A Multifactor Approach to Candidate Image

Benjamin R. Warner & Mary C. Banwart

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

A Multifactor Approach to Candidate Image

Benjamin R. Warner & Mary C. Banwart

Decades of communication research have demonstrated that political candidate images are important predictors of electoral success and that campaign communication influences these image perceptions. However, questions remain about the relative importance of various facets of candidate image, how electoral context and partisanship influence the salience of these facets, and whether privileged classes enjoy presumption in image facets that reinforce their dominant position in politics. These questions require a new approach to image research. We propose a multifactor approach that explores the relative importance of six image traits: character, intelligence, leadership, benevolence, homophily, and charm. The benefits of this approach are illustrated through application to two electoral contexts, the 2012 U.S. presidential election and the 2014 U.S. midterm elections.

Keywords: Campaign Effects; Candidate Image; Political Ads; Political Communication; Presidential Election

The issue/image binary in campaign communication is, often as not, a source of lamentation about our shallow deliberative culture. Parry-Giles (2010) has challenged this perspective by arguing that governments are made up of people, not issues, and that discussions of candidate image are thus "necessary and valuable" (p. 39). The desire to focus on issues over image ignores "the realities and demands of contemporary life—a complicated life where citizens do not have the luxury of attending carefully to detailed matters of public policy" (Parry-Giles, 2010, p. 43). Furthermore, overemphasis on issue deliberation may alienate individuals who do not have the

Benjamin R. Warner (PhD, University of Kansas, 2011) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Missouri. Mary C. Banwart (PhD, University of Oklahoma, 2002) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Kansas. Correspondence to: Benjamin R. Warner, Department of Communication, University of Missouri, 108 Switzler Hall, Columbia, Missouri 65211, USA. E-mail: warnerbe@missouri.edu

time, ability, or desire to adjudicate the technical details of competing public policy proposals. By focusing on candidate-image traits, citizens are freed "from the burden of extensive public policy knowledge" (Parry-Giles, 2010, p. 44) and are better equipped for meaningful political participation. Parry-Giles' (2010) defense of image-based decision making echoes Popkin's (1991) theory of low-information rationality. Voters use candidate-image assessments as information shortcuts to simplify the process of selecting a candidate.

Popkin argues that a primary function of political campaigns is to communicate information to voters so they can assess the competence and integrity of the candidates. It should be no surprise, then, that communication scholars have made the study of candidate image a focal point of campaign-effects research. The accumulation of four decades of research has generated three core findings: image influences electoral outcomes (Aylor, 1999; Allen & Post, 2004; Andersen & Kibler, 1978; Dennis, Chaffee, & Choe, 1979; Fridkin & Kenney, 2011; Nimmo & Savage, 1976; Pancer, Brown, & Barr, 1999), image trumps issues in the decision making of voters (Miller, Wattenberg, & Malanchuck, 1986; Sheafer, 2008), and political communication influences perceptions of candidate images (Benoit, McKinney, & Holbert, 2001; Fridkin & Kenney, 2011; Kaid & Chanslor, 1995; McLeod et al., 1996). Despite decades of research, our understanding of the influence of candidate image on campaigns has not advanced much beyond these three findings.

Important questions about candidate image that remain unanswered include the following: Which characteristics are the most influential in voter decision making? Which characteristics are most subject to change through campaign communication? Do some candidates make up for weakness in one area with strength in another? Is there a minimum threshold that candidates must meet in a given characteristic to be considered viable? Do the political parties own certain image traits in the same way they do issues? Do candidates of a privileged gender, race, or age benefit in certain image categories at the expense of underrepresented groups? Answers to these questions require a sustained program of research across multiple election cycles. This study initiates such a program of research. In what follows, candidate-image evaluation is presented as a form of low-information rationality, past research on candidate image is reviewed, and a multifactor strategy for measuring candidate image is developed. The multifactor measure is then implemented in context of the 2012 presidential election and is verified through application to three 2014 U.S. Senate campaigns. The findings are presented as a baseline from which future research can proceed and as evidence of the validity and value of the measurement strategy.

CANDIDATE IMAGE AND LOW-INFORMATION RATIONALITY

In Hacker's (2004) *Presidential Candidate Images*, he defines candidate images as "clusters of voter perceptions of candidates" (p. 4) oriented around personality traits. Furthermore, Hacker clarifies that candidate image judgments are "cognitive representations made in the process of voter perception of candidate messages" (p. 10).

Candidate image is thus a function of campaign communication because candidate image is a receiver-based trait—it is not an actual characteristic but rather the perception of a trait that influences voters.

In explaining why voters default to evaluations of candidate personality, Popkin (1991) emphasizes the limited information and expertise that voters bring to a campaign. Policy issues are cognitively demanding decision tools. People thus default to image evaluations as information shortcuts. Popkin (1991) writes that voters "are concerned about personal character and integrity because they generally cannot infer the candidate's true commitments from his [or her] past votes, most of which are based on a hard-to-decipher mixture of compromises between ideal positions and practical realities" (p. 213). Instead, voters have an idea of their preferred candidate and "generate narratives about people from specific traits" (p. 75). The process of inferring a vision about a candidate from limited information is reinforced "by our willingness to assume that we are learning about character whenever we observe behavior" (p. 76). In short, making inferences about candidate images is easier than navigating policy debates. Voters thus use candidate image as a form of low-information rationality. However, though there is extensive evidence that image influences vote choice (e.g., Allen & Post, 2004; Anderson & Kibler, 1978; Nimmo & Savage, 1976), the lack of a sustained program of research around a multifaceted conceptualization of candidate image has caused stagnation in image research.

A MULTIFACTOR OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF CANDIDATE IMAGE

Kaid addressed the measurement of candidate image in Hacker's *Presidential Candidate Images* (2004—first published in 1995). In her essay, Kaid argued that the literature was fragmented by a series of ad hoc image measures that were "born anew with each new candidate image study" (p. 234). To resolve this fragmentation, Kaid proposed that communication scholars unite around a scale originally proposed over 40 years ago in the pages of this journal (Kaid & Hirsch, 1973). This scale consisted of 12 sematic-differential items: unqualified/qualified, unsophisticated/sophisticated, dishonest/honest, believable/unbelievable, unsuccessful/successful, attractive/unattractive, unfriendly/friendly, insincere/sincere, calm/excitable, aggressive/unaggressive, strong/weak, and inactive/active. Kaid argued that a unified scale allowed research to be compared across time and to generate a stable set of conclusions. Heeding her call, communication scholars have amassed strong evidence that image is central to political campaign communication with studies of political advertising (Kaid & Chanslor, 1995; Kaid, Fernandes, & Painter, 2011; McLeod et al., 1996; Pfau et al., 1997), candidate debates (Benoit et al., 2001; McLeod et al., 1996; Zhu, Milavsky, & Biswas, 1994), and media coverage (Balmas & Sheafer, 2010; Kaid & Holtz-Bacha, 2000; McLeod et al., 1996).

Communication scholarship has benefitted from the sustained program of research made possible by this initial measure. Nevertheless, we suggest it is time to explore a different approach. Though this widely used measure has not changed since 1973,

research in both psychometrics and candidate image has evolved considerably. The primary limitation to the existing measure is that it combines diverse concepts such as intelligence, attractiveness, aggressiveness, and excitability. Thus, it fails to capture distinct facets of image and presupposes that current facets such as intelligence, attractiveness, aggressiveness, and excitability are equally important in determining voter preferences, an assumption invalidated by other image studies (see Allen & Post, 2004; Anderson & Kibler, 1978; Kinder, 1986; McCroskey & Young, 1981; Miller et al., 1986). We argue that a multifactor approach to image research provides the empirical resources necessary to advance image research beyond the findings summarized above.

We are certainly not the first to propose a multifactor approach to studying candidate image. For example, Kinder (1986) found that competence, empathy, and integrity were most important for Ronald Reagan in 1984, but that only competence was a positive predictor of evaluations of Walter Mondale. Similarly, Aylor (1999) identified leadership, empathy, and competence as the most important facets of Bill Clinton's image in 1996 to the exclusion of character, whereas Bob Dole's evaluations were most influenced by perceptions of his empathy, leadership, and character. Fridkin and Kenney (2011) found that Senatorial incumbents benefited the most if they were seen as good leaders, honest, and caring and that challengers also needed to be seen as experienced. These studies, and others like them, demonstrate the value of disaggregating candidate image into individual traits.

Despite the insights of these multifactor image studies, this line of research suffers from the fragmentation Kaid (2004) identified. Few utilize the same set of factors and few consider the accumulation of evidence across election cycles. As a result, no programmatic approach to candidate image using disaggregated factors has emerged. Conversely, studies using Kaid and Hirsch's (1973) measure have generated decades-long findings comparable across numerous election cycles. Because there has been no unified research program utilizing a multifactor measure of candidate image, scholars have not explored questions beyond those posed by the immediate electoral context. To resolve this, we draw upon the past four decades of trait-based image research to generate a measure of candidate image that can replace the measure first proposed by Kaid and Hirsch (1973).

Facets of Candidate Image

Competence, Intelligence, and Leadership

Popkin (1991) argued that voters care about the competence of a candidate because "they care about what the candidate can deliver from government" (p. 61). Competence has been measured by most assessments of candidate image (Aylor, 1999; Allen & Post, 2004; Anderson & Kibler, 1978; Funk, 1997; Hacker, Zakahi, Giles, & McQuitty, 2000; Kinder, 1986; McCroskey & Jenson, 1975; Miller & Miller, 1976; Miller et al., 1986) and is roughly relatable to *phronesis* (practical skills and wisdom) in Aristotle's three-part conceptualization of ethos. Popkin (1991) defines competence as the "ability to handle a job, an assessment of how effective the candidate will be in

office" (p. 61). Competence has been operationalized variously as the following: experienced and able (Miller & Miller, 1976); experienced, able, and intelligent (Miller et al., 1986); hard working, intelligent, knowledgeable, experienced, not prone to mistake, and qualified (Kinder, 1986); knowledgeable, experienced, and intelligent (Aylor, 1999); and so on. These existing measures miss nuance by aggregating distinct constructs under the broader heading of competence. Intelligence and work ethic, for example, are clearly not synonymous. Some items are ambiguous enough to be tautological. Of course voters want a candidate who is qualified. A good image measure would identify which characteristics are associated with candidate qualification. Both "able" and "qualified" can be functions of other facets of image—one person may think that good moral character makes a candidate qualified, for example, while another understands qualification to be a function of intelligence. Thus the broader notion of competence should be replaced with distinct factors. Because terms like "able," "qualified," and "capable" invite tautological interpretation, we propose that the measure of competence focus on specific content: intelligence and leadership.

Intelligence is often included in image research (Balmas & Sheafer, 2010; Hacker et al., 2000; Kinder, 1986) and has been identified as a significant predictor of vote preference (Balmas & Sheafer, 2010). Additionally, while leadership may seem intrinsically tied to the competence of an elected official, it has often been separated from competence. Nevertheless, leadership has been included in numerous image studies (Aylor, 1999; Balmas & Sheafer, 2010; Hacker et al., 2000; Miller & Miller, 1976; Nimmo & Savage, 1976), many of which found it to be important in voter decision making. Though intelligence and leadership should be understood as emerging from and related to past research about candidate competence, we treat each as a unique trait and thus discard the more ambiguous "competence" label.

Character

Popkin also proposed moral character as a decision-making shortcut that voters deploy in evaluating candidates. He explained that voters "are concerned about personal character and integrity because they generally cannot infer the candidate's true commitments from his [or her] past votes" (p. 213). Popkin thus affirms Aristotle's second dimension of ethos, *arête*, which is associated with virtuousness, morality, or trustworthiness. There is substantial empirical support for the inclusion of character in any image measure. Benoit and McHale (2004) found morality to be one of the most emphasized traits in candidate communication. Hacker et al. (2000) analyzed open-ended survey responses to determine which traits were most important to voters and found that high ethical standards was one of the most sought after characteristics. Good character is consistently one of the most important predictors of candidate evaluation and voter preference (Kinder, 1986; McCroskey & Jenson, 1975; McCroskey & Young, 1981; Miller & Miller, 1976). Furthermore, almost every study of candidate image includes some measure of character. McCroskey and Jenson (1975) included character among their five factors, Anderson and Kibler (1978) used trustworthiness, Kinder (1986) measured integrity via trustworthiness and

honesty, and Miller and colleagues (1976, 1986) also measured integrity. Kaid's (2004) aggregated measure included honesty and believability. Given the ubiquity of character in image research, we argue for its inclusion in any multifactor approach.

Benevolence

Though leadership, intelligence, and character are common factors in image research, the third element of Aristotle's original ethos triad is often overlooked. Aristotle argued for the importance of *euoia* or the perception that the speaker possesses goodwill toward the audience. McCroskey and Teven (1999) urged image scholars to include this element, finding that "goodwill is indeed a component of the ethos/ source credibility construct, as argued by both Aristotle and the Yale Group" (p. 101). Teven (2008) later demonstrated that goodwill was an important factor in explaining support for candidates in the 2008 presidential election. Goodwill is conceptually defined as whether the speaker is motivated by the audience's best interests or, conversely, is thought to be harboring an ulterior motive. Some measures of image include variables that are proximate to this. Kinder (1986) and Aylor (1999) measured empathy, defined as *cares about people like me*. Hacker et al. (2000) found it was important to voters. Sincerity has also been included in various studies of campaign communication (e.g., Benoit & McHale, 2004; Miller et al., 1986). McCroskey and Teven (1999) asked whether the speaker *cares about me*, *has my interests at heart* and *is not self-centered*. Both McCroskey and Teven's (1999) direct approach to goodwill and the related measurement of empathy (Aylor, 1999; Kinder, 1986) have successfully predicted support for candidates.

We argue that there is some discrepancy between the conceptual definition of benevolence—motivated by a genuine desire to help the audience—and existing measures. Both Kinder's (1986) and McCroskey and Teven's (1999) operational definition imply a somewhat self-centered audience. However, a speaker may be sincere and have noble intentions without being seen to work for the specific benefit of an individual member of the audience. We argue that the general spirit of benevolence should be separated from self-interest. The factor should replace "what is best for me" with "what is best for America."

Homophily

In explaining why voters care about candidate image above policy, Popkin (1991) observed that voters are concerned with whether "a candidate cares about people like himself or herself" (p. 65) because empathy should translate into a commitment to policies that will benefit the voter. People should thus be more likely to support a candidate who they believe understands their problems, values, and priorities. In this vein, Anderson and Kibler (1978) measured background and attitude homophily and found that only attitude homophily was associated with voter preference, a finding replicated by Allen and Post (2004). However, while attitude and background homophily may yield some valuable information, they are not the best proxies for the type of empathy

Popkin (1991) had in mind. Attitude homophily measures the extent to which an individual agrees on issue positions—a candidate will score high on attitude homophily if one is perceived to hold stances congruent with the respondent. Alternatively, background homophily is only one mechanism through which perceived similarity may be established. Prysby (2007) approached homophily with an item that asked voters if they believed the candidate cared about people like them and found that, in 2004, this item was more important in vote decision than leadership and intelligence. We follow Prysby (2007) in defining homophily as an understanding of the voter's values and concerns.

Charm

Thus far in our survey of image treatments, the concept of candidate image has been operationalized as a composite of perceived intelligence, leadership, character, benevolence, and homophily. Though these facets constitute a majority of image findings, there remains the question of likability. Pancer et al. (1999) argued that because politics in the United States have shifted from a focus on parties to individuals and personalities, the likability of a candidate is now central to political campaigns. They present evidence that dynamism, likability, charm, charisma, and warmth are important to candidate success. Personality has also been included in image research through the measurement of traits such as warmth (Funk, 1997; Kinder, Peters, Abelson, & Fiske, 1980), sociability (Allen & Post, 2004; Funk, 1997), humility (Kinder et al., 1980), extroversion (Allen & Post, 2004), friendliness (Kaid, 2004), and so on. We focus on charm/charisma to assess the likability of a candidate.

IMAGE IN CAMPAIGN 2012

A study was conducted to determine the prediction of vote choice based on candidate image. The image factors included intelligence, character, leadership, benevolence, homophily, and charm. Given the robust findings that image influences candidate support (Aylor, 1999; Allen & Post, 2004; Anderson & Kibler, 1978; Nimmo & Savage, 1976; Pancer et al., 1999), we hypothesized the following:

H1: Favorable candidate-image evaluations will be associated with voting intention.

Because this study aims to illustrate the value of disaggregating candidate image into individual image factors, a research question was posed to determine the relative importance of each trait:

RQ1: Which image traits will be most strongly associated with voting intention?

METHOD

Participants

Data were collected from four independent samples over the course of the 2012 presidential election campaign. The first three samples were drawn from participants

in university-sponsored debate-viewing events prior to the live broadcast of each of the three presidential debates. Participants completed a questionnaire in person via an online survey prior to the debate viewing. The fourth sample was collected via an electronic survey e-mailed to participants in the 10 days prior to the election. Participants were recruited from 14 different universities in Alabama, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Missouri, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin. In total, 1,710 people completed the survey. The sample ranged in age from 18–77 with a mean age of 20.6 (SD = 4.17). Of the participants, 585 (34%) were male and 1,117 (65%) were female with 592 (35%) identifying as Democrats, 646 (38%) as Republicans, and 466 (27%) as affiliated with neither major party. A majority of the sample was Caucasian (n = 1,230, 72%), though 100 (6%) identified as Asian, 108 (6%) African American, 139 (8%) Spanish or Hispanic, and 129 (8%) identified as another race or ethnicity.

Measures

The image factors consisted of multiple Likert-style items in which respondents indicated agreement on a 7-point scale with the statement "Candidate is…." The items used to measure the image factors were the following: for character: trustworthy, dishonest, and believable; for intelligence: unintelligent, knowledgeable, and smart; for leadership: strong, poised, and a good leader; for charm: charismatic, likeable, and unpleasant; for homophily: "understands people like me," "understands the problems faced by people like me," and "shares my values"; and for benevolence: "[Candidate] cares more about [his/her] own success and advancement than improving America"; "I trust [candidate] to do what [he or she] thinks is best for the country"; and "Whether I agree or disagree with [candidate], I believe [he or she] genuinely wants what's best for America." Descriptive statistics for each factor are presented in Table 1.

Stated voter intention was measured by asking respondents: "If you were to select today, for whom would you vote for President of the U.S.?" The response options were Barack Obama (n = 758, 44%), Mitt Romney (n = 641, 38%), Other (n = 134, 8%), and undecided (n = 175, 10%). The variable was coded such that 1 = intends to vote for

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Image Factors in Presidential Election Study

	Obama			Romney		
	M	SD	Cronbach's α	M	SD	Cronbach's α
Character	4.45	1.53	.874	4.07	1.47	.857
Intelligence	5.45	1.29	.855	5.11	1.30	.845
Leadership	4.88	1.43	.846	4.64	1.36	.871
Benevolence	4.54	1.52	.817	4.14	1.51	.787
Homophily	4.17	1.78	.952	3.72	1.74	.944
Charm	5.32	1.33	.844	4.40	1.44	.812

Obama, 0 = undecided or intends to vote for a third-party candidate, −1 = intends to vote for Romney. A disadvantage to this operationalization is that the vote intention variable is not normally distributed and thus stretches the assumptions of an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. Two additional models were tested to ensure that non-normality in the dependent variable did not bias estimates: one in which all undecided and third-party voters were dropped and a single logistic regression analysis was conducted and a second in which feeling thermometers for each candidate were used to create a measure of relative candidate favorability. The results of both alternative models were not substantively different from the results presented below. We retained the voter-preference variable described above because, relative to the feeling thermometer scores, voter preference is a more valid measure of our outcome of interest (actual vote) and, relative to the logistic regression model, we were able to retain independent and undecided voters. Ideally, the image measure would add the most value by helping distinguish between uncertain "lean" voters and committed voters, so we opted against the model that discarded the more than 300 respondents in this category.

Because partisanship is likely a spurious cause of responses to the various image facets, a measure of partisan affect was included as a control. Partisan affect was measured by asking respondents to rate Democrats, liberals, Republicans, and conservatives on a scale from 0–100 where 0 represents very cold or unfavorable, 100 represents very warm or favorable, and 50 indicates no opinion or a neutral evaluation. The sum of the evaluation of Republicans and conservatives was subtracted from the sum of the evaluations of Democrats and liberals to create a score such that 200 would represent an individual completely favorable to Democrats/liberals and −200 would represent an individual completely favorable to Republicans/conservatives (M = 0.19, SD = 83.39, range = −200–200).

RESULTS

Factor structure

The first objective of this study was to establish a reliable factor structure for a measure of candidate image. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using Lisrel 8.8 in which the image variables were specified to load on six image facets: character, intelligence, leadership, benevolence, homophily, and charm. Inspection of item-level data suggested that there was residual method variance associated with items that were reverse coded. A method factor was specified to account for shared variance associated with reverse-coded items. Because the chi-squared statistic is sensitive to variations in sample and model sizes, model fit is assessed through alternative fit indices. Little (2013) recommends that a CFI and TLI/NNFI > .90 and an RMSEA < .08 indicate adequate model fit. Model fit was good, χ^2 (508, N = 1603) = 4870.44, p < .01, TLI/NNFI = 0.98, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .073 with a 90% confidence interval of .071–.075. The indicator "[Candidate] cares more about his or her own success and advancement than improving America" loaded somewhat

poorly for both Obama and Romney. The source of the item's poor loading is likely that the item was double barreled; it conflated a type of cynicism (candidates are selfish) with the sinister attitude that was the target construct. The replacement item, "I worry that [Candidate] is deliberately trying to hurt America" was developed for use in the second study.

Image and Vote Intention

The first hypothesis predicted that image perceptions would be associated with voter intention in the 2012 presidential election above and beyond that which could be explained by demographic characteristics, party identification, and partisan affect. Voter intention was regressed on age, sex (female = 1), race/ethnicity (nondominant racial group = 1), party affiliation, and partisan affect as well as all 12 image variables

Table 2 Prediction of Intended Vote Choice by Image Factors

		B	*SE*	LLCI	ULCI	β
Covariate Block						
Initial R²	.721					
Age		0.003	0.003	−.002	.009	0.015
Female		− 0.028	0.022	−.071	.016	− 0.015
Nondominant		0.104	0.025	.054	.153	0.050***
Democrat		0.364	0.031	.304	.425	0.188***
Republican		− 0.638	0.034	−.703	−.572	− 0.339***
Partisanship		0.001	0.000	.000	.001	0.074***
Image Block						
Δ*R²*	.053					
Obama						
Obama Character		0.037	0.015	.007	.067	0.061**
Obama Intelligence		− 0.007	0.014	−.034	.020	− 0.010
Obama Leadership		0.006	0.016	−.025	.038	0.010
Obama Benevolence		0.034	0.014	.007	.061	0.056*
Obama Homophily		0.070	0.013	.044	.095	0.133***
Obama Charm		− 0.005	0.014	−.032	.023	− 0.007
Romney						
Romney Character		− 0.034	0.014	−.062	−.005	− 0.054*
Romney Intelligence		0.017	0.013	−.009	.043	0.024
Romney Leadership		− 0.021	0.015	−.050	.009	− 0.031
Romney Benevolence		− 0.005	0.013	−.030	.020	− 0.008
Romney Homophily		− 0.044	0.012	−.068	−.019	− 0.083***
Romney Charm		− 0.026	0.014	−.054	.002	− 0.008

Note. 1 = Vote for Obama, 0 = Undecided/Other, −1 = Vote for Romney.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

(six for each candidate). Table 2 presents the estimates predicting voter intention. Respondents with higher image perceptions of Obama and Romney were significantly more likely to intend to vote for them. The regression model that included the covariates and partisanship explained 72% of variance in voter intention. Adding the image variables to the model explained an additional 5% of variance in voter intention. The results support the hypothesis that image scores are associated with voting intention above and beyond demographic factors, party identification, and partisan affect.

The research question asked whether there would be differences in the predictive power of the image facets. Of the six trait evaluations of Obama, three were associated with voter intention: homophily, character, and benevolence. Two of the six trait evaluations of Romney were associated with voter intention: homophily and character. All relationships were in the expected direction; more favorable evaluations of Obama's homophily, character, and benevolence were associated with greater intention to vote for the incumbent and more favorable evaluations of Romney's homophily and character were associated with greater intention to vote Republican.

Using the standardized regression coefficient (e.g., Hunter & Hamilton, 2002), it can be inferred that homophily was the most important image trait for both Obama and Romney. The relative importance of homophily was greater than all of the covariates except for party identification.

The 95% confidence intervals of the unstandardized effects allow a formal test of the differences in effect size. Investigating these confidence intervals revealed that perceptions of Obama's homophily were significantly more impactful than evaluations of his intelligence, leadership, and charm but not character or benevolence. The only significant difference in effect for evaluations of Romney was between homophily and intelligence.

DISCUSSION

The study presented above demonstrates the added value of accounting for candidate-image perceptions above and beyond partisanship, ideology, and demographics. The control model explained a vast majority of variance in people's voting intention. However, the remaining uncertainty that cannot be explained by partisanship and demographic characteristics is some of the most persistent and difficult to resolve uncertainty in political behavior. Candidate image significantly improved explanation of voter intention.

Nevertheless, there are important limitations to this study. First, the image measure was tested in a convenience sample. Variable relationships may be different if older and more diverse adults value different image traits than young college students. Second, only two candidates in a single electoral context were considered. It is difficult to generalize the relative importance of image facets on the basis of a single election. Third, the study only considered the presidency, and, though most political communication research is about the presidency, a vast majority of elections occur further down ballot. Finally, voting intention was measured with a hypothetical snapshot

question that does not account for varying levels of certainty between voters prior to the election. This limitation leaves less variance to explain and may underestimate the value of the image measure in distinguishing between highly committed supporters and uncertain lean voters.

IMAGE IN THE 2014 U.S. MIDTERM ELECTIONS

To address limitations of the first study, a second study was conducted during the 2014 midterm elections. Based on the research surveyed above and the results from the first study, we expected the following:

> H1: Favorable candidate image evaluations will be associated with stronger voting intention.
>
> In the first study, homophily exhibited the strongest associated with vote intention. Based on this finding we expected the following:
>
> H2: Homophily will be more strongly associated with voting intention than the other five candidate traits.
>
> Though not as important as homophily, character and benevolence were each associated with voting intention in the 2012 election. Thus, we hypothesized:
>
> H3: Character will be associated with voting intention.
>
> H4: Benevolence will be associated with voting intention.
>
> Finally, though there was no other pattern of influence consistent in the 2012 election, it is possible that other image facets would manifest in a different electoral context. Thus, we posed the following research question:
>
> RQ1: Will other image facets be associated with voting intention?

METHOD

Residents of three states with contested U.S. Senate seats in the 2014 election were surveyed using a Qualtrics' panel aggregator that includes over 20 actively managed market-research panels. Though the panels are proportioned to the general population, Qualtrics' partners do not maintain representative state-by-state samples. The campaigns selected were Ernst/Braley (Iowa), Tillis/Hagan (North Carolina), and Perdue/Nunn (Georgia). These races were selected because they each featured highly competitive campaigns and were held in states with a sufficient number of participants in the Qualtrics panels. Participants were contacted October 10th through October 17th of 2014.

Participants

In total, 569 individuals provided sufficiently complete responses to the candidate-image survey, 193 from Iowa, 193 from North Carolina, and 183 from Georgia. The average age of the Iowa respondent was 48.69 years ($SD = 17.02$), 187 (97%) were white/Caucasian, more were female ($n = 112$, 58%) than male ($n = 81$, 42%), and a

majority had earned a four-year (n = 65, 34%) or graduate (n = 40, 20%) degree. The average age of the North Carolina respondent was 49.22 years (SD = 16.93), 156 (81%) were white/Caucasian and 28 (15%) were black/African American, more were female (n = 123, 64%) than male (n = 70, 36%), and a minority had earned a four-year (n = 54, 28%) or graduate (n = 40, 20%) degree. The average age of the Georgia respondent was 49.02 years (SD = 16.33), 140 (77%) were white/Caucasian and 39 (21%) were black/African American, more were female (n = 125, 68%) than male (n = 58, 32%), and a minority had earned a four-year (n = 39, 21%) or graduate (n = 35, 19%) degree.

Measures

Candidate image was measured by asking respondents to evaluate the Republican and Democratic candidates on the six-factor, 18-item image measure developed for Study 1. The only modification from the 2012 election study was the substitution of the reversed item in the benevolence factor with "I worry that [Candidate] is deliberately trying to hurt America." Descriptive statistics for the image factors are presented in Table 3.

A three-item measure was used to assess the direction and strength of voter intention. Respondents were asked, "As the election approaches, where would you say you stand on the candidates for [Iowa/North Carolina/Georgia] Senate?" with response options ranging from 1 (Definitely voting for [Democratic candidate]) to 7 (Definitely voting for [Republican candidate]). Respondents were later asked how likely they were (1 = very unlikely, 7 = very likely) to vote for the Democratic candidate and the Republican candidate. The variable was scaled such that a high score indicated a high probability of voting for the Democratic candidate. The items were reliable for Iowa (M = 4.15, SD = 2.26, α = .969), North Carolina (M = 4.26, SD = 2.30, α = .971), and Georgia (M = 3.93, SD = 2.21, α = .960). Though the Republican won all three contests, the Democrat was a slight favorite in Iowa and North Carolina in our sample.

RESULTS

A CFA of the image measure was conducted to confirm the factor structure established in Study 1. Acceptable model fit was established, χ^2 (486, N = 621) = 1562.37, p < .01, TLI/NNFI = 0.95, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .060 with a 90% confidence interval of .056–.063. Residuals for reverse-coded items were allowed to freely covary. Model fit was comparable to that observed in Study 1. Three stepwise linear regression analyses were conducted to test the hypotheses, one for each state. A block of control variables was entered first and included age, sex, race (white/Caucasian = 1), religiosity (self-identified born-again Christian = 1), educational attainment, income, partisanship (on a 1–7 scale from strong Democrat to strong Republican), and ideology (on a 1–7 scale from extremely liberal to extremely conservative). Participants had been exposed to

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics for Image Measure

	Republican			Democrat		
	M	*SD*	α	*M*	*SD*	α
	Ernst			Braley		
Character	4.08	1.56	.888	4.23	1.39	.907
Intelligence	4.56	1.51	.905	4.98	1.19	.868
Leadership	4.43	1.44	.885	4.42	1.14	.860
Charm	4.31	1.52	.861	4.50	1.23	.845
Homophily	3.53	1.87	.976	3.81	1.64	.966
Benevolence	4.27	1.69	.881	4.56	1.64	.871
	Tillis			Hagan		
Character	3.76	1.68	.884	4.31	1.62	.876
Intelligence	4.62	1.51	.863	4.96	1.26	.784
Leadership	4.13	1.57	.890	4.49	1.38	.892
Charm	4.10	1.50	.846	4.52	1.24	.670
Homophily	3.30	1.94	.979	3.98	1.88	.962
Benevolence	3.99	1.74	.855	4.46	1.61	.825
	Perdue			Nunn		
Character	4.07	1.50	.860	4.37	1.36	.803
Intelligence	4.90	1.31	.811	4.95	1.23	.747
Leadership	4.47	1.34	.874	4.44	1.39	.905
Charm	4.35	1.43	.820	4.56	1.18	.660
Homophily	3.65	1.78	.972	3.78	1.84	.967
Benevolence	4.32	1.63	.869	4.47	1.50	.777

campaign content as part of another study and, though the stimulus did not influence candidate-image evaluations, dummy variables for the experimental conditions were entered as controls in this analysis (Cond1 and Cond2). Results of the three regression analyses are presented in Table 4. Candidate image was significantly associated with vote intention in all six cases and explained an additional 27–34% of variance above and beyond the roughly 60% of variance in voter intention explained by the control variables. This result supports the first hypothesis that candidate-image evaluations helped explain a significant amount of variance in voting intention that cannot be accounted for through partisanship and demographics.

Homophily was the only image facet that consistently predicted voter intention in all three states. It was the only significant trait in the Georgia race; high homophily ratings were important for both Nunn (D, GA) and Perdue (D, GA). People were more likely to vote for Ernst (R, IA) over Braley (D, IA) and vice versa if they perceived the candidate to have high homophily. The same was true of Tillis (R, NC), but only marginally so for Hagan (D, NC). An investigation of the confidence intervals of the unstandardized

Table 4 Prediction of Likelihood of Voting for Democratic Candidate

		B	*SE*	LLCI	ULCI	β
Iowa						
Covariate Block						
Initial R²	.585					
Age		− 0.003	0.004	−.011	.004	− 0.026
Female		0.089	0.132	−.072	.350	0.019
White		− 0.067	0.355	−.767	.633	− 0.005
Born Again		− 0.151	0.145	−.437	.136	− 0.031
Income		− 0.014	0.024	−.061	.034	− 0.016
Party (Republican)		− 0.147	0.095	−.336	.041	− 0.048
Ideology (Conservative)		− 0.136	0.054	−.243	−.030	− 0.103*
Con1		−− 0.076	0.160	−.391	.239	− 0.014
Con2		0.191	0.142	−.090	.472	0.039
Image Block						
ΔR²	.304					
Democratic Candidate						
Braley Character		− 0.007	0.111	−.225	.212	− 0.004
Braley Intelligence		0.068	0.094	−.117	.253	0.036
Braley Leadership		− 0.035	0.122	−.275	.205	− 0.017
Braley Benevolence		0.175	0.096	−.015	.364	0.110
Braley Homophily		0.466	0.083	.302	.630	0.337***
Braley Charm		− 0.124	0.100	−.321	.073	− 0.068
Republican Candidate						
Ernst Character		− 0.145	0.112	−.366	.077	− 0.101
Ernst Intelligence		0.210	0.099	.014	.405	0.140*
Ernst Leadership		0.023	0.088	−.150	.197	0.015
Ernst Benevolence		− 0.106	0.081	−.266	.053	− 0.080
Ernst Homophily		− 0.462	0.088	−.635	−.289	− 0.380***
Ernst Charm		− 0.143	0.094	−.328	.042	− 0.096
North Carolina						
Covariate Block						
Initial R²	.621					
Age		− 0.006	0.004	−.014	.002	− 0.042
Female		− 0.252	0.128	−.505	.001	− 0.053
White		− 0.255	0.173	−.597	.087	− 0.044
Born Again		0.212	0.132	−.048	.472	0.046
Income		− 0.016	0.026	−.067	.035	− 0.018
Party (Republican)		− 0.303	0.090	−.471	−.125	− 0.097***
Ideology (Conservative)		− 0.227	0.053	−.333	−.122	− 0.172***
Con1		−− 0.167	0.146	−.454	.121	− 0.035
Con2		−− 0.163	0.150	−.461	.134	− 0.033

(Continued)

Table 4 (Continued)

		B	SE	LLCI	ULCI	β
Image Block						
ΔR^2	.273					
Democratic Candidate						
Hagan Character		0.346	0.087	.174	.517	0.244***
Hagan Intelligence		− 0.112	0.092	−.294	.071	− 0.016
Hagan Leadership		− 0.070	0.091	−.275	.205	− 0.042
Hagan Benevolence		0.083	0.091	−.096	.262	0.058
Hagan Homophily		0.179	0.074	.034	.325	0.146*
Hagan Charm		0.040	0.098	−.153	.234	0.022
Republican Candidate						
Tillis Character		− 0.089	0.103	−.292	.114	− 0.065
Tillis Intelligence		0.034	0.086	−.135	.204	0.023
Tillis Leadership		− 0.167	0.095	−.355	.021	− 0.114
Tillis Benevolence		0.050	0.091	−.131	.230	0.038
Tillis Homophily		− 0.585	0.085	−.752	−.418	− 0.494***
Tillis Charm		0.213	0.090	.036	.391	0.140*
<u>Georgia</u>						
Covariate Block						
Initial R^2	.546					
Age		− 0.008	0.004	−.016	.001	− 0.055
Female		− 0.151	0.140	−.427	.125	− 0.032
White		− 0.183	0.186	−.550	.183	− 0.035
Born Again		− 0.345	0.137	−.615	−.076	− 0.077*
Income		− 0.057	0.028	−.111	−.002	− 0.065*
Party (Republican)		− 0.080	0.118	−.313	.152	− 0.025
Ideology (Conservative)		− 0.079	0.053	−.183	.025	− 0.061
Con1		0.086	0.139	−.189	.362	0.019
Con2		−- 0.547	0.280	−.461	1.10	− 0.059
Image Block						
ΔR^2	.335					
Democratic Candidate						
Nunn Character		0.100	0.112	−.121	.320	0.060
Nunn Intelligence		− 0.187	0.106	−.397	.023	− 0.104
Nunn Leadership		− 0.032	0.108	−.246	.181	− 0.020
Nunn Benevolence		0.034	0.098	−.159	.228	0.023
Nunn Homophily		0.622	0.093	.439	.805	0.516***
Nunn Charm		− 0.012	0.108	−.226	.202	− 0.007

(*Continued*)

Table 4 (Continued)

	B	SE	LLCI	ULCI	β
Republican Candidate					
Perdue Character	− 0.096	0.121	−.335	.143	− 0.065
Perdue Intelligence	− 0.063	0.109	−.279	.153	− 0.037
Perdue Leadership	0.072	0.107	−.139	.284	0.044
Perdue Benevolence	0.018	0.103	−.186	.222	0.013
Perdue Homophily	− 0.570	0.091	−.750	−.390	− 0.460***
Perdue Charm	0.099	0.103	−.186	.222	0.013

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

effects (presented in Table 4) revealed that homophily was significantly more influential than all five other trait evaluations of Nunn, Perdue, and Tillis, all but character for Ernst, all but benevolence for Braley, but not significantly larger than any of the other five for Hagan. This is consistent with the second hypothesis and affirms the findings of the first study. People are generally more likely to intend to vote for candidates that they perceive to understand them and to share their values even after accounting for partisanship, ideology, and demographics.

The third hypothesis predicted that character would be associated with stronger voter intention. However, this hypothesis received little support. Those who rated Hagan as having high moral character were more likely to intend to vote for her than Tillis. However, evaluations of Tillis' character did not influence voter intention in North Carolina and no other race was influenced by the character rating of either candidate. The fourth hypothesis predicted that benevolence would be associated with voter intention, though this was not the case for evaluations of any candidate in one of the three campaigns.

The research question asked which other image factors would be associated with voter intention. Counterintuitively, some positive trait evaluations appeared to work against candidates. People who found Ernst more intelligent were slightly less likely to intend to vote for her over Braley. People who found Tillis charming were somewhat less likely to vote for him over Hagan. However, these effects were only marginally significant and had relatively small effect sizes. Furthermore, given the number of tests being conducted (36 image traits across three models), we should be suspicious of effects hovering around $p < .05$, as multiple tests increase Type 1 error rates. In other words, these results may suggest something idiosyncratic about the individual candidates but there may also be an error associated with repeated testing.

DISCUSSION

Perceptions of candidate image were significantly associated with voter intention for all eight candidates analyzed in the two studies. This supports the findings of past research on candidate image (Aylor, 1999; Allen & Post, 2004; Anderson & Kibler, 1978; Nimmo & Savage, 1976; Pancer et al., 1999). Though the findings from this

study are consistent with the direction of previous research, the relative strength of prediction by image facets presents important new information to our understanding of candidate image evaluations. Homophily was more strongly associated with voting intention than any other single variable with the exception of partisanship. This was true for seven candidates, four campaigns, two election cycles, and two levels of campaigns. This finding is consistent with Popkin's (1991) argument that voters care about whether candidates understand their problems and care about people like them. Because people are not policy experts, they may not know which policies would benefit them the most. Instead, if they believe a candidate understands people like them and cares about their problems, they can trust the candidate to pursue solutions that will address their problems and improve their lives. This is precisely how low-information rationality works; voters use homophily as a shortcut to determine which candidate will best represent them.

Given the importance of homophily in explaining voter intention, it is noteworthy that this image facet is the least utilized in previous image research. With few exceptions (Allen & Post, 2004; Anderson & Kibler, 1978; Prysby, 2007), homophily has been absent. Even the few studies that have included homophily used a measure of perceived similarity on issue positions—an operationalization that blurs the line between issue attitudes and image perceptions and cultivates even greater conceptual overlap with partisanship. In contrast, our measure of homophily asked respondents to consider whether the candidate understood the respondent, understood the problems faced by the respondent, and shared the respondent's values.

Though no image facet was as important as homophily, perceptions of candidate character were the next most influential image factor. Both Obama and Romney were much more likely to win the votes of those who found them believable, honest, and trustworthy, though this was only true of Hagan in 2014. Because presidential elections engage people's attention more than elections for the U.S. Senate and because people are more attentive to presidential elections than midterms, it is possible that people use more complex decision-making criteria in presidential elections. Conversely, for elections that generate less interest and conversation, voters may apply a simplified heuristic—even lower information rationality. A similar explanation could account for why benevolence was important in 2012 but was hardly a factor in the 2014 midterms. However, eight cases are too few to serve as a basis for such generalizations. Furthermore, it cannot be discerned whether the difference between 2012 and 2014 is attributable to the difference between midterm and presidential elections or the difference between presidential and down-ballot elections. In other words, down-ballot races may receive more attention and thus may be processed with more complex evaluative criteria, when the presidential election is dominating public conversations. More research should consider nonpresidential cycles and, within presidential elections, study down-ballot races. This can help discern whether more complex evaluative criteria are consistently used for the presidency.

Our findings also challenge past research on candidate competence. Past studies of candidate competence grouped tautological indicators (able and qualified) with biographical descriptors (experienced) and distinct constructs (hard working,

intelligent, a good leader). Our approach demonstrated that, though leadership is occasionally important, no candidate benefited from perceived intelligence. This illustrates the problem with an approach that groups such diverse constructs as work ethic, intelligence, experience, and qualification under a single "competence" composite variable. Though these four elections are not sufficient to demonstrate that intelligence is an irrelevant consideration in voter decision making, the findings were robust across all eight candidates. It may be that, when there are genuine concerns about a candidate's intellectual ability (perhaps George W. Bush in 2000, Sarah Palin in 2008, or Rick Perry in 2012), a different result would emerge. Intelligence may not influence voter perceptions because most candidates are seen as sufficiently intelligent. Researchers should seek opportunities to replicate our findings in electoral contexts in which intelligence appears to be a genuine concern.

Finally, those who deride image-oriented decision making as shallow and without substance often complain that voters support people they like over people who are more qualified. Our results suggest that likability and charisma do not feature prominently in voter decision making. Charm was not associated with increased voter intention for any of the eight candidates we analyzed. This suggests that when voters use candidate image as a heuristic to make important democratic decisions, they are not using shallow personality judgments. Instead, voters appear to decide whether they trust a candidate to represent them and their values. Low-information rationality is arguably more normatively defensible from this perspective. Voters are selecting candidates who, so far as they are able to discern, will fight for them if elected.

Though these findings demonstrate the potential of our approach, the findings have limitations. First, because the data are cross-section, the direction of causality cannot be established. It is possible that image evaluations are a function of voter intention and not the other way around. Second, though the sample for the second study was more diverse, it was not representative of the state electorates. The image scores of individual candidates in our samples do not achieve descriptive generalizability. Our results should not be used to infer that a candidate was advantaged in a given trait among the state populations. Finally, many of the most important questions image researchers need to address will require a sustained program of research that crosses many electoral contexts. All three of the Senatorial contests were mixed-gender races, the 2012 presidential campaign features a nonwhite candidate, and both the 2012 U.S. Presidential and 2014 North Carolina Senatorial featured an incumbent. However, no clear patterns emerged regarding how race, gender, or incumbency affects image evaluations. Whether members of nondominant social locations experience a prejudice in evaluations, whether parties enjoy image-trait ownership, whether certain types of campaign communication influence some factors differently than others, and many other related questions will all require further research. This study provides a foundation for future research to address these questions.

CONCLUSION

In Parry-Giles (2010) normative justification of image-based decision making, he argued it is unreasonable to expect citizens of a modern democracy to be sufficiently qualified to mediate complex policy debates on the various issues that confront policy makers. Instead, citizens engage in low-information rationality (Popkin, 1991) and use image traits as heuristics to simplify cognitive decision making about political representation. Critics of candidate image often imply that image reasoning is shallow because people select candidates who seem friendly or attractive. Our results suggest that image reasoning homes in on the more salient question of representation. Which candidate understands me? Who will be a voice for me in government? These are the fundamental questions of representative democracy, and they are the questions that drive voter decision making.

References

Allen, J. L., & Post, D. J. (2004). Source valence in assessing candidate image in a local election. *Communication Research Reports*, *21*, 174–187. doi:10.1080/08824090409359979

Anderson, P. A., & Kibler, R. J. (1978). Candidate valence as a predictor of voter preference. *Human Communication Research*, *5*, 4–14. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.1978.tb00618.x

Aylor, B. (1999). Source credibility and presidential candidates in 1996: The changing nature of character and empathy evaluations. *Communication Research Reports*, *16*, 296–304. doi:10.1080/08824099909388729

Balmas, M., & Sheafer, T. (2010). Candidate image in election campaigns: Attributive agenda setting, affective priming, and voting intentions. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, *22*, 204–229. doi:10.1093/ijpor/edq009

Benoit, W. L., & McHale, J. P. (2004). Presidential candidates' personal qualities: Computer content analysis. In K. Hacker (Ed.), *Presidential candidate images* (pp. 49–63). New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield.

Benoit, W. L., McKinney, M. S., & Holbert, R. L. (2001). Beyond learning and persona: Extending the scope of presidential debate effects. *Communication Monographs*, *68*, 259–273. doi:10.1080/03637750128060

Dennis, J., Chaffee, S. H., & Choe, S. Y. (1979). Impact on partisan, image, and issue voting. In S. Kraus (Ed.), *The great debates: Carter vs. Ford, 1976* (pp. 314–330). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Fridkin, K. L., & Kenney, P. J. (2011). The role of candidate traits in campaigns. *The Journal of Politics*, *73*, 61–73. doi:10.1017/S0022381610000861

Funk, C. L. (1997). Implications of political expertise in candidate trait evaluations. *Political Research Quarterly*, *50*, 675–697. doi:10.1177/106591299705000309

Hacker, K. L. (2004). *Presidential candidate images*. New York, NY: Rowman Littlefield.

Hacker, K. L., Zakahi, W. R., Giles, M. J., & McQuitty, S. (2000). Components of candidate images: Statistical analysis of the issue-persona dichotomy in the presidential candidate of 1996. *Communication Monographs*, *67*, 227–239. doi:10.1080/03637750009376508

Hunter, J. E., & Hamilton, M. A. (2002). The advantages of using standardized scores in causal analysis. *Human Communication Research*, *28*(4), 552–561. doi:10.1111/hcre.2002.28.issue-4

Kaid, L. L. (2004). Measuring candidate images with semantic differentials. In H. Hacker (Ed.), *Presidential candidate images* (pp. 231–236). New York, NY: Rowman and Littlefield.

Kaid, L. L., & Chanslor, M. (1995). Changing candidate images: The effects of television advertising. In K. Hacker (Ed.), *Candidate images in presidential election campaigns* (pp. 83–97). New York, NY: Praeger.

Kaid, L. L., Fernandes, J., & Painter, D. (2011). Effects of political advertising in the 2008 presidential campaign. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 55, 437–456. doi:10.1177/0002764211398071

Kaid, L. L., & Hirsch, R. O. (1973). Selective exposure and candidate image: A field study over time. *Central States Speech Journal*, 24, 48–51. doi:10.1080/10510977309363142

Kaid, L. L., & Holtz-Bacha, C. (2000). Gender reactions to TV political broadcasts: A multicountry approach. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 5, 17–29. doi:10.1177/1081180X00005002003

Kinder, D. R. (1986). Presidential character revisited. In R. R. Lau & D. O. Sears (Eds.), *Political cognition* (pp. 233–255). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Kinder, R. D., Peters, M. D., Abelson, R. P., & Fiske, S. T. (1980). Presidential prototypes. *Political Behavior*, 2, 315–337. doi:10.1007/BF00990172

Little, T. D. (2013). *Longitudinal structural equation modeling.* New York, NY: Guilford Press.

McCroskey, J. C., & Jenson, T. A. (1975). Image of mass media news sources. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 19, 169–180. doi:10.1080/08838157509363777

McCroskey, J. C., & Teven, J. J. (1999). Goodwill: A reexamination of the construct and its measurement. *Communication Monographs*, 66, 90–103. doi:10.1080/03637759909376464

McCroskey, J. C., & Young, T. J. (1981). Ethos and credibility: The construct and its measurement after three decades. *Central States Speech Journal*, 32, 24–34. doi:10.1080/10510978109368075

McLeod, J. M., Guo, Z., Daily, K., Steele, C. A., Huang, H., Horowitz, E., & Chen, H. (1996). The impact of traditional and nontraditional media forms in the 1992 presidential elections. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 73, 401–416. doi:10.1177/107769909607300211

Miller, A. H., & Miller, W. E. (1976). Ideology and the 1972 election: Myth or reality—A rejoinder. *American Political Science Review*, 70, 832–849. doi:10.1017/S0003055400174271

Miller, A. H., Wattenberg, M., & Malanchuk, O. (1986). Schematic assessments of presidential candidates. *The American Political Science Review*, 80, 521–540. doi:10.2307/1958272

Nimmo, D. D., & Savage, R. L. (1976). *Candidates and their images: Concepts, methods, and findings.* Pacific Palisades, CA: Goodyear.

Pancer, S. M., Brown, S. D., & Barr, C. W. (1999). Forming impression of political leaders: A cross-national comparison. *Political Psychology*, 20, 345–368. doi:10.1111/0162-895X.00148

Parry-Giles, T. (2010). Resisting a "treacherous piety": Issues, images, and public deliberation in presidential campaigns. *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, 13, 37–64. doi:10.1353/rap.0.0138

Pfau, M., Kendall, K. E., Reichert, T., Hellweg, S. A., Lee, W., Tusing, K. J., & Prosise, T. (1997). Influence of communication during the distant phase of the 1996 Republican presidential primary campaign. *Journal of Communication*, 47, 6–26. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1997.tb02723.x

Popkin, S. L. (1991). *The reasoning voter: Communication and persuasion in presidential campaigns.* Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Prysby, C. (2007). Perceptions of candidate character traits and the presidential vote in 2004. *Political Science and Politics*, 47, 115–122. doi:10.1017/S1049096508080189

Sheafer, T. (2008). Charismatic communication skill, media legitimacy and electoral success. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 7, 1–24. doi:10.1080/15377850802063983

Teven, J. J. (2008). An examination of perceived credibility of the 2008 presidential candidates: Relationships with believability, likability, and deceptiveness. *Human Communication*, 11, 391–407.

Zhu, J., Milavsky, J. R., & Biswas, R. (1994). Do televised debates affect image perception more than issue knowledge?: A study of the first 1992 presidential debate. *Human Communication Research*, 20, 302–333. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.1994.tb00325.x