundation for the proposed micro study. Chapter two will review literature pertaining to televised debates as a genre. Chapter three will examine the effects debates have had upon past presidential elections.

Since 1960, televised presidential debates have attracted the attention of communication researchers from a wide variety of areas. In this review of literature, the areas of research have been categorized according to the following divisions: Physical Delivery, Role of Television Coverage, The Debates as "Debates", Content Analysis, and Image-Issue formation. The research in each of the categories will be reviewed and interpreted with regards to their overall contribution to the understanding of
televised presidential debates. The studies are predominately technical. That is, they are concerned with matters such as speaker effectiveness or audience retention. However, some studies are concerned with philosophical matters of governance. All in all, the literature provides a firm foundation for the present study, one that lies at the intersection of rhetorical practice and civic ideology.

PHYSICAL DELIVERY

Beginning with the 1960 televised presidential debates between John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon, communication scholars paid close attention to the effect of physical delivery particularly as it related to dimensions of competence and trust. Powell (1968) noted that Kennedy spent a great deal of time working on his delivery skills prior to the debate, taking voice and speaking lessons to learn diaphragmatic breathing (p. 59). A skilled college debater (Nixon 1978 p. 150) Nixon prepared for the debates to a lesser extent. Speaking styles also received attention. The works of Highlander & Watkins (1962) represents an example of this research:

Nixon was more controlled in his style and delivery. Speaking at a slower rate than his opponent, Nixon did not strive deliberately for figurative style where Kennedy did. Nixon was sincere and straightforward, but not very inspiring. Nixon spoke more directly to the cameras and thus had more eye-to-eye contact with the audience than did Kennedy. The men revealed their most observable and commented upon
differences in the area of style and delivery. Nixon was much more traditional in his manner of presentation, and both his style and delivery were smoother than Kennedy's. Kennedy's style and delivery, however, effectively reinforced the image of vitality he presented. (pp. 46-47)

Tiemens (1978) stated that "the 'image' of Kennedy, projected by the medium [T.V.], was more influential in gaining him votes than what he said about the issues" (p. 362). Thus, despite Nixon's attempt to be sincere and straightforward, Kennedy was able to convey a more youthful, vibrant image which may have assisted him in winning the overall election. Everyone knows the anecdote about Marshall McLuhan sensing that Nixon had lost because television had allowed the people to "see" the hunger for the office. In Jeffersonian ideology, the candidate should not hunger for the office, but be "called" to it. In Weber's terms, Nixon damaged his political legitimacy by displaying his careerism and personal ambition.

The debate over candidate delivery style and image have prompted some researchers to argue that the debates may actually do very little to promote a candidates position on a particular issue or inform the public about campaign concerns. According to Kraus (1962) the debates appeared to display more showmanship than statesmanship. He concluded that "The results of the televised debate [Nixon/Kennedy] showed that voters were more interested in how the candidates looked than what they said" (p. 232).
The emphasis upon physical delivery and appearance have lead other researchers to suggest that Nixon's alleged loss to Kennedy in the first televised debate was attributed to Nixon having a "five o'clock shadow" (Tiemens 1978, p. 362).

Whether or not a single physical feature or delivery style allowed Kennedy to win any or all of the televised debates between the two candidates and place him in the White House is uncertain. What is more certain, however, is that the 1960 televised debates set a precedent for separating image and issue, a breach that has been healed since then. Analysts separated the candidates' image from their issues. Nimmo (1970) declared that "They [1960 debates] were not arguments on issues, but confrontations of images . . . what the candidates say is less significant than how they look. Style, not content, prevails" (p. 159).

After reviewing the 1960, 1976, and 1980 televised debates, Martel (1983) maintained that even something as simple as a candidate's smile "is important in communicating confidence, control, and friendliness and that smiles . . . contributed to Kennedy's success against Nixon in 1960" (p. 83). A dichotomy developed between delivery and content. While critics indicted the 1960 debates for initiating the emphasis upon delivery over content in a presidential campaign, candidates subsequently
echoed the same criticism. Richard Nixon's (1978) complaint is characteristic:

I doubt that they [televised debates] can ever serve a responsible role in defining the issues of a Presidential campaign. Because of the nature of the medium [of television] there will inevitably be a greater premium on showmanship than on statesmanship. (p. 221)

The 1980 televised debates between President Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan evoked similar criticism regarding the candidates' physical delivery as did the 1960 debates. Upon examination of content, delivery, the voters' perceptions of the candidates, and the eventual outcome of the election, Berquist and Golden (1981) drew a McLuhanesque conclusion:

The [1980] presidential debates were electronic media events in which a speaker's delivery, appearance, and overall manner -- as filtered through the television screen -- proved to be more important than substance. (p. 132)

Researchers have routinely reported the predominance of ethos and pathos over logic. Martel (1983) argued that Reagan's smile in the debates "communicated confidence, control, and friendliness and played a large role in Reagan's strong performances over Carter" (p. 83).

Studies evaluating the importance of kinesics, gestures and oral style have continually reinforced previous assumptions concerning the importance of physical delivery in the debates. In the 1984 debates, the nonverbal communication of emotions and feelings played a decisive role in audience response. Shields and MacDowell
(1987) examined the display of emotions, or emotional behavior, in a political debate and concluded that affect is a key ingredient in the success or failure of a political candidate. Masters, Sullivan, Lanzetta, McHugo, & Englis (1986) examined the role of a political leader's facial displays as determinants in rallying public support. They argued that a political leader's ability to display facial emotions of warmth, sincerity, caring, and kindness were crucial to that candidate's success.

In the 1984 televised presidential debates, Ronald Reagan appeared far more successful than Walter Mondale in communicating the appropriate emotions. Masters, Sullivan, Feola, and McHugo (1987) noted that "Mondale was ineffective in communicating warm, reassuring reactions through his facial displays during the debates" (p. 121). Sullivan and Masters (1988) extended Masters, et. al. argument by claiming that "Mondale's displays of warmth and reassurance produced less favorable reactions in [debate] viewers than did those of Reagan" (p. 345).

Additional studies have elaborated upon the role of physical delivery by Mondale and Reagan in the 1984 televised debates as a means of communicating emotions and feelings to elicit a particular response from debate viewers. Researchers Patterson, Churchill, Burger, and Powell (1992) reported that debate viewers who claimed that Mondale lost the debates argued that Mondale was less
expressive [emotionally] and less physically attractive. The study also claimed that Reagan possessed the greatest advantage in terms of communicating the proper emotions nonverbally. The authors further argued that the nonverbal cues administered by the candidates contributed more significantly to viewers interpretation of who won or lost the debates. Reagan emerged as the most successful candidate in conveying warm feelings through nonverbal cues and was more often declared the winner of the debates.

Leo (1984) interviewed subjects after they had watched the debates and found that the communication of "warm feelings" was three to four times more powerful than traditional candidate preference criteria such as party identification or issues. Additionally, Researchers Husson, Stephen, Harrison, and Fehr (1988) attempted to discover what major issues acted as preferences when selecting a candidate. The authors discovered that the candidate's interpersonal communication skills predicted candidate preference after observing the debates. Reagan was able to nonverbally communicate a more positive interpersonal image and was preferred by most subjects as the winner of the debate. Finally, Jamieson (1988) argued that Reagan's victory on election day was closely tied to his televised debate victories. In the debates, Jamieson noted that Reagan's speaking style communicated important relational messages concerning trust, affection, and
similarity. Later scholars, however, have tended to conflate image and ideological positions, noting that the personality of a candidate is a better predictor of action than issues which are fleeting. Bruce Gronbeck and Ted Windt have been zealous in exploding the issue/image dichotomy.

The 1988 televised presidential debates generated little research in terms of the physical delivery of the candidates. However, the research which was conducted centered upon each candidate's ability to use his delivery skills to portray himself as a "likeable" person. Oft-Rose (1989) stated that "It is easy to say that likability was important to the voters in the 1988 debates" (p. 197). The author further claimed that likability was situational and fluctuating. It was a "thin" perception, based on observed communication behavior:

Although Dukakis seemed more at ease during the first debate, it was Bush who appealed most to the audience in the second debate through the use of active and natural body movement and gestures, and a style of delivery that was enthusiastic and calm. (p. 197)

Stengel (1988), writing in Time magazine, also noted Bush's ability to use his nonverbal skills to create a "likeable" persona by debate viewers. His view reflected the popular conception that the ersatz and the real are one and the same in a carefully orchestrated campaign: "Although most watchers of the first presidential debate said the debate was a draw or gave the slight edge to Dukakis, it should be
noted that Bush was rated more likeable by the same voters who gave the win to Dukakis. (p. 20)

Pfau and Kang's (1991) study of relational messages in the 1988 debates produced similar data regarding candidate likability. The authors found that the candidate's smile played a large role in whether or not the candidate was liked by the debate observer. Most subjects preferred Bush's smile and therefore found him more likeable. These same subjects claimed that Bush had won the debate they observed.

Finally, Clayman (1992) discovered that in the 1988 debates, the candidate who possessed the ability to generate the most applause was usually determined the winner of the debate. Further, the candidate who could generate the most applause turned out to be the most likeable candidate.

To date, no research has been generated from the 1992 televised presidential debates regarding physical delivery. The studies regarding the effect of physical delivery on the outcome of televised presidential debates have ranged from Richard Nixon's "five o'clock shadow" to George Bush's smile. Whatever the specific physical component under examination, there is consensus among researchers that televised debates have increased the importance of a candidate's ability to "appear" to be the better candidate in order to win an election.
EFFECTS OF TELEVISION COVERAGE

At first, the 1960 televised presidential debates were welcomed as a way of allowing the entire nation to watch candidates clash over election issues side by side. However, as post 1960 debate research began to indicate, the television medium also introduced an increased awareness of delivery and appearance of the candidates by the viewing and voting public. This new awareness led political pundits and researchers to fear that televised debates might hurt American presidential campaigns more than help them.

The 1976 televised debates generated a great deal of research regarding the overall effect of television as a medium upon the debates. After examining the editing choices made by the television director of shot-by-shot decisions in the 1976 debates between Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter, researchers Messaris, Eckman, and Gumpert (1979) argued that "the televised versions of the three debates presented an image of direct, explicit conflict which was an exaggeration of the state of affairs of the live event" (p. 359). The authors contended that the editor's decisions regarding camera angles appeared to be made with the specific intent of creating a more entertaining show for television viewers. Thus debates made matters of degree seem like deep divisions, not a healthy expression
of systematic legitimacy, and a condition that depended on commonly respected public virtue.

Tiemens (1978) argued that not only did the camera angles and shots fabricate tension and conflict but that the pictorial treatment of the candidates [which candidate had more "positive" angles and eye contact] tended to favor Carter. Consequently, due to the visual composition, camera angle, and screen placement, Gerald Ford was unable to maintain as much eye contact with the cameras as Carter. The importance of maintaining constant and consistent eye contact with the television camera was established by Davis (1978). Upon surveying subjects who had watched the debates, Davis found that the candidate whom the viewer believed maintained the most eye contact with the camera (and thus the television viewing audience) was also the candidate whom the viewers declared to be the winner of the debate.

While the use of television as a medium was accused of creating conflict which did not exist in the 1976 debates, television was criticized for the opposite effect in the 1980 presidential debates between President Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. After conducting an extensive visual analysis of the Carter-Reagan debate, Tiemens, Hellwig, Kipper, and Phillips (1985) argued that "the restrictions upon the event itself and the television medium through
which it was transmitted contributed very little toward establishing any confrontational results" (p. 42).

The role of television in the debates however, was credited with providing Reagan an edge in the debate and therefore the election. Blankenship, Fine, and Davis (1983) argued that television camera angles, shots, and the debate commentators all favored Reagan. The authors reported that various medium effects such as camera angles portrayed Reagan in a more positive light. The study cataloged numerous examples during Reagan's speeches. Carter was usually missing from view. However, during Carter's speeches, Reagan could be seen on the television screen in the background, sometimes in cinematic reaction shots. This visual edge allowed Reagan more "air time" as well as the opportunity to respond nonverbally to Carter's statements in a way with which Carter was not provided. The authors contended that this type of media manipulation made Reagan the central focus of the debate and ultimately of the election.

In the 1984 televised debates between Walter Mondale and Ronald Reagan, Morello (1988a) examined the visual syntax of the debates as a factor in the perception of clash. His findings were similar to those of the 1980 studies. Television angles and visuals used in the debate clearly favored Reagan over Mondale, again placing the central focus of the debate, and the election, upon Reagan.
Morello also noted that the visual structuring of the debates made Reagan appear to have more "clash" in his responses, when Mondale was the candidate who actually expressed more verbal conflict and ideological differences (p. 286).

In the 1988 televised debates between George Bush and Michael Dukakis, television angles and shots were found to have other unexpected consequences. Television shot sequences were found to fabricate debate content which did not exist. Morello (1992) examined the visual structuring of arguments in the debates and found that the certain television shot sequences were employed by the camera directors in order to "visualize" the clash transpiring in the debate. Upon concluding his study, Morello argued that television camera angles misrepresented the incidences of verbal clash in the debate, gave preference to ad hominem attacks as a verbal cue to cut to a reaction shot of the other candidate, and offered opportunities for nonverbal refutation of opposing arguments unfairly for one candidate over another.

The various studies conducted concerning the role of television upon the effect and outcome of presidential debates has drawn much criticism from communication researchers. Given their historic bias toward logic, evidence and issues, and their relative innocence about non-verbal behavior, this is not surprising. Traditional
rhetors, Berquist and Golden (1981), were typical critics of televised presidential debates. Noting the increase in the importance of delivery over content in the debates [reviewed earlier in this chapter] the authors were unsparing: "Presidential debates are electronic media events in which a speaker's delivery, appearance, and overall manner -- as filtered through the television screen -- proved to be more important than substance" (p. 132). Berquist and Golden concluded their essay by arguing that "television and the media have contaminated presidential debates" (p. 137).

Morello (1988b) examined the visual structuring of the 1976 and 1984 televised presidential debates and argued that "the shot pacing was substantially quicker in 1984" and appeared to change at critical junctures in the debate (p. 242). From his research, Morello argued that something as simple as shot pacing contaminated the presidential debates because

the changes potentially interfered with the comprehension of verbal content of the debates, undermined the political purpose of the encounters, and promoted unequal visual treatment of the candidates. (p. 243)

Jamieson (1987) expressed additional concern regarding the potential damaging effect which television can bring to a presidential debate. Since television clearly places a greater emphasis upon delivery over substance, Jamieson opined that "voters can be seriously misled by the
nonverbal communication on which television dotes and toward which viewers involuntarily gravitate" (p. 32).

Pfau and Kang (1991) echoed Jamieson's concerns in their study on the impact of relational messages in televised debates by noting that television shaped what was being communicated to viewers. Since television was able to control variables such as viewers access to facial cues -- which actually had the ability to influence viewers perceptions of who won the debate -- the authors criticized television for creating a new "eloquence of style" required of all presidential hopefuls (p. 117).

In recent years, critics have continued to level criticism regarding the negative effects which television has brought to presidential debates. Hellwig, Pfau, and Brydon (1992) have contended that the visual component of television communication continues to dwarf the verbal dimension. Their study denigrates televised presidential debates as nothing more than looks and image, a dumb show lacking significant content.

Finally, researchers Donsbach, Brosius, and Mattenklott (1993) identified differences between observing a speech in person versus observing a debate or speech on television. The author's argued that the differences are so vast that television drastically effects the viewing of political activities such as debates and creates an
entirely new medium which candidates must prepare for and cater to.

Presidential debates were originally created to inform voters regarding candidates positions on crucial issues effecting the nation. Prior to 1960 that objective was probably accomplished quite often. However, with the introduction of the television camera in the 1960 debates, presidential debates were redefined and became more public spectacle and entertainment then a political dialogue.

DEBATES NOT TRUE DEBATES

Due to the redefining nature of television, televised presidential debates have been criticized by debate researchers as lacking the characteristics of a true "debate." Time constraints, debate moderators, and television producers' desire to provide "entertainment" have created a "format" for the debates which does not allow for any real debating. Halberstam (1981) noted that Richard Salant, vice-chairman of the Board at NBC, had candidly remarked: "Because of the format of television, we go [with a debate format] with attacks and counterattacks. And because we go with them, that usually means we get them" (p. 8). Due to the industry guided debate format, televised presidential debates have become regarded as being anything but debates. Auer (1981) supported this criticism: "The formats of the debates make them anything but a debate" (p. 21).
Highlander and Watkins (1962) noted that the debate formats used in the 1960 debates for the sake of television placed severe limitations upon the candidates as debaters. Jamieson and Birdsell (1988) not only echoed this criticism but provided specific examples of how the format hindered each candidate. In summary, the authors noted:

The question-and-answer format [often used in televised debates to involve special guest panelists or audience members] is not conducive to substantive debate. The structure places irreconcilable demands on the candidates.

(p. 165)

Jamieson and Birdsell argued that Richard Nixon, having had extensive intercollegiate debate experience, was a much better and a more skilled debater than Kennedy. Consequently, Nixon approached the 1960 debates as debates and tried to act like a debater and lost as a would-be president.

As the inaugural televised presidential debates, the 1960 debates between Kennedy and Nixon have often been referred to as "The Great Debates" (Krauss 1962). However, after examining the structure, format, and presentation of the 1960 debates, Kerr (1961) argued: "The 1960 'Great Debates' were neither 'great' nor 'debates'" (p. 9). The author claimed that the debates were superficial, that they substituted personality for serious examination of issues, and that the format forced candidates to shift rapidly from

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7 See also Seipmann (1962) for similar arguments.
one question to another without providing them an opportunity to state fully their perspective. At the time, the author also suggested that future televised debates develop a format which would allow candidates to confront one another more directly. Auer (1962) went so far as to call the 1960 debates the "Counterfeit Debates" and titled his critical essay by that title. Reiterating the numerous criticisms regarding the contamination of political debates by television, Highlander and Watkins (1962) complained: "The 'Great Debates' of 1960 were better television shows than they were well developed and significant discussions of vital issues [affecting the presidency] between candidates" (p. 48).

Unfortunately, calls for a better "debating" format in future debates went unheeded in the next televised debates, in 1976. Once again, television production dictated the format and the debates were heavily criticized. In his review of the 1976 Carter-Ford debates, Salant (1979) argued "The 1976 debates were not debates any more than the Kennedy-Nixon 'events' in 1960 were debates. They [1976 debates] were nothing more than joint interviews" (p. 175). Bitzer and Rueter (1980) claimed that the use of panelists, journalists, and moderators in the 1976 debates created a format which suffocated productive inquiry and created nothing more than an interview environment. Frustrated with the lack of any real discussion, the authors borrowed

> The degree and intensity of confrontation [in the debate] was unquestionably minor . . . there is no question that lack of confrontation in the debate was attributed in part to the format. The Carter-Reagan debate was highly structured, giving no opportunity for direct confrontation. (pp. 40-41)

To support their criticisms, the authors provided the following example of what happened in the 1980 debate to prevent a real debate from taking place:

> The restrictive nature of the format was clearly illustrated when Reagan addressed a question to Carter: "I would like to ask the President why it is inflationary to let the people keep more of their money and spend it the way they'd like, and it isn't inflationary to let them take that money and spend it the way he wants?" At this point, the moderator, Howard K. Smith, interrupted with "I wish that question need not be rhetorical, but it must be, because we've run out of time on that. Now, the third question . . . " (p. 41).

In a similar study examining the absence of opportunities for Carter and Reagan to engage in direct clash and confrontation, Rowland (1986) argued that the structure and format of the 1980 debates prevented the event from being a debate.

The controversy over debate format became a central issue in the 1992 presidential campaign. Gersh (1993) reported that two months before the election, Bush and Clinton had not yet agreed to a format for a debate (p. 18). Since the candidates could not reach an agreement on
a format in a timely fashion, the first scheduled debate was forced to be cancelled.

Confrontation is fundamental to debate. Contrasting ideologies and personalities, traditional elements of true debate, can only be revealed through the exercise of confrontation between participants. Due to the need for fairness in representation, the role of moderators, the presentation of questions from guest panelists and audience members, time constraints, and other format constraints, televised presidential debates have become anything but debates. To researchers, televised presidential debates become nothing more than what Ranney (1979) referred to as "televised joint appearances" (p. vii), or what Drucker (1989) called "electronic public space" (p. 7).

CONTENT ANALYSIS STUDIES

Researchers have attempted to evaluate the contents of televised presidential debates to assess possible rhetorical styles or patterns. This type of scholarship has proven problematic in that no two debates have ever been the same. The six presidential campaigns which have included televised debates have always involved different opponents and each campaign has addressed different issues.

In the 1960 Kennedy-Nixon debates, Samovar (1962) argued that the candidates' statements during the debates consisted largely of ambiguous and unequivocal passages. The candidates merely reinforced previously known positions
on particular issues. When new issues were raised in the debate, the candidates responded with ambiguous or vague answers which allowed them to avoid taking a public position on a new issue. In a follow-up study, Samovar (1965) reiterated the presence of ambiguity on significant topics to an extent that threatened the perception of clear differences between candidates.

Rowland (1986) challenged the conventional wisdom regarding the content of the 1980 Carter-Reagan debate. He noted that the 1980 debate had been criticized by commentators who believed that Reagan's style defeated Carter's substance in the debate. Formerly, critics had accused the media of catering to Reagan's "on camera" style and strengths in order to cover up for his poor substance. However, after an extensive analysis of the text, Rowland concluded that Reagan, not Carter, won the debate on the issues.

Other researchers have examined the content of televised debates and have provided a wide variety of data. Mortensen (1968) noted that content analysis of several debates revealed sharp differences between political telecasts which simply employ a rally format and those in which the candidate faces a panel of questioners. This finding reinforces previously reviewed research regarding the contaminating effects which the televised debate formats have upon the actual debate.
Pfau and Kenski's (1990) study across several debates revealed a large number of "attack messages." Candidates spent a considerable part of the debate attacking their opponent rather than providing concrete answers to questions directed at them or clarifying positions on various issues. The authors noted that "these 'attack messages' were negative in focus and were designed to call attention to an opponent's weakness" (p. 25).

Murphy (1992) argued that it is very difficult to isolate any particular rhetorical style or content as indigenous to any single debate. Thus in order to understand the full political and rhetorical significance of any presidential debate, the contest must be studied within the rhetorical context created by previous campaign discourse. Murphy explained that "the arguments candidates use may reflect underlying traditions of discourse, such as populism or progressivism, that influence ongoing social disputes" (p. 228).

Jackson-Beeck and Meadows (1979) provided some of the most successful research regarding the study and/or analysis of presidential debate content. After examining the contents of the 1960 and 1976 televised presidential debates, the authors developed a fourfold scheme for classifying communication content including both verbal and nonverbal dimensions. The scheme consists of the following criteria: Speech content 1. Includes manipulated verbal
messages; 2. Sometimes entails unintentional message transmission; 3. reflects unconscious use of speech; and 4. May occur nonverbally (pp. 324-325). Using this method, the four types of communication content could be analyzed one-by-one or in combinations to arrive at a more extended treatment of debate content data.

ISSUES AND IMAGES IN PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS AND TELEvised PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

Candidate issue positions and image formation serve as the best determinants of electorate decision making in a presidential election. As Joslyn (1984) explained: "numerous studies have found issue positions and candidate images to be two equally important predictors of voting behavior" (p. 36). Weiss (1981) argued that in political debates "issues and images are a practical fact overlooked and . . . they intertwine in all manner of convolutions and mutually affect one another in countless ways" (p. 22). Weiss named this mutual relationship as the "issue-image interface."

Issues

Issues in a presidential campaign are identified by the electorate on two levels. For many voters, the first level of Issue assessment involves party affiliation and perceived incumbent success. Researchers Edwards (1990), Jacoby (1990), Kenski (1992), Lodge & Hamill (1986), Sears (1990), and Squire & Smith (1988) argued that while [political] party identification has declined since the
mid-sixties, it is still a potent factor in voter decision making. Party members tend to absorb party positions on various issues. Kenski, Walkosz, and Reichert (1993) noted that "partisanship is not only important in campaigns, but later in the White House itself" (p. 8). If the Republican Party has taken a particular position on an economic issue, then the electorate from that party will generally subscribe to a similar position. However, when the Republican candidate is elected into office, that candidate will be expected to fulfill the party's promise. In the next presidential election the incumbent's ability to identify with issue fulfillment will become a major factor in the incumbent's re-election. Elliot (1989) explained:

> Voters make voting decisions on the basis of a general assessment of the party performance of the party in power. If, on a set of salient issues, the assessment is positive, voters will tend to support that party. If the assessment is negative, they will support the opposition. (p. 8)

To this argument Wattenberg (1991) added:

> For presidential incumbents it is not issues per se but rather voter perception about presidential performance on issues that is the single most important voter consideration. Perceptions of a president's policies may be the primary basis upon which voters decide whether they approve of his performance. (p. 141)

In a televised presidential debate where an incumbent is involved, an effective attack by a challenger would be to address the performance of the incumbent regarding party goals.
After decision making based upon partisanship, the next level of issue consideration for the electorate involves specific types of issues. Stokes and DiIulio (1993) noted:

The two kinds of issues that matter in presidential elections are position issues and valence issues. A position issue is one on which the rival parties or candidates reach out for the support of the electorate by taking different positions on a policy question that divides the electorate. Valence issues are issues in which voters distinguish parties and candidates not by their real or perceived difference in position on policy questions but by the degree to which they are linked in the voters' minds with conditions, goals, or symbols that are almost universally approved or disapproved by the electorate. (pp. 6-7)

Abortion or Health Care is a prime example of a position issue. The electorate will identify with a candidate who has taken a position on abortion which is consistent with the party's position on abortion. The electorate may have already identified with a particular party because of that party's position on the issue. The candidate will be expected to support that position and will thus gain the support of like-minded voters.

The economy would be an example of a valence issue. A challenger would have an opportunity to link poor economic conditions with the incumbent's performance in office, while being somewhat vague about potential and painful policy remedies.

In the 1992 election, it would be the electorate's dissatisfaction with the economy which the Democrats were
able to blame upon the Bush administration and the Republican party's handling of the economy for the past twelve years.

Issues are very important to voters. However, the importance of certain issues has varied from election to election and from study to study. Conover and Feldman (1989) argued that domestic [economic, race, social issues] and foreign affair issues were key factors. However, researchers Jacoby (1990), Kinder, Adams, & Gronke (1989), Kenski (1992) and Lockerbie (1989) all identified various socioeconomic issues as key considerations in the voting booth.

While every presidential campaign has addressed specific issues, the introduction of televised debates has made issue consideration more prominent in voters' decisions. Jamieson and Birdsell (1988) explained: "debate increases the likelihood that a candidate will take a specific stand on an issue, and will specify the ways in which goals would be reached" (p. 128). With a challenger able to cross examine and press another candidate on a particular issue on television in front of millions of viewers, candidate commitment to issues is heightened allowing for increased voter knowledge. As the electorate becomes more informed, candidate issue position becomes much more important in the election.
Elliot (1989) identified the various issues affecting voting behavior in presidential elections involving televised debates from 1976 to 1988 (pp. 38-116). Table 1 identifies Elliot's findings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Issue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Inflation, Crime, Unemployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Inflation, Iran, Unemployment, Defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Budget Deficit, Unemployment, Fear of War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Budget Deficit, Trade Deficit, Economy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the 1992 presidential election, Bush focused upon his foreign policy exploits during the previous four years, while Clinton and Perot both focused upon the economy. The electorate cared little about foreign affairs and were more concerned about issues such as how to pay their medical bills. The issue of the economy had appeared in every presidential campaign since 1976, yet as Hahn (1994) noted "Bush stated 5 times in the first debate [alone] that the economy was 'not that bad'" (p. 191). Hahn also explained that Bush's emphasis on foreign policy made him appear as if he did not care about the general electorate, something both Clinton and Perot targeted. The economy became a central issue in the 1992 election and Bush's apparent insensitivity towards it contributed to his demise.
In addition to campaign issues, candidate image plays an equally, if not more, important role in voter decision making. Barber (1985) explained: "voters don't vote for issues, but for people" (p. 139). Windt (1994) stated a similar position: "it should be remembered that in any presidential campaign the central issue is leadership . . . People vote for a person, not a set of policy statements" (p. 7). Jamieson and Birdsell (1988) also noted: "when asked what they liked and disliked about presidential contenders . . . the American public reported that they liked such personal traits as warmth, honesty, or intelligence" (p. 140). The qualities described are the traits of a good human being but not necessarily the traits of a good politician. A candidate's image must convey him as being a quality human being who is able to do the job. Ansolabehere, Behr, & Iyengar (1993) added that "the politician's ability to govern is increasingly intertwined with his . . . public image" (p. 125). The President of the United States is the highest position in this country and has generally fostered a great deal of respect. Past Presidents were held in high regard and assumed to possess integrity. However, events in the past fifty years such as the Watergate scandal have created a cloud of suspicion to hang over the Oval office. The electorate has become concerned with the type of person they are placing into
that office. Quite often when assessing character, voters have little to rely upon other than their gut feelings. Keeter (1987) identified the potential struggle which this conundrum can create for the electorate by noting that "citizens may be forced to 'vote by feeling' because they feel they lack adequate information in an atomized political system . . . [and] the search for 'truth' becomes a search for 'trust'" (p. 356).

Television presidential debates provide the forum through which many voters can develop their "gut feeling" about a candidate. Keeter (1987) explained: "television provides the candidate as a person" (p. 345) rather than a politician. How the candidate acts and responds under pressure can reveal numerous "signals" to the electorate as to the type of person the candidate is. Lanoue and Schrott (1991) explained:

Viewers are far more likely to use debates to gain insight into each candidate's personality and character . . . A superior "personal" presentation appears to be more important to voters than accumulation of issue-oriented debating "points." (p. 96)

The use of televised debates by the electorate to evaluate a candidate's image is easily identified. After examining the 1980 televised debates between Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter, Martel (1983) contended that "Reagan's television personality was so warm and humane that Carter could not make his anti-Reagan charges believable" (p. 49). Leon (1993) noted that in the 1992 televised debates "the
analysis of each candidate's character [by the electorate in the debates] showed that Bush could not do what a president was supposed to do as well as the other candidates" (p. 100).

Several researchers have concurred that personal traits are the most important [criteria] in the decisions made by voters. Voters watch and assess candidates and attempt to determine what type of person the candidates are. The specific character qualities and traits which are important vary from voter to voter. However, numerous studies have found that voters organize their thoughts into broad categories of schema. Wattenberg (1991) has assessed the studies regarding voter schema and noted that "personality evaluations of presidential candidates has clustered on the factors of competence, integrity, reliability, charisma, and personal attributes" (p. 8)

Trent and Friedenberg (1991) identified several image strategies that can be employed in a political debate in order to foster the schema identified by Wattenberg. The authors identified three crucial strategies:

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The principle image strategies that can be utilized in political debating include development of a leadership style, personification, and identification. Political figures can develop an activist leadership style or a passive leadership style. The activist is just that. In a debate, activists consistently refer to their actions, their initiatives, their effect on events. Passive leaders are cautious. They do not speak of their initiatives, but rather portray themselves as reacting to events. In personification, the candidate attempts to play a definite role determined by his campaign platforms. In identification, debaters [candidates] attempt to symbolize what they believe are the principle aspirations of their audience and play to those aspirations. (pp. 226-227)

Through these strategies, presidential candidates can address the personality schema deemed most valuable by the electorate and establish their desired image. The candidate who can convey the right image and persuade the electorate to respond to that image will have the greatest chance of winning the election.

Issues Are Images And Images Are Issues

While Weiss (1981) argued that the relationship between image and issue was an "interface," other researchers see the connection between the two variables as much more than that. The candidates images and issues are one and the same. Jamieson (1987) explained:

speaker image becomes central to the assessment of viewer response. So central in fact that one can say the candidate image is the issue in the campaign, the one and only criterion every American voter feels qualified to apply. (p. 74)

If a member of the electorate does not feel they can trust
a candidate based upon the image they have observed, any position the candidate takes on any issue will become suspect. Even if the voter agrees with the candidates position, the image will tarnish the issue and inhibit the decision at the ballot box.

Hinck (1993) views presidential debates as a chance for candidates to enact character dramatically. In so doing, however, the enacted "character" becomes the "argument" in the debate. Hinck explained that "in a political debate, an audience deliberates about the qualities of the candidates, not their programs" (p. 4) and as a result, character and argument are related. The candidate's perceived character creates the candidate's potential presidential ethos. Based upon a candidate's potential ethos, voters will agree or disagree with whether or not a candidate's position upon a specific issue is valid or can be trusted. The "issue," in and by itself, is not enough to carry a presidential campaign. It must be joined with the right image. Therefore, image and issue blend together so much, that the two become one.

Friedenberg (1994) opined that candidates contribute to the elimination of the boundaries between images and issues. The author explained: "candidates frequently respond to issues in ways designed to advance one or more of the [numerous] image related goals that characterize contemporary political debates" (p. 244). When addressing
an issue, a candidate may process their answer in such a way as to manipulate the presentation of a particular image. As a result, each variable is intricately related.

**Issue-Image Summary**

Despite the role of image in a presidential campaign, not everyone believes issues are insignificant. While voters may feel far more comfortable assessing a candidate's image, issue acquisition does transpire. Debates force candidates to take public stands on specific issues and explain ways in which they want to accomplish their goals while in office. Jamieson and Birdsell (1988) noted that debates allow candidates to address and specify issues in much more detail than regular campaign speeches or advertisements. Debates also allow candidates to become clearly associated with a specific stand on a specific issue. Barber (1985) noted the value of this type of public exposure and association because "character theories recognize that voters don't vote for issues but for people, and in many cases, for people who espouse certain stands on [specific] issues" (p. 139).

Finally, Chaffee (1978) summarized a number of studies and found that "viewers do indeed acquire political information from watching televised presidential debates and that viewing debates did have substantial benefits for voters concerning campaign issues" (p. 346).
CONCLUSION

This review of literature has examined the research conducted by communication researchers on televised presidential debates. The research was found to involve the study of the physical delivery by the candidates in a debate, the effect of television as a medium upon the debates, televised presidential debates as true debates with regard to format and structure, the analysis of the content of various debates, and the role of image-issue formation in televised debates.

It also revealed a number of features with implications for the maintenance of legitimacy. The perception of enhanced conflict and issue polarity — to have a single feature — has implications for the traditional roles of the citizen and the concept of a larger public good that are troubling. However, many aspects of debate are clearly amenable to a Jeffersonian norm of legitimacy, enhanced information, direct (if mediated) address to all the people, and questions by citizen-surrogates.
CHAPTER 3
TELEVISED DEBATES AND PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS

INTRODUCTION

Televised presidential debates have had controversial effects upon presidential elections. Every presidential campaign has a communication trajectory. It begins with face to face appeals to local constituencies and local supporters. Later it seeks to address a set of dispersed core constituencies during the early presidential primaries. Those candidates still standing at the end of the primaries produce messages that increase in volume and range as they attempt to address the concerns of a major political party. If the party nominates the campaigner as its candidate there is further escalation of message making as ever more diverse constituencies are addressed in an ever greater variety of formats. Within the past thirty six years (largely in the past twenty) the presidential debate has become the central event in the campaign wherein both or several (1980, 1992) candidates struggle for the minds and hearts of the total electorate.

Over the past thirty five years, the presidential debate has evolved as a genre; it has begun to establish its own norms of performance, its own format, and its own set of viewer expectations. Despite its relative coherence and stability as a discourse event, the presidential debate is neither a static nor unitary event. Its formats have
been altered from election to election; candidates and producers have experimented with it and its conventions have been modified over the years. Thus, any study of a particular debate or set of debates must take account of the antecedent formats to obtain a deep understanding of the event. Further, presidential debates are merely one discourse event, however major, in the total campaign.

Accordingly, this chapter will review the major research of the past thirty five years on presidential debates. This review will attempt to detail scholarly inquiry into the expectations that have developed about the meaning of debates for voters, their function within the larger campaign, their impact upon voting behavior, and their effect upon political discourse for good or ill. Because scholars are divided in their assessments of these matters, I will attempt to detail those conclusions that are both significant and consensual. Do debates as debates help to restore legitimacy to the election process? The evidence is mixed.

TELEVISIONED DEBATES DIFFICULT TO STUDY

Through the years, televised presidential debates have proven to be problematic to study. Every debate has contained its own unique set of variables which make it difficult to identify a genre or consistent theme throughout all of the debates. Patterson (1980) identified several of the many problems researchers confront:
It is difficult to draw strong conclusions about debates. First, each debate is different. It involves different candidates, different offices, different issues, different audiences, different press coverage, different formats, and a host of other differences. Hence to talk about the specific effects of debates is virtually impossible, for no two will be identical, nor will their effects be identical. Second, debate effects cannot be isolated from the effects of all the other communication that voters receive during the campaign. Individuals may be exposed to a dozen messages about the candidates on the very day of the debate. Finally, unlike laboratory experiments, scientists cannot control political debates.

(p. 229)

Because of the constantly changing variables and numerous information messages surrounding an election, scholars such as Murphy (1992) have argued that a single debate cannot be examined for its effect upon the overall election process. Issues such as underlying traditions of discourse or ongoing social disputes must be included in the assessment of a debate. As a result, the debate becomes nothing more than a single text within a larger context.

Perhaps the most problematic variable in studying televised debates is the influence of television upon the debating process. Debates have been a part of the political process in this country since the inception of elections. However, the introduction of televised debates has brought the candidates and the issues of the election into the homes of the American voter. This personalization of presidential candidates has redefined how voters assess and elect a president. Elections are no longer left to the
political insider. The average voter, who may know very little about actual political issues, is now able to assess a candidate based upon the one criteria they feel qualified to critique — their character and personality. As Keeter (1987) noted "television [presents] the candidate as a person" (p. 345). Recent research by Kenski (1992) has identified personal traits as the most important criteria in decisions made by voters. By televising the presidential debates, voters have a chance to sit in their living rooms and watch a candidate and decide whether or not they like him.

As candidate personality has begun to play a larger role in voter decision making, voters have begun using personality semantics to explain their voting decisions. Leo (1984) noted that voters identified "the communication of 'warm feelings' as being three to four times more powerful than traditional candidate preference criteria such as party identification or issues" (p. 37). Jamieson and Birdsell (1988) added: "When asked what they liked . . . about presidential contenders, approximately one-fourth of the American public has reported such personal traits as

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warmth and honesty" (p. 140). Voters want a human being as president, not a politician.

The personification of presidential candidates to require the display of warmth and honesty has redefined the American political process. Historically, presidential candidates have attempted to be "all things to all people." They are often forced to withhold their personal belief or opinion and favor the belief or opinion which will secure votes. Jamieson and Birdsell (1988) noted this long held political tradition:

Promising all things to all people is a long lived tactic memorialized by Machiavelli, who recommended that a Prince be a great "feigner and dissembler." The move has been recognized by political theorists through the history of campaigning. Indeed, ambiguity may be the mainstay of effective politics. No man who fully and frankly expressed his real convictions, made manifest exactly the way he felt and thought on public matters, could possibly be elected to any considerable office in the United States. (p. 128)

However, with televised debates requiring the candidates to bring "warmth and honesty" into the homes of the electorate, candidates must either be completely honest and risk losing votes, or attempt to lie while appearing truthful and risk being caught and labeled a charlatan. The current trend appears to be that of requiring candidates to be honest and be human.

DEBATES EXPECTED

After closely examining the 1960 televised presidential debates, Sidney Kraus (1964) prophetically
stated that "There is no doubt in this writer's mind that debating on television by presidential candidates will eventually become an integral part of political campaigns" (p. 220). It was sixteen years before the next set of presidential debates appeared on television in 1976, but as Kraus predicted, debates have not only been a part of every presidential election since 1976, but have even become expected events in American politics. Ritter and Hellweg (1986) noted the increased frequency and importance of debates:

Presidential candidates participated in more televised debates in 1984 than occurred in the entire 1980 presidential campaign. Televised debates have become more popular at all electoral levels since the 1976 presidential campaign. (p. 1)

Televised presidential debates have become a mainstay in American politics due to voter expectations and candidate campaign strategy. Friedenberg (1994) noted the fruition of Kraus' 1964 prophecy when he stated the "Debates have become an expected feature of our presidential elections, and the risks involved in rejecting debates has outgrown the risks involved in debating poorly" (p. 239). Not only have debates become expected but they are believed to exercise a substantial effect on the course of the election. Jamieson and Birdsell (1988) believe that debates now play the central role of the campaign:

"Debate" has become a buzzword for serious politics . . . when debates are announced, movement in the polls slows, in anticipation,
the electorate suspends its willingness to be swayed by ads and news. (p. 5-6)

The rise in popularity of televised debates, however, does not appear to be due to the role which the debates play in the election process. Berquist (1994) argued that televised debate popularity is due to the mentality of the American voter. The "mediated contest" is a particularly resonant form:

There continues to exist in America a remarkable mythology about presidential candidates debating before a nationwide audience... One of American television's legacies in the game-show-sporting event mentality. Viewers are conditioned to expect a winner and a loser. As a result, millions of Americans readily assume a presidential debate is a sort of political game, which lends itself to instant analysis and the awarding of a decision. (pp. 35-36)

The televised debate format provides the "arena" where the voter can watch their "gladiator" engage in combat and emerge the victor. This sporting mentality by the American voter has forced presidential candidates to engage in a televised event which may actually provide few benefits to the overall election. It may be that due to the "sporting mentality" which the public brings to presidential debates, public expectations have forced candidates to debate rather than appear "weak" or be accused of having something to hide by refusing to debate. Auer (1986) noted this pressure upon candidates when he stated that

The public has grown to expect candidates for major office to engage in debates. By 1984 public expectations had grown so strong that
some have argued that incumbent Ronald Reagan, holding a commanding lead in the polls, nevertheless risked debating because he felt that not to do so would create a greater problem for him than any possible error he might make in debating. (p. 216)

Friedenberg (1990) echoed Auer's arguments about the power of public expectation:

In recent years incumbents have come to fear that their failure or obvious reluctance to debate will be interpreted extremely negatively by the public to mean that they are weak and unable to defend their own positions and policies. (p. 216)

While the combination of public expectations and the sporting mentality surrounding debates complicate the decision to engage in debates, other issues are also important. To illustrate the types of issues a candidate and his advisors would need to study prior to engaging in a debate, Friedenberg (1979) provided six questions which a candidate must assess in determining whether or not to engage in a debate:

First, is this likely to be a close debate? Second, are advantages likely to accrue to me if I debate? Third, am I a good debater? Fourth, are there only two major candidates running for the office? Fifth, do I have control of all the important variables in the debate situation? And sixth, is the field clear of incumbents? (pp. 214-216)

Only the 1988 presidential election allowed candidates the opportunity to positively answer all six of Friedenberg's questions. The 1980, 1984, and 1992 election failed to provide the opportunity to address all six questions positively by any of the candidates.
Despite these difficulties, candidates have routinely elected to participate in presidential debates. There are, of course, potentially positive benefits. The positive impact which televised debates can provide for a candidate will be reviewed in the next section of this chapter.

IMPACT OF DEBATES UPON ELECTIONS

Candidates Gain Exposure

While only one presidential election has been argued to have been directly affected by the televised debates, political communication scholars have argued that debates have an impact upon presidential elections in a number of ways. The initial impact of a televised debate for a presidential candidate is exposure. In a single setting, a candidate can gain exposure to millions of voters in a way which other media vehicles do not provide. Researchers Patterson, Churchill, Burger, and Powell (1992 p. 232) noted that televised debates provide numerous benefits not only for the candidate who gains increased exposure, but benefits are also provided for the electorate as well. Voters have an opportunity to see the candidates side-by-side and directly compare and contrast the candidates opinions and viewpoints. The televised debate allows each candidate an opportunity to expand and develop their opinions on various issues in a way which campaign speeches do not allow. Jamieson and Birdsell (1988 p. 132) have
noted the limitations of the stock campaign speech. It is formulated and superficial.

Large Numbers of Voters Watch the Debates

A televised debate, on the other hand, allows candidates to address issues at greater length and gain exposure to more potential voters than any other forum. The need for increased exposure in a presidential election is explained by Ritter and Hellweg (1986) who noted:

With the decline of party identification by voters, candidates in presidential . . . debates must appeal beyond the active members of their own party. Debates reach a national audience that transcends party divisions. In short, presidential debates have emerged as a national forum for political debates in the United States. (p. 1)

The amount of exposure a candidate receives from a televised debate is quite significant. Since the first televised debate in 1960 the number of viewers has steadily increased. Katz and Feldman (1962) noted that "over 60% of the adult population -- an average of 77 million individuals -- watched the first Kennedy-Nixon debates" (p. 120). Since the first debate was a novelty for American politics, the audience numbers declined slightly for the last three debates. Windt (1994) noted however, that the numbers were still extremely significant. The author explained that the second debate drew 61 million viewers, the third debate 70 million viewers and the fourth debate attracted 63 million viewers (p. 20). While debate viewership has fluctuated over the years, the number of
viewers has increased steadily and represent a significant number of votes. Jamieson and Birdsell (1988) identified the amount of people who have watched the televised debates over the years:

Where six out of ten watched in 1960, that number became seven of ten in the first two debates of 1976, dropping back to the 1960 average for the third Ford-Carter encounters. More than 120 million viewers saw the 1980 Carter-Reagan debate. But four years later, the numbers were down. In 1984 the general election debates drew 85 million viewers. (p. 120)

These figures indicate that for the 1960 televised debates, 90% of American households watched at least some of the Nixon-Kennedy debates. In the 1976 Ford-Carter debates the figure was 83% of American households. Debates Do Not Influence Voter Decision

Although various arguments have been made regarding the value of exposure from a televised presidential debate, only one election, the 1960 campaign, permitted analysts to frame a cause-effect argument between the debates and the outcome of the election. The 1960 race for the presidency was the closest margin of victory in U.S. history. Windt (1994) explained that "the election was decided by only .2% of the popular vote -- a margin of about 112,000 out of almost 69 million votes cast" (p. 1). White (1961) and

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others attributed Kennedy's narrow margin of victory to the televised debates:

When the debate began, Nixon was generally viewed as being the probable winner of the election contest and Kennedy as fighting an uphill battle; When they [the debates] were over, the positions of the two contestants were reversed. (pp. 290-291)

Chester (1969) provided statistics to support White's claim. Chester noted that "going into the first debate, Gallup Polls reported Nixon with a 47 to 46 percent lead in the polls. But after [the debates] Kennedy took a lead of 49 to 46 percent" (p. 295). Windt (1994) noted that even Kennedy attributed his victory to the debates. After the election Kennedy stated the "It was TV more than anything else that turned the tide" (p. 1). Lang (1987) echoed these same sentiments when he argued that "a strong case can be made that without the televised debates in 1960 . . . Kennedy would not have been elected" (p. 211). Samovar (1965) further supported this argument by stating that "the Nixon-Kennedy debates were the really decisive factor in the [1960] election" (p. 211). Windt summarized the present consensus about the Kennedy-Nixon debates:

In some campaigns, debates have had minimal or no impact on the election. For better or worse, that was not true in 1960. The belief that without the debates Kennedy could not have won is fairly established" (p. 1).

The 1960 presidential race is the only election to have been directly effected by televised debates. With so many millions of voters watching televised debates, the
question arises as to why only one debate out of six has been influenced by an event which has become expected by the voting public. Lichtenstein (1982) analyzed the audience demographics of several televised debates to suggest a more refined concept of their role:

A substantial proportion of voters formed opinions and made decisions about the election prior to viewing the debates. The debates did not, therefore, generally alter or form references but, rather, reinforced existing predispositions and made voters more sure of their choice. Debates mainly reinforce both the standing party allegiances and the candidate preferences built up over many prior months of campaigning, primary elections and convention. (p. 298)

Six years later Jamieson and Birdsell (1988) reached a similar conclusion:

Debates do reinforce the dispositions of those who have already decided how to vote. In the typical election, about two-thirds of the electorate has decided its November vote by the end of the party conventions" (p. 127).

Even though several million viewers watch televised debates, the telecasts tend to only attract those voters who are already involved in the campaign. Those individuals who could benefit the most from the debates are least likely to watch. Citizens who do not plan to vote in the election, whether from apathy or mere lack of knowledge regarding the issues, simply do not watch the debates. Jamieson and Birdsell (1988) explained that "debates give more to the information rich than to the information poor. The debates make the most sense to those already
knowledgeable and the least to those most in need of information" (p. 173). Researchers McLeod, Bybee, and Durall (1979) found that in the 1976 debates "those initially most interested in politics spent more time watching the debates" (p. 487). As a result, televised debates tend to have nominal impact upon the eventual outcome of an election.

**Debates Can Be Beneficial**

Even though televised debates may not alter the outcome of a presidential election, Trent and Friedenberg (1991) argued that "contemporary political debates are extremely valuable" (p. 208) for the larger political process. Televised debates are valuable because they provide exposure for each candidate, force candidate accountability, and do inform the voters regarding significant issues surrounding the debate.

A presidential candidate is physically limited to the number of cities he can visit, speeches he can give, and hands he can shake. Therefore candidates often must rely upon media coverage of their activities for exposure to those voters not present at a particular rally. However, as Jamieson and Birdsell (1988) noted "television news tells people little about the issues in a campaign" (p. 125). While the media may provide exposure for a candidate, that exposure is limited to sound bites and video clips, none of which provide any substance regarding
a candidate's platform. Radio and television commercials are limited mediums and do not permit candidates to fully explain their positions on various issues. Televised debates provide a candidate with an extended period of time to present their plans and programs. Jamieson and Birdsell (1988) explained that "the debates offer the longest, most intense view of the candidates available to the electorate" (p. 126). From this increased exposure, voters are able to gain some type of increased knowledge of the candidates' positions. Katz and Feldman (1962) noted that in the 1960 debates "voter exposure to the debate was associated with learning about the issues and changing attitudes toward political candidates" (p. 89). Even if a televised debate will not earn a candidate needed votes, it can provide much needed exposure which can result in increased support from constituents.

Televised debates also provide an opportunity for voters to assess each candidate in terms of job accountability. Rosenberg and Elliot (1987) noted that "the existing evidence points to possible debate influences, particularly on variables that allow subjects to directly compare candidates on factors related to job performance" (p. 57). Jamieson and Birdsell (1988) extended this argument by stating that "debates provide opportunity to underscore the criteria by which the presidency will be assessed" (p. 156). Researchers Lang
and Lang (1962) argued that the 1960 televised debates provided voters with the opportunity to assess the candidates specifically for their "President like" qualities. The authors stated that "the 1960 presidential debates provided information viewers used to evaluate the candidates' ability to perform in office, their fitness for political office, and their qualities as human beings" (p. 330). Voters have preconceived opinions of how a President should speak and act. By observing presidential candidates' behavior in televised debates, voters are provided with an opportunity to assess each candidate to see if they fulfill the expected criteria. Berquist (1994) noted that voters may tune in to the debates, or at least the first debate if there are several debates scheduled, to use the debate as a measuring stick for the candidates. The author stated that "in the five sets of televised presidential debates America has witnessed since 1960, most observers view the first encounter as the acid test of a candidate's fitness for high office" (p. 39).

Jamieson and Birdsell (1988) have also argued that "debates heighten the candidate's responsibility to engage the issues considered central by the other side" (p. 131). In debates candidates address questions viewed as central by their opponents in an environment in which the electorate can compare the answers. Consequently, debates are able, although they do not always do this, to produce a
clarity and specificity otherwise absent in campaign discourse. This rhetoric differs from typical campaign discourse. In a campaign speech candidates may tend to attack and criticize their opponents. However, in a debate with an opponent present and the threat of an instant rebuttal imminent, candidates tend to focus their debate discourse on case building and refutation.

Televised presidential debates serve perhaps their greatest function in that they inform voters. Even though the "information rich" may comprise the majority of the viewing audience, researchers Hellweg, Pfau, and Brydon (1992) argued that "debates are informative for the electorate" (p. 45). Chaffee and Choe (1980) noted that during the 1976 election "a study of Wisconsin voters found that during the debates the percentage of viewers who could not report candidate positions declined from 20% to less than 10%" (p. 52). Miller and MacKuen (1979) argued that not only are debates informative, but they "are a source of information for all classes, educational levels, and races" (p. 345) and that in the 1976 election "those individuals who watched the debates exhibited a heightened political awareness at exactly the time when political information is crucial - shortly before an election" (p. 346).

Researchers Lemert, Elliott, Nestvold, and Rarick (1983) revealed that "watching a televised debate . . . can increase respondents' [voters] interest in, and knowledge
about, the campaign" (p. 155). While not every voter can attend a candidate's election rally, most voters do have access to a television set and can become involved in the election by watching the debates. Waldb and Lupfer (1978) found that "the ability of viewers to comment sensibly on the candidates and their stands on issues increases with debates" (p. 342).

The ability of debates to inform viewers has been supported by several studies. Desmond and Donohue (1981) found that after examining the information debated in the 1960 televised debates and viewers' recall of that information after the debates that "the [1960] debates were instrumental in the formation of viewers' impressions of both the personality and the expertise of the candidates" (p. 302). Miller and MacKuen (1979) examined the amount of information retained by viewers of the 1976 televised debates and concluded that "the important effects of political debates on individual cognition or stored information about political [issues]" obtained from viewing the debates (p. 346).

Even though televised debates may have little effect in changing the outcome of an election, debates do have a significant impact upon presidential campaigns by providing increased exposure for the candidates, forcing candidate accountability, and informing voters regarding issues relevant to the election.
DEBATE EFFECTS ON VOTING BEHAVIOR

Viewers Do Not Change Minds

Scholars have claimed that televised presidential debates have been argued to have either no effect upon voters' decisions or merely invoke a slight change. No research has yet argued that a significant number of voters have ever changed their candidate preference due to a televised debate.

After evaluating the effects of the 1960 debates upon viewers, Kane (1966) concluded that "the majority of voters were not influenced by the programs [debates] . . . Only a very few had switched from one candidate to another" (p. 96). Gallup (1987) echoed this argument: "presidential debates have tended to reinforce the convictions of voters who were already committed. They have caused few people to change their minds" (p. 34).

Since most debate viewers are information rich, they watch the debates with predispositions which tend to "poison the well" when evaluating debate outcome. Sears and Chaffee (1979) illustrated this problem when they explained:

the information flow stimulated by debates tends to be translated by voters into evaluations that coincide with prior political dispositions. They perceive their party's candidate as having "won" and they discuss the outcome with like-minded people. (p. 255)

Researchers Sigelman and Sigelman (1984) found the issue of political predisposition to effect viewer opinion in the
1980 presidential debates. After interviewing numerous voters who had observed the debates, the authors discovered that:

voter intention was the strongest predictor of who won the 1980 presidential debate between Carter and Reagan among decided voters and that political ideology among the undecided voters. (p. 628)

Pfau and Kang (1989) conducted a similar study with the 1988 televised debates and found similar results: the debates served to do little more than to "primarily reinforce existing attitudes" (p. 16). Research on the effects of televised debates indicates that very few voter opinions are ever changed by a debate. This means that if a voter has already decided to vote for candidate "X" prior to watching the debate, then candidate "X" will win the debate in that voter's opinion. Furthermore, if a voter has not selected a particular candidate yet but is loyal to a particular party, then the candidate representing that party will most likely win the debate in that voter's opinion.

Slight Changes In Voter Opinion

While a large number of voter's opinions may not be changed by a televised debate, research tends to indicate that some moderate shifts in voter decisions can take place. Swanson and Swanson (1978) revealed that after watching the first Ford-Carter debate in the 1976 election, "the debate effected the opinion of college students on
certain issues" (p. 353). During the 1980 televised debate, Ritter and Henry (1994) discovered that "6% of those voters who had watched the debates reported a change in their vote because of the debate" (p. 86). The authors noted however that the shift reflected undecided voters who were won over by Ronald Reagan and that no one had really "changed their mind." During the same 1980 election campaign and debates, Ritter and Hellweg (1986) noted that in one study, "viewers of the debates had changed the way in which they thought about a [particular] candidate" (p. 7) but they were not planning to change how they were going to vote in the election.

A Debate "Win" May Not Sway Voters

Candidate loyalty and party preference are difficult to change through the medium of televised debates. Since only those voters who are information rich and already heavily involved in an election campaign tend to be the ones who watch the televised debates, candidates have little chance of winning large numbers of new voters by participating in the debates. Smith and Smith (1994) illustrate the difficulty of swaying voters in a debate:

After the first debate in 1984, a Harris Poll revealed that 61% of the viewers said that Mondale had won the debate and only 19% said that Reagan had won the debate. However, despite this apparent victory by Mondale, candidate preference remained virtually unchanged. Prior to the debate, 54% of the voting public planned to vote for Reagan and only 42% planned to vote for Mondale. After Mondale's "victory" in winning the first
debate by such a large margin, candidate support remained virtually unchanged. Post
debate polls found 53% of voters still planned to vote for Reagan and only 44% now planned to vote for Mondale. (p. 107)

Effects of Debates On Specific Elections

Since each presidential election involves different candidates and different issues, each televised debate can be assured of being different. Therefore an assessment of each election debate by year for effects on voters seems appropriate.

As has been argued previously in this chapter, the 1960 presidential election appears to be the only election in which there is any scholarly agreement about the significant impact of televised debates. Researchers have offered several explanations for the effect of this particular debate on the election. The 1960 campaign was unique in that Kennedy, as the challenger, was young, a devout Catholic, and not as well known as Richard Nixon. Windt (1994) explained that getting the two candidates to debate was problematic:

Kennedy as challenger in the campaign had little to lose by debating, and much to gain. Kennedy desperately wanted to debate, whatever the circumstances. Nixon's decision was more complex. Nixon's advisors argued that in the practical sense there was little to be gained since he was the better known of the two candidates. (p. 3)

Knowing that he was the challenger, Kennedy prepared diligently for the debates. Powell (1968) noted that Kennedy took voice and speaking lessons prior to the
debates to learn diaphragmatic breathing. Kennedy also
spent several days prior to the debates in seclusion,
preparing for the debates with his advisors by studying
trunk loads of data and material. Nixon spent the day of
the first debate on the campaign trail and had given
several speeches. Nixon arrived exhausted and as Tiemens
(1978) noted, he spoke with a five o'clock shadow and
looked old and tired (p. 59). As a result, Kennedy
appeared full of energy and vitality which was reflected in
his delivery style to the television viewing audience
(Highlander & Watkins, 1962, p. 46-47). The differences in
presentation style have been identified by researchers as
the crucial ingredient affecting voter decisions at the
ballot box. Researchers Tannenbaum, Greenberg, and
Silverman (1967) argued that due to their images "Kennedy
did not necessarily win the debates, but Nixon lost them"
(p. 286). Highlander and Watkins (1962) noted that Kennedy
strengthened his campaign because of his strong physical
appearances in the debates. The author's claimed that
"Kennedy picked up support [from voters during the
debates]. But this may not have been so much support taken
away from Nixon as the re-establishment of support that was
waving from Kennedy" (p. 47-48).12

12Tradition has argued that there was an extreme
difference in opinion between voters as to who won the
debates based upon whether the voter watched the debates on
television or listened to the debates on the radio.
Arguments have been made that those voters who watched the
Arguments regarding the effects of the debates upon voter decisions in the 1976 presidential campaign are conflicting. Witcover (1977) noted that Jimmy Carter felt he benefited greatly from the debates and it was because of the debates that he won the election:

Carter himself said . . . 'If it hadn't been for the debates, I would have lost. They established me as competent on foreign and domestic affairs and gave the viewers reason to think that Jimmy Carter had something to offer" (p. 687).

Schram (1977) provided statistical data which indicated that Carter may have been hurt by the debates more than helped by them. Schram explained that "Ford closed Carter's 30 point lead [in public opinion polls] during the period of time when the debates were being held, eventually losing by only 2 percent of the vote" (p. 436). If Carter had performed in the debates as well as he claimed he did, it is unlikely that voters would have shifted so much support toward Ford. While the debates alone cannot be proven to be solely responsible for the shift in popular opinion, a cause and effect argument can be made that since debates on television favored Kennedy as the victor [possibly influenced by what they "saw" in terms of a young, energetic Kennedy]. Those voters who listened to the debates on the radio and could only base their decision on the content of the debates favored Nixon as the victor of the debates. However, after an exhaustive review of all the available material and research data gathered at the time, researchers Vancil and Pendell (1987) stated that "after examining the historical evidence on audience response to the 1960 televised debates, we conclude that the alleged viewer-listener disagreement is unsupported" (p. 16).
the shift took place during the debates, that the debates did play a role in that shift.

In the 1980 presidential campaign, candidate delivery style seemed to have the most influence upon voter decision making. Carter's pollster, Patrick Caddell, viewed debates as vehicles for promoting challenges. He therefore advised Carter not to debate Reagan and avoid the risk of appearing on the defensive (Jordan, 1981, p. 96). Mayer (1980) explained that a further variable which Carter had to evaluate was independent candidate John Anderson:

The Carter camp was scared to death of Anderson because he was viewed as taking voter support away from the Carter campaign. Therefore, when Carter did finally did agree to debate Reagan, he insisted that Anderson not be included. (p. 21)

Reagan, aware of the support Anderson might pull away from the Carter campaign, insisted that out of fairness, Anderson be included in the debate. Carter prevailed and Anderson was not allowed to participate in the debate (Mayer 1980 p. 21)

Because of his background in radio, television, and films, Reagan had a great deal of experience with presentation skills. Reagan was able to present himself to the television viewing audience with such skill that critics such as Martel (1983) were led to claim that "even his smile communicated all of the necessary ingredients" (p. 83). It would be those skills that lead to Carter's demise. Ritter and Henry (1994) argued that "Reagan won
the audience through his superior television presentation style" and that Reagan's success in the November election could be directly attributed to his ability to attract voters with his debating style (p. 70). Martel (1983) noted that Reagan's smile alone contributed significantly to his strong performances in both the debates and the election (p. 83).

In the 1984 presidential campaign, Ronald Reagan had little need of a debate to help him win the November election. Smith and Smith (1994) noted that pre-debate polls made it clear that Reagan was preferred by enough people in states with enough electoral votes to win the election (p. 105). However, debates had become expected in presidential elections by the American public and Reagan could not refuse to debate and risk the appearance of trying to hide something. Public interest in the campaign was high with 81% of the nation's registered voters watching all or part of the debates. Throughout the debates Reagan was able to maintain his lead and Smith and Smith (1994) argued that "the presidential debates did not have a major impact on the [1984] election outcome" (p. 115).

The 1992 presidential campaign provided a first for televised presidential debates. For the first time in the history of the debates, three candidates would participate at the same time. Overall, the debates were the most
helpful for independent candidate Ross Perot. Researchers Zhu, Milausky, and Biswas (1994) noted that the first televised debate proved extremely helpful in providing voters with information regarding each candidate's position on issues. After watching the first debate, the authors argued that "viewers knew, on average, 34% more about Bush's issue position, 24% more about Clinton's, and 39% more about Perot's" (p. 319). The authors also stated that "the debate helped Perot improve his image considerably" (p. 325). The audience learned the most about Perot who was the least known candidate of the three. This information surge may account for why Perot was declared the winner of the first debate and the loser in the second debate. Hahn (1994) noted that when asked who won the first debate, 47% of the viewers selected Perot, 30% selected Clinton, and only 16% selected Bush. However, after the second debate Perot dropped to last with only 15% of the viewers declaring him the winner whereas 58% selected Clinton, and 16% selecting Bush (p. 187). Based upon the results from just the first two debates, the effects of the debates upon viewer perception could be attributed to the audience merely learning the most about an unknown candidate in one debate and then fading in interest by the second. However, as Hahn (1994) explained, in the third debate Perot was again selected the winner of the debate by 37% of the viewers. Bush and Clinton tied,
each being declared the winner by 28% of the viewers (p. 187). Voter opinion appeared to have been swayed through the course of the debates. The overall effects of the debates upon the general election can be identified in the final results. Clinton won the election but did so by only receiving 43% of the popular vote, Bush 38%, and Perot attracting 19% (Prysby & Scavo, 1993, p. 9). With the tremendous rise and fall in candidate popularity during the debates and the low vote percentage victory by Clinton in the overall election, it appears that there may be numerous variables involved in televised debates which have yet to be identified.

The effects of televised debates upon voters is vast and as of yet, not completely understood. Debates do appear to increase voter knowledge of a candidates position on issues relative to the campaign, but that knowledge seems to have little effect upon changing voters minds on election day. More research is still needed before the exact role of televised debates upon election outcomes can be assessed.

\[13\] Clinton's victory is tainted when compared to the 1988 presidential campaign where Dukakis lost the election but still carried 46% of the popular vote. However, one positive variable of the 1992 election is that 55% of the voting age population cast a presidential ballot. Not only was this a substantial increase over the 50% turnout in 1988, but represented a reversal of a 30 year decline in voter turn out at the polls (Pear, 1992, p. B4).
EFFECTS OF MEDIA COMMENTARY ON DEBATES

Presidential debates are not only "mediated" by television; they are also "mediated" by network analysts and commentators. Research on the effects of declaration of winners and losers, criticism and interpretive commentary by network analysts is still fragmentary and anecdotal. However, it is beginning to emerge as a coherent area of study. Studies of post-debate analysis by media journalists have linked it to voter perception of debate outcome. The 1976 televised debates between President Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter inspired the first studies of commentator effects. Lang and Lang (1979) conducted a study with two different groups of debate viewers. One group watched the first debate and was asked to determine who won the debate immediately after the debate was over. The second group also watched the debate but was not asked to determine a winner of the debate until several days after the debate. The first group which responded immediately after the debate declared Carter the winner by a 7-4 margin. The second group which did not respond until several days later and had access to media input declared Ford the winner by a 7-4 margin. The authors argued that since the media had declared Ford the winner of the debate in the days following the debate, a probability existed that intervening media commentary had changed the judgement of the members of second group.
In another study of the 1976 televised debates, Lupfer and Wald (1979) reported a similar conclusion. The authors found that after watching the debates, a group of viewers found no differences in candidate image immediately following the debate. However, one week later, the same viewers rated Ford more positively in areas such as honesty, fairness, and effectiveness during the debate. Lupfer and Wald concluded the change was a result of exposure to post debate commentary from network analysts.

Steeper's (1978) study identified specific media influence in viewer perception in the second 1976 televised debate. During that debate, President Ford mistakenly stated that Eastern Europe was not dominated by the USSR. While the statement was clearly an error, the average American viewer failed to notice it as such. Steeper monitored one group of debate viewers during the actual debate. Subjects were asked to rate each candidate randomly during the debate. At the time when Ford made his flawed statement, no one in the sample group noticed the error and all participants rated Ford as "OK" at that point in the debate. In addition, Steeper monitored a second group of viewers and tested them immediately following the debate. The viewers declared Ford the winner of the debate by a margin of 44 to 35. Furthermore, when the viewers were asked to comment on whether or not the candidates performed well in the debate, most commented that Ford had performed
well. The day after the debate, however, the media flooded the electorate with information regarding the flawed comment. When Steeper tested the second group on the following night after the debate, the viewers declared Carter the winner over Ford by a 61 to 19 margin. When the group was asked again to comment on whether or not the candidates performed well, this time 20% of the viewers stated that Ford did not do well and cited the flawed comment as the reason why. Steeper argued that the extreme reversal in viewer opinion was a direct result of the media criticism of Ford's mistake, a mistake most viewers initially missed. The author concluded that the "public did not know that Ford had made an 'error' until they were told so by the news media during the following day" (p. 82).

Patterson (1980) provided evidence of the media's influence in another study of the 1976 debate. A majority of viewers who were asked within 12 hours after the debate to declare a winner selected Ford. However, viewers who were asked after the 12 hour time period to declare a winner consistently selected Carter. Patterson could find no credible alternative to media exposure that could explain the shift in opinion. After reviewing all three of the 1976 debates, authors Sears and Chaffee (1979) asserted that the media had unduly influenced viewer perception. The authors noted that judgements about the debaters were
based on information obtained prior to the event. Their research found that viewers did not find the content of the debates useful in forming a judgement about the winner:

The perception of a winner is determined mostly by information other than the direct experience of watching a debate itself. Prior preferences seem to have guided immediate judgements very heavily, and the post-debate media interpretations subsequently swayed voters away from this immediate partisan division. (p. 240)

Chaffee and Dennis (1979) also linked media statements and shifts in viewer judgement in yet another study of the 1976 debates. Attempting to match the media’s statements and viewer opinion shifts, they concluded that commentary had a substantial influence:

It may well be that the press’s interpretation of the debate, based on its initial information as to the apparent victor, is more important in determining the impact on the electorate than is the debate itself. (p. 85)

In the first 1984 televised debate between Ronald Reagan and Walter Mondale, researchers Abrahamson, Aldrich, and Rohde (1986) argued that post-debate media analysis directly influenced viewer opinion of who won the debate. Polls on the night of the debate found viewers declaring Mondale a winner over Reagan by only 9 percent. For two days following the debate, the media contended that Mondale had indeed won the first debate. When follow-up polls were taken two days after the debate, viewers now declared Mondale the winner by over 49 percent. The authors concluded that the media was responsible for Mondale’s 40
percent in his margin of victory. Geer (1988) also found evidence that the media influenced viewer perception in the first 1984 televised debate. He noted that immediately after the contest, 43 percent of the respondents in a CBS/New York Times poll thought Mondale had won, while 34 percent thought Reagan emerged victorious. Yet two days after the debate, Mondale was perceived by 66 percent of the respondents as the winner, while Reagan's share declined to 17 percent. The author explained that "this large shift toward Mondale is surely attributable to the media's verdict that Mondale had bested Reagan" (p. 488).

Researchers Lowry, Bridges, and Barefield (1990) also discovered a significant link between media commentary and viewer perception for the first 1988 televised debate between Ronald Reagan and George Dukakis. The authors explained that an experimental examination of different TV exposure groups following the [first] debate found that post-debate commentary primarily reinforced voting predispositions. A control group that saw and reacted immediately to the debate was most likely to find the debate interesting, to report change in the intensity of their candidate choice, and to judge Bush's performance highly. However, the authors explained that "the group that viewed the results of an instant poll by ABC indicating that Dukakis had won the debate seemed to be influenced by the poll results" (p. 814).
Lanoue's (1991) study of the second 1988 televised debate between Reagan and Dukakis revealed a similar pattern. Lanoue explained that "the media portrayals of the debate did seem to color subjects' views about who won the encounter" (p. 85). He reported that subjects who viewed the debate and then completed posttest questionnaires immediately after the event chose Bush as the winner over Dukakis by a margin of 44 percent to 30 percent. The group that filled out the surveys after four days of exposure to media commentary declared Bush the winner by a 52 percent to 8 percent margin.

In a similar examination of the 1992 televised debates researchers Zakahi, Hacker, & Baker (1993) noted that "participants who viewed [post debate commentary] immediately following the debate, had significantly different opinions about who won the debate than those who did not watch the commentary" (p. 10).

In summary, although earlier research had established that televised presidential debates have very little effect upon voter candidate selection, the studies of media interpretation of debates has revealed a very different result. However, over the past two decades, sufficient data has been undertaken to make probable the claim that media post-debate analysis can have a significant influence upon viewer opinion of candidate performance in a debate.
DEBATES NEGATIVE EFFECT UPON POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

The relationship of the debates and their contribution to political legitimacy is a complex matter and scholars are divided in their assessment. My personal judgement is that debates come close to approximating the agrarian civic ideal, adapted of course to an urbanized and necessarily mediated form of mass communication. Subtract the soundbites and political knowledge is obtained from headlines, fragmented news stories, talk radio, and sessions on the internet. Clearly the debates present candidates in their own words making extended arguments in paired comparison with other candidates, point by point and issue by issue.

Communication researchers have been much concerned with the decline of the quality of civic discourse. Not a few have seen presidential debates as symptomatic of this decline, accordingly several researchers have argued that debates are unable to accomplish the task they are designed to do and that televised debates are a negative influence on the American political system.

Selecting a candidate to serve as the leader of one of the most powerful nations in the world is a task which should not be taken lightly. Voters need to be able to assess an individual's ability to work within a large bureaucratic system such as the United States Government. However, researchers argue that the large array of talents
and skills needed to accomplish that job cannot be revealed by a candidate in a debate. Polsby's (1979) criticism of debate as a template of presidential leadership is typical:

The ability to stimulate a bureaucratic apparatus to bring forth alternatives, while no doubt related to an ability to imagine alternatives in the first place, requires a large panoply of talents and disciplines that are not so easily revealed by the debate format. The capacity to pick correctly among alternatives, to understand the reasons for picking one alternative and not another, the capacity to see whether the selected alternative is being pursued by a government agency -- these managerial talents are quite inexpressible through debate. (p. 179)

Jamieson and Birdsell (1988) have produced similar criticism at greater length. Despite their far greater experience with the arts of rhetoric in general and debate in particular, their reaction of debate performance as a guide to presidential selection is even more thorough-going:

Debates fail to elicit or provide a means of evaluating some of the skills central to conduct in office [as President of the United States] including an ability to ask significant questions, a talent for securing sound advice, a disposition to act judiciously, and a capacity to compromise without violating conscience or basic social principles. (p. 181)

Other scholars have argued that debates have fallen short of their early promise of informing voters about issues and have instead become forums exhibiting entertainment and production values. Highlander and Watkins (1962) strongly criticized the first televised debates in 1960 and predicted that the media would
contaminate the election process. The authors argued that televised debates are "better television shows than they are well developed and significant discussions of vital issues" (p. 48). Berquist and Golden (1981) supported and extended the Highlander and Watkins criticisms. They charged that television shifted the attention of viewers away from the political process and onto issues such as each speaker's delivery, appearance, and overall presentation skills -- issues not vital to executing the office of President (p. 132). Berquist and Golden concluded their study by declaring that "televised debate formats currently in use favor perceived candidate advantage rather than the public interest" (p. 135).

From the beginning, evidence of the manipulation of presidential debates by television to produce a "show" rather than a true political confrontation has led many researchers to claim that televised debates are anything but "real" debates and hurt rather than help the election process. When the first televised debates in 1960 were labeled "The Great Debates" (Kraus 1964), researchers such as Kerr (1961), Siepmann (1962), and Auer (1962) were quick to argue that the debates were neither "great" nor "debates." Sixteen years later when the second televised debates took place in 1976, Kraus (1979) once again used the term "great debates" in a derogatory way when assessing the debates. Salant (1979) argued that not only were the
debates not "debates," but they were more "joint interviews" than anything else (p. 175). Bitzer and Rueter (1980) were so disillusioned by the inadequacies of the format that they referred to the encounters as "counterfeit debates." In their assessment of the 1980 televised debate, researchers Tiemens, Hellweg, Kipper, and Phillips (1985) also argued that, as with previous debates, the "debate" was not a "debate" because of the lack of confrontation between the candidates. The authors stated that "There is no question that lack of confrontation in the debate was attributed in part to the format. The debate was highly structured, giving no opportunity for more direct confrontation" (p. 41).

Auer (1962) explained why televised presidential debates are not debates:

A true debate is 1)A confrontation 2)in equal and adequate time 3)of matched contestants 4)on a stated proposition 5)to gain an audience decision . . . Each of these elements is essential of we are to have true debate. Insistence upon their recognition is more than mere pedantry, for each one has contributed to the vitality of the debate tradition. (p. 146)

Despite constant revision of the format with each election, televised presidential debates still possess very few of Auer's criteria. In order to make televised debates more of a show and to maintain the interest of the viewers, televised debate formats have become highly structured, focusing upon questions and answers, generally engaging some type of moderator, and often involving questions taken
from guest panelists or audience members. While this format may not create a true debate, producers and political consultants seem to believe that it does help create a more entertaining television show. Jamieson and Birdsell (1988) argued that this highly structured format contaminates the debates because "the formats do not ask the right questions, the question-and-answer format is not conducive to substantive debate, and the structure places irreconcilable demands on the candidates" (p. 165).

An even more serious charge is that the analysis of the debate may contaminate the entire election as well. Researchers have argued that the media is more concerned with identifying a winner and a loser of each debate rather than be concerned about the content. Jamieson and Birdsell (1988) argued that "by focusing on who won and who lost rather than on the positions revealed and clarified, press coverage also reinforces the views that elections are "horse races," not processes of preparing the electorate for informed decision making" (p. 171).

While the identification of a winner and a loser may sell more newspapers or attract more viewers, it creates a misguided focus both among the electorate and within the industry. When a winner is not clearly present, the media may feel it necessary to declare a winner in order to keep the horse race alive. Berquist and Golden (1981) explained how the media attempts to fulfill this role in that "when a
victor is not at once apparent, television commentators and analysts fill the vacuum by playing the dual role of referee and final judge" (p. 125). The danger is that media will preempt public discussion. As Desmond and Donohue (1981) pointed out "often, audience members do not reach final judgement [of who won] until they have discussed the debate with others and have observed the media reaction" (p. 306).

Earlier, I reported the existence of studies about the influence of the media upon voters perceptions. It has been argued that media commentary may contaminate the political process. If the electorate is no longer listening, thinking, and critically assessing issues, but waiting to be told how to think by the media, then civic discourse has been impoverished. Chaffee and Dennis (1979) noted that "a growing body of data suggests that the voters' shifting perception of the candidate's success in a debate is shaped not by actual debate performance but by the media call of who won or lost" (p. 171). Should the media be at a loss for a winner or loser, Berquist and Golden (1981) noted how the media may manipulate circumstances and "attempt to establish public expectations regarding the probable outcome of a political debate" (p. 125). Jamieson and Birdsell (1988) further noted the obsession of the media with the outcome of the debates rather than the content:
In 1984, both *Time* and *Newsweek* delayed publication by 24 hours to carry accounts of the final Mondale-Reagan debate. The headlines dramatically illustrated the concern analysts have about press reports of debates. The covers read: "Who Won and Why?" (p. 170)

In a study of the 1976 televised debates, Berquist (1994) studied the effects of time on viewers' opinions. After viewing the debates and selecting a winner on their own, Berquist discovered that those viewers who were exposed to input from the media regarding the outcome of the debate were more prone to change their opinion of who won than those viewers who were not exposed to media input (p. 36).

Other researchers worry about presidential candidates shaping the form and content of their message to accommodate media norms. Zarefsky (1992) argued that rather than engage in detailed explanations or provide complete and thorough answers to questions and attacks, candidates provide dialogue which is more adapted to the evening news:

> We have debased political debate . . . the debates have been formatted for television . . . [and as a result] thwart sustained discussions of serious issues and encourage one-liners and canned mini-speeches. The focus in political debates is on winning by not losing, or by cleverly scoring a hit against the opponent. (p. 412)

Candidates need to create one-liners and to score hits because that is what the media will use in determining a winner or a loser. The small shards of information which
the candidates provide will become the lead-in for the evening news. Sigelman (1992) noted that "between 1968 and 1988 the average sound bite on network newscasts shrank from 43 to 9 seconds" (p. 407). Candidates in televised debates accommodate the media by giving them their "9 seconds worth" of campaign information. Such practices may weaken the political process they are alleged to save if debates fail to promote a true political process, and the debate format developed for television not only contaminates the entire process but turns the debates into "non-debates." We must alter the format or revise our notion of the meaning of political discourse.

DEBATE BENEFITS

While the evidence against debates providing any significant benefit to televised debates is quite extensive, some studies indicate redeeming qualities. One of the most extensive, recent studies, that of Trent and Friedenberg (1991), argued that there are seven effects of debates upon a political campaign (pp. 229-236). While the proposed seven effects are not necessarily "bad," they are not all necessarily "good" either. Some of the proposed effects are just that -- "effects" -- and should be evaluated as such.

Effect 1: Increased Audiences. Political debates attract large audiences. Debates generate audiences far larger than those that are generated by any other
communication activity during the campaign. Larger audiences are good for the overall political process because the more people who watch, the more likely they will be to get involved in the campaign at some level.

Effect 2: Audience Beliefs are Reinforced. While debates do not provide substantial shifts in voter position, they at least reinforce the positions held by candidate partisans. This reinforcement helps to solidify a voter's support for a candidate and strengthens that candidate's foothold in an election.

Effect 3: Shifting Limited Numbers of Voters. While political debates do not normally result in massive shifts of votes, some voters may shift. In a close election, the numbers who shift as a consequence of the debates might be decisive. Even if electorates make no shift in votes, the party solidarity obtained from the reaffirmation to a particular candidate can only help the overall political process.

Effect 4: Debates Help Set Voters' Agenda. Even if voters succumb to the media's influence and allow the media to tell them what is important, at least some type of agenda has been set. Voters can now identify with a particular issue or issues and vote accordingly.

Effect 5: Debates Increase the Voters' Knowledge of Issues. Studies have indicated that voters do seem more knowledgeable as a consequence of watching political
debates. Any increase in voter awareness and knowledge of election issues is good for the political process.

Effect 6: Debates Modify Candidate's Images. When a candidate is not well known, the debate increases the public's awareness of that candidate. Voters are also able to assess the general character, personality attributes, and general competency of a candidate. All of these variables are beneficial to the political process.

Effect 7: Debates Build Confidence in U.S. Democracy. Televised presidential debates may be unparalleled in modern campaigning as an innovation that engages citizens in the political process. Debates provide voters with greater exposure to information about candidates, which possibly results in a certain degree of commitment to the election process. It is always a positive contribution whenever the democratic process is nurtured.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored the role of televised debates in the presidential election process. Televised debates have become an expected, even mandatory event in modern presidential campaigning. Media analysis of debate was found to have a significant impact upon the election process. Further, they provide vastly needed exposure for candidates and heighten interest in the election. Numerous researchers have argued that televised debates are not true debates and that this hybrid media form has contaminated
the entire process. Finally, researchers have argued that whatever its shortcomings, the debates provide several benefits to presidential elections and to the democratic process. Having reviewed televised debates from a macro perspective, the remainder of this study will concentrate on a micro perspective -- an examination of the 1992 televised presidential debates.
CHAPTER 4
HABERMAS AND LEGITIMACY TOPOI

INTRODUCTION

The examination of any rhetorical artifact requires the appropriate lens. An examination of the 1992 televised presidential debates for their relationship to the legitimacy crisis in the American political system requires a filter which allows the critic the opportunity to interpret the debates as both rhetorical and political. In this chapter, I will formulate an appropriate tool for this study by combining Habermas's notions of political legitimacy crises and his ideal speech situation.

ORIGINS OF LEGITIMACY CRISIS

Max Weber (1968) argued that legitimacy can be guaranteed in two fundamental ways. First, through "subjective" means, which may take the form of an emotional surrender to a charismatic figure, religious belief that salvation depends on obedience to authority, or belief in the absolute validity of the social order as an expression of ultimate values. Second, legitimacy may be guaranteed through the expectation of specific external effects, that is, the promise of tangible benefits that will result from the efficient performance of a political system. In either case, rhetoric plays an essential and vital role in order to articulate political benefits to the people, in formulating the means to bring about the realization of the
benefits, and in mobilizing the people on behalf of societal goals. Rhetoric also, as Bensman (1979) noted: "performs a vital socio-political function by bridging the gap between legitimacy as claimed by those who would exercise authority and legitimacy as believed by those who would obey it" (p. 17).

Later, Jurgen Habermas "democratized" Weber's concept of emphasizing the participatory and forensics dimension. Habermas (1975) defined legitimacy as "An ongoing process of reason giving, actual and potential, which forms the basis of the right to exercise authority as well as the willingness to defer to authority" (p. 43). In 1979, Habermas offered an extended definition for legitimacy of political order: "Legitimacy means a political order's worthiness to be recognized. This definition highlights the fact that legitimacy is a contestable validity claim; the stability of the order of domination (also) depends on its (at least) de facto recognition" (p. 178). Both definitions argue that legitimacy must include an implicit requirement of a rationality of good reasons. The reason giving process must involve a value system which has been socially constructed and which provides meaning by creating ties between individuals and socio-political orders. Francesconi (1982) explained that these ties, or bonds, create a "justification for the actions taken by
authorities and the very right to exercise authority [and] are weighed against the requirement of rationality" (p. 50).

RHETORIC AND LEGITIMACY CRISIS

Francesconi (1986) argued that Habermas's definition of legitimacy of political order contained three claims important for rhetoric (p. 16). First, the legitimacy of political order can be examined as a rational claim. Second, such a claim is contestable and, therefore, capable of discursive redemption or rejection. And third, a claim of legitimacy rests upon a normative evaluation of worthiness. From these three claims, Francesconi (1986) argued that four crucial terms emerge for understanding the role of rhetoric in legitimacy.

The first crucial term is "normative evaluations."

Habermas (1979) explained: "Legitimation crises are based upon a discrepancy between the need for motives declared by the state and motivations percolating up from the normative framework defining the collective social identity" (p. 180). A social body contains norms which are inseparable from its identity. These norms contain truth and the people must be able to inform the political "experts" of these norms to believe they are being represented. The political order must identify, acknowledge, and appear to support these norms to maintain legitimacy.
The second term is "contestable validity claims." In order to believe in legitimacy, there must be some relation to truth, by which he means a consensual or societal truth. Habermas (1973b) argued: "In the realm of social and political action, truth must find consensus through justification" (p. 75). A political system is justified and maintains legitimacy if it can communicate a social identity, or represent the norms of the society.

The third term is "discourse." For Habermas (1970) discourse is a reflective, interest free dialogue aimed at producing social consensus (p. 373). Normal communicative action rests upon fundamental norms of rational speech that are prerequisites for communicative competence. This concept is reflective of the public good. A legitimate political system will engage in discourse containing "interest free dialogue" reflecting the norms of the culture, indicating that the political system understands "truth."

The fourth, and final term, is "worthiness of recognition." Again, the notion of public good is thrust to the forefront. Habermas (1975) explained: "the legitimacy of political order is based upon the norms of trust and expectation" (p. 43). Citizens expect legitimate order to act in accord with the norms established by social identity and trust that authority will act in the general interest. The political order must earn its legitimacy.
James Aune (1994) argued that the political order must select from two rhetorical traditions which reflect the relationship between rhetoric and politics (p. 121). The political order can select the conception of rhetoric as mythmaking for the masses, where the elite inform the people of what they need. Or, the order may select the Sophistic and Ciceronian view of rhetoric wherein all citizens possess the skills necessary to engage in discourse which informs the experts of the needs of the people. The Ciceronian view is historically associated with American civic discourse. Jefferson admired Cicero both as a style model and as a republican martyr. The public believes that they live in a society where they are able to inform the experts about "their" needs. However, as the state intervenes, the political leadership become members of an administrative elite and are strongly tempted to consolidate their prerogatives into a permanent structure of privilege. Then a dilemma arises between private and public interests. While the leadership may acknowledge a public good, they must also maintain the stable political order -- and the two ideologies often conflict. Consequently, an advanced industrial society is simultaneously political order and world sphere. Aune (1994) explained that this dichotomy leads to the existence of contradictions. However, as long as the people believe that they are able to inform the experts of "their" needs,
then legitimacy of the political order is upheld. Should the administrative actions of the elected officials indicate a control of information — the experts shaping or selecting the social reality of the people — then the legitimacy of the system becomes suspect. As Aune (1994) puts it: "One cannot colonize the lifeworld without exacting a cost" (p. 122). The cost is generally a lack of political participation by the people who no longer believe that the political order is committed to upholding the "public good."

**IDEAL SPEECH SITUATION**

Aune (1994) articulated the limits of Habermas's theory for the examination of particular specimens of discourse:

> Truth is what we would rationally agree to in a situation of undistorted communication, one in which manipulation as well as errors of fact, wishful thinking, rationalization, and ideological positioning would not occur. (p. 124)

To achieve this level of truth, Habermas developed the concept of an ideal speech situation which is constructed through three steps: an analysis of types of speech acts, a description of the validity claims each act implies, and a description of the ideal situation in which the claims could be redeemed (Aune 1994, p. 124).

Habermas described four types of speech acts. First is "communicatives," which express the meaning of an utterance as an utterance. Second is "constatives" which
explicate the meaning of a statement with reference to the external world. Third, "representatives," explain the meaning of the self-representation of the speaker to the hearer. And fourth, "regulatives," which explain the relationship of the speaker and hearer in reference to moral and social rules that can be followed or broken (Aune 1994 p. 124).

Once a speech act is identified, the promise, or validity claim, which each act carries, can be identified. Given the right set of circumstances, the promises contained in each act can be followed through to completion. A communicative speech acts validity claim is comprehensibility. The validity claim of a constative speech act is truth. A representative speech act finds validity in truthfulness. And rightfulness is the validity claim of a regulative speech act.

While any one or more of these standards can be violated in a communication exchange, by entering into a communication act, the speaker presupposes a commitment to abide by these standards. Aune (1994) explained that the social situation which would most likely guarantee the fulfillment of these values is one in which the following four standards prevail: 1) Each speaker must have an equal opportunity to initiate and perpetuate communication; 2) Each speaker must have an equal opportunity to employ regulative speech acts, without having to obey one-sidedly
binding norms; 3) Each speaker must have an equal opportunity to employ constative speech acts -- no proposition statements are immune from criticism; and 4) Each speaker must have an equal opportunity to employ representative speech acts -- to be able to express feelings and attitudes (pp. 124-125).

DEBATE

No other communication format provides as much potential for realizing the ideal speech situation than debate. Debate, in the Anglo-American tradition, provides an opportunity for the confrontation of ideals wherein each speaker has equal opportunity to initiate the types of speech acts which Habermas presented. In a debate, the validity of Habermas's speech acts can be cross-examined and tested for comprehensibility, truthfulness, and rightfulness.

A debate format such as a televised presidential debate can also serve as a litmus test for the legitimacy of a political system. By polling the public and seeking decisions as to a winner and loser of a televised presidential debate, an audience decision is achieved. This process allows the public to inform the [political] experts of what they think and ultimately of what they want. By employing this type of feedback the debate contributes to determining the legitimacy of the political order.
METHOD: RHETORICIZING HABERMAS

Although Habermas privileged communication in his social theory, he has not developed a rhetoric. He has not adopted his scheme of ideal communication for the analysis of particular discourse. He has provided criteria for a vision of community. He has not yet developed norms for judging a situated debate.

In order to move from a universal theory of communication to the rhetorical analysis of actual legitimation appeals, we must "methodize" Habermas. First, rhetoric (as opposed to a theory of ideal communication) presupposes an opponent and an audience. Second, rhetoric is agonistic and governed by social conventions. In a debate, issues are frequently argued in terms of their rhetorical status. That is to say, opponents marshal their claims and evidence in terms of an established sequence. This sequence is a series of struggles over the facts, definitions, qualities, and procedures associated with an issue (i.e. what are the facts about a policy or action? What nature, kind or category of act is it? Is it good or evil? What procedures or implementations are being followed?).

The presidential debates of 1992 will not be analyzed for their overt positions or stock issues but for their embedded legitimate appeals. For example, two candidates might both want similar welfare reform, but one would
consign the solution to government "experts" whereas another would advocate a return to neighborhood decision making. Thus, both might express the same fiscal and humanitarian goals, but the means of attaining these goals might suggest differing orientations toward legitimacy. One might express faith in government expertise and reform from the "top" whereas the other candidate might appeal for a return to direct participation by the people.

THE TOPOI OF LEGITIMACY

In the spirit of Habermas, filtered through the lens of American ideology, three legitimation themes have been selected:

1) Citizenship: Restoring Citizen Participation. Both Habermas and American civic humanism posit a basic human need for participation in community affairs. The citizen, not the expert or the interest group, must be the primary actor.

2) Virtue: The Public Good. This topos addresses the restoration of the concept of a public good, a moral community. The government should seek to promote respect for virtues in its people (defined as education, civil order, family, property, and piety). Virtue becomes the conception of a larger public good compatible with individual rights.

3) Authority: The Role of the Government. The goal of this topos is to restore accountability. Governments must be
made accountable to the people. The source of its legitimacy is the will of the people.

My selection of topoi is not arbitrary. Topoi are stock expressions of commonplace beliefs, general political recipes for an ideal order. Their relationship to myth is that of a moral to a story. Thus, the Jeffersonian myth narratizes the "ideas" of agrarian virtue and the centrality of the yeoman.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Three themes, long hallowed as axioms of legitimate civic culture, figured prominently in the discourse of the presidential elections. They did not appear as direct overt statements so much as what Kenneth Burke (1945) has called representative anecdotes: statements of warning or admonition that thread across a whole body of discourse, acting as a synecdoche for the whole and giving many disparate statements a larger coherence and meaning. These themes are seldom stated nakedly and literally, rather they undergird whole issues and sets of issues as a general imperative or orientation. They make implicit sense of diverse and seemingly conflicting statements.

My order of procedure will be to review the debaters in a sequential fashion throughout. I will chart the three legitimacy themes as they are used as strategic rhetorical appeals during the discussion of the contested issues. Next I will attempt a summary statement for each candidate.
detailing his apparent position on these themes and his skillful use of them in the debates. Finally, I will attempt to evaluate the impact of the legitimacy theme on the campaign in particular, and presidential discourse in general.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the origin of a legitimacy crisis has been identified as the byproduct of the existence of contradictions arising from an advanced industrialized society. When the notion of the public good is questioned or threatened, a legitimacy crisis emerges and the authority of a political system is questioned. A Ciceronian style of rhetoric has been identified as the appropriate rhetorical response for a system experiencing a legitimacy crisis. Habermas's ideal speech situation has been shown as the best rhetorical tool for achieving the values outlined by Habermas and the debate format was argued as the most appropriate method for executing Habermas's theory. Finally, Habermas's ideal speech situation was translated into a series of thematic appeals. The following chapter will examine the strategic use of these appeals within the presidential debates of 1992.
CHAPTER 5
LEGITIMACY CRISIS RHETORIC
IN THE 1992 TELEVISION PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES
INTRODUCTION
This chapter will begin with a description of the debates, detailing their general procedures and their particular settings and differences in format. Then the chapter will proceed to a sequential analysis of each debate using the legitimation topoi identified in Chapter Four.

THE COMMUNICATION ECOSYSTEM OF THE DEBATES
The 1992 televised presidential debates were staged over a nine day period beginning on Sunday October 11, 1992 and concluding on Monday October 19, 1992. Their impact upon the overall election has been documented. CBS election coverage on November 3, 1992 reported that of all the possible influences on voters decisions, the presidential debates were the most important element (Crawford, 1993). Sandell, Mattley, Evarts, Langel, and Ziyati (1993) also observed that when asked what influenced their decision in selecting a candidate, voters most often cited the economy (the central focus of all three of the debates); the second most mentioned influence was the debates. Only the 1960 televised debates attracted similar notoriety. Neither the 1976, 1980, 1984, nor the 1988 televised debates were determined to have as much influence upon the outcome of the elections.
The 1992 debates were unique in that they placed three presidential candidates together on the same stage. Although the effect of this unique format has yet to be ascertained, Prysby and Scavo (1993) speculated that the presence of three candidates changed the dynamics of the election campaign and the debates in favor of a particular candidate. The authors opined: "Perot's focus on the deficit and the economy meant that there were two candidates criticizing Bush's performance, and the three candidate debate format may have prevented Bush from focusing more heavily on Clinton's personal characteristics" (p. 9).

Several different debate formats were employed. Debate one consisted of a series of direct questions from a panel of journalists with specific amounts of time designated for each candidate's answer and response time. Debate two was a town hall meeting with the audience members -- average citizens -- being allowed to ask questions of any candidate. Debate three was split into two parts. For the first half of the debate, a single moderator was allowed to ask any candidate any question he desired. For the second half, a panel of journalists were introduced and allowed to ask the candidates questions of their choice. For the last half, the debates returned to the structured time formulas of the first debate.
Debate One

The first televised presidential debate, held Sunday October 11, 1995, took place on the campus of Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. The debate was moderated by Jim Lehrer and consisted of a series of questions asked of the candidates by three journalists: John Mashek of the Boston Globe, Ann Compton of ABC News, and Sandy Vanocur, a freelance journalist. When a candidate was asked a question, he would have two minutes to answer. Following his answer, the other two candidates would each have one minute to respond. All three debaters were fairly reserved in the first debate with no significant or memorable exchanges taking place between them.

Ross Perot was declared the winner of the first televised debate by 47 percent of the viewers polled. Many critics attributed his victory to the fact that he was relatively unknown and provided the most "new" information of the three candidates. Bill Clinton placed second, carrying 30 percent of the viewers polled, while George Bush finished a very distant third, carrying only 16 percent of the vote (Hahn 1994, p. 194).

Debate Two

The second televised presidential debate was held Thursday October 15, 1992 at the University of Richmond in Richmond, Virginia. The debate was moderated by Carole
Simpson and the debate format consisted of a town hall meeting where members of the audience were permitted to ask the questions. While the moderator attempted to allow each candidate equal answer and response time, since several of the audience's questions were directed specifically toward a single candidate, equal time was not always possible. This was the only debate in which Perot was not declared the winner. He finished last carrying only 15 percent of the votes. George Bush was able to finish in second place but only by one percentage point over Perot, gathering just sixteen percent of the viewers polled. Bill Clinton was the runaway winner of the second debate with a whopping 58 percent of the public vote (Hahn 1994, p. 201). Clinton's victory in the second debate is particularly noteworthy because he lobbied heavily for, and insisted upon, the use of the town hall format for the televised debates (Fouhy 1992). When the public response to the second debate was extremely favorable, Clinton made sure that the public knew the format was his idea.

The town hall format allowed the citizens to confront the candidates with some very tough questions. Many of the questions forced the candidates to have to provide hard, truthful answers for the audience. Of particular note was President Bush stumbling and searching for an answer to a question of how had the national debt affected him personally.
Debate Three

The third debate was held on Monday October 19, 1992 at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan. The debate was moderated again by Jim Lehrer and the format consisted of two parts. In the first half of the debate, moderator Lehrer would ask the candidates questions with follow-up answers allowed by each candidate. The second half of the debate consisted of a panel of three journalists -- Susan Rook of CNN, Gene Gibbons of Reuters, and Helen Thomas of United Press International -- who would ask the questions. Time constraints of two minutes for an answer to a question and one minute for a rebuttal were used for the second half of the debate.

The format of the third debate produced some very heated exchanges between the candidates. Of interest was Ross Perot's challenge to President Bush to provide for the American public papers containing his exact orders to U.S. Ambassador Glaspie on the Eve of the Gulf War. Bush took exception to the question and a heated debate ensued. Governor Clinton capitalized on Perot's attack and used the opportunity to challenge Bush's integrity.

After scoring poorly in the second debate, Perot rebounded and was declared the winner of the third and final debate by 37 percent of the viewers. While this number was not particularly high, it was enough to propel Perot past both Bush and Clinton who tied for second with
28 percent each. The scores represented a significant drop for Clinton from his 58 percent victory in debate two, and a significant increase for Bush who had scored only 16 percent in both debates one and two.

ANALYSIS: THE DEBATES

Debate One

The first debate began with each candidate being asked by Jim Lehrer to provide an opening statement in which they would explain what separated them from the other candidates in the presidential race. Ross Perot, as determined by a drawing, spoke first. He defined himself as a unique sort of leader, the true people's candidate. Perot explained:

I think the principle that separates me is that 5 million people came together on their own and put me on the ballot. I was not put on the ballot by either of the two parties. I was not put on the ballot by any PAC money, by any foreign lobbyist money, by any special interest money. This is a movement that came from the people. This is the way the framers of the Constitution intended our government to be, a government that comes from the people. Over time we have developed a government that comes at the people, that comes from the top down, where the people are more or less treated as objects to be programmed during the campaign . . . I go into this race as their servant, and I belong to them. So this comes from the people.14

From the very beginning, Perot set his keynote; he placed himself squarely within the Jeffersonian myth.

14All excerpts from the debates in this dissertation are taken from transcripts of the debates received through Prodigy Services Company, Prodigy Interactive Personal Services, 1992, downloaded the day following each debate.
Perot argued that his candidacy would place government back in the hands of the people, that his presidency would be accountable to the people for their actions, that the needs of citizens would set the agenda, and that his campaign would be clear of "interests." All three of the topoi of legitimacy, citizenship, accountability, and virtue, are touched upon in Perot's opening statement.

Bill Clinton was second to speak in the debate, being the first to respond to Perot. Clinton did not address any of Perot's comments and stayed with his prepared text in which he used the word "change" five times. Despite this word, Clinton never indicted the system to the extent that Perot had done. Instead, Clinton used reformer's stock idioms. It was just "time for a change" and he would be the competent agent of change for the American people:

The most important distinction in this campaign is that I represent real hope for change, a departure from trickle-down economics, I must challenge the American people to change and they must decide . . . Its time to change. I want to bring that change to the American people, but we must all decide first we have the courage to change for hope and a better tomorrow.

Except for the partisan attack against "trickle-down economics," Clinton never defined what he meant by change. However, he did refer to the topos of citizenship by claiming that "we must all decide." Citizens had a participatory role as agents of the change.
President Bush's opening statement also responded to the question of what separated him from the other candidates: "I think the one thing that dramatically distinguishes is experience. I think we've dramatically changed the world . . . and the changes are mindboggling for world peace." Bush cast himself as an expert in a difficult, frightening and mysterious world. Experience was the key to national survival, and the more experience a person had working within the expert system, the more qualified he was to be president. Of the three candidates, Bush believed that he was the only person to possess this type of experience in full measure. Ironically, the experience he praised was within a system which Perot had already identified as corrupt and self serving.

In the same opening statement, Bush indicated that the present political system, despite questions about its effectiveness, size, and scope, could be fine-tuned given the best personnel. Bush used the word "change" seven times in his opening statement. However, he was not referring to the type of change which the other candidates wanted. For Bush, "change" meant placing new people in the same old jobs and changing the dominant party affiliation of the Congress. He explained: "And the way we are going to get it done is we're going to have a brand new Congress. . .I'll sit down with them and work for my agenda..."

According to Bush, the old system was not fundamentally
flawed, it just needed to be given a chance with some new players. Bush's position ignored the legitimacy topoi with the exception of accountability. Bush identified the expert as the primary actor rather than the citizen. He appeared to believe that the role of the government was to lead from above; his public virtue consisted of efficiency and effectiveness.

To ensure equal time throughout the debates, Clinton was given two minutes to address the same opening question while Bush and Perot then received one minute for response statements. Clinton used his opening statement to respond to Bush's claim that his administration was essentially sound. He made a significant attack against the old "expert" system. Clinton told the audience "My wife gave me a book in which the author defined 'insanity' as just doing the same old thing over and over again and expecting a different result." The direct argument was never made, but Clinton implied that the old system was insane because it never got anything done. An insane system, by extension, cannot be reformed, it must be smashed. Clinton also attacked expert political insiders when he declared that what worked in the new world order was not "government for the benefit of the privileged few." This statement exemplified the topos of accountability and virtue: Government of the people and a broad sphere of public good.
After Clinton completed his opening statement, Bush interrupted and stated that he had something else to add to what he felt distinguished him from the other candidates. He noted that earlier in the campaign, Clinton had made a reference to America "falling apart at the seams" and needed to be overhauled:

I think he said that the country is coming apart at the seams. Now I know that the only way he can win is to make everybody believe the economy is worse than it is, but this country's not coming apart at the seams, for heaven's sakes. We are the U.S. of America. In spite of the economic problems, we're the most respected economy around the world. Many would trade for it . . . I would hate to be running for president and think that the only way I could win would be to convince everybody how horrible things are.

This statement presented Bush as a defender of the legitimacy of the present system and condemned the use of de-legitimizing rhetoric as strategic and insincere. He hinted that the perception of economic woes had been manufactured. Bush indicated he believed complaints were largely illusory, placing him above and away from the experience of ordinary people.

At the close of his statement, Bush would again make a reference to the essential soundness of the system and that a mere change in party hegemony would redeem it. Bush exclaimed: "I believe we can get it done now. You're going to have a whole brand new bunch of people in Congress that are going to have to listen to the same American
people I'm listening to." This gesture to the primacy of the citizen was rather pale.

When allowed an opportunity to respond to the other candidates' opening statements, Perot humorously reiterated his outsider status, he was one of the people, not a member of the corrupt political system which the public had come to distrust. Perot declared: "Well they've got a point. I don't have any experience in running up a $4 trillion debt. I don't have any experience in gridlock government . . . ." Thus, Perot discredited the experience arguments which the other candidates had made by identifying the consequence of their experience. Perot portrayed himself as a non "expert" and as an advocate for the topoi of legitimacy.

During the volley of opening statements about candidate character (an issue played upon very heavily by George Bush), Perot seized the opportunity to dramatize his citizen status. He was not a part of the typical dirty politics of character defamation which members of the system usually get caught up in. Perot supported his promise of putting political decision making back into the hands of the public by asserting: "I think the American people make their own decisions on character . . . ." Thus, Perot showed that he trusted the competence and moral authority of the people. They, not the candidates, would
judge who was a good person and who was a bad person. This comment exemplified the topos of citizenship.

During the series of statements and responses regarding candidate character, Clinton made a statement which contradicted his previous criticism of the political system. He responded to an attack by Bush regarding his patriotism and military service: "I honor all those who serve our country, including Admiral Crowe who was your chairman of the Joint Chiefs and who's supporting me." The system might be insane and in need of change, but Clinton now claimed to have ties with experts who supported him. While seemingly contradictory, this statement supported the nation and its survival (public good) rather than the particular policies of the present administration.

However, Clinton may have weakened his citizenship theme in his discussion of his plan to reduce the deficit. Clinton declared: "Nine Nobel Prize winning economists and 500 others, including numerous Republican and Democratic business executives have endorsed [my plan] because it offers the best hope." Clinton implied that he was not just offering vain promises to the people, but he had the approval of experts who knew about economic issues. Clinton cast himself as well connected with political experts.

In discussing deficit reduction proposals, Bush criticized a gas tax proposed by Perot and declared that
his plan was better. Bush argued that even though his plans may not have worked in the past, they would now. He would go through the proper channels and get his ideas passed through Congress. The reason Bush would be able to do this was because of the new officials who would be elected to Congress. Bush explained: "And with this new Congress coming in, gridlock will be gone, and I'll sit down with them and say let's get this done." While Bush offered no explanations other than superior partisan competence, as to why the new Congress would be any better than the old, he continued to support the system and claimed that even though it had failed to work in the past, it would work now, we just had to believe in the system. For Bush, there was no need to restore citizen participation or government accountability.

John Mashek asked the next question which concerned converting military jobs to private industry. Mashek made reference to an article in that day's St. Louis Post-Dispatch in which a woman had written a letter and inquired if she could ask the candidates about the lack of a plan to convert defense-oriented industries to other purposes, an issue she was very concerned about. Bush returned to his previous statements regarding the state of the economy and stated: "But we are not coming apart at the seams... But tell her [the woman] it's not all that gloomy; we're the United States of America!" Bush relied on national pride
and rebukes to console a person afraid of losing their job. By not addressing the voter as an individual, Bush violated the topoi of citizenship and accountability.

While Clinton had formerly attempted to demonstrate his ties with the experts, his response to the problem of converting military jobs now criticized the current system as slipshod and unresponsive. Clinton complained: "This administration may say they have a plan, but the truth is they have not even released all the money, the paltry sum of money, that Congress appropriated." The attack was meant to be directed as discrediting the Bush administration, but he also attacked Congress in the process as lacking accountability.

The next question came from Ann Compton who asked Perot how he would use the powers of the presidency to get more people back into good jobs? Perot began his answer with a statement designed to frame him as a tribute of the people rather than a professional politician. Perot began: "Step one, the American people send me up there . . ." The only way Ross Perot was going to be president was if the people sent him -- not "elected" him -- but "sent" him. The topos of citizenship was supported because the people were making the decisions and the choices, not the experts.

When addressing the issue of job creation, Clinton presented an uncharacteristically conventional plan by
working within the current political system. Clinton stated: "On the first day I was inaugurated, I would meet with the leaders of the Congress, and we would present a jobs program." The same Congress that had previously allotted a "paltry sum of money" would now sit down with him and work on a jobs program. This statement could potentially identify Clinton as an expert whose presence was crucial to success. If that was the case, then Clinton had affirmed the legitimacy of the system he had just finished bashing.

When Bush responded to a question regarding how he would use the office of the presidency to create jobs, he explained: "What I'm going to do is say to Jim Baker when this campaign is over, all right, you do in domestic affairs what you've done in foreign affairs." Bush was going to hire the appropriate technician to do the job which the public perceived to be his responsibility. This type of action would remind the public of their perception of wealthy people who hire others to do their work for them. Bush continued to cast himself as a wealthy elite insider.

At the end of his answer regarding the hiring of Baker, Bush once again made a reference to how well the system would function with a new Congress in place. Bush stated: "We're going to have a new Congress, and we're going to say to them, you've listened to the voters the way
we have. Nobody wants gridlock anymore, and so let's get the program through."

The focus of the debate turned next to foreign affairs. Bush seized the opportunity to list all of his accomplishments. He felt that his experience in this area was what qualified him to be president. In responding to a question regarding what the U.S. should do in the post cold war world, Bush exclaimed:

Well, we are still the envy of the world in terms of our military . . . I worked out a deal with Boris Yeltsin to eliminate -- get rid of entirely -- the most destabilizing weapons of all, the SS-18 . . . so, we've got a good military . . . But we're so -- turned inward we don't understand the global picture.

Bush's identification of his personal relationship with Yeltsin and his discourse scolding the American public for focusing too much upon domestic affairs indicated that he was not just an expert, but Bush knew what was better for the country then the people did. Bush failed to identify with any of the topoi.

Next, Ann Compton asked the candidates what they thought America should do to address problems in Somalia and Bosnia. In particular, she wanted to know if we should engage in military action to preserve human rights. Bush spoke first and stated that he would act based upon what the experts told him, not based upon what the people wanted. Bush explained: "I am not going to commit US force until I know what the mission is, till the military
tell me that it can be completed, and till I know how they can come out." Bush seemed consumed with experts, not the fighting spirit of America as Reagan might have been. The role of citizen input in government affairs and the citizen-soldier in combat seemed a distant reality to him.

Perot responded with a statement demonstrating that he would never act outside the will of the people and recognized how military action hits the working middle class the hardest:

If we learned anything in Vietnam is you first commit this nation before you commit the troops to the battlefield. We cannot send our people all over the world to solve every problem that comes up . . . our all-volunteer armed force is not made up of the sons and daughters of the beautiful people; it's the working folks who send their sons and daughters to war.

While not implicit, Perot did imply that the experts, or insiders, had the ability to protect their children while the hard working middle class did not. Perot was promising to protect those children because he would never send them to a war which the people had not agreed to. Once again, Perot indicated that the public would dictate what the government would do.

At this point, the panel of journalists asking questions turned the focus of the debate to domestic affairs. Clinton seized this opportunity to shift direction again and attempted to now identify with the common citizen. Clinton declared: "I know a lot about family values. I was born to a widowed mother who gave me
family values, and grandparents. I've seen the family values of my people in Arkansas . . ." Clinton did not come from a family of means but worked his way to the top just like every other hard working American. He was one of the people, not an elite insider born into means. He seemed to imply that political virtue was located in the typical American.

Bush responded to the question by attempting to emphasize the need for a good strong family unit and criticized the high divorce rate in the country. Bush scolded the public: "I'm appalled at the highest outrageous numbers of divorces -- it happens . . . but it's gotten too much." This statement cast Bush as seeing himself as superior to a large majority of people in the country who had experienced divorce. His family intact and a good healthy family unit appeared to be the golden standard. While his response did uphold virtue, it implied that the people were wanting and had to be lectured to by a politician.

Next, Sandy Vanocur asked the candidates a question regarding the legalization of drugs in the United States. Perot used this opportunity to criticize the poor job that the past "insiders," the political experts, had been doing about the problem:

Now, let's look at priorities. You know we went on the Libyan raid . . . because we were worried to death that Gaddafi might be building up chemical weapons. We've got
chemical warfare conducted against our children on the streets in this country all day every day, and we don't have the will to stamp it out.

Perot indicated that when the insiders could do something that was simple and would make them look good and get re-elected, they did. However, when they needed to do something really hard and tough, they did not. Perot cast the experts as not being committed to upholding any type of virtue for this country at all, but merely personal success.

Perot also used the drug question to extend his theme of putting people in charge again: "Now, if I get up there, if you send me . . ." Perot does not state that he would "win" the election, or he would even be "elected." He communicated that if he went to Washington it would be because the people had spoken and had sent him.

Clinton responded to the legalization of drugs question by extending his "I am one of the people" claim. Clinton stated: "I know more about this [drugs], I think, than anybody else up here because I have a brother who's a recovering drug addict. If drugs were legal, I don't think he'd be alive today." Clinton indicated that he had suffered with many of the same problems and many of the same pains which the average person had.

The next question was from John Mashek and addressed the problems of racial division in this country. Perot used his answer to criticize the old expert system and
promote his new system controlled by the people:

The first thing I'd do is, during political campaigns, I would urge everybody to stop trying to split this country into fragments and appeal to the differences between us . . . We are all in this together. We ought to love one another because united teams win and divided teams lose . . . Our diversity is our strength . . . We have got to unite and pull together.

Perot advocated that the government needed to be more accountable to the people for their actions and should strive for a more moral community.

When Clinton was asked to address the issue of racial strife in the country, he responded: "I grew up in the segregated South, thankfully raised by a grandfather with almost no formal education but with a heart of gold who taught me early that all people were created equal in the eyes of God." Clinton tried to show that he had strong ties to grassroots America and that he came from a moral environment and community. With these words, he endorsed the virtue of ordinary people.

Following the racial division question, Bush was asked why he felt his administration was being criticized for not doing enough about AIDS. In his answer, Bush openly criticized a sports hero and a gay rights group. Regarding Magic Johnson's decision to resign from the President's AIDS Commission, Bush exclaimed: "I was a little disappointed in Magic . . ." Considering Magic Johnson's enormous following of sports fans and the sympathy he had
received since his public announcement regarding being HIV positive, criticizing Johnson cast Bush as divisive, immoral and not committed to the public good. Following his comment about Magic Johnson, Bush further alienated another segment of the public by declaring that AIDS was a result of immoral behavior and that ACT-UP, a gay rights movement, was wrong to engage in some of the efforts they did:

And the other thing is part of AIDS -- it's one of the few diseases where behavior matters. And once I called somebody, "Well, change your behavior. Is the behavior you're using prone to cause AIDS? Change the behavior . . . You can't talk about it rationally. The extremes are hurting the AIDS cause. To go to a Catholic mass in a beautiful cathedral in New York under the cause of helping in AIDS and start throwing condoms around in the mass, I'm sorry, I think it sets back the cause.

If Bush was attempting to be virtuous, his attempt excites partisan comparisons between segments of the community rather than a vision of a moral community.

Perot responded to the AIDS question by indicating how the system was flawed and not helping the people. Perot expressed compassion in his answer and identified with the sentiments of many of the members of the electorate:

If you're going to die, you don't have to go through this ten-year cycle that FDA goes through on new drugs. Believe me, people with AIDS are more than willing to take that risk. We could be moving out to the human population a whole lot faster then we are on some to these new drugs.
Thus, Perot envisioned a society in which citizens would be empowered to take direct action.

In his response to the question about AIDS research, Clinton appeared to abandon his previous grassroots solution in favor of a top down general staff solution, one run by experts who placed citizens in the position of clients or participants. Clinton outlined several plans which he felt should be implemented, but all of them would be executed under federal auspices:

We need to put one person in charge of the battle against AIDS to cut across all the agencies that deal with it. We need to accelerate the drug approval process. We need to fully fund the act named for that wonderful boy Ryan White to make sure we're doing everything we can on research and treatment.

The model was clearly Sgt. Shriver and the War on Poverty, the results of which Clinton had earlier criticized.

The next question came from Ann Compton who asked Ross Perot how he intended to execute the many controversial changes he had proposed during his campaign. Perot reversed the conventional wisdom of consultants who speak in terms of constituency and interest. Perot spoke of a public or people who existed as a coherent force. Thus he invoked a concept dear to the hearts of believers in the tradition of civic discourse:

If I get there it will be because the people, not the special interests, put me there . . . we're going to inform the people in detail on the issues through an electronic town hall so
that they really know what's going on . . . the lobbyists, the PAC guys, the foreign lobbyists, and what have you, they'll be over at there in the Smithsonian . . . because we are going to get rid of them. And then the Congress will listen to the people.

Thus, Perot described a binary tension of good and evil terms. On one side were the interests and on the other, "the people." His rhetorical formation was reminiscent of W. J. Bryan's "masses vs. classes" dichotomies. Later in his answer on the same question, Perot attacked the government's lack of accountability to "the people:" "This is a town where the White House says, Congress did it; Congress says, the White House did it . . . Then when they get off by themselves, they say nobody did it." Perot's formula for attaining a legitimate political system will follow from his restoration of a public sphere. The authentic voice of the people will run the government and the government will be accountable to the people for what they do.

In responding to Perot's answer, Bush did not pursue systematic attacks. He used his time to attack the Democratic party. Bush stated: "Every 4 years, the Democrats go around and say, Republicans are going to cut Social Security and Medicare. They started it again . . . whether it's Mondale, Dukakis, whoever else it is." In other words, legitimacy is threatened by diverse strategies. Bush did not rise to the opportunity to affirm
the transcendent theme of the public good and the virtue of a reinstated citizenry.

When the candidates were asked to provide their closing statements, Perot spoke first and concluded the debate by reinforcing his platform of servanthood to the people and the need to clean out the failed experts:

I love this country. I love the principle it's founded on. I love the people here . . . We just have a bad system . . . I'm doing this for your children . . . I owe you this, and I'm doing it for you . . . I'll give you everything I have, if you want me to do it.

Perot endorsed patriotism and piety as public virtue.

Although he had spent a great deal of time in the first debate identifying himself as one with the people, Clinton's closing statement concerned his actual political practice, strategies, and tactics. These resembled those of a policy wonk who would "fix things" rather than one who would energize and inspire the people:

I'd like to thank the computer executives and the electronics executives, 2/3 of whom are Republicans, who said they wanted to sign on to a change in America. I'd like to thank the hundreds of executives who came to Chicago, 1/3 of them republicans, who said they wanted a change.

While rising out of the people, Clinton argued that he had the support of many of the leaders of industry, commerce, and high technology. His message was mixed. His discourse in the first debate indicated that he was both well connected with the experts, yet his heart belonged to the
people. His call for the restoration of legitimacy (re-invention of government) sounded a note of virtue, but lacked a strong element of civic participation, and too often it addressed constituent needs as opposed to a transcendent public good.

Bush was the final candidate to speak and in his closing comments he returned to his accomplishments in foreign affairs as having given him the experience needed over the other candidates to be president. Bush made several references to his past four years as President with an air of an insider, an uncommon man whose vision was international. It did not include the local and immediate human concerns of the citizenry:

Let me tell you a little what it's like to be president . . . you need a philosophical underpinning. Mine for foreign affairs is democracy and freedom, and look at the dramatic changes around the world. The Cold War is over. The Soviet Union is no more and we're working with a democratic country. Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, the Baltics are free. Take a look at the Middle East. We had to stand up to a tyrant.

Bush appeared to set his claim upon foreign policy, an issue in which the citizenry had least input and control. Casting himself as an historic personality, Bush also took a great deal of credit for success abroad with little acknowledgement of the role of the people. With so much attention in the debates focused on how the political system of experts had failed the people, Bush's arguments
seemed a paradigm case of one who was out of touch with the system.

Debate Two

The second televised debate began with a question from an audience member directed specifically to Ross Perot. The audience member asked: "What will you do as president to open foreign markets to fair competition from American business?" Perot indicted the expert political system and reminded the people that they would control the system in his political order:

That's right at the top of my agenda. We've shipped millions of jobs overseas and we have a strange situation because we have a process in Washington where after you've served for awhile, you cash in, become a foreign lobbyist, make $30,000 a month, then take a leave, work on presidential campaigns, make sure you've got good contacts and then go back out . . . If the people send me to Washington the first thing I'll do is study that 2000-page agreement [NAFTA] and make sure its a two-way street.

Perot appealed to the topos of authority by attacking the experts system which was corrupt. A by-product of his indictment was to implicate his opponents as being a part of that system. Additionally, Perot included the topos of citizenship in his answer when he reminded the people that they would have to decide to send him to Washington. The public would have to take charge and decide which political system they wanted.

President Bush responded to the audience member's question about foreign markets and American jobs by using
the jargon of the political insiders. He stated:

I have just negotiated with the president of Mexico the North American Free Trade Agreement — and the Prime Minister of Canada . . . I believe in free trade . . . so I will keep on as president trying to get a successful conclusion to the GATT Round, the big Uruguay Round of trade . . . I want to get one with Eastern Europe, Chile . . .

Only experts would be familiar with these terms and understand the full impact which these issues had upon a global market. Also, only a true insider could claim to have ties with other world leaders. As a result of his answer, Bush began the second debate by reminding the audience that he was a political expert, an insider, and the role of the citizen was deferred to the experts in his political order.

The next question was directed at Governor Clinton and an audience member asked:

In the real world, that is, outside of Washington DC, compensation and achievement are based on goals defined and achieved. My question is about the deficit. Would you define in specific dollar goals how much you would reduce the deficit in each of the 4 years of a Clinton administration and then enter into a legally binding contract with the American people, that if you did not achieve those goals that you would not seek a second term? Answer yes or no and then comment on your answer.

Governor Clinton's first response to the question was "no," he would not make such an agreement and then he proceeded to explain why. In his answer, Clinton returned to the tactic he employed in the first debate of name dropping
experts who supported his plans and his candidacy. Clinton reminded the people: "Nine Nobel prize winners and over 500 economists and hundreds of business people, including a lot of Republicans said, this [his plan] is the way you've got to go." Clinton demonstrated that he was well connected and supported by experts.

In addressing the reduction of the deficit, Perot asserted that he would assume direct responsibility (accountability). He further noted that he had been "drafted" by the people because others had failed: "I'm just a businessman . . . The American people asked me to get into it [the race] . . . Now it's not the republicans' fault, and it's not the democrats', and what I'm looking for is who did it? . . . Somebody somewhere has to take responsibility for this."

Bush responded to the deficit question with a technical-legal solution, the passage of a balanced budget amendment:

Give us a balanced budget amendment. He [Clinton] always talks about Arkansas having a balanced budget, but he has a balanced budget amendment. I'd like to have what 43 governors have - the line item veto, so if Congress can't cut, let the president have a shot at it.

Bush attributed Clinton's success to legal compliance. He argued that passage of a similar law would produce a similar result. Legal coercion rather than voluntary and creative action was the order of the day. The answer
appeared to indicate that Bush did not believe that the government could not be accountable to the people unless forced to by law. The topos of moral authority was not upheld.

Bush further muddied the government accountability issue when during his answer to the budget deficit question, he proposed an additional solution to balancing the budget. Bush indicated that he would like to offer the American public the chance to pay off the debt by checking a box on their income tax forms which would force Congress to put a specified amount of money toward the debt. This proposal made Bush appear as if he was trying to pass his responsibility off on the public perhaps already cynical about the "off-budget" financing of Congress. The audience was left wondering in what way Bush saw himself and the government accountable beyond legal necessity and technical fixes.

The next question came from an audience member who urged the candidates to stop attacking one another's character and stick to issues. The audience member asked:

The amount of time the candidates have spent in this campaign trashing their opponents' character and their program is depressingly large. Why can't your discussions and proposals reflect the genuine complexity and the difficulty of the issues to try to build a consensus around the best aspect of all proposals?

While Perot promised that he would not mud sling and stick to the issues, he did incorporate an attack message which
seemed to diminish the others while praising his candidacy and bashing the present system. Perot stated:

> I couldn't agree with you more. Let's get off mud wrestling, let's get off personalities and let's talk about jobs, health care, crime, the things that concern the American people. I'm spending my money, not PAC money, not foreign money my money to take this message to the people."

Bush had a difficult time handling the request from the audience member asking each candidate to stop the character assassinations and mud slinging and to just stick to the issues of the campaign. Rather than agree to the request or acknowledge any wrong doing on his part, Bush defended his actions. He began his answer by saying "In the first place, I believe that character is a part of being president." This statement implied that if he could prove that he was the only candidate with the appropriate character required to be president, then his negative campaign attack messages would be justified. Bush then pointed his finger at Clinton as having started the exchanges of negative attacks in the first place. He explained: "I think the first negative campaign run in this election was by governor Clinton, and I'm not going to sit here and be a punching bag; I'm going to stand up and say, hey, listen, here's my side of it." Bush seemed unable to manage the transcendent gesture.

Clinton used his response to the request to stop the negative campaigning to demonstrate how he had spent the
past year offering town hall meetings and thus engaged in offering issues rather than images to the people. He might be well connected with leading experts, but he was still one of the people. Clinton explained: "I suggested this format tonight. I started doing these formats a year ago in New Hampshire and I found that we had huge crowds because all I did was let the people ask questions and I tried to give very specific answers." Thus, Clinton endorsed the topos of citizenship, placing the citizens at the heart of the political process. He had sought their ideas and shared in their deliberations.

Unsatisfied with the candidate's answers, a second audience member stood and pressed the candidates to make an even stronger commitment of just sticking to the issues. The audience member exclaimed: "Could we cross our hearts? It sounds silly here but could we make a commitment? You know, we're not under any oath at this point but could you make a commitment to the citizens of the US to meet our needs, and not yours. Its a real need that I think we all have."

President Bush was the first to respond to the pledge request and stated: "I think it depends how you define it." Bush appeared to quibble over definitions before a weary electorate. In so doing, he completely violated the topos of virtue. His needs and his agenda were more important than what was good for the people.
When Perot was pressed to take the pledge he quickly affirmed a portrait of the public as a long suffering body, tired of bickering and demanding serious action: "Just no hedges, no ifs, ands or buts. I'll take the pledge because I know the American people want to talk about issues and not tabloid journalism. So I'll take the pledge and will stay on the issues." Perot was the only candidate to step forward and make such a pledge.

Perot did, however, follow up his statement by noting that he could remain more virtuous than his rivals:

Now just for the record, I don't have any spin doctors. I don't have any speech writers . . . but you don't have to wonder if it's me talking . . . I don't have any foreign money . . . no foreign lobbyists . . . no PAC money . . . I've got 5.5 million hard-working people who put me on the ballot and I belong to them."

And he was, after all, only running for president because the people had asked him to.

The next question from the audience regarded the infrastructure of the nation. The audience member asked: "What are your plans to improve the physical infrastructure of this nation, which includes the water systems, the sewer systems, our transportation systems, etc?" The question indicated that the citizen believed there to be a problem. President Bush preferred to accept the implicit indictment of the question: "We passed the most furthest looking transportation bill in the history of this country - $150 billion for improving the infrastructure." The failure of
other infrastructure bills were blamed on a bad Congress.

Bush declared:

We go to Washington and it's very difficult to get it [bills] through Congress. But there's going to be a new Congress. No one likes gridlock. There's going to be a new Congress because the old one [was full of scandals]. You're going to have a lot of new members of Congress. And then you can say, help me pass these programs.

Bush invalidated the citizen's concerns by implying that the indictment was exaggerated. Inadequacies were not his fault; the blame rested with Congress. Bush came closer to attacking the legitimacy of the system, but minimized his own accountability in the process.

Clinton used his response to the infrastructure question to attack the "experts" who had corrupted the political system. Clinton referred to an infrastructure bill being presented to Congress at that time which addressed an issue referred to as enterprise zones. Clinton declared: "That bill pays for these urban enterprise zones by asking the wealthiest American to pay a little more. And that's why he wants to veto it, just like he vetoed an earlier bill this year." The relationship of this response to legitimation is complex. On the one hand it attacked prevailing practices as ignoring the public good; on the other hand it played the old class card, acknowledging that Americans are deeply divided by income, residence, and interest. No transcendent or consensual note is sounded.

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The candidates were next asked to state their position on gun control. The audience member queried:

As you are aware, crime is rampant in our cities. And in the Richmond area — and I'm sure it's happened elsewhere — 12-year-olds are carrying guns to school. And I'm sure when our Founding Fathers wrote the Constitution they did not mean for the right to bear arms to apply to 12-year-olds. So I'm asking: Where do you stand on gun control, and what do you plan to do about it?

Clinton used his response to endorse civil order and condemn partisanship. Clinton explained: "There is a crime bill which would put more police on the street, which was killed this session by a filibuster in the Senate, mostly by Republican Senators, and I think it's a shame it didn't pass." With his answer, Clinton appeared to be advocating a basic coalition of community: civil order and safety while placing republicans on the side of special interests. He could not, however, resist an attack which may have sounded too fluent and professional to the disaffiliated millions outside of either party and to the Perot loyalists who were beginning a new world.

In his response to the question of gun control, Perot referred to his platform for letting the people decide. According to Perot: "This is going to take, first, building a consensus at grassroots America. Right from the bottom up, the American people have got to say they want it . . . take it to the people." For Perot, the citizens would have to decide first, then he [the government] would
be accountable to execute the will of the people. Citizen wisdom and virtue would set the agenda, force the issue, and sit in judgement on their execution.

Next, an audience member stood and asked: "Please state your position on term limits, and, if you are in favor of them, how will you get them enacted?" Bush responded first and provided a very interesting response. He began by stating that he strongly supported term limits for members of Congress. Bush then explained his answer. Placing term limits on Congress was a way of getting the Democrats out of the House of Representatives and filling it with Republicans. If that would happen then Bush could accomplish all sorts of plans. Bush stated: "For 38 years one party has controlled the House of Representatives, and the result, a sorry little post office that can't do anything right and a bank that has more overdrafts than all the Chase Bank and Citibank put together." While Bush appeared to be in support of the will of the people, he had framed his answer in terms of partisan advantage.

Clinton's response to the question of term limits provided one of the best examples of his platform of an essentially "fix-it-up" attitude toward the system. Clinton explained that small changes might be effective:

I'm against them [term limits] . . . Now let me tell you what I favor instead. I favor strict controls on how much you can spend running for Congress, strict limits on political action committees, requirements that
people running for Congress appear in open public debates like we're doing now.

Clinton's remedy did not match his earlier critique of government, but it was uttered in a style that sounded bold and reminded this writer that legitimacy is a feeling, not wholly rational or consistently definable. Under Clinton's remedy, career politicians could stay in office as long as they wanted or could get elected, but the people could rest comfortably knowing that all of the elections would be fair and honest because the candidates would always debate the issues publicly. Legitimacy appeared to be an uneven affair for Clinton. On one issue it was irretrievable, on another easily recoverable.

In his response to the issue of term limits, Perot was very clear and straightforward in his answer stating that he would set an example of how a true servant of the people should act. Perot declared: "If the American people send me up to do this job, I intend to be there one term. I do not intend to spend one minute thinking about re-election... I would take absolutely no compensation; I go as their servant." He concluded his answer by pointing out that the people in Washington were basically good people, they were just "in a bad system. I don't think there are any villains, but, boy, is the system rotten." Perot took a firm stand regarding how he viewed the government's accountability to the people. The government was to serve the people, and he would go to Washington as the ultimate
example of a true servant, taking no pay and serving for just one term. Perot consistently separated system from people. People equaled good, virtue, wisdom, and competence. The system equaled evil, corruption, short sightedness, and foolishness.

The next question in the debate came from an audience member who wanted to know: "Do you attribute the rising costs of health care to the medical profession itself, or do you think the problem lies elsewhere? And what specific proposals do you have to tackle this problem?"

In Perot's response, he cleverly noted that the question itself was symptomatic of citizen alienation:

You own this country but you have no voice in it the way it's organized now. You have a government that comes at you. You're supposed to have a government that comes from you . . . Now, you've got to have a government that comes from you. You've got to reassert your ownership in this country and you've got to completely reform our government.

Perot used his answer to remind the audience that the present system did not conform to a Jeffersonian ideal type, and he proposed they reclaim it.

At this point in the debate an audience member stood and asked each of the candidates: "How has the national debt personally affected each of your lives? And if it hasn't, how can you honestly find a cure for the economic problems of the common people if you have no experience in what's ailing them?" Perot responded that the size of the national debt had acted as a call, it had caused him to
leave his private life and get involved in the campaign. Evoking the old Roman ideal of Cincinnatus, who had left the plough to save his country and then returned to his farm, Perot had left his affairs to save his country from danger too. Perot appeared selfless, truly committed to the public good.

Bush had difficulty framing the question and his answer was nearly incoherent. The questioner and Bush engaged in a tense exchange:

Bush: Well, I think the national debt affects everybody.
Audience Participant: You personally.
Bush: Obviously it has a lot to do with interest rates . . .
Simpson (Moderator): She's saying, You personally.
Participant: You, on a personal basis — how has it affected you?
Simpson: Has it affected you personally?
Bush: I'm sure it has. I love my grandchildren...
Participant: How?
Bush: I want to think that they're going to be able to afford an education. I think that's an important part of being a parent. If the question -- maybe I -- get it wrong. Are you suggesting that if somebody has means that the national debt doesn't affect them?
Participant: What I'm saying is . . .
Bush: I'm not sure I get — help me with the question and I'll try to answer it.
Participant: Well, I've had friends that have been laid off from jobs.
Bush: Yeah.
Participant: I know people who cannot afford to pay the mortgage on their homes, their car payment. I have personal problems with the national debt. But how has it affected you and if you have no experience in it, how can you help us, if you don't know what we're feeling?
Bush: Well, listen, you ought to be in the White House for a day and hear what I hear and see what I see and read the mail I read . . .
But I don't think it's fair to say, you
haven't had cancer. Therefore you don't know what's it like. I don't think it's fair to say that if you haven't been hit by it personally . . .

Bush responded as if he were under personal attack. In his clumsiness, he lost an opportunity to identify his own fate with that of ordinary citizens and to make their struggle one with his struggle.

Clinton used his response to the question to attack the incompetence of past administrations:

I'll tell you how it's affected me. Every year Congress and the president sign laws that make us do more things and gives us less money to do it with. I see people in my state, their taxes have gone up in Washington and their services have gone down while the wealthy have gotten tax cuts.

Clinton's response depicted an institution fundamentally illegitimate in the sense that it was no longer doing the job it had been licensed to do. With more money, it provided fewer services to the average person while making more laws to protect their own economic interests.

The candidates were next questioned about the future of social security and pension funds. The audience member stated: "I would like from each of you a specific response as to what you intend to do for retirees relative to these issues [social security and pension funds], not generalities but specifics because I think they're very disturbing issues." President Bush used the question to affirm the solvency of present arrangements. In his response, Bush made such statements as: "The Social
Security system was fixed about 5 years ago, and I think it's projected out to be sound beyond that . . . . The full faith and credit of the United States, in spite of our difficulties, is still pretty good." Bush indicated that the experts had already fixed the problem and everything was under control. Citizen input was not sought.

The candidates were next asked by an audience member: "We've come to a position where we're in the new world order, and I'd like to know what the candidates feel our position is in this new world order, and what our responsibilities are as a superpower?" President Bush seized the opportunity to remind the audience that he had been conspicuously active in creating the new order. Bush informed the audience that "Since I became president, 43, 44 countries have gone democratic, no longer totalitarian . . . NATO has kept the peace for many." While his experience in foreign policy was much stronger than the other two candidates, Bush's answer celebrated past achievement rather than envisioning the future role of the US in the new order. Nor did his remarks indicate a place for youthful adventure or endeavor as Kennedy had articulated in 1960 or Reagan's vision of a beacon of hope in the 1980's.

Yet an audience member stood and asked "How can we create high paying jobs with the education system we have and what would you do to change it?" In his response,
Perot emphasized the need to do the best for the children and that meant that education reform should not be a Federal job, but a matter for committees, even neighborhoods to decide. Perot declared: "By and large, it [reform] should be local -- the more local the better. . . . You need small schools, not big schools." Perot celebrated the tradition of parent participation and local school governance. By allowing schools to be governed locally, Perot demonstrated one of the ways in which he intended to return the prerogatives of government back to the people.

Each of the candidates was then asked: "When do you estimate your party will both nominate and elect an Afro-American and female ticket to the presidency of the US?" President Bush appeared uncomfortable and his non-verbal cues suggested he regarded the question as an unjust accusation. After struggling awkwardly to provide names of minorities or women whom he felt could be on a presidential ticket in 1996, Bush observed: "This is supposed to be the year of the woman in the Senate. Let's see how they do." While Bush may not have intended this statement to be flippant, viewers of the debate might easily have interpreted it that way.

Perot's closing statement for the second debate was less coherent than his closing remarks in the first debate. In the second debate he used his closing statement to
address several loose ends regarding policies and plans which he apparently had not been able to complete during the debate. His characteristic Jeffersonian appeal celebrated the amateur ideal of the citizen-statesman: "If the American people want to do it and not talk about it, then they ought to -- you know, I'm the person they ought to consider . . . I am action oriented . . . I didn't create this mess. I've been paying taxes just like you." Perot attempted to identify himself as a regular citizen who wanted to give the government back to the people. His energetic demeanor recalled "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," a no-nonsense tribute of the people confident he could overhaul the system.

In his closing statement, Governor Clinton began by taking credit for suggesting the format for the evening, hoping the people now felt more in touch with the candidates and reminding them that they already had a little more say in their government. This allowed Clinton to demonstrate respect for the people by facilitating their role as questioner and judge. Clinton spent the reminder of his closing statement detailing his experience as Governor of Arkansas. Clinton highlighted such accomplishments as better schools, ranking first in the country in job growth, fourth in the country in income growth, and having balanced twelve consecutive budgets. Clinton was banking on his political experience in Arkansas.
to convince the public that he had the experience needed to be president because he knew how to work within political systems. Clinton also added that "we've had 24 retired generals and admirals, hundreds of business people, many of them republican, support my campaign." His experience in politics had left him well connected with the experts across a broad range of domains and backgrounds. He could marshal the experts on our behalf. Clinton appeared to present himself as both favoring and opposing the expert, while addressing the ordinary citizen alternately as partner and client.

Debate Three

The third debate began with moderator Jim Lehrer asking Governor Clinton about his budget deficit plans. Lehrer's question seemed phrased in a way that would force the governor to deal in specific terms:

You are promising to create jobs, reduce the deficit, reform the health care system, rebuild the infrastructure, guarantee college education for everyone who is qualified, among many other things, all with financial pain only for the very rich. Some people are having trouble apparently believing that is possible. Should they have that concern?

Clinton began his response by criticizing the present tax structure as unequal and unjust:

Middle-class Americans are basically the only group of Americans who've been taxed more in the 1980's and during the last twelve years, even though their incomes have gone down. The wealthiest Americans have been taxed much less, even though their incomes have gone up . . . My plan is a departure from trickle-
down economics . . . it's also a departure from tax-and-spend . . . my plan proposes that we invest and grow.

Clinton argued that the present system had been run by and for the wealthy, while it hurt the average middle-class taxpayer. He also attempted to define himself as a new type of Democrat, not associated with past Democratic presidencies which had supported a tax-and-spend mentality, a philosophy which Bush had tried to associate Clinton with all through the campaign.

Bush was provided one minute to respond to Clinton's opening comments and used the time to engage in negative attacks against Clinton. Bush attempted to associate Clinton with past Democratic presidencies: "Remember what it was like under Jimmy Carter and inflation was 15 percent?" Bush then criticized Clinton's record in Arkansas. His direct assault on the governor's record appeared gratuitous in the generally positive debate: "I think it's time I start putting things in perspective. It's not dirty campaigning because he's been talking about my record for a half a year, so we've got to do it. I gotta get in a perspective."

Finally, Ross Perot was provided an opportunity for his opening statement, and responded to what Clinton and Bush had said in their opening comments. Perot simply noted that he did not think that the other candidates' plans would balance the budget and then used the rest of
his time to remind the audience that his own plan would develop as a result of public deliberation. Referring to his several infomercials he had sponsored, Perot stated:

The one thing I have done is lay it squarely on the table in front of the American people. You've had a number of occasions to see in detail what the plan is, and at least you'll understand it. I think that's fundamental in our country, that you know what you're getting into.

Perot continued to identify the present government with exclusivity and arrogance, characteristics inimical to institutional legitimacy.

The next question in the debate came from moderator Jim Lehrer who asked President Bush to respond to criticism regarding Bush's character. Lehrer explained: "You have been criticized to have begun focusing on the economy, or health care, or racial division in this country, only after they became crises. Is that a fair criticism?" Bush responded that it was not fair and explained why it was not. After Bush responded, Lehrer turned to Ross Perot and said "Do you think that's true Mr. Perot?" Perot immediately responded "I'd like to just talk about the issues." Mr. Leher rephrased the question, still goading Perot to seize the opportunity to attack Bush. Perot responded a second time, "I will let the American people decide that. I would rather not critique the two candidates." Citing his pledge in the second debate not to
attack the other candidates, Perot appeared serious and statesmanlike.

Perot was next challenged with a question regarding his dedication and commitment. Having walked away from General Motors when he could not get his way, and having withdrawn from the presidential race in mid-July, only to re-enter in late September, Perot was asked to explain if those actions indicated how he would act as a President. After providing a long list of services he had rendered to the United States as examples of his commitment to the Nation, Perot managed to use his withdrawal and return to the presidential campaign as a way to further his argument as a response to the call of the people:

I never quit supporting you as you put me on the ballot in the other 26 states; and when you asked me to come back in, I came back in. And talk about not quitting, I'm spending my money on this campaign; the two parties are spending your money, taxpayer money. I put my wallet on the table for you and your children.

The next question in the debate regarded the auto industry and CAFE standards. Jim Lehrer asked Ross Perot "Just for the record, I take it you do not have a position on whether or not enforcing CAFE standards will cost jobs in the auto industry?" Perot quickly responded that yes, it would cost jobs. President Bush spoke after Perot and led the debate topic from CAFE standards to NAFTA. When Bush completed his statements, Lehrer turned to Governor Clinton and sought his response to the topic. Clinton
indicated that he thought NAFTA was a good idea but he could make it better. Bush re-entered the conversation at this point and tried to use Clinton's answer to suggest Clinton lacked vital experience to negotiate the agreement. Bush's past experience as president (expert), qualified him to know what the system required. As Bush described it: "See, he made my case. On the one hand it's a good deal but on the other hand I'd make it better. You can't do that as president, you have to take clear positions on one side or the other." President Bush attempted to reaffirm public identification with one of his on-going administrative goals.

Responding to an attack on his character, Clinton attempted to justify his apparent fluidity on positions as a deep respect for the American people and a concern for the complexity of difficult regulations:

That's what's wrong with Mr. Bush. His whole deal is you've gotta be for it or against it, you can't make it better. I believe we can be better. I think the American people are sick and tired of either/or solutions, people being pushed in the corner, polarized to extremes. I think they want somebody with common sense who can do what's best for the American people . . . this election ought to be about the American people.

Clinton framed his reputed uncertainty as willingness to seek out and ascertain the will of the people. Clinton defined the public as unsure of the future of NAFTA and indicated that their uncertainty required respect.
Following the exchange between Governor Clinton and President Bush, Perot was given an opportunity to respond to the volley of arguments. Perot spent a majority of his response arguing that the other candidates' pro-NAFTA positions were motivated by hidden agendas created by influence from foreign lobbyists:

Our country has sold out to foreign lobbyists. We don't have free trade. Both parties have foreign lobbyists on leaves in key roles in their campaigns. And if there is anything more unwise than that, I don't know what it is. I would like for them to look you in the eye and tell you why they have people representing foreign countries working on their campaigns . . . One country spent $400 million lobbying in 1988, our country. And it goes on and on. And you look at a who's who in these campaigns around the two candidates. They're foreign lobbyists.

Perot implied that the other candidates did not have the interest of the American people as their first priority, but were influenced by secret insider deals. This implicit attack seemed an ironic counterpoint to Perot's pledge to forgo explicit attacks of his competitors.

Moderator Lehrer then turned to Bush and asked: "Mr. President, how do you respond to that? Mr. Perot's made that charge several times. The fact that you have people working in your campaign who are paid foreign lobbyists."

Bush responded: "Most people that are lobbying are lobbying Congress. And I don't think there's anything wrong with an honest person who happens to represent an interest of another country for making his case. That's
the American way." Bush openly defended lobbyists, a group who had been presented as a symbol of corrupt government. Bush defended lobbyists as a part of the system, which despite the attacks had long been a part of the "American way." If Perot had raised any suspicion regarding lobbyists in the minds of the audience with his constant attacks against them, Bush may have fed those suspicions with his comments and alienated many voters. Bush's position could easily be interpreted as a violation of the topos of accountability and fairness in striking contrast to Perot's rejection of floating careerists as the antithesis of accountability.

Assuming a reformer's stance on the issue of lobbyists, Governor Clinton took a position representing the apparent middle ground:

I think we need more restrictions on lobbyists. We ought to make them disclose the people they've given money to when they're testifying before congressional committees; we ought to close the lawyers' loopholes; they ought to have to disclose when they're really lobbying.

By requiring lobbyists to be more accountable, Clinton appeared to attempt to make professional and citizen politics seem compatible. The current system would remain the same with lobbyists influencing decisions, but the public need not be afraid because lobbyists would practice full disclosure. His position smacked more of the information society than Jeffersonian America.
At the midpoint of the third debate, the format switched from a moderator asking questions to a set of questions proposed by a panel of journalists. While the moderator was trying to move to the second format, Perot quickly interrupted to respond to a final statement Bush had just made regarding domestic affairs. Perot interjected: "I was put on the ballot by the people, not special interests, so I have to stand up for myself . . ." Perot claimed that even though he should not interrupt, the people's interests transcended polite format and expedient agreements.

The second half of the debate began with UPI writer Helen Thomas who asked the candidates to comment on Governor Clinton's military record and his behavior during the Vietnam War. After Bush and Clinton had expressed their views, Perot was given one minute to respond. He simply stated: "I look on this as history. I don't look on it personally as relevant, and I consider it really a waste of time tonight, when you consider the issues that face our country right now." Perot cast himself as presidential, future oriented and focused on issues rather than personalities. Apparently his mission was to listen to and obey the will of the people.

The next question in the debate regarded President Bush's reversal on the tax increases of 1991. Perot used his answer to launch a systematic indictment:
Leadership is to be accountable for what you do ... Nobody ever told the American people that we increased spending $1.83 for every dollar of taxes raised. That's absolutely unconscionable. Both parties carry a huge blame for that on their shoulders. This is not a way to pay down the deficit. This was a trick on the American people ... Nobody takes responsibility for anything. We've gotta change that.

Perot vilified the government as mendacious and even dangerous. His words amount to a promise to restore legitimacy.

Perot was then confronted by CNN Correspondent Susan Rook who asked him how he would lead if he was forever seeking consensus before he acted. In fact she came close to questioning the existence of a coherent and careful public opinion. Perot responded that his presidency would clean out the old corrupt system and all of the negative influences which presently prohibited the government from getting anything done. The government would then be placed back into the hands of the people and that would stimulate action. Perot explained:

How do you get anything done when you've got all of these political action committees, all of these thousands of registered lobbyists -- 40,000 registered lobbyists, 23,000 special interest groups ... and the average citizen out here is just working hard every day. You've got to go to the people ... The public goes bonkers over town hall meetings ... they'll decide what to think ... because they want the details ... that's going back to where we started. That's having a government from the people.

Throughout the debate, Perot's rhetorical construction of
"the people" was that of a long suffering citizenry, unified in their disgust, and ready to mobilize around common sense objectives.

Bush appeared annoyed by the next question asked of him regarding why there were so few women in key positions in his administration and his campaign. Rather than provide a list of names of women who were very influential in his administration, Bush appeared to become defensive and stated: "This is a little defensive on your part, Susan, to be honest with you. We've got a very good record appointing women to high positions of trust." Bush appeared to feel threatened, as if he were demeaned by having to undergo examination in a public forum.

When asked about women and minorities in his campaign, Clinton politely and courteously provided the names of women in key positions in his administration and various awards he had received from women's groups for his sensitivity and involvement of women in high levels of government. By listing the names of women involved in his campaign and awards he had won, Clinton appeared to demonstrate his deep compassion for, and sensitivity towards the needs of the people.

Perot used part of his response time to the "women in your campaign" question to make various claims regarding how the Bush administration had handled Saddam Hussein. Perot accused the Bush administration of creating Hussein
and covering up their actions by refusing to release papers which contained orders sent to Ambassador Glaspie on the eve of the Persian Gulf war. Bush interrupted and said Perot had attacked national honor and he had to reply. The exchange went as follows:

Bush: We did not say to Saddam Hussein you can take the northern part of Kuwait.
Perot: Well, where are the papers?
Bush: That is absolutely absurd.
Perot: Where are the papers?
Bush: Glaspie has testified, let's be factual.
Perot: Talk to any head of any of those key committees in the senate. They will not let them see the written instructions given to Ambassador Glaspie. And I suspect that in a free society owned by the people, the American people ought to know what we told Ambassador Glaspie to tell Saddam Hussein . . . I'd like to see those written instructions.

The verbal exchange was followed by very loud applause and cheers from the audience indicating that the people did indeed want to know what went on behind closed doors. Perot appeared to dramatize the suspicion of "the people" toward their leader.

During his next response time to a question, Perot returned briefly to his clash with Bush and stated: "Now I say whose country is this? This is ours. Who will get hurt if we lay the papers on the table? I just object to the fact that we cover up and hide things." This statement further indicated Perot's commitment to an informed and participative electorate.
Clinton capitalized on Perot's attacks regarding Bush and Hussein by emphasizing the incumbent president's status as an elite insider, an effective leader who nonetheless made secret deals without informing the American public:

But in late 1989 the president signed a secret policy saying we were going to continue to try to improve relations with him [Hussein], and we sent him some sort of communication on the eve of his invasion of Kuwait that we still wanted better relations . . . It was wrong to coddle Saddam Hussein when there was no reason to do it and when people at high levels in our government knew he was trying to do things that were outrageous.

Clinton's description separated Bush from the tradition of the open society while tarnishing his image as a stainless leader.

In defending his actions with Hussein, Bush responded:

Yes, we tried, and, yes, we failed to bring him into the family of nations; he had the 4th largest army. But then when he moved against Kuwait, I said this will not stand. And it's hard to build a consensus. We went to the UN . . . Congress was dragging its feet . . . A president can't always vote with the majority. Sometimes he has to act.

Bush appeared to endorse the idea that a president must act without the consensus or support of the people. Indeed, a president had enjoyed a crisis mandate, but the end of the Cold War had weakened their mandate. It must now be "argued for" to an extent that would have seemed not necessary a few years previous. Thus his reply seemed more defensive than magisterial.
The next question asked Ross Perot what policies he would change? He seized this opportunity to preach the Jeffersonian ideology in nearly undiluted form:

In a nutshell, we've got to reform our government or we won't get anything done. We have a government that doesn't work. It's supposed to come from the people, it comes at the people. The people need to take their government back. You've got to reform Congress, they've got to be the servants of the people again . . . but very specifically the key thing is to turn the government back to the people and take it away from the special interests and have people go to Washington to serve . . . The American people have had enough. If I get up there, we're going to clean that up. You say, how can I get Congress to do that? I'll have millions of people at my shoulder.

Perot argued a legitimate government would return power to the people.

In his final response of the night prior to his closing statement, Clinton engaged in the harshest attack against Bush which he had made in all three debates.
Clinton criticized Bush for ad hominem attacks noting that Bush had made the Arkansas Governor's character and trust the central focus of his campaign:

I really can't believe Mr. Bush is still trying to make trust an issue after "read my lips" . . . He still doesn't get it . . . they don't want us talking about each other. They want us to talk about the problems of this country . . . Look at the Republicans that have endorsed me. High tech executives in Northern California. Look at the 24 generals and admirals, retired, that have endorsed me, including the deputy commander of Desert Storm . . . we've got a broad based coalition that goes beyond party because I am going to change this country and
make it better, with the help of the American people.

Clinton used his attack to construct a legitimacy so powerful that it transcended party.

Ironically, Perot, who gave the first opening statement in the first debate, provided the final closing statement of the final debate. In his closing remarks, Perot exclaimed:

To the millions of fine decent people who did the unthinkable and took their country back in their own hands and put me on the ballot, let me pledge to you that tonight is just the beginning. These next two weeks we will be going full steam ahead to make sure that you get a voice and that you get your country back . . . Then the question is, can we govern? I love that one. The "we" is you and me. You bet your hat we can govern . . . you won't tolerate gridlock, you won't tolerate endless meandering and wandering around, and you won't tolerate non-performance . . . I'm doing this for you: I want you to have the American dream. I'm doing this because I love you. Thank you very much.

Just as he had begun the debates, Perot ended them with statements advocating a people run government. Perot argued that the people of the United States deserved a legitimate government, one in which the citizens were the primary actors, virtue and public good motivated every decision, and the government was clearly accountable to the people. Ross Perot was going to give that type of government to the people of the United States.
DISCUSSION

Ross Perot

Throughout the debates, Ross Perot stood steadfastly by his platform of restoring the control of the government to the people. In so doing he hoped to restore political legitimacy to the American political system. He planned to rid Washington of special interest groups and lobbyists and do only that which the public instructed him to do. Perot's vision was to establish a political order in which all elected officials were true public servants, executing only the desires of the people. His concept of the people was simplistic but coherent. When "the people" took the government back into their own hands they would rid the system of all of the corrupt influences, articulate a moral and common sense political agenda, and support a leader who served that agenda or reject one who did not. By developing discourse which highlighted the topoi of legitimacy, Perot argued that under his leadership the political order would restore citizen participation, restore the concept of a public good and nurture a moral community, and the government would be completely accountable to the people for everything they did.

The televised debates provided Perot with an opportunity to expose his political orientation to the many members of the electorate who were largely unaware of his position. Zhu, Milausky, & Biswas (1994) noted: "The
audience learned the most about the least known candidate, Perot . . . and that helped him improve his image considerably" (p. 325). The authors further reported that the debates not only informed the viewers about Perot, but "it substantially changed the viewers' minds" (p. 326).

Perot's success at attracting viewers' attention may have come from his unique approach to the election. Hahn (1994) explained that Perot's consistent theme throughout the debates was "I'm not a politician, but I want to be president -- rather -- you the people want me to be president" (p. 192). This ideological approach might have seemed primitive or ingenuous in previous elections, but the perception of weakened legitimacy of American institutions gave his approach saliency and bite. His outsider stance appealed to roughly one-fifth of the electorate on election day.

Perhaps an additional reason for Perot's success was stylistic. Leon (1993) suggested that "Perot's language [usage] was the strongest [of the three candidates] in its illustration of character. Perot's language revealed the greatest indication of human interest and slightly more powerful words" (p. 99).

Regardless of whether it was what he said, or how he said it, Ross Perot was the dominant candidate in the 1992 televised debates winning two of the three debates. These victories were significant, but could not overcome the
handicap of his third party status. Perot also failed to win a single Electoral College vote. While the public may have liked what Perot said, they appeared hesitant to trust his ideas enough to give him the opportunity to put them into practice.

George Bush

Throughout the debates, Bush largely supported the system, and tried to show that not only was the system good, but that it worked. For Bush, the system was exhausted by the limits essential to a representative democracy. "The people" were untrained in governance and should accept the decisions made for them by their representatives. Bush appeared to believe that if a legitimacy crisis existed, its origins were not embedded in the deep structure of the system, but in technical failure and aberrations.

Bush attempted to capitalize upon his twelve years of experience in the White House. He attempted to make experience and character the central theme of the debates and the campaign. Bush reminded the audience that he had the most experience in political office of the three candidates and that his experience in foreign policy was central to his superior qualifications. Viewers did not respond well to the image which Bush attempted to create as indicated by the post debate polls. Bush finished last, or next to last in every debate.
Bush made few legitimacy appeals during the 1992 televised debates. If a legitimation crisis existed in the American political system, he seemed only marginally aware of it. The system was good and worked. The system was run by experts who know what was best for the public. Bush was proud that he was a member of the expert insider group and used his past experience as an insider as the factor which best qualified him to be president over the other candidates. Even if the system had flaws, those flaws are a small price for the people to have to pay in order to partake of all of the benefits derived from the system.

Leon (1993) noted that Bush's language choice only undermined his cause. According to Leon, "Bush's language was markedly weaker than his opponents [in the debate]; in particular, Bush used less person centered language -- an indicator of human interest; and his speech reflected greater uses of hesitations" (p. 99). Bush apparently used less person-centered language as he expressed his political ideology of government by experienced professional.

Whatever the specific reasons were for his demise, Bush clearly lost both the debates. He garnered only 16 percent of the viewers' vote in the first two debates and moved up to just 28 percent in the third debate. In the general election, Bush attracted only 38 percent of the popular vote. After a landslide victory over Dukakis in the 1988 presidential election, Bush's 38 percent
represented a tremendous decline in both party and general support.\(^{15}\)

**Governor Clinton**

Clinton expressed both support for, and opposition to legitimacy topoi throughout all three debates. Clinton's discourse identified him as being on both sides of the fence. He would boast of his political experience and argued that he knew how to work within the system, yet at the same time argued that he was one of the people and had suffered right along with them. Whereas Perot wanted to completely clean house, and Bush felt the system worked fine just as it was, Clinton appeared to want to do both. The system was good and could work, but it just needed to be modified, to be changed. The ideology of "change" would become a buzz word for his campaign and he used it extensively throughout the debates.

Ironically, Clinton's attempt to both affirm and deny institutional legitimacy was strategically sound. He seemed to argue that declining legitimacy in the American government could be reversed, and that he could restore legitimacy to the political system by serving as a strong advocate for the people when placed as the expert into the middle of that system.

\(^{15}\)As noted in Chapter One of this dissertation, based upon post-election polls, if Perot had not been in the race, Clinton still would have won the election with 53 percent of the vote and Bush only managing 47 percent (Prysby & Scavo 1993, p. 9).
Clinton asked the American public to invest a great deal of trust in him. Clinton had to convince the people that he was both an expert and an advocate of a people-centered legitimate political order. Like Ronald Reagan he was able to play the strings of rural nostalgia and modern technology. By making the necessary changes, Clinton believed the two worlds could be united. The electorate had to trust him, that he would not betray them by becoming a complete insider and abandoning his mission of healing and restoration.

Even in his language choice, Clinton tried to find a middle ground. Leon (1993) explained that "Clinton used much more personal language than Bush, but not as much as Perot. While he was more certain than Bush in his style . . . he was never as certain as Perot, nor as oriented toward activity" (p. 100).

The electorate appeared uncertain as to how to respond to Clinton's political ideology. While all of the candidates' scores in post-debate polls were very volatile, Clinton's scores displayed the greatest range of change. He went from 30 percent in debate one, to 58 percent in debate two, and crashed to 28 percent in debate three. In the general election, Clinton won the election, but only received 43 percent of the popular vote. This number could be considered quite low when compared to the 1988
presidential election where Dukakis carried 46 percent of the popular vote but lost the election to Bush.

While the questions about institutional legitimacy crises may have soured the public on expert politicians such as Bush, they may not yet be ready for someone as radical as Ross Perot. As a result, while the public may have been relatively vague about Clinton's position on issues in the 1992 election, he eventually emerged as the most acceptable, or tolerable, option for addressing the legitimacy crisis in the American political order.

CONCLUSION

The televised debates provided an opportunity for the three candidates to present their basic positions and to address their perception of weakened legitimacy and remedies for it. Three distinct and very different candidates emerged. Ross Perot would promise to reform the entire political system radically and place the government back into the hands of the people, restore virtue, and insist on accountability. George Bush provided a technocratic piece meal approach claiming that the political order was essentially sound. Bill Clinton offered radical vilification and rather traditional solutions. Whatever the impact of their orientation, from these three options, the electorate chose Clinton.
CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION
INTRODUCTION

The 1992 televised presidential debates were a unique combination of both media spectacle and ideological soapbox. All three presidential candidates used the debates to gain exposure to the electorate as well as convey their political platforms. In recent years scholars of political communication have decried a crisis of political legitimacy in Western, and particularly American political institutions. First coined by Jurgen Habermas, the term "legitimacy crisis" has become almost a shibboleth in recent years. In brief, scholars such as Kathleen Jamieson, Karlyn Campbell and Michael McGee have argued that the "citizen" has been largely transformed into a consumer of images and ideographs. They argue further that because the public no longer participates in the world of civic discourse it has withdrawn its psychic and moral support from state and national politics. Numerous scandals, evidence of resource mismanagement, and blatant deception by politicians have violated the long held Jeffersonian ideal of service and further weakened the social contract which has existed between the voter and the candidates. As a symptom of citizen withdrawal, a shrinking percentage of the electorate has been showing up on election day to cast ballots. The restoration of the
citizen role and the broadening of civic dialogue has become a theme in presidential politics: open forums, call-in radio show appearances, town meetings, and other citizen oriented formats during the past campaigns have shown that candidates understand the symbolic staging of legitimacy. This dissertation has studied the theme of legitimacy as it appeared in the 1996 presidential debates.

REVIEW OF STUDY

The televised debates proved to be an ideal forum for a rhetorical study. In televised debates, the candidates have the opportunity to address an extremely large portion of the electorate at a point in the campaign when they are able to present a matured, fully crafted and encapsulated version of their program.

Habermas' ideal speech situation outlines the needed components for achieving a rhetoric which properly addressed the legitimacy crisis in the American political order. However, since Habermas did not concern himself with concrete discourse situations, rhetorical criteria needed to be developed. The topoi of legitimacy were created from Habermas' ideology to be used as critical categories for this study. Presidential candidates' attempt to restore or simply to comment upon legitimacy of the political order were identified through the topoi of citizenship, virtue, and authority.
STUDY RESULTS

Ross Perot's discourse was strongly marked by condemnations of the present political order and promised to restore legitimacy. Perot consistently condemned professional politicians and expressed a desire to return the functions of the government back to the people. In a tradition as old as Cicero, Perot outlined a narrative of the decline of republican virtue. A system had evolved in which the government ruled over the people rather than from the people. Plans for citizen participation, execution of only those functions which encouraged the public good, and complete government accountability to the people pervaded Perot's rhetoric. In his opening statement of the first debate, Perot exemplified his position when he declared "I represent a movement which has come from the people. You have put me on the ballot." Nearly every sentence Perot uttered was framed either as a lament for the loss of legitimacy or as a promise to execute his office in a way that would recapture it.

The rhetoric of George Bush in the debates contained the fewest legitimacy appeals. As an incumbent, the president had few systematic criticisms of the present political order; change must be prudently managed. On several occasions, he even seemed to offer weak endorsements for two of Perot's major anti-legitimacy targets: Lobbyists and Political Action Committees. Bush
also indicated that he believed the president had the right to act independently of the will of the people in major undertakings. If the electorate was uneasy about the political order's legitimacy, the president offered very little to restore legitimacy. His rhetorical strategies were those of a manager rather than a moral leader and could only serve to distance him from the electorate.

Governor Clinton appeared to ride two horses at once. He offered rhetorical appeals which appeared to simultaneously support the political status quo and place control of government functions back into the hands of the people. Clinton attempted to identify himself as a populist candidate, a person who had arisen from the most humble circumstances and had remained one of them psychologically despite studies at Oxford and Yale, long considered bastions of privilege by the plain people of America. Despite his validation of the citizen, Clinton indicated that he was an experienced politician who could translate the inchoate desires of the American people into a coherent program. He was a political expert, but he was the people's political expert. He had internalized their spirit. Clinton's attempt to restore legitimacy to the political order straddled both sides of the political legitimacy fence.
STUDY PEDAGOGY

This examination of the 1992 televised presidential debates provided insight into political campaigning in several different ways. First, a better understanding of the contemporary meaning and experience of political legitimacy was determined. Ross Perot's success in both the debates and the election may well be connected to the persistent drumfire of his legitimacy restoration rhetoric. Members of a contemporary electorate appear receptive to messages regarding the restoration of the functions of government back into the hands of the people. Whether voters believe in the possibility and effectiveness of a citizen driven polity is another matter. Perhaps it is mere Jeffersonian nostalgia in a Hamiltonian world. Perhaps the electorate may just feel restless and not understand or know the source of their restlessness. If a candidate such as Perot is able to articulate a reason for that restlessness, then a certain percentage of the electorate may respond positively to the candidate who has given a name to their unease and frustration.

Second, this study provided an understanding of the clash between expert and Jeffersonian dialogue. Candidate comments in the debates can be easily identified as subscribing to a particular political ideology. America appears suspended between its reality as a modern power state characterized by electronically mediated discourse...
and a ghostly memory of our agrarian past. Perhaps this latest "crisis" is in a long tradition of cyclical populism, progressivism, and good government movements. But perhaps the magnitude of alienation is greater than before. If this is so, then the exigence from this tension will have to be resolved. Political experts will either need to reform their ways, or the electorate may seek a way to regain control of the political system, whether by ballot box or revolution. Proposition 13 in California, which brought fiscal chaos for a decade, is an example of an armed citizenry taking back its prerogative and withdrawing physical as well as psychological support.

Third, this study indicated a chaotic new direction in American politics. When a virtually unknown candidate, such as Ross Perot, can engage in symbolic political suicide by withdrawing from the race in mid summer, return in early fall, score extremely well in every debate and attract a significant portion of the vote in the general election, conventional wisdom falters. It may indicate that a large portion of the American public are so discontented with current political options, that they will respond to appeals for a radical restoration of the power arrangements in the world's leading democracy. Clinton found a radical Jeffersonian ideology worth incorporating into his campaign rhetoric and used it successfully during the election. Bush used citizen appeals rarely. He seemed
unconcerned with the apparent obsession to empower citizens and may have suffered defeat because of his insensitivity in this arena.

Fourth, this study provided additional tools for the rhetorical and political critic for the examination of future political endeavors. The proposed topoi of legitimacy may provide a useful set of analytical categories which researchers can use to isolate and critique variables unique to a specific study.

Finally, by articulating the rhetorical components of legitimacy appeals, an electorate might be better informed about political messages and then able to make more informed decisions. By inoculating the electorate regarding candidate strategies, greater listener discernment is possible when participating in political campaigns, rallies or debates.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This study provides the political communication critic with numerous opportunities for future research. First, the topoi of legitimacy can be applied to future debates. In particular, the rhetorical messages of President Clinton and Perot (should he decide to run again) can be examined in the 1996 campaign for possible consistencies or changes. The critic may explore questions such as: Might Clinton continue to use mixed appeals successfully? Or, as an
incumbent, will legitimacy appeals be more or less salient in the coming campaign?

Further areas of future research might include examining the roots of legitimacy rhetoric. Has this rhetorical style slowly evolved over the past several decades or are its roots in the Cromwellian revolution or at some earlier crisis? A further research question might explore the use of the "expert" as an appeal in presidential rhetoric. In addition to televised debates, other forms of campaign rhetoric could be examined for the presence of the legitimacy topoi. Are they situational or are they an enduring feature of contemporary discourse. Finally, legitimacy topoi of particular genres could be identified. Generic forms such as crisis rhetoric and apologia might be examined. Even extreme situations must contain legitimacy functions and rituals for leaders. Additional study questions might include: How might politicians, not just presidents, incorporate legitimacy topoi into their rhetoric; Do rhetorical manifestos such as the Republican Party's "Contract With America" use the topoi as a stock of heuristic forms for their indictment of present leaders?

In closing, do these additional forms of attempts at legitimacy crisis restoration reflect a growing trend in American politics as a whole or is it merely temporary? Finally, can legitimacy crisis be reduced to a verbal tick,
a mere traditional gloss like the laments of the Elder Cato
for the loss of Roman piety and discipline?
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VITA

Kevin Travis Jones was born in Hartford, Wisconsin on November 17, 1957. He is the son of Barbara and Travis Jones. As a child, Kevin moved with his family to Southern California where he graduated from Santa Ana High School in 1975. Kevin graduated from Santa Ana Community College in 1978 with his Associate of Arts degree. He then attended Biola University, La Mirada, California where he graduated in 1981 with a B.A. in Communication. After attending Seminary for a short time and serving as a Youth Pastor of a small church, Kevin enrolled at California State University, Fullerton and graduated in August of 1987 with a M.A. in Speech Communication. In 1991, Kevin enrolled in the doctoral program in speech at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana where he completed his doctoral work and graduated from LSU in December, 1995.

Kevin has held various teaching positions as a part of his academic career: Director of Forensics, Southern California College, Costa Mesa, California 1982-1986; Instructor and Director of Forensics, Otterbein College, Columbus, Ohio 1986-1989, Visiting Professor, Biola University, La Mirada, California 1990-1991; and Assistant Professor and Associate Director of Forensics, Bradley University, Peoria, Illinois 1993-1994. Kevin is currently an Assistant Professor and Director of Forensics at Asbury College, Wilmore, Kentucky.
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Candidate: Kevin Travis Jones

Major Field: Speech Communication

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Approved:

Major Professor and Chairman

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September 19, 1995

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