Ethos and electronics: A rhetorical study of televised presidential debates

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ETHOS AND ELECTRONICS: A RHETORICAL STUDY OF TELEVISION PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

by
Gail Houston Cramer
December 1995
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Abstract

Television allows an intimacy between a presidential candidate and the public which was not available before this technology was introduced into millions of American homes. This can be an asset to a candidate who is adept at an intimate, self-disclosive style (which is compatible with television), or it can be a detriment to the candidate who demonstrates physical signs of stress and presents a guarded demeanor. A candidate who understands how to manipulate the medium of television by employing a speaking style and mannerisms conducive to it can inspire the public's confidence in his or her ability to lead. Such an understanding also helps candidates project and reinforce the image of themselves that they have formed for voters.

In order to examine the evolution of image-making and projection of that image through television, this thesis will evaluate two presidential candidates, John F. Kennedy and Bill Clinton, will be evaluated. The thirty-year difference between their campaigns and the well-documented similarity between the two candidates provides a reasonable basis for comparison.

Through an evaluation of the creation of these two candidates' images, as well as their projection of those images during one of the televised debates in each of their campaigns, this thesis will show that, although the basic
components of image-making have not changed in three decades--negatives are still minimized and positives are still accentuated--the manner in which a candidate projects that image in a televised presidential campaign debate has changed from a formal to a more informal style. Further, brevity of response now characterizes such debates. These changes have been brought about by the medium of television itself, which causes voters to be more engaged by image than issues and causes candidates to place as much importance on their image as the issues they present.
A Brief History of Political Debate

Political debate has always been at the foundation of the American political system. The Founding Fathers believed a government should be accountable to its people and devised a system of checks and balances to insure that accountability: "At the heart of 'checks and balances' was a confidence in the ability of the best ideas to triumph if strongly presented by forceful advocates in a fair forum" (Jamieson, Presidential Debates 11). The power and necessity of a public exchange of ideas fuels American democracy and accounts for the continual evolution of political debate into its present form.

An examination of the history of political debate in this country can provide a backdrop against which to assess current political debates. Voter expectations, government regulations, and the rise of the broadcast media have all contributed to the changes that have occurred since our nation's infancy.

Initially, political debate was not as public as it is today. Many of the great debates of the past were not held before an audience of voters but in the closed chambers of the Constitutional Convention, colonial and state assemblies, or the Congress. When a debate was conducted publicly, it was usually issue-oriented, such as slavery in the 1860 election of Abraham Lincoln, and tariffs in the
Cleveland-Harrison election of 1888. However, no direct debates were held between presidential candidates at that time, because it was considered bad manners to appeal directly to the common voter.

The most popular method for a presidential candidate to campaign during the 19th century was to have a surrogate do the speaking for him. A presidential stand-in was usually a prominent member of Congress or a major political figure within the state that was being targeted for votes. This surrogate would conduct public speeches at various locations in which important issues and party affiliation were emphasized.

Stephen Douglas was the first presidential candidate to personally conduct a nationwide campaign and was widely criticized for breaking new ground. Minow and Sloan document disapproval for this new style of campaigning when they report the disparaging remarks directed at Douglas by various newspaper reports.

Douglas 'demeans himself as no other candidate yet has,' complained one newspaper; he 'goes about begging, imploring, and beseeching the people to grant him his wish.' Observed another: 'Douglas is going about peddling his opinions as a tin man peddles his wares. The only excuse for him is that since he is a small man he has a right to be engaged in small business, and small business it is for a candidate for the presidency to be strolling around the country begging for votes like a town constable' (6).
This quote sharply contrasts Americans' expectations of their presidential candidates in the 19th century with what they are today. In the last century, national politics were still considered to be in the domain of an elite gentry—carefully selected pillars of the community who were assigned to the electoral college in order to cast the best vote for their party. Douglas upset the status quo because it was considered unseemly and demeaning for a member of this gentry to be mingling with the common rabble, much less to be beseeching them for their vote. It was also considered unnecessary, since he was well-known by the members of the electoral college who would be casting their votes. Yet, when the reporter in the above quote wrote that Douglas was "peddling his opinions as a tin man peddles his wares," he captured the essence of what American presidential campaigning was to become. Beginning in the mid-20th century, the candidate would not only peddle his opinions, but peddle himself like one of the many products advertised on television.

Part of the underlying assumption in the creation of the electoral college was that most Americans did not have enough access to and knowledge of the presidential candidates to cast an informed vote. Only with the appearance of broadcast media did voters begin to receive easier access to political candidates.
Beginning with radio, political messages were, for the first time, spoken in the prospective voter's living room rather than on a country stage or an auditorium. Not only did radio give both candidates and constituency greater access to each other, but it also caused candidates to change their message to meet the circumstances of this new forum. When voters had to travel long distances (by walking or using a horse and buggy) to hear a political debate on stage, they were more likely to listen for the duration because of the amount of effort required to attend the event. When radio brought political messages into the voters' homes, however, political candidates (or their stand-ins) were forced to give shorter, more "entertaining" messages to keep the attention of the radio audience.

Even with the available use of radio, however, candidates did not feel compelled to debate each other over the air waves. Incumbents realized they had nothing to gain by engaging their opponents in verbal exchanges. Swerdlow explains the tendency of incumbent presidents in the first half of this century to remain secure in their position by avoiding their opponent

...they [incumbents] follow a strategy of minimal exposure to voter and press scrutiny.... When presidential candidates met or came close to meeting during campaigns, the country's press and opinion makers--in sharp contrast to their present-day attitudes--encouraged nonconfrontational gentlemanly demeanor (10).
However, as more and more senatorial and presidential candidates began using radio as a means to reach voters, the inevitable encounters between candidates began occurring over the air waves. Although no presidential candidates faced-off during an electoral campaign on radio, Republican candidates Harold Stassen and Thomas Dewey debated on May 17, 1948 in their bid for their party's presidential nomination.

The debate was broadcast by ABC, NBC, and Mutual radio "to an audience estimated at between 40 and 80 million. One of the largest audiences in radio history had abandoned the 'Carnation Contented Hour' and Fred Waring to listen to Stassen and Dewey" (Presidential Debates 90). The debate proved to be Stassen's undoing.

The significance of the Stassen-Dewey debate is that it drew listeners into a new dimension of judging the personal characteristics of the debaters, something that wasn't relevant when listening to surrogates debate their party's platform. Not only was the validity of the arguments weighed, but also the candidates' ability to respond well under stress, appear fair and compassionate, and speak more eloquently. The audience was afforded a new list of factors with which to judge the candidates. When voters decided which candidate to vote for according to their party's platform, it was the content of the message that held
prominence in the voters' minds. However, when candidates themselves debated issues in the voters' living rooms via the radio, not only the message was judged, but the delivery and believability of the candidate as well.

This new method of candidate analysis was greatly increased with the advent of television. When Kennedy and Nixon engaged in the first televised presidential debates, voters judged not only how the candidates sounded, but how they looked and moved. Assessment of candidates' perceived character became more important than the issues, which were foremost in voters' minds when candidates kept themselves hidden from sight, sound and conflict and had surrogates carry their case to the public.

Not only did television provide voters with more factors with which to assess candidates, but it also created new expectations of what candidates should be like due solely to the technology of television. In fact, television has so much changed Americans' expectations of how a political candidate should be that, according to Ranney, "being 'good on television' has become one of the first requirements...for being a successful candidate for nomination and election to the presidency, a governorship, a seat in the U.S. Senate, or any office with a constituency that encompasses one or more television markets" (102). The result is that campaign managers must now have a thorough
understanding of how to work with the broadcast media in order to present their candidates positively to the public.

But what does it mean to be "good on television"? It means looking good, i.e., appearing healthy and confident which promotes confidence in the viewer. It also means knowing what sort of rhetorical delivery television requires. Ranney quotes political media specialist Tony Schwartz, who observes that

the kind of personality, appearance, and speaking style that inspires standing ovations from crowds of thousands in auditoriums is quite different from the kind that inspires liking and confidence from a few people sitting in front of a television set in their own homes. The auditorium situation calls for a commanding presence, a strong voice projected at a high volume, large gestures, and dramatic punch lines with plenty of pauses for cheers. The TV-room situation calls for a pleasant and friendly presence, a moderate tone of voice, small and natural gestures, and a general conversational manner. (103)

Thus, the candidate who speaks on television as he or she would in a living room of a few people is more likely to gain a favorable consensus from the public, because this type of presentation, being more natural in a private setting, puts viewers at ease. If a candidate were speaking in a booming voice and waving his arms around, it would be as much an affront as if this were taking place right in front of the viewer instead of in an auditorium. Issues aside, a voter would be hesitant to vote for a person to
lead the country if that candidate did not know how to present himself as called for according to the situation.

Thus it is that with candidates being brought into voters' living rooms through television, image began to override issues in importance. Issues were of importance when voters did not see or hear the candidates except from a great distance on a country stage. When voters began to be exposed to candidates close up on a daily basis through television, different judgment factors began to hold sway.

John F. Kennedy was the first presidential candidate to have a full awareness of the power of promoting an overall image of himself above any party platform. Through use of the media to promote his image, he set a precedent which subsequent political candidates copied. It was Kennedy's "image-making" which, according to Brown, dissolved "the barriers between the private and public realms" (70). Brown explains the effects of this type of campaigning as follows:

Largely as a result of the media of mass communication, the process of voting has become more and more analogous to the consumer's "choice" of commodities. Increasingly, to cast a vote for a candidate is seen as an act of self-definition in which one selects an "image" supposedly emblematic of one's "taste" and "lifestyle" (70).

Brown cites the Kennedys as being the pioneers of the "new politics of style" through their use of magazines and television to turn good looks and glamour into political
assets. The Kennedy campaign of image over issues set the tone for future political campaigns.

Certainly, such emphasis on a candidate's image calls for a new understanding of rhetoric that encompasses more than merely a candidate's careful choice of words in persuading voters. This new rhetoric must also include how a candidate is presented for public viewing, i.e., in what setting a candidate is seen, with what people, for what reason.

The rhetorician Kenneth Burke has aptly framed this new type of persuasion within his rhetorical conception of "identification." With this theory, candidates cause others to identify themselves not only with what is said through speeches, but also with what "properties" they surround themselves with. Burke explains the importance of the overall image a candidate presents when he writes:

> For a "good" rhetoric neglected by the press cannot be so "communicative" as a poor rhetoric backed nation-wide by headlines. And often we must think of rhetoric not in terms of some one particular address, but as a general body of identifications that owe their convincingness much more to trivial repetition and dull daily reinforcement than to exceptional rhetorical skill. (1022)

Televised presidential debates have now become the norm. Voters expect it, for these debates are the only time they are allowed to judge the candidates for themselves as
they appear in a somewhat spontaneous setting, holding each other accountable for their views.

Candidates have been known to ignore or change campaign promises, but a person does not so easily change his or her way of acting or being. Thus, the televised debates provide a setting for voters to determine how each candidate might perform in any future situation that might occur during that person's presidency.

As will be shown, political campaigns have become a battle of candidate images. A candidate's image, as well as the candidate's personal life, is stressed over issues, and campaign staffs' attempts to present candidates who conform to whatever image the public expects. The climax of this image-making occurs during the televised presidential debate, when candidates must, at all costs, hold onto and project that image of themselves which has been molded to please the public.
An Analysis of Clinton's and Kennedy's Campaign Image

Political candidates, in order to be elected, must assure the electorate that they are capable leaders. Incumbents have the benefit of their track record in office if, indeed, their actions have received favorable public notice. But even with a good record, a candidate must still re-establish, in the public's eye, a position of superiority over any new contenders for the job.

To obtain the position of frontrunner in a campaign, a candidate must not only assure voters of his or her ability to perform the job, but, more importantly, convey a total image of him or herself as trustworthy, competent and likeable. To this end, a campaign becomes not only a concerted effort to reach as many voters as possible with a candidate's message, but an image formation and promotion as well.

A candidate's image is "created" by accentuating his or her positives and minimizing the negatives. How this is done is greatly determined by the mood and expectations of the voters during the particular time period that the campaign is waged. Voter expectations of a candidate that have been determined to be most important are explained by Jamieson

Trait-based explanations of voting tell us what we say we look for. When asked what they liked and disliked about the presidential contenders, approximately one-fourth of the American public
has reported such personal traits as warmth, honesty, or intelligence. Among the traits routinely appearing in assessments of presidential hopefuls are competence and integrity. Of the two, competence generally carries the greater weight. Specific historical circumstances, such as Watergate, can shift our focus to integrity, however. Although the relationship may follow an inverted U curve, we also expect presidents to be knowledgeable (Presidential Debates 140).

Although "warmth" is not necessarily a required trait for governing the country, a large block of American voters view it as significant in what they expect in a president. Apparently, many voters would not vote for a candidate, no matter how competent and trustworthy, if that candidate was not likeable.

John F. Kennedy understood the importance of image, as explained by Joseph P. Berry, Jr. in John F. Kennedy and the Media: The First Television President: "When speaking in public, Kennedy understood that it is not simply 'what you say' that counts; 'how you say it' is also important.... Simply stated, it is easier to persuade people to think your way if they like you as a person" (121).

Kathleen Hall Jamieson also stresses the importance of image over substantive issues and qualifications when she writes in Presidential Debates

When voters report, as they have since the early 1970s, that their voting decisions are more influenced by the character of the candidate than by stands on issues or party affiliation, they are revealing, in part, the extent to which party and promises are insufficient to allay the fears engendered by unforecast policies and unanticipated presidential behaviors.... (4).
Even Richard Nixon, after a poor showing in his televised campaign debates with Kennedy, grasped the importance of image over substance, saying

"Unfortunately, in the television age a candidate's appearance and style count for more than his ideas and record.... An intelligent candidate who follows his conscience and runs a campaign based entirely on substance—who worries more about getting his views across than about what color shirt will look best on the evening news—is a sure loser" (Berry 37).

In summation of the importance of the candidate's image over any substantive matters, Berry recommends that candidates "create a politically sellable image; understand that image is just as important, if not more important, than one's stand on the issues" (147).

When a national campaign is waged by presidential candidates, the most expedient method for creating and promoting one's image is through the media, especially television, since it can reach the greatest number of people in the shortest amount of time. Clearly, a candidate who understands how to manipulate the medium of television in promoting his or her image will have an advantage over any opponents.

Given the peculiar demands of television in transmitting a positive image to the modern audience, a more contemporary definition of rhetoric is called for than the traditional key term "persuasion" which has been assigned to it. Kenneth Burke expands the definition of rhetoric with
his theory of "identification," which more closely corresponds to the rhetorical knowledge a televised political candidate must employ to gain the attention and respect of voters. Burke writes

Rhetoric is the art of persuasion, or a study of the means of persuasion available for any given situation.... As for the relation between 'identification' and 'persuasion': we might well keep it in mind that a speaker persuades an audience by the use of stylistic identifications; his act of persuasion may be for the purpose of causing the audience to identify itself with the speaker's interests; and the speaker draws on identification of interests to establish rapport between himself and his audience (The Rhetorical Tradition 1034).

Television must certainly be considered by late 20th century presidential candidates to be the most potent "means of persuasion available," and a study of what is effective in this medium is necessary to achieve frontrunner status. This medium can prove extremely detrimental to the candidate (such as Nixon in the first 1960 televised debate) who does not understand its peculiar effect upon an audience.

The establishment of rapport, through a candidate's presentation of his or her interests in a way that will cause the audience to identify with those interests, is also best done through the medium of television, due to its ability to create a feeling of intimacy between viewer and viewed. Because the television audience is viewing the
candidate close-up in their own living room, this intimacy is expected.

Theodore H. White echoes Burke's philosophy in a more practical manner in The Making of the President 1960 when he writes, "To become known, to be identifiable to voters in terms of their own gut reactions, is perhaps the most expensive and necessary condition of American Presidential politics" (33).

It will be shown in this chapter how both John F. Kennedy and Bill Clinton surrounded themselves with those properties (as defined by Burke) which identified them with the constituency which eventually elected them president. Both men, along with their advisors, carried out a concerted image-making campaign of accentuating their positives and minimizing their negatives in order to get elected. Although these two men are no different from other presidential candidates who create an image of themselves for the purpose of being elected, their situations are intriguing because their youth, as well as other factors, created a similarity in their image promotion, while the thirty-year difference in their campaigns provides an interesting contrast with which to discern evolving differences in styles of campaign image-making.

* * *
Joseph Kennedy, Sr. knew all too well that in order for his eldest son, John Fitzgerald, to win the presidency, it would be necessary to create a positive image of him and broadcast it across America. "We're going to sell Jack like soap flakes," (Berry 42) he announced to a friend. The elder Kennedy realized that his son's assets (athletic, youthful appearance; heroic war record; Pulitzer prize-winning book; name recognition; and charisma) must be amplified, and his negative aspects (Catholic religion, poor health, apparent lack of experience) must either be transformed into assets or hidden.

As Berry explains it, "The media attention generated after Kennedy's performance at the 1956 Democratic National Convention encouraged the senator to pursue the presidency. Most of Kennedy's activities between 1956 and 1960 were geared to developing a politically positive media image" (43).

One of the biggest negative factors in Kennedy's image to be overcome was his Catholic religion. The country had never elected a Catholic president, and voters were fearful that Kennedy's allegiance to the Pope might compromise his duties as president. In effect, voters thought Kennedy's election might mean that the Pope would be the de facto leader of the U.S. Counteracting this fear was to be
Kennedy's first order of business, and he met the challenge head-on in the West Virginia primary.

Kennedy turned the religious issue to his advantage with a two-pronged approach. First, he needed to counteract any fears that non-Catholics might have by presenting a positive image of himself to the West Virginia voters. Theodore H. White describes the image-making tactic that television helped effect in the primary:

Up and down the roads roved Kennedy names, brothers and sisters all available for speeches and appearances; to the family names was added the lustrous name of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. Above all, over and over again there was the handsome, open-faced candidate on the TV screen showing himself, proving that a Catholic wears no horns. The documentary film on TV opened with a cut of a PT boat spraying a white wake through the black night, and Kennedy was a war hero; the film next showed the quiet young man holding a book in his hand in his own library receiving the Pulitzer Prize, and he was a scholar; then the young man held his golden-curled daughter of two, reading to her as she sat on his lap, and he was the young father; and always, gravely, open-eyed, with a sincerity that could not be feigned, he would explain his own devotion to the freedom of America's faiths and the separation of church and state (108).

In addition to the television ad, Kennedy directly confronted the voters' fears of Catholic religion in a paid telecast on Sunday evening, May 8th. He used about ten minutes of the half-hour show to discuss the religious question. White recalled his speech, saying, "...Kennedy spoke from the gut. He reviewed the long war of church on state and state on church and that greatest of all..."
constitutional decisions: to separate church from state. Then, peering into the camera and talking directly to the people of West Virginia, he proceeded, as I remember, thus:

...so when any man stands on the steps of the Capitol and takes the oath of office of President, he is swearing to support the separation of church and state; he puts one hand on the Bible and raises the other hand to God as he takes the oath. And if he breaks his oath, he is not only committing a crime against the Constitution, for which the Congress can impeach him—and should impeach him—but he is committing a sin against God.

Here, Kennedy raised his hand from an imaginary Bible, as if lifting it to God, and, repeating softly, said, 'A sin against God, for he has sworn on the Bible' " (107-108).

Not only did Kennedy present inescapable logic in this telecast, for those who could grasp it, he also interjected a strong visual with attendant emotion. It would be hard for anyone watching him to doubt his reasoning or his sincerity. And, by using the Bible as a prop for this display, he forged a bond with the strongly Protestant West Virginians. It was one of the strongest elements of his Catholic religion which he could use to, in effect, tell these voters, "I, like you, rely on the Bible in the practice of my religion; we are the same."

The second way in which Kennedy turned the religious issue to his advantage was to play on people's fears of being labeled bigots. In essence, Kennedy replaced the
voters' fear of his Catholicism with the fear of being referred to as bigots. David Burner explains in John F. Kennedy and A New Generation how Kennedy did this: "He brought [religion] up repeatedly, raising the issue of bigotry in such a way as to put even nonbigots on the defensive, as though any vote cast against him for any reason would lead the media to label his opponents as bigots." Burner adds, "That Nixon's own pastor, the Reverend Norman Vincent Peale, condemned Kennedy on religious grounds may have gained votes for the Democratic candidate because much of the country was viewing the election as an exorcism, once and for all time, of political anti-Catholicism" (47).

Jamieson explained Kennedy's tactics in turning his religion to his advantage as follows:

In a brilliantly executed transformation, Kennedy recast questions of religion as ones of tolerance. A vote for Kennedy became a sign of open-mindedness, a vote against him a potential sign of bigotry.... By addressing the issue of religion in question-and-answer sessions, first with voters in televised five and one minute ads, then by answering queries from FDR's namesake Franklin Roosevelt Jr. in a televised half hour exchange, Kennedy demonstrated that he did not need to clear his statements with either Cardinal Cushing or the Pope and also showed that he could withstand the pressure of scrutiny by skeptics and their stand-in FDR Jr. The tension of the encounters rivetted attention and invited identification with Kennedy as the candidate under siege and as the champion of such American virtues as fairness, tolerance, equal opportunity, freedom of religion, and separation of church and state" (Packaging... 125-126).
The overwhelmingly Protestant West Virginians were well aware that the rest of the country was watching and waiting for their reaction to a Catholic presidential candidate. White describes one woman he spoke to, who had switched her vote to Kennedy, as saying, "We have enough trouble in West Virginia, let alone to be called bigots, too" (108). The tactics that Kennedy employed to make his Catholicism work for him, as well as the labors of his highly organized and innovative grassroots volunteer organizations, won him the West Virginia primary.

Four other factors entered into the image-making campaign of Kennedy: his bad health, his inexperience, his wife, and his need to prove to be the opposite of Eisenhower. Kennedy's team was hoping that the careful handling of each of these areas would create the undeniable image of a leader for the American people.

Kennedy suffered a lifetime of illness, beginning in childhood with scarlet fever and continuing through the years with jaundice, malaria, Addison's disease (an adrenalin insufficiency), and a bad back which required three operations. When Addison's disease was finally diagnosed, a family friend recalled that Kennedy was "so sick that it was an irritation for both of them, for his father and for himself. It threatened to get in the way of everything they were trying to accomplish" (Parmet 192).
Kennedy surmised, probably correctly, that Americans would be more responsive to a young man of vibrant health than one who needed daily doses of DOCA to maintain a sufficient hormonal balance and who relied on the use of crutches to ease his back pain. Thus, a concerted effort was put forth to hide Kennedy's many ailments and paint a picture of a healthy, tan, athletic young man ready to take on the task of ruling America. Hidden from the public were the many pills, the reading glasses, and the crutches; revealed, instead, was the perpetually tan face, sailing with his wife, playing football with his family, barnstorming the country without a hat or coat--obvious displays of vitality. His athleticism and energy were also displayed in the constant retelling of his war hero efforts when he swam for hours rescuing his crew members from the sinking PT-109.

In describing the concealment of Kennedy's illness, Parmet writes:

Medical records were sealed and vague rumors about Addison's could be satisfied with casual, assuring explanations that there really was not much to it. Photographers recorded the hatless and often coatless vigorous-looking senator, accompanied by a wife who obviously enhanced his portrait as a man of accomplishments, and the writers did not look much beyond the pictures (522).

Jamieson agrees that the public would not have favored an unhealthy candidate for the presidency when she writes:
Had Kennedy's illness and the nature of his medical regimen become public knowledge in the 1960 campaign, it might have changed the outcome of the Democratic convention and, if not, surely would have been a widely discussed and perhaps decisive issue in the fall election, for Eisenhower's heart attack, ileitis, and stroke had raised the public's consciousness of the importance of a candidate's health (Packaging... 138).

Instead of acknowledging the seriousness of Kennedy's disease, the Kennedy campaign relied on the televised PT 109 ads to promote JFK as a man of leadership, vigor and endurance. Anyone watching these ads could not, according to Jamieson, "seriously entertain the possibility that a man who had survived the destruction of his PT boat, had towed another man in the ocean for five miles, and had survived nine days in the jungle could suffer from a supposedly serious disease" (Packaging... 139).

Another asset to Kennedy's image was his highly accomplished and personable wife, Jacqueline. Unlike other presidents' wives who created a name for themselves after taking up residence in the White House, she became a sensation during the campaign due to her youth, her beauty and her style. Women across the country were copying her trademark hats, hairdo and clothing. Parmet describes Jacqueline's benefit to her husband as follows:

The Kennedy women and teas were largely superceded by personal visits throughout the state by Jacqueline. Appearing both with her husband as well as alone, she was thereby introduced to campaign politics, her French especially helpful with the large number of Massachusetts voters of
Canadian origin. Her fluency with Italian was an additional asset to Kennedy among an ethnic group somewhat cooler to his appeal (452).

Certainly, the majority of women voters in 1960 were housewives, not polished, international figures like Mrs. Kennedy, but their desire to look like her indicated a desire to identify themselves with what they imagined to be her admirable persona. This sort of imitation of an icon exemplified Burke's treatment of "identification" as a methodology of "means."

One instance of how an individual might merge her identity with a particular icon (in this case, Mrs. Kennedy) would be to wear particular clothes or other "psychological equivalents" (Holland 29). Modeling oneself after Jacqueline Kennedy was a form of bragging by her emulators in which they nonverbally pronounced, "I look like her, therefore I am like her."

In order to keep this Jacqueline "myth" alive, American women who admired Mrs. Kennedy would have to vote for John F. Kennedy so that his wife would not fade from the public eye and, thus, dissolve their own identification with her. This sort of rhetorical identification was a clear example of image over substance during the 1960 campaign. Certainly, there is no mention of any international attempt to copy Patricia Nixon's hairstyle or clothing. Because John F. Kennedy used his wife's high visibility as part of
essence, a Burkean prop. She was one more "means of persuasion" available to Kennedy with which to win the voters' favor.

Brown adds credence to this phenomena of image over substance when he writes: "Increasingly, to cast a vote for a candidate is seen as an act of self-definition in which one selects an 'image' supposedly emblematic of one's 'taste' and 'lifestyle' " (70).

One negative side effect to the youthful appearance that JFK and his wife put forth was that it strengthened the opinion of some voters that Kennedy was too young and inexperienced to lead the country. To counteract this negative opinion and prove his competence, Kennedy took every opportunity to point out that he and Nixon shared the same number of years in public service: fourteen. In fact, one of the reasons that Kennedy sought to enter into the "Great Debates" with Nixon was to prove his competency on the issues.

Another effective tactic which Kennedy employed to remove his too youthful image was to inform the media of his preference for being referred to as JFK or Kennedy. The use of the initials JFK, of course, would draw comparisons in the public's mind with FDR, a popular president who first understood the impact of communicating directly with the American people via radio.
The careful manipulation of all of Kennedy's perceived negative aspects (Catholic religion, bad health, apparent inexperience) formed an image in the public's mind of a young, handsome, athletic, brilliant and charismatic young leader. *Time* magazine, in listing his attributes, solidified this image for the country.

So far, Jack Kennedy has gone on some of the most highly visible assets in U.S. politics. At 40, he is trim...and boyishly handsome, with a trademark in the shock of unruly brown hair.... He belongs to a legendary family that surpasses its legend.... He is an authentic war hero and a Pulitzer-prizewinning author.... He is an athlete (during World War II his swimming skill saved his life and those of his PT-boat mates); yet his intellectual qualifications are such that his photographer wife Jacqueline remarks.... 'If I were drawing him, I'd draw a tiny body and an enormous head.'... No stem-winding orator..., Kennedy instead imparts a remarkable quality of shy, sensemaking sincerity..." (Dec. 2, 1957, 18).

As a result of JFK's careful attention to his image campaign as much as, or more than, his attention to issues, the reaction of the people to him resembled the same frenzied adoration reserved for Hollywood stars. *Time*, in the same article, felt obliged to describe the hysteria toward Kennedy in this way: "...Jack Kennedy has left panting politicians and swooning women across a large spread of the U.S" (17). The same article mentioned a University of Minnesota student who gave Kennedy a message at a Young Democrats' Convention from her fifty-eight sorority sisters:
"Every girl told me to give Senator Kennedy all her love and to tell him they should all vote for him" (17).

Theodore H. White personally witnessed the celebrity phenomenon that Kennedy inspired and describes the crowd adulation as follows.

One remembers being in a Kennedy crowd and suddenly sensing far off on the edge of it a ripple of pressure beginning, and the ripple, which always started at the back, would grow like a wave, surging forward as it gathered strength, until it would squeeze the front rank of the crowd against the wooden barricade, and the barricade would begin to splinter;.... One remembers groups along the road waving, the women unbinding kerchiefs from their heads to wave;.... One remembers the grabbers, bursting through police lines, trying to touch him or reach him, and the squeezers who grasped his hand.... One remembers, of course, the jumpers. The jumpers made their appearance shortly after the first TV debate when from a politician Kennedy had become, in the mind of the bobby-sox platoons, a "thing" combining... 'the best qualities of Elvis Presley and Franklin D. Roosevelt' (330-331).

White also provides evidence of the great contrast between Nixon's and Kennedy's effect upon an audience during speaking engagements when he writes: "...out of doors the Nixon crowds were incomparably more subdued than the Kennedy crowds. Kennedy evoked an excitement, a response to personality. Nixon held his crowds earnestly together in a sober, intent frowning mass" (332).

Berry offers one possible explanation for Kennedy's great appeal when he writes, "Why did Kennedy's appearance create so much attention? The three presidents prior to
him, Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower, were balding older men. In comparison to them, Kennedy's youth and svelt good looks made him seem even more attractive than he was" (91).

In fact, Kennedy did attempt to create a great gulf in the minds of Americans between his style and that of Eisenhower. Robert G. Carlton, when writing about Kennedy, explained his desire to distance himself from Eisenhower in this way:

> From FDR he learned what to do, from Eisenhower he learned what to avoid.... He had watched the former president on television for eight years; he greatly disapproved of what he saw. In particular, he thought pictures of Eisenhower golfing undermined his dignity, projecting an image of frivolity (103).

Although JFK thoroughly enjoyed playing golf, he would allow no pictures to be taken of him engaged in this pastime in order to prevent any associations of himself with Eisenhower in the public's mind. Berry reinforces Carlton's comments, saying, "...golf playing evoked images of Eisenhower's sluggish country club days at the White House where he dented the floors with his golf shoe spikes" (62).

Parmet offers an even more intriguing contrast between Eisenhower and Kennedy when he explains the differences in the associates of these two leaders:

> Interviewing Ike's associates invariably evokes laudatory comments: praise for his geniality, kindness, humanity, temperance. But the common denominator centered on his love for the country and value to America, his sense of duty, and his ability to bind the wounds of the early 1950s just
as he had handled delicate wartime alliances.... Kennedy intimates, equally loyal, sometimes feverishly so, guard his memory in a 'cult of the individual' fashion. Emphasizing his brilliance, charm, wit, sophistication, he--rather than the country--becomes the center of value. Eisenhower presided over an institution; Kennedy, in his very brief reign, was the institution (xvi).

Not all Americans responded to the celebrity appeal of Kennedy and some, in fact, questioned the place of such mindless hysteria in the consideration of a candidate's worthiness for office. Parmet quotes William V. Shannon of the New York Post as writing in the Nov. 11, 1957 issue

There is a growing tendency on the part of Americans to 'consume' political figures in much the same sense we consume entertainment personalities and in the movies.... Month after month, from the glossy pages of Life to the multicolored cover of Redbook, Jack and Jackie Kennedy smile out at millions of readers; he with his tousled hair and winning smile, she with her dark eyes and beautiful face. We hear of her pregnancy, of his wartime heroism, of their fondness for sailing. But what has all this to do with statemanship? (438).

The tendency of Americans to bestow "star status" on their presidential candidates has not diminished with time. Thirty years after Kennedy won over America, Bill Clinton appeared, almost as a reincarnation of the young Kennedy. Comparisons between the two were rampant. There was even a photograph of President Kennedy shaking hands with the unknown sixteen year old Bill Clinton on the White House lawn. After Clinton's election, Howard Fineman drew attention to the importance of the photograph when he called it "...prophetic history. For it documents JFK reaching
history. For it documents JFK reaching across the years to a boy he did not know—and to whom the torch of leadership now passes in an emphatic statement of America's desire for change" (5).

Bill Clinton, like Kennedy, waged a campaign of accentuating his positives and minimizing his negatives. Clinton's journey to the White House, however, involved overcoming some of the most damaging, scandalous press that any presidential candidate has had to face in recent history. Joe Klein described Clinton's campaign, calling him "a remarkably skilled and resilient politician, a man of persistence and intelligence who has managed to survive a personal ordeal unlike any other in the history of presidential campaigning and showed more than his share of grace under pressure in the process" (23).

Indeed, Clinton, like Kennedy, managed to make the bad aspects of his image work for him to obtain more votes. Unlike Kennedy, however, who entered the race already knowing his detriments and with a battle plan for dealing with them, Clinton was taken by surprise when a probing press and a Republican party on the attack defined for him what he needed to address.

Three major negative factors which threatened Clinton's promotion of his leadership image during his campaign were: (1) Gennifer Flowers' allegations of a twelve-year affair
activities; and (3) Clinton's image as a "waffler"—saying anything to please anybody. This third factor, surprisingly, was the most damaging of all, because it referred not to an activity, but to Clinton's basic character. The American people might side with Clinton in his explanation of the adultery and draft-dodging scandals, but they would not come to support him if they believed his basic character was flawed. Clinton's indecisiveness was called "the character problem" by his staff and became the focus for their image upgrade of Clinton.

On January 23, 1992, the tabloid Star broke "the Gennifer Flowers story" in which she described a twelve-year affair with Clinton. This was the first devastating blow to the Clinton campaign, and one that would have to be dealt with immediately and directly before the campaign could continue with the New Hampshire primary. Clinton's staff knew, of course, that the most direct and immediate route to the greatest number of Americans was through television, and they chose two popular television shows to try to lay the Flowers rumor to rest.

First, Mandy Grunwald, one of Clinton's advisors, went on "Nightline." Newsweek reported: "She so thoroughly pinned Ted Koppel's ears back on trash-for-cash journalism that even the Great Stone Face had to admit he felt a bit defensive" (Nov/Dec 1992, 33). Then, Clinton and his wife
Hillary were offered a prime time spot on "60 Minutes" right after the Super Bowl. At first, Clinton feared that his use of this news show would justify the coverage of the Flowers rumor by the legitimate press. But James Carville, Clinton's campaign manager, argued that it would be better to confront the issue immediately, rather than waiting for the fall.

When the Clintons appeared before the cameras that evening, they were well prepared and actually turned the Flowers rumor around to their advantage, because not only were they able to dispel the Flowers rumor in many people's minds, they were also able to show the American people who they were and gain newfound fame overnight. The other four Democratic presidential candidates were powerless against this prime time opportunity to say, "Regardless of the issues in this campaign, this is who I am!"

Another significant factor to this television appearance was the emergence of the candidate's wife as a character in her own right and, although the opposition viewed her as a dangerous, outspoken woman, many voters across the country identified with her strength and clarity and viewed her as a positive for Clinton. It is true that Hillary Clinton attempted to downplay her strength as a professional and capable woman in order to assuage and attract the more conservative voters who were afraid of her
forwardness. But she already had a strong following among voters who were ready for a "new type" of First Lady who would do more than redecorate the White House and change the china pattern.

An interesting comparison can be made between Hillary Clinton and Jacqueline Kennedy. Both were considered to be a new type of potential First Lady when they made their public debut, yet the novelty of each woman (Jacqueline's youth and trendsetting style and Hillary's professionalism) was highly restricted by the time period in which they operated. Both Kennedy's and Clinton's use of their wives as "Burkean props," attracted voters to them who identified with the type of woman they represented.

The television appearance by the Clintons was a success due to Hillary Clinton. According to Hohenberg, "Hillary Clinton, apparently, made the difference. For by standing up for her husband and defending both their marriage and the future of their daughter, Mrs. Clinton helped make him [her husband] a national figure" (5). In contrast to Hillary's high profile, the wives of the other four candidates were practically unknown.

But the truth of the rumored affair was still unknown. Not even Clinton's staff would approach him directly about it, because they secretly feared it was true since he had never denied it. During the taping of the "60 Minutes"
important was the Nixon-Kennedy debate, and I like to think we helped create a president. I'd like to think we'll do it again" (Newsweek Nov/Dec 1992, 34). Hewitt's use of the word "create" is significant, since it shows that he attributed a candidate's success to the "creation" of that candidate by the television media.

Since the veracity of Flowers' claims was still unclear, she called a press conference and offered tapes to the media of alleged telephone conversations between herself and Bill Clinton. Then CBS and ABC played segments without verifying them. Once again, Clinton's staff used television to fight back. "We're going to have to go to war," announced Clinton's campaign manager, James Carville, and he went on the "Today" show the next day "to attack the credibility of Flowers and the media coverage" (Newsweek, Nov/Dec 1992, 34).

The Gennifer Flowers scandal was finally laid to rest when it was discovered that the tapes had been doctored. The effect of the affair upon voters was determined by an ABC poll which "found that the scandal had swayed only 11 percent of the voters; 79 percent said the press had no business poking through such dirty laundry; 82 percent thought enough had been said about Clinton's personal life" (Newsweek, Nov/Dec 1992, 34).
The widespread coverage of the Flowers affair by the press was indicative of an important change that occurred in the thirty years between Kennedy's and Clinton's presidential campaigns. As soon as Gennifer Flowers told her story, journalists raced to spread this news about Clinton via newspapers and television. However, even though Kennedy's philandering was well-known among journalists during his campaign and presidency, they did not report this area of his life to the American public. Brown, in his discussion of revisionist history, notes that "rumors of sexual misconduct by Kennedy had been rife in Washington during his lifetime" (71).

Even Kennedy's liaison with Inga Arvad, who accompanied Hitler to the 1936 Berlin Olympic games, was left untouched by the press. Parmet reports that, if Kennedy's lengthy and intimate relationship with Arvad had been revealed, "it could easily have reignited doubts about [Joe Kennedy, Sr.] and the Nazis and, by extension, Jack and Joe McCarthy.... Although no evidence of her spying had actually been uncovered, her close associations with leaders of the Third Reich could have provided first-rate ammunition for Jack's enemies...." (522).

Perhaps the journalists in the 1960s did not report Kennedy's intimate activities because Kennedy enjoyed such a good relationship with them, always providing them with
Perhaps the journalists in the 1960s did not report Kennedy's intimate activities because Kennedy enjoyed such a good relationship with them, always providing them with helpful information, granting them special favors and looking out for their comfort. The lack of women reporters during Kennedy's campaign might have been another reason for failure to take offense at Kennedy's philandering. There was also, in the early 1960s, still an overriding innocence in the way citizens viewed their president, and digging into a candidate's private life was considered taboo, if not unnecessary. Parmet captures this national optimism when he writes

The civil-rights movement had yet to peak, .... Television sets were still to show police dogs, fire hoses, and cattle prods being used against citizens demonstrating for the right to be citizens. Cities had not begun to burn and, to most Americans, Indochina was indistinguishable from China, which at least everyone knew was Red. When the President spoke, people listened and believed, even if they weren't inspired. Meanwhile, the Washington press corps happily subsisted on authorized handouts and confined knowledge of naughty behavior to whispers in fraternal gossip sessions. Few looked for a Deep Throat (522).

After successfully reducing the alleged Flowers affair to what appeared to be an insignificant rumor, Clinton next had to turn his attention to a Wall Street Journal article charging him with dodging the draft during the Vietnam War. ABC then exposed a letter from a 23-year-old Clinton to the
drafted were high; then, when the lottery was instituted and he drew a high number, he requested the ROTC chief to remove his name from the ROTC program.

A heroic war record is one factor that could still be considered a positive accomplishment for a candidate in the thirty year span between Kennedy's and Clinton's campaign. In fact, when comparing these two men, it is ironic that Kennedy's connection with the military was superbly positive while Clinton's was incredibly negative. Damage-control on Clinton's image was clearly called for.

After Clinton's draft dodging became public, the candidate was immediately besieged by questions about his patriotism and whether or not he thought he was capable of serving as commander-in-chief if elected president. Clinton's advisors thought it best to meet the attack head-on as they had with the Flowers affair, urging him to restate his opposition to what he believed to be an unjustified war. Clinton, however, attacked the press for trying to tear him down and defended himself without approaching the issue directly. *Newsweek* reported

The attack concealed a sharp twinge of embarrassment, if not guilt, on Clinton's part. He was from the South; he had grown up within its tradition of military service. If anything, friends said, he was far more touchy over the draft than he had ever been about Gennifer Flowers. The candidate's evasiveness as to the details of his draft record probably hurt him more than not having served in Vietnam (Nov/Dec 1992, 34).
friends said, he was far more touchy over the draft than he had ever been about Gennifer Flowers. The candidate's evasiveness as to the details of his draft record probably hurt him more than not having served in Vietnam (Nov/Dec 1992, 34).

Hohenberg, who viewed Clinton's handling of the issue in a more positive light, wrote

Clinton's response was that he had had a high draft number, which was true. Moreover, when the accusation was viewed against the antiwar sentiment of many of the college students and other youth of his generation, the draft-dodging charge also failed to impress a lot of people across the land (5).

It did not seem to affect the voters in New Hampshire who gave him second place to Paul Tsongas' win there. Clinton had managed to minimize the negative effects of adultery and draft-dodging and was still in the race.

But these negative issues did stick with many voters as evidence that Clinton was capable of evasiveness when clear answers were called for, and that his ability to command America's military was questionable.

Clinton's lack of directness on the draft question revealed a character flaw that the voters were quick to pick up on—his tendency to "waffle," to change or redefine his statements to please whomever he was talking to. Newsweek reports that Clinton's staffers employed modern marketing techniques by assembling a focus group of ten women and asking what they thought of Clinton: "'He just goes with the flow,' said one panelist. 'If you asked his favorite
color he'd say "Plaid".' (Afterward, whenever Clinton fudged, his staffers said he'd gone 'plaid.' )" (Nov/Dec 40).

Even after the Democratic National Convention, when Clinton and Gore entered the campaign trail together, "Carville said they had to be careful not to look too political or slick. 'Watch the "plaid" problem,' he reminded them: anything that made Clinton look like he was offering everything to everyone would be a disaster" (Newsweek, Nov/Dec 1992, 78). " 'Specificity,' George Stephanopoulos, Clinton's communications director, said in New Hampshire, 'is a character issue this year' " (Klein 15).

In order to combat the character problem that resulted from Clinton's perceived desire to want to please everyone, his staff launched "The Manhattan Project." This program's goal was to research, through focus groups, and reform Clinton's image in response to various national polls. What it did, in effect, was determine what the American people wanted and then mold the candidate to meet that desire. Clinton was, indeed, the modern presidential candidate in every sense of the word. His advisors used well-known marketing techniques to discover what sort of candidate was wanted and then employed television to project that image to the greatest number of people in the shortest amount of time.
Marketing techniques were not used thirty years previously in Kennedy's campaign because they had not yet been refined. Focus groups had just come into use after World War II but were not yet considered scientific enough to be used successfully. Kennedy did make full use, however, of Lou Harris and his polling techniques. During the presidential campaign, Harris would first determine who the winner of a primary would be and then find out why Kennedy would theoretically win or lose the race depending upon the results of the survey. If Kennedy came up the loser, his team would then determine why, then attempt to overcome the negative factor in Kennedy's image.

For instance, Harris polled West Virginians in June 1958 and discovered that they would vote 52% for Kennedy, 38% for Nixon, balance undecided. In April 1960, however, the poll revealed 60% for Humphrey, 40% for Kennedy. When Kennedy advisors requested of pollsters an explanation for the great difference in the two poll results, they were told that no one knew Kennedy was Catholic in 1958. Thus, Kennedy conducted most of his West Virginia campaign by dealing with the issue of his religion.

What Clinton's advisors' research revealed was that college-educated women, in particular, were suspicious of Clinton and considered him no more than a mere politician.
moving an electronic needle on a scale: 0-50 indicates frigid to cool, 50-100 indicates cool to hot. *Newsweek* reports

Greenberg...studied a group of 26 moderate to slightly liberal white women; only six were mildly impressed by Clinton. But when he said things like, "No more something for nothing," the needles moved up. When he talked about keeping kids in school, the needles flicked to 60. Getting welfare recipients off the rolls in two years produced a 75-point spike* (Nov/Dec 42).

After several focus groups showed similar results, the Clinton team decided to run the campaign message as a simplified version of the Manhattan Project: People First, with a strong dose of Responsibility.

As this vision expanded into reality during several staff sessions, it became clear what Clinton must do. *Newsweek* reported the results from one of the meetings

'We need to mention work every 15 seconds,' offered Carville. Warming to the theme, Grunwald said, 'by the end of the convention, what do we want people to know about Clinton: that he worked his way up; that his life's work had been in education and investing in people; that he values work; that he had moved people from welfare to work; that he has a national economic strategy to put America back to work.' Carville chimed in, 'The word "work" works for us. There are no quick fixes, no hoaxes, no easy answer. We have to work our way out of this mess' (Nov/Dec 42).

The economy was on a downward trend; people were being pushed out of middle-management jobs by computers and wanted work; people wanted others to work, as well, rather than receive an easy welfare income from the government. And if
Clinton had worked so hard to get himself where he was in life, the voters might have surmised, then he would understand their situation and help them. Clearly, this was a case of word usage, that Burke would describe as a strong identification factor for Clinton's constituency. They identified with the message that was being put forth, and they identified with the candidate. Because Clinton placed his interests alongside those of his constituency, he had achieved social agreement with the voters through the rhetoric of "identification" as defined by Burke. When the candidate is able to show the voters "that his interests and attitudes and theirs are consubstantial, and that, consequently, the solutions which offers are identified with their interests" (Holland 38), then he has gained their confidence and, possibly, their vote.

Besides the strong message that Clinton developed, he counteracted his image as a "waffler" by employing what his advisors called "counterscheduling," giving an unpopular message to particular groups to prove that he was a strong, independent thinker, not out to please anyone in order to get votes. This technique would also assure voters that Clinton could stand up for his principles, regardless of what the consequences were.

A prime example of this counterscheduling occurred when Clinton spoke to Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition and
get votes. This technique would also assure voters that Clinton could stand up for his principles, regardless of what the consequences were.

A prime example of this counterscheduling occurred when Clinton spoke to Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition and attacked Sister Souljah (a rap singer) for suggesting that blacks should stop killing each other and concentrate on killing whites for awhile. By delivering an unpopular message in person to his black audience, Clinton gathered a greater number of votes from suburban whites who saw the televised version of his speech in their living rooms that night. It was a case of sacrificing a smaller number of votes to receive a far greater number of votes. By not delivering the message the Rainbow Coalition was expecting, Clinton proved the worth of his character to many American voters.

Kennedy's negatives did not spring from character issues ("waffling") or activities (alleged affairs, draft dodging) as Clinton's did. Rather, the negatives Kennedy suffered from sprung from who he was: a rich, young, inexperienced Catholic with bad health. He did not need damage-control to appear capable of delivering strong messages or innocent of wrongful deeds. Kennedy needed damage-control to conceal or re-work what he was born with. If the press of thirty years ago had reported Kennedy's
philandering, then comparisons between the two candidate's survival of bad press could be more closely aligned. What is apparent though, is that both Kennedy and Clinton were noteworthy in their determination and success at overcoming strong negative image factors in their campaigns.

After Clinton won the nomination at the Democratic National Convention, he began riding a wave of momentum that culminated in his election as President of the United States. Three factors contributed to the energy of the Clinton campaign after the convention: (1) choosing Gore as vice presidential running mate; (2) participating in the bus tours; and (3) immediately meeting Republican challenges head-on.

By choosing Gore as his running mate, Clinton defined his campaign as a generational and regional one. Both men were young and both were from the South. Morrow described their combined force as follows:

Clinton's selection of Al Gore to be his running mate suggested something of the energy that might be released—a sort of sibling synergy. The ticket of Clinton and Gore violated traditional political rules demanding geographical balance and even a sort of personality contrast between a party's two nominees. The very similarity of Clinton and Gore in generation and regional accent produced a powerful twinning effect—policy wonks in a buddy movie: Butch and Sundance (25).

An additional positive in a year in which "Family Values" were touted by both parties as being all important, was the image projected by the Gore and Clinton families.
Hohenberg also noted the visual power of the two families as follows:

In a response to Republican concern about [family values], Mrs. Gore and three of their four children often took to the campaign trail with the Senator and Governor Clinton. With them, usually, were Hillary Clinton and the Clinton's twelve-year-old daughter, Chelsea, making a colorful showing of family values on the Democratic side.... To match such a show of virility and enthusiasm, the Bushes were obliged to enlist the help of their grandchildren as well as the younger vice president and Mrs. Quayle (65).

In order to counteract President Bush's well-financed television campaign, the vitality of the Clinton/Gore family merger was also utilized by Clinton staffers in a low-budget, attention-grabbing ploy: the Bus Tours. *Newsweek* caught the effect that coverage of the tours had upon the public when it reported:

The route offered 1,000 miles of getting-to-know-you time against a backdrop of irresistible photo ops: those three guys out in a field with a giant Clinton-Gore banner draped across their combine, that family on the front yard in lawn chairs, the kids waving sparklers. At stop after stop, Gore would step out and warm up the crowds. Hillary and Tipper would hug like sorority sisters (Nov/Dec 78).

At the end of the bus tours, polls showed that Clinton scored higher than Bush on family values.

The media coverage that the Clinton team had hoped for with these energetic bus tours was exuberant, prolific and effective. The image presented by the combination of the Clinton and Gore families sweeping America was of young,
energetic, positive politicians ready to revamp America.

Kennedy presented this same image. He was young and energetic, and momentum was built for his campaign by the support of his many family members giving speeches and teas within any geographic area he was visiting.

But, in order to sustain the positive wave of energy generated by the bus tours, the Clinton campaign needed a solid foundation. "Momentum is not message," announced Clinton's analyst Grunwald (Newsweek, Nov/Dec 79). And this is when James Carville organized what he called the "War Room." Its main focus was to keep tabs on Bush, media reports, and inside rumors to determine any forthcoming attacks on Clinton and to be ready with an immediate counterattack. Hohenberg described the results when he wrote:

> Once the White House assault began on [Clinton's] character, he slammed back sometimes with two blows for one. The governor and his hard-working staff had perfected a system of prompt responses to anything that came out of Republican headquarters or the White House. If the president called Clinton 'weak-kneed,' a 'know-nothing' and 'not to be trusted,' the name-calling also mounted on the Democratic side that the president was 'irresponsible,' 'pitiful,' and 'afraid to debate the issues' (122).

It was an effective tactic, and further strengthened Clinton's image as man who could deal effectively with any problem that came his way. The immediate responses also had a negative effect upon the opposition, making the
Republicans look desperate and ineffectual in their attacks upon Clinton.

Once Kennedy and Clinton had proved to the voters that they were energetic, trustworthy, and capable of leading the nation, they chose to project and prove this image through national televised debates with their opponents. It was in these debates that the American people would be given a chance to scrutinize their chosen candidate in a way that was not allowed by any of the news reports or televised sound bites they had been exposed to thus far.
A Rhetorical Analysis and Comparison of a Televised Presidential Debate from 1960 and 1992

Clinton and Kennedy created an image of themselves by assessing the voters' expectations of what was needed in a candidate, then minimizing their negatives and accentuating their positives to meet that need. By understanding what voters expected, then using images, words and props to create an image with which the voters could identify, Clinton and Kennedy held an advantage over their opponents which led to their election. One of the most important means for Clinton and Kennedy to project their created image to the public was through the televised presidential debates. Clearly, the candidate who understood the medium best would have an advantage over his opponents.

Since the first Kennedy-Nixon debate in 1960 had proven so convincingly the power of image over substance, much analysis and study had gone into the effect of television on viewers. Thus, Clinton, Bush and Perot had the advantage of thirty-two years of television experience with which to project their image to millions of voters. Yet Clinton seemed to have the advantage over his opponents in the second presidential debate, perhaps because he had chosen an innovative format which he felt more comfortable with than the other two candidates.

The second presidential debate of 1992 occurred the evening of October 15th at the University of Richmond in
Richmond, Virginia. The Republican incumbent, President George Bush, was present along with the Democratic candidate Bill Clinton and independent candidate Ross Perot. Although Ross Perot charmed viewers with his homespun "folksy" wisdom and delighted reporters with his talent for spouting humorous one-liners that could be repeated in the evening news, he could not be considered a serious threat to either Clinton or Bush, each of whose main concern was obviously with the other. He was, however a wild card who could do damage if his sudden rise in popularity were not properly understood. U.S. News & World Report described the role Perot played, thus: "His folksy directness only reinforced the sense that Clinton and Bush were sidestepping difficult issues and that politics as usual would not do" (Oct. 26, 1992, 43).

Therefore, Clinton and Bush treated Mr. Perot deferentially throughout the debate, attempting to align themselves with him as a friend rather than a foe. On one occasion during the second debate, Bush said, "Like Mr. Perot, I...." In another instance, Clinton stated, "...I think Mr. Perot and I agree on this...." Obviously, neither Clinton nor Bush wanted to alienate Perot's supporters, hoping to garner support from them if Perot dropped out of the race again.
Bill Clinton's main concern in this second debate, as in the other 1992 presidential debates, was to persuade voters that he was the obvious choice to be elected president in the upcoming elections. In order to do this, he had to maintain and strengthen the image he had created during his campaign by proving that his knowledge on important issues demonstrated his competence to lead, despite the fact that he was in his early forties and had only been involved in politics at the state level.

Clinton also had to convince voters that he was trustworthy by coming out with strong, definitive statements on the issues, thereby further dispelling his negative image as a "waffler." The strong, fact-based statements that Clinton put forth in the debate also added to his competency factor. Additionally, he would continue to carry the campaign theme "People First" into the debate arena by encouraging individual responsibility, but also by showing that ordinary people count. Clinton obviously wanted to give the impression, during the debates, that the concerns and opinions of every voter were important to him and would continue to be so if he were elected president.

Clinton understood the public's growing dissatisfaction with the excesses of Congress. Self-importance was held in low regard by voters in the fall of 1992. It explained, in part, Perot's rapid gain in popularity, since he portrayed
himself as an outsider who was going to go to Washington to "fix it." It also partly explained Reagan's popularity when he was president. As Jamieson explains it: "Where Nixon spoke as The President and Johnson as Your President, Reagan [spoke] as a neighbor who stepped out of a shower one evening to find that he had been asked to lead the country for a while" (Eloquence 158).

Because the 1992 voters were increasingly distrustful of "Washington insiders," feeling they were out of touch the needs of working Americans, the ability to distance one's self from Washington, while seeking the nation's highest office there, became a distinct asset. Therefore, Clinton proposed a "talk show" style format for the second debate in which the audience members would pose questions to the candidates, thus giving the impression that he believed ordinary citizens were intelligent enough to ask questions of future presidents. The stage props were also less formal (bar stools with small tables next to them to hold notes and glasses of water) than the previously used podiums.

Carole Simpson, an ABC reporter who moderated this debate, mentioned in her introduction that Bill Clinton had proposed the format and Clinton himself reiterated this fact later in the debate in his answer to a questioner who wondered why the candidates couldn't stop "trashing each other" and just try to find the best solutions for the
issues. Clinton responded: "...I believe so strongly in the question you asked," he said, "that 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 people ask questions and I tried to give very specific answers" (Reuter 16:17).

In this answer, Clinton not only stressed the importance that the opinions of "real people" have for him, but he also stressed the significance of his involvement in bringing about this revolutionary format, thus insinuating that Bush and Perot had not actively sought the opinions of ordinary people or been innovative enough to suggest such a format themselves. This indictment of his competitors made them appear guilty by omission.

It is obvious that Clinton chose a debate format in which he excelled and which he probably realized would cause Bush to falter. Perhaps the genius of Clinton's choice of this format was displayed when a young black woman asked the candidates how the national debt had affected them personally. William F. Buckley, Jr. reported, "...a whole lot of time was spent trying to cope with the question in such a way as not to hurt the feelings of the questioner, and so appear to be brusque and unfeeling" (70).

More than any other question in the second debate, this one appeared to cause Bush's worst moment and Clinton's
best. Mr. Perot volunteered to answer the question first and did an adequate job of taking the questioner's feelings into account while stating that the debt had caused him to enter the presidential race.

Then, Bush was called upon by Carole Simpson to give his answer, but she interrupted him four times before he had said two sentences, clarifying that he must describe his own personal experience. "You personally," she kept repeating to Bush. Finally, Bush, obviously floundering, uttered what had to be the most damaging sound bite of the campaign:
"I'm not sure I get...help me with the question and I'll try to answer it" (Reuter 16:30).

This statement caused the Clinton team to immediately race around their command post forging that moment into a damaging indictment of Bush. Their method of attack is described by Rosenstiel

It was irrelevant that the woman confronting Bush had probably meant to ask how the recession had affected Bush rather than the national debt, and that her imprecision, not the economy, was what had stumped the less-than-nimble President. What mattered was the black outline of recollection: A citizen asked Bush about the economy and he didn't understand the question. The moment reinforced exactly what was driving the election—that Bush was out of step. If Clinton's team could get the press to repeat their talking point, and replay the video of that moment over and over in the days after this October 15 debate, they would define what this moment came to mean and trap Bush with his own words.

Within minutes Clinton campaign headquarters in Little Rock had written up the "Talking Points" and faxed them to both the group in Virginia and
the fifty state offices to use. The document began, "'I'm not sure I get it,' said Bush" (304).

Not only was Bush portrayed as "not getting" the economy in answering this question, he also portrayed himself as one who does not "get" the troubles of the ordinary American, which would be severely damaging to how voters perceived him. U.S. News and World Report, in forecasting what sort of difficulties might occur during the second debate, reported

"When you have a sincere person asking a weird, off-the-wall question," says a prominent political consultant, "your candidate tends to give a weird, off-the-wall reply." And viewers have a natural sympathy for citizen questioners—who are seen as more in tune with everyday concerns (Oct. 19, 1992, 11).

Yet Clinton's response to this questioner was undoubtably one of his best moments during this debate and gave viewers the impression that he was deeply concerned for the ordinary citizen, verifying the "People First" theme of his campaign. He had prepared himself well for this sort of situation before the debate. Carville had advised Clinton to "'...use the audience--make the audience your friend.' ....'Tone and body language are important,' Clinton said as he calculated the best fighting stance to take against Bush" (Newsweek, Nov/Dec 1992, 91).

The Newsweek article goes on to describe Clinton's response to the woman:
Body language well prepared, Clinton moved in toward the young woman, established eye contact and talked warmly about how much pain the national debt caused in a small state like Arkansas, where the governor personally knew people who lost their jobs when companies went bankrupt. Clinton connected" (91).

Clinton first of all questioned the woman in a concerned tone, "Tell me how it's affected you again." "Um..." the woman replied. "You know people who've lost their jobs and lost their homes?" he asked. "Well, yeah, uh-huh," she said. He then explained that because his state is so small, "when people lose their jobs, there's a good chance I'll know them by their names." Clinton also said that during the last thirteen months of his campaign, he had met many people "like you" all over America who had lost their jobs (Reuter 16:30).

It is ironic that, although superficially, Clinton's answer showed that he was less personally affected by the poor economy than the other two candidates, it seemed that he was the most affected because he cared more for others who were affected by it. Perot's family had suffered because he decided to run for President to fix the economy; Bush had heard of and talked to those who lost their jobs and money had come out of his own pocket because "everything's more expensive;" Clinton knew people by name who had lost their jobs. Yet what the American people saw on television (and could not see by listening to the radio) was a presidential candidate who was extremely concerned for
this one woman who was worried about the economy. Viewers could easily infer, from seeing Clinton's concern for this woman, that he would carry this understanding of the economy and concern for its victims into the White House and turn things around.

This sort of concern for a troubled fellow human being carries such strong emotional weight, that it could also dispel any uncertainties voters might have about Clinton's alleged immorality (the Flowers' affair), unpatriotic attitude (dodging the draft and alleged participation in anti-American demonstrations in Russia), or character problems (there was certainly no waffling in his feelings of concern for this woman). In this particular instance, body language (walking toward the woman, establishing eye contact, talking directly to her) and the display of concern overrode the content of Clinton's answer.

It is clear that Clinton's strongest attribute in this debate was his demonstration of concern for "ordinary people." Clearly, this sort of empathy with the problems of voters would increase his likability factor. But Clinton also had to prove to voters that he was competent to lead the country. To do this he would have to overcome possible concerns that he was too young and inexperienced and show that he understood the national and international concerns of the U.S. Three characteristics of Clinton's speech style
and choice of words would bolster voters' confidence in his abilities: numbering, leadership statements, profusion of the first person pronoun "I."

Numbering has long been used by speakers to hold an audience's attention and provide a comforting sense of completion to the speaker's statement. Max Atkinson adds that such numbering, "...can work to strengthen, underline or amplify almost any kind of message" (60). It is not surprising, therefore, that out of the twelve answers Clinton provided during the second debate, half of them (six) included numbering and, of those six, four of the answers contained three numbered items, which is the most potent and satisfying form of numbering for the listener. The other two answers contained two and four numbered items.

Neither Bush nor Perot included numbering in their answers during the second debate, preferring a more informal method for proposing solutions to problems. This tactic benefitted Perot because it furthered his "folksy" image. Numbering would have made him appear more prepared than "just a businessman" should be. Bush, as the incumbent, strengthened his leadership image by confidently explaining problems and calling upon his experience in office as proof of his understanding of the situations presented. If Bush had used numbering, it could have worked against him, making
it appear as though he were coming up with new solutions to problems he should already have solved.

Clinton's numbering, however, in contrast to the relaxed attitude of the other two candidates, made him appear knowledgeable on the issues and ready to put a specific plan in place once he were in Washington in order to make the lives of all American citizens far better. Further, Clinton's numbering of steps in planned solutions, in contrast to Bush's listing of what had already occurred, gave viewers the impression that, whatever Bush had done, it hadn't worked and some new plan must be put into effect.

Television viewers had the added visual benefit (over radio listeners) of seeing Clinton number each proposed step with his fingers. The movement of Clinton's hand in unison with his words further strengthened each numbered statement that he made.

An additional factor in Clinton's phrasing which strengthened his image as a capable leader was his profusion of leadership statements. Bennet notes that "appeals to popular leadership images are an important part of the pragmatics of any campaign." He explains the importance of leadership statements when he writes

If elections are about nothing else, they entail the dramatization and resolution of collective concerns about security, governmental succession, and the shape of the future. In order for candidates to play their roles properly, they must address these concerns by symbolizing
leadership as the basic campaign issue and by transmitting familiar images of leadership in the process (226).

In other words, voters who are about to experience a change of leadership want to be reassured that they are secure in the hope that their lifestyle will remain relatively intact if not improved by the candidate they elect. Thus, it is the candidate's primary concern to consistently reassure voters in the form of leadership statements. If a candidate is able to project an image of strong leadership, then voters can feel secure that this leader will not waiver in times of crisis.

Clinton strengthened his leadership image for the voters in two ways. First, he made continual reference to his position and experience as Governor of Arkansas for twelve years and, in so doing, reminded voters that he had been a leader for many years. This is in keeping with Bennet's theory that projecting leadership imagery to voters gains support for a candidate:

A common pragmatic symbolization of leadership is the practice of incumbents to blur the distinction between their image as a candidate and their image as public official.... Candidates who lack this symbolic resource (incumbency) must develop other devices if they are to convert their obligatory attention to leadership into a pragmatic consideration as well. ...Short of being president, the next best strategy for a candidate is to create situations in which he can appear to act in a presidential manner (228-229).

Clinton began this leadership association for the audience in his first response during the debate, indicating
that his desire to promote his governing experience was foremost in importance for him. In fact, Clinton's self-promotion was so prominent in his agenda, it seems, that the leadership statement was interjected somewhat out of context into the response, resulting in an illogical presentation of his thoughts.

Clinton's first words in the debate were: "I'd like to answer the question, because I've actually been a governor for twelve years, so I've known a lot of people who have lost their jobs because of jobs moving overseas, and I know a lot of people whose plants have been strengthened by increasing exports" (Reuter 16:15).

Upon hearing this response, the audience might have initially assumed that Clinton was saying he'd like to answer the question because he'd "actually been a governor for twelve years," rather than what he really meant to imply, which was that because he'd been a governor for twelve years, he'd gleaned some experience relevant to answering the question. The word "actually" in Clinton's response reveals an embarrassingly puerile attempt at self-promotion. The use of this word worked against him because it sounds childish, and it displayed a subconscious reactive defense against the opinion of voters who believed him too young and inexperienced to be president, thus validating those opinions.
After this awkward start, Clinton referred to his governorship five more times during the debate, including his closing statement. These references, included within his responses, were: "I've worked on these things for twelve years...." (Renter 16:17); "I've been governor of a small state for twelve years,...." (Renter 16:30); "...I've spent more of my time and life on this in the last twelve years than any other issue" (Renter 16:33); "...the people of my state have let me be their governor for twelve years because..." (Renter 16:35); "...my state ranks first in the country in job growth,..." (Renter 16:35).

Along with these references to his governorship, Clinton attempted to strengthen his leadership image with a profusion of the first-person singular pronoun "I" scattered throughout his speech. When viewed in comparison to the speech of the other two candidates in the debate, the abundance of Clinton's "I" statements is noteworthy. Although "I" statements did appear in Bush's and Perot's speech, Bush's responses included more statements of fact ("There are...," "This is...") which reflected his knowledge of specific issues, yet removed him personally from his statements. Perot's responses utilized the second-person ("You've got to...") as he outlined what must be done to fix problems in the government, although it could be assumed by the audience that Perot himself would be the active agent in
active agent in his proposed solutions. The use of the second person sounds less harsh and more informal than consistently saying, "I am going to..." throughout the debate.

Brennan and Hahn state: "That the frequency of the first-person singular [pronoun] is related to egocentrism is neither a new nor discerning notion,..." (51). Certainly, the constant use of "I" draws attention to the speaker. This is exactly what Clinton hoped for. His responses are filled with combinations of "I think," "I believe," "I want," "I asked," "I suggested," "I found," "I saw." Yet, rather than assume the more superficial motivation of egocentrism behind this sort of word choice, it might be suggested that Clinton is using the "I" pronoun in his speech to indicate his personal ownership of and investment in his statements, thus promoting his leadership capabilities.

When Clinton says, "I think," or "I believe," it appears that he wants to make it clear to the audience that these opinions are his own, carefully examined and arrived at after much study, rather than facts he obtained from an analyst or almanac. When he employs such statements as, "I asked," "I suggested," "I found," he is indicating to the audience that he personally took action to solve the problem under discussion.
Brennan and Hahn offer another explanation for a speaker's use of "I think," when they write: "As the subject becomes more aware of personal fallibility, direct statements are replaced by more cautious indirections, such as 'it seems that,' 'it may be,' and 'I think that,' with each expression followed by a noun clause. In their extreme, these indirections become vacillations" (51). Yet, this does not seem to be the case with Clinton's speech. As stated above, he is attempting to show the voters his personal investment in his facts and opinions. The alternative phrasing would have been "I know," which is far too strong, sounding somewhat overbearing and not commonly used in this situation, or direct statements of fact, such as Bush used, which would not indicate a personal investment in the ensuing phrase.

All of the factors explored above: Use of the "I" pronoun, references to governorship, people first, and distancing from Washington, came together in one particular response Clinton gave during the debate, when he defended himself against Perot's innuendo that Bush and Clinton let others do their thinking for them. Perot stated: "Now, just for the record, I don't have any spin doctors. I don't have any speechwriters. Probably shows. I make those charts you see on television. But you don't have to wonder if it's me talking. See, what you see is what you get, and if you
don't like it, you got two other choices, right?" (Reuter 16:17)

Clinton interrupted Perot's response, saying

Wait a minute. I want to say just one thing now, Ross, in fairness. The ideas I express are mine. I've worked on these things for twelve years and I'm the only person up here who hasn't been part of Washington in any way for the last twenty years. So I don't want the implication to be that somehow everything we say is just cooked up and put in our head by somebody else. I worked twelve years very hard as a governor on the real problems of real people. I'm just as sick as you are by having to wake up and figure out how to defend myself every day. I never thought I'd ever be involved in anything like this (Reuter 16:17).

In this statement, Clinton reveals how important it is to him to have voters know how hard he has worked on coming to his own conclusions about various issues. His personal investment in the process, indicated by the "I" pronoun, is abundantly obvious. He distances himself from Washington, thus villainizing Perot and Bush in the audience's mind. He makes two distinct references to his experience as governor, using the magic number "twelve." And he talks about "real" problems and "real" people, again villainizing Bush and Perot by suggesting that they have spent too much time "at the top" to have any experience with actual human beings and must have arrived at their opinions some other way.

This sort of defensive response by a non-incumbent is usually directed at incumbents. But Bush and Clinton had been admonished earlier by two questioners to quit "mud-
slinging" and just stick to solving the issues. So Clinton interjected his image-promoting defense at the most appropriate time. If he had interrupted Bush with this sort of utterance, he might have invited a stronger response from Bush than Perot's simple, "May I finish?" and been viewed as ignoring the requests of the "real" people to stop such bickering.

Additionally, Clinton's use of Perot's first name, "Ross," created a friendly and informal tone, because friends call each other by first name. This friendly informality is in stark contrast to the very formal tone of the 1960 Kennedy-Nixon debate in which Nixon referred to his opponent as "Senator Kennedy," and Kennedy responded with "Mr. Nixon" or "the vice president."

Clinton faced a dichotomy in his efforts to distance himself from Washington and big government while, at the same time, proving that his experience as Arkansas' governor qualified him to run the country. This predicament was easily resolved, however, by not including both qualifications in the same statement and by responding with the appropriate aspect depending upon the question. When an audience member posed a question calling for a proposed solution to a specific problem, Clinton would inflate his experience as governor to cover such issues as national health care and a balanced economy. But when the questioner
exhibited some vulnerability or asked for the candidate's personal experience, such as the young black woman mentioned above, Clinton reduced his governorship of Arkansas to the equivalent of running a town meeting.

He began his response to her by saying, "Tell me how it's affected you again. You know people who've lost their jobs and lost their homes?" She responded affirmatively and then Clinton attempted to align himself with the woman's experience, saying, "Well, I've been governor of a small state for twelve years. 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" (Reuter 16:30). Then he continued to relate to the woman what the federal government had done to the people of his state.

Clinton's use of the word "small" in the response to the woman is significant. It distanced him from Washington and identified him with all the other "small" citizens who were, supposedly, too insignificant to be of concern to the federal government. His use of the third-person plural "us" also forged this alliance between Clinton and those who had suffered at the hands of the federal government.

By limiting or expanding his governing experience, depending upon what type of response was required, and by focusing upon only one aspect of that experience per each
response, Clinton was able to accomplish the difficult rhetorical feat of projecting both images to the debate audience: his domain was small enough that he could experience each person's pain personally, yet large enough to provide him with the expertise to govern a nation.

In addition to Clinton's word choices, another important element to be examined in this debate was his propensity to wait rather than volunteer to answer a question. Out of the twelve questions asked, Clinton only volunteered to answer once, and even with this one instance, he was not volunteering to respond first, but to answer second. Clinton gave the first response only three times, only because the question was directed at him. Of the three times he responded second, he was directed to answer by the moderator twice. Clinton was the last to respond six times. Perot, like Clinton, responded first three times, second three times, and last six times, yet he volunteered three times. Most significantly, Bush aggressively volunteered to respond five times and never responded last. He responded first six times and second six times. The moderator, Carole Simpson, did not seem to employ any order in her direction of questions to the candidates. In fact, once when she called on Clinton to answer second, he declined, saying, "Ross has his hand up" (Reuter 16:17).
This information can be interpreted two ways. If a viewer had perceived Clinton as a waffler before the debate, his lack of volunteering might justify such an opinion. It might be assumed that he needed time to think over a proper response and wanted to hear what the other two candidates had to say first. Perhaps he knew he could come up with a more palatable response after judging the responses of Bush and Perot and capitalizing on their errors or inadequacies.

If a viewer were pro-Clinton, the candidate’s responding last could be viewed as a sign of patience and deference to others. The Clinton supporter might believe that Clinton was allowing the other two candidates to go first because he was being polite, rather than buying time to come up with an answer. The assumption could also be made that Clinton was shrewd enough to realize the rhetorical advantage to speaking last.

Certainly, it was to Clinton’s advantage to answer last. After having a chance to hear the responses of the other two candidates and having more time to form his response, Clinton would be at an advantage. Also, the last response to a question would probably be the one most likely to be remembered by the audience, further strengthening Clinton’s position.

Clinton successfully promoted himself in the second televised presidential debate of 1992 by continually
reminding the voters of his leadership position (as Governor of Arkansas), distancing himself from Washington, appearing sympathetic to questioners, and including strong, factual statements in his responses.

Thirty-two years previously, John F. Kennedy certainly realized in advance what opportunities a nationally televised presidential debate would provide him. However, what Kennedy considered to be an opportunity in a television appearance, namely the further projection and strengthening of his image before millions of voters, was probably different from Nixon's idea of opportunity. Before the first debate, Nixon only seemed eager for the opportunity to present his ideas to the voters, not his image.

Kennedy's success in the debates would be threefold: he would receive national recognition and become as well-known as Vice President Nixon; he would overcome the voters' negative perception of him as too young and inexperienced as he proved his knowledge of the issues; and, with his knowledge of how to manipulate the technicalities of visual effects during the debates, he would project a stronger, more likeable image than Nixon. Minow and Sloan confirm Kennedy's understanding of the television medium and its advantages for him whey they write: "Senator Kennedy was comfortable with television and confident that he could use it to his advantage" (10).
Certainly, Kennedy achieved nation-wide recognition with these televised debates and convinced many more voters that he was capable of serving as President. Berry writes...

...Kennedy, the lesser known candidate, gained prominence by receiving prime time TV coverage with Vice President Richard Nixon. ...the general consensus of opinion was that Kennedy overcame the public's perceived image of him as too immature and too inexperienced to lead the free world" (34-35).

Berry explains that Kennedy accomplished this image reversal "by demonstrating his broad awareness of all the issues and by quickly citing pertinent facts and statistics to support his statements" (35). Kennedy also established his authority by challenging Nixon's many statements about the Republican record and countering with his own proposals.

Yet, even though Kennedy and Nixon countered each others proposals for a better nation, the candidates' appearance had a greater effect upon viewers than did their words. It was the first major triumph of image over issues in the television medium. Reeves' analysis of the debate summarizes the effect it had upon viewers...

Despite their lack of intellectual substance, the debates stirred public interest in the election and clearly helped Kennedy's campaign.... Jack became better known to the nation and impressed millions with his ability to stand toe-to-toe with the more famous vice-president. His emerging charisma--stemming from a blend of good looks, a forceful speaking manner, and a seeming abundance of self-confidence, charm, and sincerity--was no doubt an even more powerful influence" (200-201).
Clearly, the words that were spoken in that first debate were not as powerful as the positive, confident image of Kennedy that was transmitted to millions of television viewers that night.

Kennedy had already glossed over his very serious health problems through his denial of them and by exuding an aura of vitality in all of his photographs and appearances. He had also successfully minimized the negative effects of his Catholic religion in his "Houston Ministers' Speech." Therefore, the principle negative factor that he would be attempting to change in the debates was the charge that he was too young and inexperienced to govern the country.

During the four "Great Debates" between Kennedy and Nixon, it became obvious that the two candidates had no disparate views on the goals for America, only on the means to achieve those goals. With disagreement thus minimized, the debates were reduced to a battle of images. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the first debate on September 26, 1960 in Chicago. It is estimated that seventy-five million people watched the two candidates on television that night, and many based their opinion of the candidates upon what they saw, not what they heard. As testimony to television's visual power, those who watched the first debate on television thought Kennedy was the winner; those who
listened to the debate on radio thought Nixon was the winner.

The reason television viewers gave the debate to Kennedy has been well documented and is encapsulated by Jamieson in *Presidential Debates*

In the first presidential debate of 1960, Nixon—pale from a hospital stay and perspiring under the hot studio lights—evinced cues that can, but do not necessarily, signal stress. By giving him a sinister look, the beard apparent under his poorly made-up translucent skin complicated matters further. Nixon glanced repeatedly at a clock just off stage. In a bearded, pale, perspiring candidate, this invited the inappropriate inference that Nixon was shifty-eyed. Additionally, the freshly painted set had dried to a color lighter than that anticipated by Nixon's consultants. Consequently the gray suit he wore blended into the background, blurring his image. Finally, an injury to his knee as he alighted his limousine caused him pain. By shifting weight from that knee to the podium he minimized the pain, but at high cost. During his hospital stay, he had lost weight. His suit, as a result, was a bit large for him. As he leaned on the podium for support, the suit shifted forward on one shoulder, suggesting that he had, perhaps, purchased it second hand or borrowed it from a friend. In a fitted blue suit, his face suntanned, Kennedy looked more decisive than his pale, ill-suited eye-shifting opponent.... Dogged by the charge that he was too inexperienced to lead the nation, Kennedy looked resolute. At one point he caught a glimpse of himself on the studio monitor and reacted by assuming a determined expression. As Nixon spoke, Kennedy took notes as if in anticipation of rebuttal. To minimize his youthful look, Kennedy trimmed his bushy hair" (183-184).

In the 1992 televised presidential debates, the visual contrast between candidates was not as stark as this first debate between Kennedy and Nixon because all three
candidates, armed with the knowledge gained from past televised debates, realized that image was of first importance. It might be said that Nixon had no such knowledge in this first debate and was caught completely unaware of the power of television's projection of images to the viewers.

In combination with Kennedy's vigorous appearance in comparison to Nixon's sweaty, shifty, dour one, Kennedy's rhetorical style supported the image of a candidate energetic, determined, and knowledgeable enough to lead the nation. Barber quotes James McGregor Burns as saying of Kennedy during his campaign, "He slowly developed a style of direct, informal, simple speaking, without high-blown rhetoric or bombastic exaggeration, that to some of his listeners was in happy contrast to the oratory of the old-fashioned politicians" (357).

During the first debate, Kennedy's rhetorical style played out in several ways. The significance of some elements of Kennedy's rhetoric were highlighted by Nixon's ineptness in understanding the television medium. For instance, Nixon entered the first debate believing that it would be, in fact, a debate. But, as Rubin points out, "...the word 'debate' was stretched that night on several counts. As debaters, the candidates would have done better alone" (55).
Jamieson explains what happened that night and why Nixon's misunderstanding of television's style put Kennedy in the forefront:

By viewing it as a 'debate,' Nixon 'lost' the first Kennedy-Nixon joint appearance. His varsity debate instincts at the ready, the vice president marshalled his facts against Kennedy's, contested points, and defended his ground. He instead should have showcased himself against the backdrop Kennedy provided. By combatting Kennedy's arguments, Nixon legitimized the less experienced senator and ignored an opportunity to appear presidential (Elocuence, 50).

Atkinson asserts that television calls for a different style of projection. He writes: "...to rely on techniques of oratory in a studio interview of discussion is to run the risk of coming across as long-winded, tense and generally lacking in spontaneity" ((176). These adjectives were ascribed to Nixon's style in the first debate, lending further credibility to the fact that Nixon had a limited understanding of how to best conduct himself on television to receive a positive viewer reaction.

The inherent problems of televised debates--choices to be made and the implications of those choices--are also explained by Jamieson when she writes about the pressures placed upon the candidates

They are expected, for example, to both engage each other and speak to the mass audience. As every presidential debate has demonstrated, it is difficult to do both. Nixon chose to engage Kennedy in their first debate, repeatedly summarizing Kennedy's points and addressing his arguments. In the process, he lost the
opportunities Kennedy seized to play to the folks at home. By so doing, the vice president won as a debater and lost as would-be president (Presidential Debates, 165).

"Play to the folks at home," is exactly what Kennedy excelled at in this first debate. While Nixon dutifully combatted Kennedy's statements point-by-point, Kennedy, according to White, "used each question as a springboard for an appeal to the mind and the imagination of the audience assembled before the countless sets" (288).

Nixon also made the mistake of continually referring to Kennedy by name during the debate. "Senator Kennedy" was so prevalent in Nixon's responses that the audience was continually reminded of him, even when he wasn't speaking. Conversely, Kennedy mentioned his opponent only when necessary in his responses and then referred to him only as "Mr. Nixon" or "the vice president"—never "Vice President Nixon." In this way, Kennedy diminished the image of Nixon as vice president and kept him in the background as much as possible when giving his responses. By the end of the evening, it might be assumed by some voters that Kennedy was leading the way with his own innovative and effective plan for getting America moving again while Nixon's policies were formed by pointing out what was wrong with Kennedy's plan.

Kennedy also effectively spelled out the similarities in his and Nixon's governmental experience, thus favorably cancelling any remaining concerns in voters' minds that he
was not experienced enough to lead the country. In fact, the first question posed to Kennedy in the debate concerned Nixon's charges that he was "naive" and "immature." Kennedy responded that both he and "the vice president" came to Congress in 1946. "I've been there now for fourteen years," said Kennedy, "the same period of time that he has, so that our experience in government is comparable" (New York Times 28). 

Kennedy found an opportunity later in the debate to again equate his experience with that of Nixon's while subtly drawing comparisons between himself and Abraham Lincoln in the voters' minds. He said, "Abraham Lincoln came to the presidency in 1860 after a rather little known session in the House of Representatives and after being defeated for the Senate in '58 and was a distinguished president" (New York Times 28). He then told voters that there is no certain road to the presidency and again reminded them that he had been in Congress for fourteen years.

Kennedy's opening and closing statements and responses to questions conveyed a more visionary and inspiring message than Nixon's business-like review of the facts and what should be done. Charles H. Percy, chairman of the Republican Platform Committee, said that "Mr. Nixon had 'countered with facts' while Senator Kennedy 'spoke of the
future' " (New York Times 29). However, Percy's derision of Kennedy's forward-looking rhetoric showed no understanding of the positive impact of this type of speech on the voters.

Kennedy was calling the nation together as an invincible freedom force against the tyranny of Communism which was threatening the world. "If the United States fails," he pronounced in his opening statement, "then the whole cause of freedom fails. And I think it depends in great measure on what we do here in this country" (New York Times 28).

Kennedy then focused this evil threat of Communism in Khrushchev, thus providing Americans with a real person, a villain, to be on guard against. Kennedy stated:

We discuss tonight domestic issues, but I would not want that to be any implication to be given that this does not involve directly our struggle with Mr. Khrushchev for survival. Mr. Khrushchev is in New York and he maintains the Communist offensive throughout the world because of the productive power of the Soviet Union itself (New York Times 28).

Because Kennedy could tell viewers that Khrushchev was in New York, on their own native soil, it heightened the importance and urgency of the issue of warding off this impending threat. He was also able, through this tactic, to keep his campaign theme--making America strong to fight off the impending threat of Communism--in a debate which was to be focused solely upon domestic issues. Jamieson illustrates the importance of public figures' use of
villains and heroes when she writes: "At any moment in the life of a republic, the public can viscerally distinguish those presumed to be villainous from those presumed to be virtuous. Of such assumptions of virtue and villainy political discourse is made. Countering them is difficult--capitalizing on them simple" (Dirty Politics, 44).

Kennedy capitalized on heroes by invoking popular U.S. presidents in his speech, thus forming an identification in the voters' minds between himself and these presidents' successful policies. Abraham Lincoln appeared in the first sentence of Kennedy's opening statement. Franklin Roosevelt and his policies appeared twice in the opening statement.

In Kennedy's first response, he stated: "I come out of the Democratic party, which in this century has produced Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman and which supported and sustained these programs which I've discussed tonight" (New York Times 28). In this statement, Kennedy is blatantly identifying himself with these presidents as if to say, "I am like them. They were successful; I will be just as successful. If you agreed with their administration, you should vote for me."

Kennedy continued to invoke past presidents in his responses to questions. "Mr. Truman" and Abraham Lincoln appeared in his third response and Franklin Roosevelt appeared once more in the last response of the evening.
Nixon, in contrast, only once called upon the name of other presidents when he compared the records of Truman and Eisenhower.

Besides his use of heroes and villains, Kennedy employed two rhetorical devices in his speech which Atkinson attributes to inspiring, charismatic speakers: lists of three and contrastive pairs. Both of these appear in Kennedy's prepared opening statement.

Atkinson describes a contrastive pair as an antithesis in which "a common and highly effective technique for attracting attention (i.e. a puzzle) is used as a preliminary to supplying a clever punch line (the solution). Kennedy begins his opening statement in the first debate with a contrasting pair involving "the election of 1860" and "the election of 1960".

In the election of 1860, Abraham Lincoln said the question was whether this nation could exist half-slave or half-free.

In the election of 1960, and with the world around us, the question is whether the world will exist half-slave or half-free; whether it will move in the direction of freedom, in the direction of the road that we are taking, or whether it will move in the direction of slavery (New York Times 28).

The "puzzle" Kennedy presents his audience in the first sentence is the question of whether, in 1860, the nation could exist half-slave/half-free. The "punch line" to this puzzle is a new, but similar question: whether, in 1960, the world will exist half-slave/half-free. In this
contrastive pair, the first sentence describes a nation considering its present status (whether it could continue to exist half-slave/half-free). The second sentence describes the entire world considering its future (whether it will exist half-slave/half-free). The basis for the contrast is a convenient 100 years (1860 to 1960) and the importance of two elections.

A second contrastive pair that Kennedy used in his opening statement also relied upon comparisons between past and present

> In 1933, Franklin Roosevelt said in his inaugural that this generation of Americans has a rendezvous with destiny.
> I think our generation of Americans has the same rendezvous with destiny (New York Times 28).

Again, a time contrast appears, reminding voters of important decisions of the past that impinged upon present circumstances. It is noteworthy, as well, that in the first sentence of both of the above contrastive pairs, Kennedy invokes a successful president of the past. In the second sentence of each contrastive pair, as Kennedy describes the current state of affairs, the implication is that the solution to the situation or the accomplishment of the task can only be performed by him, since he is identifying the problem and pointing the direction to take.

Atkinson explains the rhetorical benefit of contrastive pairs when he states:
Contrasts work in such a way as to have considerable advantages both for projecting a completion point and for delivering a punch line that is likely to appeal to an audience in a way that is similar to that of the punch line of a good joke. If the speaker can present his audience with some sort of puzzle, he stands a good chance of arousing their curiosity, and thus giving them more of an incentive to pay attention. They will then be in a good position to recognize and appreciate whatever solution is provided by the punch line. (73)

Lists of three, as described by Atkinson, can be either the same word repeated three times, such as in "We shall fight, fight, fight," or the same word used at the beginning of each phrase in a list of three. The rhetorical advantage to this three-fold repetition is that it provides speakers "with a way of underlining or giving progressively more emphasis to the point being made, and doing so in such a way as to give the impression that all possibilities have been covered and there is nothing else to be said on the matter" (Atkinson 159, 160).

Kennedy employs lists of three in three consecutive paragraphs at the beginning of his opening statement, which creates a rhythmic momentum in his speech similar to that created by cheers at a sports event. In the first list of three, Kennedy repeats "the kind of": "The kind of country we have here, the kind of society we have, the kind of strength we build in the United States will be the defense of freedom." Not only does Kennedy enliven his speech with this device, but he also chooses to focus upon the visionary
topic of what type of country, society and strength
Americans have, thus implying that his knowledge of the
issues that affect America are informed by an overall vision
of this country.

Kennedy immediately follows this statement with another
list of three (although the faulty parallel grammatical
structure in the third phrase diminishes the effect
somewhat). He says, "If we do well here, if we meet our
obligations, if we're moving ahead, then I think freedom
will be secure around the world."

In the next paragraph, Kennedy repeats the phrase "are
we" three times: "Are we doing as much as we can do, are we
as strong as we should be, are we as strong as we must be."
In this statement, as well as the previous list of three in
which "we" is focused upon, Kennedy includes himself with
his listeners as he implies that personal action is required
to ensure that America's strength is sufficient to promote
world-wide freedom. Interestingly, whenever Nixon used "we"
during this first debate, it was in reference to either him
and Kennedy or as an inclusive reference to the Republican
Party, never as an inclusive reference to Nixon and other
Americans.

The contrastive pairs and lists of three added a
dynamic, visionary, poetic sense to Kennedy's speech, that
made Nixon's predictable repetition of facts and proposals
seem dull in comparison. Berry lends credence to the power of Kennedy's use of memorable phrases rather than a reliance upon quoting facts when he writes, "When Kennedy proclaimed that the time was ripe 'to get this country moving again,' he was referring principally to improving the national economy and to closing the alleged missile gap. But these goals implied larger matters of national character, strength, and prestige" (54).

Barber describes the success of the Kennedy style in the following statement:

...Kennedy's personal cool, his critical stance toward self-satisfaction, his call for a higher standard of performance, and his thirst for action--or some part of symbiosis of those--fit the mood of the young, and, increasingly in a culture where the young are thought to show the way, the not so young. After the television debates with Nixon, Kennedy was remembered not so much for what he said as for the impression of expertise, precision, and judgment he conveyed" (360).

Kennedy had successfully used the debates as he had intended to: to prove his experience and competence as a leader and project a winning image to the American public.

When Kennedy used the 1960 televised presidential debates to promote his image to the American voters, he showed the way for future presidential candidates who would use this same method of winning over voters. The first Kennedy-Nixon debate clearly established for future candidates the importance of image over issues, visuals over
speech. Thirty-two years of repetition of this type of performance informed the candidates in the 1992 televised presidential debates that how they appeared held greater weight with voters than what they said. Yet, although the importance of image over issues remained constant, styles of presentation had changed.

As will be shown in the next chapter, informality and brevity of response signal the changes that have occurred in the evolution of televised presidential debates. The reason for the appearance of these qualities can be traced back to the importance of image over issues.
Conclusion

Both Kennedy and Clinton created an image to meet voter expectations by accentuating their positives and minimizing their negatives, yet their attempt to project and maintain that image through the televised presidential debates was affected by both the emerging technology of television and evolving voter expectations of how a candidate should act. Kennedy's invitation to the press to view scenes from his private life (albeit staged ones) opened a floodgate of media scrutiny which has plagued candidates and informed voters ever since. Government scandals, such as Watergate, and ineptness, such as the Vietnam War, created distrust in the public. At the same time, the emerging prominence of television created an expectation in viewers of receiving information immediately and in compact segments, such as the 60 second ads they had become so accustomed to. Both the voters' increasing familiarity with television and their increasing disillusionment with political candidates and government, shaped their expectations of how candidates should act in a televised presidential debate.

In comparing the rhetorical styles of two televised presidential debates, thirty years apart, it must be determined what changes have occurred and why. Although a thorough analysis of rhetorical evolution would require compiling data from all televised presidential debates, the two debates examined in this study do contain major elements
that are representative of the progression of rhetorical style over the past thirty years.

The most notable differences in the current debate style when compared to the 1960 debate are: (1) informality (as seen in a more conversational style and personal statements); and (2) brevity of response and statements. It is, perhaps, the voters' expectation of being allowed into the private lives of candidates in order to judge their mental and ethical traits that brought about a more informal atmosphere to televised presidential debates. The second factor, brevity, most certainly came about due to the technology of television, which created the expectation in viewers of short segments of information.

Although the format of the 1992 debate allowed a greater amount of informality than most contemporary debates, it is reflective of the expectations of the voters who, although interested in candidate positions on important issues, hope to find instances during televised presidential debates from which they can judge what they assume to be the character of the candidates. This can best be done when there is a greater amount of exchange between the candidates than when, as in 1960 and other earlier debates, the strict format of the debate minimized spontaneous exchanges between candidates.
Alan Harrington realized that, even in the 1960 debate, voters were using the event to assess the governing capabilities of the candidates when he described it as "the first great, nationwide personnel interview in history" (Political Television, 60). Voters who read the transcript of the debate in the paper the next day or who listened to the debate on radio, could not benefit from the full spectrum of factors afforded them by viewing the event on television, such as Nixon's pasty, sweating face and Kennedy's confident eye contact. Kennedy's planned presentation of a positive image and Nixon's unplanned presentation of a negative one were lost on that portion of the debate audience which either listened to the event on radio or read about it in the newspaper.

Jamieson chronicles the reasons for voters increasingly using the debates to judge what they perceive to be the candidates' character when she writes

One powerful factor propelling candidates, press, and the public toward press conferences and debates is the disillusionment that followed the revelations of Vietnam and Watergate. Voters sought additional sources of evidence about those who would lead. The 'character' of the candidate become more salient. The confrontations debates create seemed one way to test the character of the candidates (Presidential Debates, 109).

Once voters became aware that the president could make mistakes as well as be dishonest, they began to give the presidential candidate's ethical and mental traits
prominence over the candidate's position on important issues. It was known by voters that issues could be forgotten or changed once an elected president took office, but a person's basic nature could not so easily be changed. Thus, voters began to depend upon the televised presidential debates as an important forum for discovering or confirming their opinions about candidates.

Confrontation in both the 1960 and 1992 televised debates could be described more as an encounter or an exchange of ideas than an aggressive action. The most common form of confrontation seen in these debates is an interruption for the purpose of correcting another speaker. By keeping aggression at a minimum, candidates are able to promote an image of themselves as fair and kind, thus increasing their likability factor. In the first 1960 presidential debate, there was only one interruption of a speaker. This occurred when Kennedy interrupted a questioner three times in succession to correct his misinterpretation of Kennedy's past statements.

Although Kennedy and Nixon sometimes responded to statements made by each other, these responses were always done within their properly allotted turn for answering a question. Thus, the voters were able to judge these candidates by the way they looked, the way they talked, what they said, and how they responded to pressure, i.e., a live
televized debate, seen by millions of voters. Yet, the voters could not judge the candidates by how they responded to their opponent. The only interaction Kennedy and Nixon engaged in during this debate was looking at each other, perhaps because addressing each other directly during the debate would have appeared out of line and thus, in 1960, extremely confrontational.

In contrast, the second 1992 presidential debate contained several interruptions of candidates by each other and "off-the-cuff" comments, creating a conversational tone. For instance, when Clinton was responding to a questioner who asked if the candidates could stop "trashing" each other, Bush took exception to one of his statements and interrupted, saying, "Please don't get into the Washington Post." Clinton, momentarily caught off guard, responded to Bush, saying, "You don't have to believe it." This brief exchange between the two candidates allowed voters to make a deeper assessment of their communication styles than they received in 1960 when candidates simply responded to questions with well-rehearsed position statements. This type of assessment would allow voters to make the logical assumption that how a candidate deals with the stressful interruptions during a national televised debate might reflect how a candidate deals with stressful communication as president.
Interestingly, Bush's comment, above, could be seen as either a positive or negative for him. It could prove that Bush was, indeed, fed up with incorrect statements from the press, which would align him positively with many voters who felt the same way. Also, his comment could be seen as sign of strength because he was not afraid to make what might be an unpopular comment in order to keep the debate moving along factual lines. Negatively, Bush's comment could prove that he was a "whiner" and that he could interrupt at inappropriate times.

Clinton's response to Bush, since he was in a defensive position under Bush's "attack," could only be seen in a positive light because he was not the aggressor in this confrontation and gave a conciliatory statement in response.

There are several more instances in this debate in which the candidates either have a short back-and-forth exchange with each other or with the moderator. The frequency of this type of encounter creates for the viewer a more informal, conversational "debate" or "roundtable" discussion than the more constrained styles of past televised presidential debates and, thus, allows voters more factors with which to judge the candidate. For instance, these unplanned exchanges present instances to the candidates which they may not have planned for before the debate, thus increasing the amount of spontaneous responses.
each candidate must provide. These exchanges also provide feedback to the voters on how a candidate responds in different situations--stressful or friendly--which might also indicate how this candidate responds in similar situations while in office when national security might be at stake. Simply responding to questions, as Kennedy and Nixon did in 1960, only shows voters how the future president might act in a press conference.

Brevity of response, the second factor of change mentioned above, also adds to the perceived informality of contemporary debates since this supports the conversational tone. The reason for shrinking the time allotted for candidate response can be traced in the evolution of radio and then television. When radio first appeared in American homes, hour-long speeches were the norm to be replaced by half-hour speeches in the 1940s. By the mid-50s, air time costs and the dwindling attention of listeners caused politicians to reduce their air-time to five minutes. This was replaced in the 1970s by the sixty-second ad (Jamieson, *Eloquence* 9-10).

Before radio and television, Americans were not accustomed to receiving information in short segments. All they were offered were long speeches at political rallies and verbose newspaper stories. Even newspaper advertising, before the prominence of television, carried lengthy
messages rather than the mainly visual ads that are offered today. Television created a visual society; Americans accustomed themselves to receiving messages through pictures. This visual method of gathering information was quicker and more closely resembled the type of assessment made about how someone looked (i.e., their image) rather than what they said or included in their resume.

Jamieson provides reasons for why television has changed political discourse when she writes

...American audiences accustomed to the half-hour sitcom are unlikely to sit for hours as candidates detail their positions on television. Long speeches are not only taxing, but expensive, especially if more than two candidates join in debate. Solutions to the time crunch must take account of the episodic character of television programming and respond to the viewing habits of the modern audience (Presidential Debates 195-196).

The main reason why television changed political discourse was because Americans depended upon television mainly for entertainment value, such as the sitcoms mentioned by Jamieson or the popular game shows. Americans did not expect television to provide informative depth about important issues.

In fact, televised political debates were set up to resemble television game shows with the two contestants vying for the grand prize (the presidency), the journalists acting as the emcees, and television audiences looking for positive or negative reactions from the "contestants"
depending upon how the game was going for them. Brevity of response and spontaneity were expected, and these factors became more prominent during televised presidential debates between 1960 and 1992.

In the first Kennedy-Nixon debate, commentator Howard K. Smith informed the audience that each candidate would be allowed "an opening statement of approximately eight minutes' duration and a closing statement of approximately three minutes' duration" (*New York Times*, September 27, 1960, 28). There was also a three-minute time allotment for responding to questions. It is indicative of Nixon's misunderstanding of the television audience's desire for entertainment and brevity when he responded to reporters, after the debate, that "the three-minute limitation on answering questions was not sufficient to develop a point" (*New York Times*, September 27, 1960, 28). Nixon was mistaken in placing issues over image.

In the second presidential debate of 1992, moderator Carole Simpson told the audience that each candidate would be allowed two minutes for a closing statement but did not inform them of any response time allotments. However, one of her main duties that night was to continually inform each candidate toward the end of his response time that it was time to close. These time reminders increased in frequency from the middle of the debate to the end and included such
interuptions as: "Very briefly," "Sorry to cut you short," "One brief point?" "Brief," "Can you wrap it up?" "I'm sorry, I'm going to have to..." "I don't want to sound-bite you, but...," "We have just a little bit of time left...."

Listening to this type of time management of the candidates' responses, a viewer might either feel grateful that the moderator was shortening the statements or anxious that there might not be enough time left to hear all that the candidates had to say. Either way, the tenor of the debate was that of a race against time, which allowed voters to judge how the candidates reacted to interruptions and time pressures. It also informed the viewers of whether a candidate could "think on his feet" and get to the point quickly. Interestingly, none of the three candidates complained (at least in public) that they were not given enough time to sufficiently develop their answers. They perhaps realized that voters were judging how they presented themselves, not necessarily what they said.

By comparison, the 1960 debate was almost sedate due to the total lack of interruptions by speakers except the instance of Kennedy stopping a reporter's questions in order to correct him. There were no such interruptions of candidates by Howard K. Smith to remind them that their time was up. This lack of interruptions had the effect of lending an extremely formal tone to the 1960 debate.
Regardless of the changes in political discourse that have been effected by television, some rhetorical principles remain constant. One of these factors is the reluctance of candidates to appear too aggressive when attacking an opponent on policy or character issues. Offensive tactics that are overdone or wrongly timed cause the voters to feel unsympathetic towards the perpetrator. This is one of the reasons why candidates request moderators and refuse a face-off in televised debates.

Bennett proposes three pragmatic rules that govern personal attacks within political discourse and that have remained constant within this century. These rules are: 

"(a) one uses offensive formats when one is the underdog, (b) one uses defensive formats when one is the front runner, and (c) one claims to be above these personal concerns at all times" (225). Bennett explains the skill involved in following these conflict rules when he writes: "These symbolic tests of personal mettle involve substantial precision in rhetorical format" (225-226).

One example of a political candidate who failed to follow the ritualistic rules of political discourse is Robert Dole during the 1976 vice presidential debates. Dole's answers contained "sarcasm, gratuitous humor, and, more often than customary in political discourse, an impugning of his opponents' integrity" (Jamieson,
Presidential Debates, 151). Because Dole went beyond necessary limits in attacking his opponent, he violated voters' sense of propriety concerning political discourse. Consequently, Dole's erroneous judgment in how to publicly conduct himself reflected badly on his image as a potential president. Voters could not place their confidence in a candidate who approached problems (including opponents) in such a negative manner. The error of his offensive attacks was obvious in a statement he made in 1988 when he was running for president: "They told me to go for the jugular. I did. My own" (USA Today, November 9, 1987, 4A).

Rubin conveys a sense of Kennedy's and Nixon's reluctance to appear too confrontational in their first debate when he quotes Russell Baker as commenting that the two men "argued genteelly" and that the two candidates' "exchanges were distinguished by suavity, earnestness and courtesy that suggested that the two men were more concerned about 'image projection' to their...television audience than about scoring debate points" (53-54).

Certainly Nixon did not want to look confrontational, but this was not so much a case of image projection as protecting his image. Nixon did not yet understand what a television camera could do to his image, much less do for it. Even without the cameras, Nixon would probably have been polite because this was his natural demeanor in
conducting business. However, Kennedy was on his best behavior, because reports were that his private conversations were filled with curse words, off-color remarks and ranting criticisms of his critics, especially the media when they portrayed him in a bad way.

In the second 1992 presidential debate, two audience members requested that the candidates stop "trashing their opponents' character" and "focus on the issues and not the personality and the mud." Since these questions were among the first four posed to the candidates, and no confrontations had yet occurred, it must be assumed that the questioners were basing their requests upon the candidates' ads and the news sound bites that they had been subjected to thus far in the campaign.

However, these requests did effectively dampen any aggressive confrontations that might have occurred in the debate and put the candidates in a position of having to address any subtle accusations or insinuations about them by setting the record straight (in an offended tone) rather than reacting with accusations against their opponent. When Perot insinuated that Clinton paid others to do his thinking for him, Clinton defended himself saying, "Wait a minute. I want to say just one thing now, Ross, in fairness. The ideas I express are mine...." When Clinton implied that the Republicans had allowed the deficit to build up for twelve
years and proposed a plan to fix it, Bush responded in a victimized manner saying, "Well, I'm a little confused here, because I don't see how you can grow the deficit down by raising people's taxes." Bush was pleading confusion to appear victimized, but he was, in reality, implying that Clinton's plan was ineffective. Both Clinton's and Bush's response to a subtle attack was to victimize themselves and, in a proper tone of voice, give their version of the facts.

Certainly, it can be said that the format of these televised debates minimize occasions for clashes between candidates. The insertion of a questioner or moderator to which the candidates respond enables the candidates to avoid a direct face-off. Swerdlow gives credence to this view when he writes

Much of the controversy surrounding debates concerns format: Should there be a moderator? How about eliminating the panel of questioners? Why not just put the candidates on stage alone and let them confront each other? Those who ask such questions usually assume that more truth and better information will emerge from a face-to-face meeting without intermediaries. But in the real world candidates do not want—and have not accepted--face-to-face confrontations. Such confrontations, they fear, could force them to appear unpresidential or overly aggressive.... Debates also document the fact that face-to-face meetings...can easily digress into distracting pettiness (141).

American voters have never seen a televised presidential debate in which the candidates face-off on the issues without an intermediary. Therefore, they do not expect it.
A debate moderator gives the impression that the debate is controlled— that important issues will be raised, that each candidate's time will be fairly allotted, and that the debate will move along at a good pace and not become stalemated on one issue. Leaving out the moderator might cause voters to feel uneasy about which candidate is control of the debate. With the moderator, voters can focus their attention on how candidates respond to the questions rather than how the debate is being conducted.

At any rate, these "joint press conferences" as they have been called, give the voters a unique opportunity to judge presidential candidates upon their governing ability and knowledge of the issues. McKinnon, Tedesco and Kaid, in their study of the 1992 presidential debates, write:

Research has concluded that debates have the ability to educate and inform voters, to influence perceptions of candidates, and to impact voting preference and behavior.... Mediated debates provide viewers or listeners with glimpses of the candidate as a person and how the candidates, if elected, will shape our society and culture" (117-118).

The majority of voters, when they watch a televised presidential debate, are, indeed, using the event to judge how a candidate will govern if elected. The manner in which a candidate proposes to solve various contemporary problems is not as important a factor as how the candidate responds to stress, frames his responses, and interacts with the other candidate(s).
The proposals for governing that a candidate offers can be changed or shelved once that person takes office. But voters have learned that a person's propensity to act certain ways in given situations does not change when he or she takes office. This is why voters now put more stress upon judging what sort of person the candidate seems to be rather than listening to what a candidate says. This is also why a candidate's creation of a positive image to meet the demands of the voters is of utmost importance.

When John F. Kennedy used the media to promote his image, American voters were dazzled by a display they had never before witnessed in a political candidate, only in Hollywood stars, whose business is make-believe. Certainly, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt introduced the idea of a president becoming intimate with his constituents when he broadcast his "fireside chats" over the radio and appeared on the cinema in movie theaters. Yet Kennedy took that intimacy with the public one step further when he appeared on television in the debates, promoted himself visually in television commercials, and invited photographers to record supposedly private moments with his wife and child.

Since Kennedy's media display in 1960, voters have come to expect this access to political candidates. A public grown cynical over government scandals has come to rely on how a candidate presents him or herself to judge how that
person will govern. It is no longer of utmost importance what a candidate says but, rather, who that candidate says he or she is. Thus, a candidate now, naturally, employs Burke's rhetorical theory of "identification" in which an image of him or herself is created for the voters to identify with. The televised presidential debates are an essential part of candidates' display of their image, when voters will either have their judgment of candidates confirmed or finally decided.

Televised presidential debates have now become the norm in the American political system because voters demand this close, somewhat spontaneous presentation of the candidates in order to make their most informed judgment. Voters' current uncertainty about the objectivity of press coverage of the candidates, as well as the extreme nonobjectivity of campaign ads, have left the televised debates as the only arena in which they can judge for themselves the merits of the candidates.

If the current trend in the style and format of the televised presidential debates continues, voters can expect to see informality, brevity and minimized confrontations in these nationwide presentations by the candidates. Additionally, voters who have learned that a candidate's mental and ethical traits are of the utmost importance in determining that person's ability to govern, will demand
more, and possibly, new ways of judging candidates' capabilities. This demand by voters will, in turn, cause candidates to seek out even more effective ways of determining, creating, and projecting an image of themselves that will fulfill the voters' expectations.

Clearly, both Kennedy and Clinton entered their respective presidential races with the negative factors of low recognition, youth, and inexperience standing between them and the presidency. Yet, they were both, through their careful preparation of an image to meet voters' expectations, able to turn those negatives into positive images of youth and energy, capitalizing on America's periodic tendency to reinvent itself. Each man's careful construction of an image that could meet America's expectations resulted in a victory against great odds that could be called a "triumph of timing and temperament" (Morrow 24). Kennedy captured America's imagination with his "New Frontier" and Clinton reproduced that success with his "New Generation."

The famous photograph, showing President Kennedy shaking hands with a 16-year-old Bill Clinton in the Rose Garden, was used by the Clinton campaign as proof of "passing the torch." The implication was that an aura of leadership and approval had been passed from Kennedy to Clinton. However, the reality of what Kennedy gave to
Clinton (as well as other successful presidential candidates after 1960) was an understanding of how to create an image that would meet America's expectations and how to use television to project that image.
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