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The Image and the Vote: The Effect of Candidate Presentation on Voter Preference

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It is generally assumed that a political candidate's appearance and style have an impact on voters and the choices they make on election day. Little research, however, has been done to investigate this claim. Here, the authors examine the role that these nonverbal aspects of candidate presentation play in the process of political communication. In the course of two related studies, the impact of candidate photographs appearing on campaign flyers is assessed. The results suggest that these photographs influence voters' perceptions of a candidate and this significantly affects their vote.

How a political candidate looks and speaks has a significant impact on that candidate's chances of being elected—style shapes image and image affects the vote. These claims are political truisms of the television era. Election commentary invariably focuses on candidates' images and their image-making strategies. A good example of this is provided by the news commentary on the 1984 Democratic presidential primaries. Attention centered on the role of image—the strength of Gary Hart's image and the weakness of the images of the initially more prominent Alan Cranston and John Glenn.

Although the importance of a candidate's appearance and style is taken for granted by politicians, campaign consultants, and news commentators, there is little systematic research to support this assumption. Political scientists have not addressed the issue. In the research reported here, we provide a first step in the study of this nonverbal dimension of political communication and its impact on voter preference. We offer evidence which suggests that (1) a candidate's physical appearance produces a clear image of that candidate's character and fitness for public office and (2) this nonverbally communicated image has a significant impact on the vote.

Candidates and Perception

Although political scientists have focused primarily on the electoral effects of issue position and partisan affiliation, there exists a significant body of research which suggests that candidates are among the most impor-

tant determinants of the vote. In an early study, Stokes (1966) provided evidence that it is the change in candidates from one presidential election to the next which has the greatest impact on shifting party fortunes. Later, Kelley and Mirer (1974) argued that a voter's choice is influenced first by his or her evaluation of the candidate. Other factors play a role only when the voter has no clear preference for any particular candidate. More recently, a number of studies have demonstrated that people's evaluations of the candidates importantly influence their electoral preferences. (For research on presidential candidates, see Markus and Converse, 1979; Kinder and Abelson, 1981; Foti, Fraser, and Lord, 1982; Miller et al., 1982; and Lau, 1984. For research on congressional candidates, see Hinckley, Hofstetter, and Kessel, 1974; Wright, 1974; Mann and Wolfinger, 1980; Ragsdale, 1980; and Jacobson, 1981.)

Despite the foregoing evidence of the important role which candidates play in determining electoral outcomes, little research has been directed to discovering how candidates are perceived and why. The research which has explored these issues addressed the narrow question of how candidates are evaluated and sought answers to this question in light of the traditional focus on such clearly political factors as party affiliation, issue position, and incumbency. The research on presidential elections has provided evidence which suggests that candidate evaluations are influenced by voters' partisan affiliations (Campbell, Gurin, and Miller, 1954; Campbell et al., 1960) and by their issue positions (Weisberg and Rusk, 1970; Rabinowitz, 1978). While addressing these issues, the research on congressional elections has also demonstrated that incumbency has an important impact on voters' evaluations of candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives (Erikson, 1971; Hinckley, Hofstetter, and Kessel, 1974; Parker, 1980; Mann and Wolfinger, 1980; Jacobson, 1981). Although this research offers important insight into how candidates are evaluated, its scope is limited. More general questions of how candidates are perceived were not addressed, and the possible effects of the perceived personal qualities of the candidate were not fully examined.

In the last few years, political scientists have begun to explore more fully the question of how candidates are perceived. A number of researchers have investigated the structure of people's perception of political candidates (e.g., Kinder et al., 1980; Conover, 1981; Hinckley, 1981; Jacobson, 1981; Kinder and Abelson, 1981; Foti, Fraser, and Lord, 1982; Miller, Wattenberg, and Malanchuk, 1982; Lau, 1984). Taken together, these studies suggest that the consideration of the personal qualities of candidates play a central role in candidate perception. Moreover, this consideration of the candidates' character has a significant impact on voter's preferences.

Shaping Perception: The Role of Appearance and Style

In our research, we also address the general question of candidate perception. Our focus is, however, somewhat different. Rather than considering how perceptions of candidates are structured, we examine how perceptions of candidates are formed. In particular, we are interested in the effect of the nonverbal aspects of candidate presentation on voters' perceptions and preferences. Political scientists have not investigated this question directly. Nonetheless, there has been some speculation regarding the possible impact of candidates' appearance and style on electoral outcomes. Here, there has been some division of opinion. Some researchers (e.g., Kinder and Abelson, 1981) suggest that these nonverbal factors are influential. Others have chosen to de-emphasize whatever role these factors may play (e.g., Miller, Wattenberg, and Malanchuk, 1982).

The literature on nonverbal communication suggests that nonverbal factors such as appearance and style probably do have an impact on how candidates are perceived and evaluated. One general conclusion which has been drawn throughout this research is that nonverbal behavior (reference here is to personal appearance as well as behavioral style) importantly affects person perception. Indeed, the research suggests that the nonverbal behavior accompanying a communication is at least, if not more, influential than the verbal content of the message in determining how an individual is perceived (Argyle, Alkema, and Gilmour, 1971; Mehrabian, 1981). This has been demonstrated in a number of contexts including friendly conversation, personnel interviews, and psychotherapeutic sessions (e.g., LaCrosse, 1975; Smith-Hanson, 1977; Dovidio and Ellyson, 1982; Erickson and Schultz, 1982). The general strategy adopted in this research has been to isolate "channels" of nonverbal communication. Examples of these channels are eye contact (Exline, 1971; Argyle and Cook, 1976; Ellsworth and Langer, 1976; McGovern, 1981), body posture (Mehrabian, 1968; Davis, 1975; McGinley, LeFevre, and McGinley, 1975; Smith-Hansen, 1977) and interpersonal distance (Hall, 1966, 1974). Each of these channels has been shown to be influential in determining an observer's perception of such characteristics of the communicator as warmth, dominance, anxiety, and responsiveness.

It is important to note that while the research suggests that nonverbal cues significantly affect person perception and thus provides general support for the hypothesis that political candidates' nonverbal behavior will affect how they are perceived, no specific support is offered. Virtually no research has been done on political candidates, nor has much work been done on the nonverbal communication of such politically relevant traits as competence and integrity. Nonetheless, a review of the literature on nonver-

bal behavior suggests that the study of the nature and impact of candidates' appearance and style should prove fruitful.

Here, we investigate the influence of a candidate's appearance on the vote. Our hypothesis is that this nonverbal aspect of a candidate's presentation does have a significant impact on voters' perceptions and choices—appearance creates an image and image affects the vote. In so doing, we draw both on the research on candidate perception and the research on nonverbal communication. The first body of research suggests that personal qualities of the candidate play a significant role in how candidates are perceived and evaluated. The second body of research suggests that the perception of an individual's personal qualities is importantly affected by that person's appearance. Taken together, these two bodies of research suggest that a candidate's appearance will influence how that candidate is perceived and, thereby, affect the electoral choices voters make. To test our hypothesis, we conducted an empirical investigation of the impact of photographs on campaign flyers of candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives.

Congressional Demeanor: The Effect of Appearance on Image (Study 1)

Before turning directly to the question of the effect of image on the vote, we addressed the preliminary question of the relationship between a candidate's physical appearance and the image that candidate projects. Thus, our first concern was to establish that a person's appearance would produce a distinct and reliable image regarding that person's fitness for public office. In this context, we addressed several questions: (1) Does a photograph convey a distinct image of a person's character along lines of potential relevance to candidate assessment? (2) Is some general quality of fitness for public office projected as part of this image? In our case, is there such a thing as congressional demeanor? (3) Are the images communicated by photographs of different people sufficiently distinct to yield reliable and differentiated judgments?

Subject Population

Eighty undergraduate students at a major California university participated in the study. Half the subjects were male. Approximately 70 percent were white, 20 percent were Asian, and 10 percent were Hispanic and black. The average age of the subject population was 20.

Method

Stimulus Materials. Photographs were taken of 27 men between the ages of 35 and 60. All the men were white and of Anglo-American origin. During the camera session, each man wore a coat and tie. All the men were

photographed from the chest up. The photographs were printed in black and white and to a size of three by five inches. The photographs were then judged by a panel of four judges. Photographs which were judged either to be of poor quality or to depict men of unusual appearance (due either to contorted expressions caught by the camera or to apparent physical deformity) were removed from the pool. The remaining 20 pictures were used in the study.

Procedure. Subjects were asked to evaluate the photographed men along a number of dimensions. These included likableness, integrity, competence, leadership ability, attractiveness, and congressional demeanor. These evaluations were elicited by asking individual subjects about each of the men. For example, to elicit a judgment of congressional demeanor, subjects were asked, "Is this the kind of person you would want to represent you in the United States Congress?" To elicit a judgment of competence, subjects were asked, "Is this the kind of person you feel could get a job done properly?"

The evaluation of the photographs was conducted in two ways. One half of the subjects (40) participated in a rating task and the other half participated in a sorting task. Preliminary testing indicated that subjects could not comfortably rate more than ten pictures. Therefore, in both evaluation tasks, subjects were presented with packets of only ten pictures. The contents of the packets were varied to insure that all 20 photographs were evaluated by the subject population.

In the rating task, each subject was presented with a series of ten photographs. The photographs were presented one at a time, and the order of presentation was randomized across subjects. For each picture, subjects filled out a rating sheet. The rating sheet included six questions designed to elicit evaluations along the six dimensions mentioned above. Subjects responded to each question on the seven-point scales provided. This procedure was repeated until all ten pictures had been rated.

In the sorting task, each subject also was presented with a packet of ten pictures. Subjects were instructed to lay out all ten pictures in front of them. Subjects then were asked a question (of the kind presented in the rating task) and told to order the pictures according to which depicted most to least of the trait in question. All subjects rated their packets six times (once for each of the six evaluative dimensions).

Two different evaluative tasks were administered to allow for an assessment of the degree to which the evaluations made were simply an artifact of the particular measurement instrument used. In essence, each task provides a basis for validating the other.

Results

When analyzing our data, we address several questions. The first is whether or not a photograph conveys a distinct and reliable image of a

person along lines of potential relevance to candidate perception. The results suggest that they do. On the one hand, the results indicate that different photographs conveyed quite different images of the men photographed. Along all six evaluative dimensions, scores ranged from about 2 to 6 (on a seven-point scale) on the rating task and 1.5 to 8.5 (on a ten-point scale) on the sorting task. On the other hand, the results suggest that the images conveyed by the photographs were quite reliable. We tested for image reliability by comparing the assessments of our two different groups of subjects along each evaluative dimension. The test is a particularly stringent one since the assessments compared are not only made by two different groups of subjects, but each group also used a different assessment instrument (either the rating or the sort). The rank-order correlations between the assessments of the two subject groups indicate a high degree of reliability in the image conveyed along all six evaluative dimensions. The correlations range from .73 to .93.

The second question we address is the degree to which an individual can project a general image of his or her general fitness for a public office, in this case that of congressman. The data suggest that an individual does project a distinct congressional demeanor. Different photographs elicited quite different assessments of congressional demeanor. Scores ranged from 2.2 to 6.0 on the rating task and 1.8 to 8.1 on the sorting task. Moreover, these assessments are quite reliable across subject populations and measurement instruments (rank-order correlation=.73). Our data also allow us to examine the degree to which congressional demeanor is linked to such observed qualities of the individual as competence, trustworthiness, leadership ability, attractiveness, and likableness. To explore this issue, we conducted a further analysis of the results of the sorting task. We did a regression analysis using congressional demeanor scores as the dependent variable and the competence, integrity, leadership ability, likableness, and attractiveness scores as the independent variables. Together, these five trait variables account for more than 83 percent of the variance in the congressional demeanor scores. The regression coefficients indicate that leadership ability ($\text{Var } b = .73$) is significantly related to congressional demeanor in a positive manner and that attractiveness ($\text{Var } b = -.42$) is significantly related to congressional demeanor in a negative manner. While sizable, the effect of trustworthiness is not significant at the .05 level. The effects of competence and likableness scores are not significant.

Conclusions

Our preliminary research suggests that an individual's physical appearance can produce a clear image of that individual's character. Indeed, a single photograph is sufficient to create a distinct and reliable image of the person photographed. Of particular importance here, this nonverbally

produced image can communicate a considerable amount of politically relevant information. This includes both a general impression of that person's fitness for public office and more specific impressions of a number of personal qualities (e.g., competence and integrity) which other research has shown to be central to voters' assessments of political candidates.

In sum, we have evidence which suggests that a person's physical appearance communicates a clear and politically relevant image of that person's character. Of significance to the analysis which follows, we also have a set of photographs of men who have been evaluated for congressional demeanor. With this in hand, we can now address our central question regarding the electoral consequences of the nonverbal aspects of candidate presentation.

Appearance, Image, and the Vote (Study 2)

To examine the impact of candidates' appearance and image on the vote, we presented subjects with pairs of campaign flyers and asked them to vote for the candidates of their choice. Each flyer included a photograph of the candidate, his position on the issues, and his party affiliation. The photographs placed on the flyers were drawn from the pool of photographs already evaluated for congressional demeanor. In this context, we were able to examine the impact of physical appearance and image in the context of other information (issue positions and party affiliation) on the candidate.

Subject Population

One hundred four undergraduates at a major California university participated in the study. Half the subjects were male. Approximately 65 percent were white, 20 percent were Asian, and 15 percent were Hispanic and black. The average age of the subject population was 20.

Method

Stimulus Materials. Multiple copies of 24 campaign flyers were produced. All the flyers shared a common format. Each flyer was printed on an 8 1/2-by-11-inch sheet of white paper and contained the following information: (1) in the upper left-hand quarter, the candidate's name, his party affiliation (Republican or Democrat), and the office (U.S. Congress) for which he was running; (2) in the upper right-hand quarter, a 3-by-5-inch black-and-white photograph of the candidate (taken from the chest up); and (3) on the bottom half, a brief two- or three-sentence statement of the candidate's education, occupation, and political experience and a three-line statement of the candidate's position (consistently liberal or conservative) on each of three campaign issues. The photographs used were drawn from the pool of 20 photographs used in Study 1. The three photographs which

were rated lowest and three photographs which were rated highest on congressional demeanor were chosen. The pairs of photographs used and their mean scores for ratings of congressional demeanor are presented in Figure 1. The issue positions presented on the flyers referred to those issues which figured prominently in the 1984 California primary campaign. They included defense policy, support for education, unemployment, protection of the natural environment, public transportation, and U.S. involvement in Central America. Moderate conservative and moderate liberal positions for each of the issue areas were formulated and checked by a panel of five judges. (The set of issue positions used in each election are presented in the Appendix.)

The campaign flyers were prepared in pairs to simulate elections between three sets of opponents. Each election was prepared as follows. First, candidates were selected so that one of the men whose photograph had been rated poorly was pitted against one whose photograph had been rated highly. Second, two sets of issue positions, one liberal and one conservative, were formulated. Third, four versions of each candidate's campaign flyer were constructed by varying the candidate's issue positions and party affiliation. Thus, each candidate was presented as either a liberal Democrat,

FIGURE 1
Candidates' Photographs



<u>First Congressional Election</u>	
Favorable Appearance	Unfavorable Appearance
	
Larry Rodgers 2.8*	Patrick Cox 5.2*

FIGURE 1—continued
Second Congressional Election

Favorable Appearance

Unfavorable Appearance



Eric Zahler
3.0*



Mark Gottlieb
4.4*

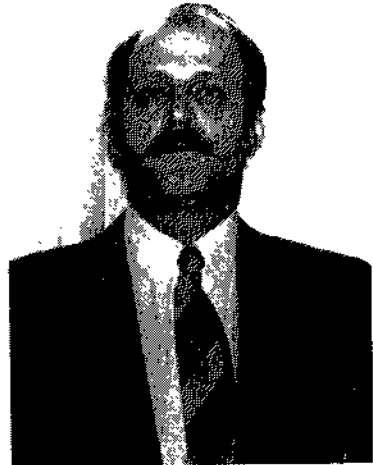
Third Congressional Election

Favorable Appearance

Unfavorable Appearance



Alfred Harrison
3.1*



Michael Stevens
5.1*

*Mean score rating on congressional demeanor (scores range from high of 1 to low of 7).

conservative Democrat, liberal Republican, or conservative Republican. Finally, these flyers were used to create four versions of each election. In each version, the opposing candidates were presented as belonging to different parties and as having opposing ideological stances.

Procedure. The experiment was conducted toward the end of the 1984 California primary season. Subjects were randomly assigned to receive one of the four versions of each of the three elections. Subjects were tested in groups of ten. They were given the following information: (1) They were told that they would be participating in a study of voting. Other research had demonstrated that, when people vote, they generally know more about one candidate than the other. The purpose of the present study was to examine how people would vote when they had equal information on all candidates. (2) Subjects were also told they would receive campaign flyers from the two major candidates running for election in each of three nearby congressional districts. The flyers were prepared by the experimenter to insure comparable presentation. Preparation was accomplished, however, with the cooperation of the campaign managers of the six candidates. They supplied all the requisite information and photographs. (3) Finally, subjects were told they would be voting in each of three electoral contests. After receiving instructions, subjects were given 10 minutes (more time than generally required) to review each pair of flyers and to record their vote on a ballot provided. In accord with the false premises of the study, subjects were also asked to indicate on their ballot if they had received campaign literature from any of the candidates.

Postexperimental interviews indicated that subjects believed that they had voted for real candidates and took the task seriously.

Results

The results of our three "elections" are presented in Table 1. In the table, the results of the four versions of each election are reported separately. *The results indicate a strong and consistent effect of appearance. Controlling experimentally for issue position and party affiliation, the more nonverbally desirable candidates (a) received 60 percent of the total vote, winning overall by a highly significant margin, and (b) won all three elections (two by statistically significant margins).*

Looking more closely at the table, we see that the number of votes each candidate received in response to each of the four versions of his campaign flyer are reported separately. This allows for a direct comparison of the number of votes received by a candidate and by his opponent when both were presented in the same way—with the same party affiliation and ideology. (For example, in the first election, when Rodgers, the candidate with the favorable appearance, was presented as a conservative Republican, he received 12 votes. When Cox, the candidate with the unfavorable appearance, was pre-

TABLE 1
Effect of Candidate's Appearance on the Vote (University Population)

Ideology and Party of the Candidates Presented on the Campaign Flyers	Number of Votes Received in Response to Candidates' Campaign Flyers	
(Unfavorable versus Favorable)	Unfavorable Appearance	Favorable Appearance

<u>First Election</u>		
	<u>"Cox"</u>	<u>"Rodgers"</u>
Conservative Republican versus liberal Democrat	8	18
Conservative Democrat versus liberal Republican	8	18
Liberal Republican versus conservative Democrat	15	11
Liberal Democrat versus conservative Republican	<u>14</u>	<u>12</u>
Total	45	59
	$\chi^2=1.885$	

<u>Second Election</u>		
	<u>"Gottlieb"</u>	<u>"Zahler"</u>
Conservative Republican versus liberal Democrat	14	12
Conservative Democrat versus liberal Republican	12	14
Liberal Republican versus conservative Democrat	6	20
Liberal Democrat versus conservative Republican	<u>9</u>	<u>17</u>
Total	41	63
	$\chi^2=4.654^*$	

<u>Third Election</u>		
	<u>"Stevens"</u>	<u>"Harrison"</u>
Conservative Republican versus liberal Democrat	12	14
Conservative Democrat versus liberal Republican	3	23
Liberal Republican versus conservative Democrat	12	14
Liberal Democrat versus conservative Republican	<u>12</u>	<u>14</u>
Total	39	65
	$\chi^2=6.500^*$	

Overall vote total	125	187
	$\chi^2=12.321^{**}$	

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

sented as a conservative Republican, he received only 8 votes.) Given that candidates were presented in four ways in each of three elections, 12 comparisons may be made between candidates with favorable appearances and candidates with unfavorable appearances. The results indicate that the candidates with favorable appearance outpolled their opponents in all 12 cases.

Given the nature of the research design, the relevant variables in the study are experimentally controlled. This may be complemented by a multivariate regression analysis in which the relevant variables are statistically controlled. The results of a logit analysis of the effect of candidate appearance, party affiliation, and issue position on the vote are presented in Table 2. The results of this analysis support our conclusion. In this multivariate analysis, candidates' appearance has a strong and statistically significant influence on the vote.

Conclusions

The results of our research indicate that, other things being equal, a candidate's appearance does have a powerful impact on voters' preferences. Even when clear and substantial information on candidates' party affiliations and positions on major campaign issues were presented, the photographs of the candidates exercised a strong and consistent influence on the vote. In light of the preceding research on the relationship between appearance and image, we may conclude that a photograph provides voters with a clear image of the candidate's character and fitness for office and this, in turn, importantly influences the electoral choices they make.

It is important to recognize the limits of the present study. Two significant points may be made regarding the external validity of this study. First,

TABLE 2

The Effect of Appearance, Issue Position, and Party
Affiliation of the Candidate on the Vote
(Logit Regression Analysis)

Independent Variable	Var <i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i> Ratio
Appearance	.50	.15	3.26*
Party affiliation	-.09	.14	-0.62
Issue position	.18	.14	1.25
Likelihood ratio=12.78**			

NOTE: In the analysis, favorable appearance, Democratic party affiliation, and liberal issue positions were assigned a value of 1.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

the elections conducted were artificial. Even if we accept that the subjects believed the candidates to be legitimate, the fact remains that their votes were cast in the laboratory and not in the election booth. Moreover, the "campaign" to which they were exposed was a balanced one which lasted for one-half hour rather than an uneven contest which lasted for several weeks or months. Second, the voting population participating in the study, university students, was a very unusual one. Together, both these points suggest caution when generalizing from our experiments to naturally occurring voter behavior.

A Replication with a Nonuniversity Population (Study 3)

In an attempt to compensate for some of the weaknesses of our research, we collected additional data. This additional research replicated the earlier work, but there are important changes. The research was taken out of the laboratory and involved the participation of a subject population which was more representative of the American voting public. Like the original study, the replication was also conducted toward the end of the 1984 California primary campaign season.

Subject Population

The subject population consisted of 80 adults who were shoppers at a large discount department store. The store is located in a large metropolitan area and serves a middle- to lower-middle-class and ethnically diverse community. This said, the majority of the shoppers were white. The average age of the shoppers participating in the study was 39. Males and females were represented in roughly equal proportions.

Method

The stimulus materials, the campaign flyers and ballots, were the same as those used with the university students earlier. The procedure followed was also quite similar. Unlike the earlier study, however, this third study was conducted at a large discount department store. Two assistants, one male and one female, were employed to conduct the research. They set up a table and several chairs at the main entrance to the department store. One of the assistants approached prospective subjects as they entered the store. Subjects were asked to participate in a voter survey which would take only a few minutes of their time. Once having agreed to participate, subjects were seated at the table. They were then given instructions similar to those used in Study 2.

Results

The results for the three elections conducted at the department store are presented in Table 3. Again, appearance had a significant impact on elec-

TABLE 3
Effect of Candidate's Appearance on the Vote
(Nonuniversity Adult Population)

Ideology and Party of the Candidates Presented on the Campaign Flyers (Unfavorable versus Favorable)	Number of Votes Received in Response to Candidates' Campaign Flyers	
	Unfavorable Appearance	Favorable Appearance
<u>First Election</u>		
	<u>"Cox"</u>	<u>"Rodgers"</u>
Conservative Republican versus liberal Democrat	8	12
Conservative Democrat versus liberal Republican	9	11
Liberal Republican versus conservative Democrat	5	15
Liberal Democrat versus conservative Republican	8	12
Total	30	50
	$\chi^2=5.000^*$	
<u>Second Election</u>		
	<u>"Gottlieb"</u>	<u>"Zahler"</u>
Conservative Republican versus liberal Democrat	11	9
Conservative Democrat versus liberal Republican	8	12
Liberal Republican versus conservative Democrat	4	16
Liberal Democrat versus conservative Republican	5	15
Total	28	52
	$\chi^2=7.200^{**}$	
<u>Third Election</u>		
	<u>"Stevens"</u>	<u>"Harrison"</u>
Conservative Republican versus liberal Democrat	9	11
Conservative Democrat versus liberal Republican	7	13
Liberal Republican versus conservative Democrat	10	10
Liberal Democrat versus conservative Republican	15	5
Total	41	39
	$\chi^2=0.500$	
Overall vote total	99	141
	$\chi^2=7.350^{**}$	

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

toral outcomes. *Candidates with highly rated appearances received 59 percent of the total vote and won two of the three elections by statistically significant margins.* By examining the votes received by the two opposing candidates when each was presented on the same type of campaign flyer (e.g., when each was presented as liberal Democrat), we can again compare the performance of favorably and unfavorably rated candidates. The results indicate that the more favorably rated candidates received more votes than their opponents in 10 of 12 cases.

Again, we complemented our experimental control over the independent variables (appearance, issue position, and party affiliation) with a multivariate regression analysis. The results of our logit analysis of the impact of appearance, issue position, and party affiliation on the vote are presented in Table 4. Here, candidate appearance emerges as a significant influence on the vote.

Conclusion

The results of our replication parallel those obtained in the earlier research. They indicate that the electoral preferences of relatively average adults polled in a nonuniversity setting are powerfully influenced by a candidate's appearance. With the issue positions and party affiliation of the candidates experimentally controlled, differences in appearance produced a 60-40 split in the vote to the advantage of those candidates who projected a favorable image.

The original research and the replication corroborate one another. As a result, firmer ground is provided for generalizing from the results of the two studies to naturally occurring electoral behavior. Caution is, however, still

TABLE 4

The Effect of Appearance, Issue Position, and Party
Affiliation of the Candidate on the Vote
(Logit Regression Analysis)

Independent Variable	Var <i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i> Ratio
Appearance	.54	.20	2.73*
Party affiliation	-.09	.18	-0.49
Issue position	-.13	.18	-0.71
Likelihood ratio = 8.61*			

NOTE: In the analysis, favorable appearance, Democratic party affiliation, and liberal issue positions were assigned a value of 1.

* $p < .05$.

necessary. The two studies share a common weakness. The "elections" conducted lack the context of an ongoing campaign. Nonetheless, it should be noted that strong and similar results were achieved with two different populations polled in two different settings. This suggests that the behavior observed does have a general quality. Thus, we are provided with a stronger basis for concluding that in real campaigns, as in our experiments, candidates' appearance exerts a strong influence on how people vote.

Concluding Remarks

A political candidate's appearance does have a significant impact on electoral outcomes. Moreover, this is true even when the candidate's appearance is presented only through the medium of a photograph on a campaign flyer. This conclusion is based on the three related studies presented here. Considered together, these studies suggest that a candidate's physical appearance can project a distinct image of the candidate's personal qualities. This image includes both general impressions of the candidate's fitness for office and specific impressions of a number of character traits (e.g., competence and integrity). The impact of this image is sufficiently strong so that a single photograph can have a clear impact on voters' judgments regarding a candidate's congressional demeanor, competence, leadership ability, attractiveness, likableness, and integrity. Our research also suggests that these nonverbally mediated judgments influence how people vote. Presented in conjunction with information on a candidate's issue positions and party affiliations, a photographic image of the candidate exercised a strong and consistent influence on the electoral choices subjects made. Controlling for party affiliation and issue position of the candidate, those candidates whose appearance projected a favorable image averaged 60 percent of the vote. This was true across three different elections and two quite different subject populations.

When considering our research, it is important to remember its limitations. Most problematic is the fact that the research depends on artificial elections. The "candidates" presented in the study were not real. Consequently, our elections lacked the social context and duration of a real campaign battle. It may well be that in a real campaign voters are presented with different types and sources of information which would reduce the impact of the nonverbal aspects of a candidate's presentation.

In this context, it is worth noting three points which suggest that our conclusions regarding the significance of candidates' nonverbal presentations are not unwarranted. First, our research was designed to minimize its artificiality. Subjects were led to believe the candidates were real, and their preferences were polled in the last weeks of the 1984 California primary. Second, the research was designed in such a way that the influence of

nonverbal presentations may have been underestimated. On the one hand, the nonverbal data on the candidates was presented through a single photograph. The medium of a photograph is certainly less informative and probably less influential than other media of presentation (e.g., personal or televised appearance) to which voters are normally exposed. On the other hand, subjects were presented rich verbal information on the candidates' issue position and party affiliation immediately before voting. Consequently, the problem of memory loss, a problem which probably has a greater effect on the retention of verbally presented information, was minimized.

Ultimately, the degree to which our conclusions are biased by the experimental design of our research remains to be determined by future research. Studies of the effect of candidates' nonverbal presentations occurring during an actual campaign must be conducted to complement the research presented here. Nonetheless, our research constitutes an important step both in establishing the political significance of the nonverbal dimension of candidate presentation and in offering an understanding of the means whereby these nonverbal factors shape voters' preferences.

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APPENDIX

Issue Positions Presented on the Campaign Flyers

First Election

Liberal Position

1. Our forests and beaches are being threatened. These precious natural resources must be protected. We must not allow the narrow interests of a few oil or lumber companies to dictate our national environmental policy.

2. Maintaining our ability to defend ourselves is a necessity. This does not mean we must allow runaway spending on the production of unnecessary weapons. There are millions of Americans who require our help—the poor, the disabled, and the elderly. They must not be forgotten.

3. Our cities are collapsing. Money must be provided to improve transportation, housing, and employment in the center city.

Conservative Position

1. Unemployment is a terrible thing. We must create jobs for those who are willing to work. This does not mean handouts and government jobs. Instead, incentives must be offered to encourage new investment and industrial expansion. Greater productivity is the only lasting solution to unemployment.

2. America must remain strong. This requires that we provide continued support for our armed forces. In particular, we must focus on two projects: the upgrading of our conventional forces and innovation to meet the needs of the future.

3. More must be done to preserve our national heritage. Further legislation is necessary to protect our parks. We have enjoyed our natural environment, and we must insure that our children have the same opportunity.

Second Election

Liberal Position

1. We must continue to participate in arms limitations talks. We must try to bring the escalation of the nuclear arms race to an end. The dangers of accidental war are too great to simply be ignored by government policymakers.

2. The United States must exercise constraint in Central America. We must learn the lessons of history. Military solutions to complex political problems are ineffective and costly.

3. Despite some economic recovery, unemployment remains a major problem. Attempts must be made to provide people with skills and support which will allow them to once again become productive members of our community.

Conservative Position

1. Our educational system is collapsing. Young people are graduating from high school barely able to read and with little understanding of mathematics or science. In an ever more complex and competitive world, this leaves our children with an unacceptable disadvantage. Improving our schools must be a top priority.

2. Defense spending has gotten out of control. The Department of Defense regularly exceeds its legally allotted budget by hundreds of millions of dollars each year. America must be strong, but this waste must be brought under control.

3. Our Social Security system is in disarray. More effort must be made to return that system to a sound financial basis. It is the obligation of any community to insure the well-being of its elder citizens.

Third Election

Liberal Position

1. Education is a crucial factor in determining our future. We must do what is necessary to maintain high educational standards. Support for education is an investment in our nation's future.

2. A secure America, safe from threats from abroad, is and must be a top priority. National security, however, must not be used to license wasteful spending. With other national needs to be satisfied—with problems of the poor, the old, and the infirm—we cannot afford to throw our dollars away.

3. United States policy toward Central America must be crafted with care. We must balance our national interests with a respect for the independence and right of choice of the people of other countries.

Conservative Position

1. The political situation in Central America is at a turning point. While we should avoid the use of American troops, we must provide the economic and military aid required to prevent the emergence of left-wing dictatorships on our southern borders.

2. Government must create an atmosphere in which private enterprise can flourish. It is private initiative, not government, which insures the health and well-being of our country.

3. Arms limitations talks are important. The world cannot afford the continued proliferation of nuclear arms. At the same time, the United States must not be naive. Arrangements must be made to insure the Soviet Union complies with the agreements it makes at the negotiating table.

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