

**The Clinton Factor: The Effects of Clinton's Personal Image in 2000 Presidential
Primaries and in the General Election**

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Under normal circumstances factors directly associated with the candidates running for office determine whom citizens will support. Social scientists have investigated an impressive array of these candidate-related decision factors (Campbell et al. 1960; Hinckley 1980; Hinckley 1981; Kelley and Mirer 1974; Nimmo and Savage 1976). The 2000 election cycle provides an opportunity to study a factor that was, perhaps, unrelated to a candidate. This cycle provides an opportunity to study whether perceptions of a *person not on any ballot* have significant effects.¹

During the administration's darkest hours Vice President Gore publicly defended President Clinton. The steady flow of news and talk of Clinton's inappropriate relationship with Monica Lewinsky from the time it became public knowledge through the impeachment process surely took its toll on Clinton's personal popularity. But was Gore's reputation tarnished, too? Did evaluations of President Clinton as a person affect Gore's electoral fortunes? Bob Edwards, the host of National Public Radio's Morning Edition, put this question to Gore most succinctly: "Are [voters] blaming you for the scandals of the last eight years" and are they "getting back at [Clinton] through you" (Edwards and Gore 2000)?

The purpose of this paper is to examine whether, and to what extent, evaluations of Clinton as a person (the "Clinton Factor") influenced how citizens decided for whom to vote. Gore had to compete in 43 states with presidential primaries to win the Democratic Party's nomination (Mayer 2001). Since Gore won each of these contests it might be assumed that the Clinton Factor was insignificant. The analysis reported here will demonstrate that these primary election results essentially concealed some politically significant effects. Since election forecasters had projected Gore as the November winner through the use of historically accurate methods and techniques, unique, election-specific factors might have had an effect.² Various authors have suggested that the Clinton Factor and the Gore campaign's response to it contributed to Gore's defeat (Abramowitz 2001; Ceaser and Busch 2001; Pomper 2001; Sides 2002; Tseng 2002; Weisberg and Hill 2001). The analysis reported here will investigate those arguments.

This paper examines several specific questions: Why did Democratic primary voters prefer Gore or New Jersey Senator Bradley? Did their evaluations of President Clinton as a person affect their votes? Why did voters in the November general election

prefer Gore or Texas Governor Bush? Did the Clinton Factor sway general-election voters one way or another? Since presidential primaries are state elections and since “battleground” states are vital to winning the Electoral College vote (Sides 2002), the paper also examines where (i.e., in what states) the Clinton Factor made a difference.

The results reported here are of interest for several reasons. First, the nomination process determines “the kind of person who [will] occupy the White House” (Ranney 1977). Since presidential primaries are central to that process, how primary voters decide warrants greater attention than it has received. Second, the 2000 election cycle posed several unusual problems, including how Gore would cope with the Clinton Factor and how Bradley’s health would affect the race. Third, voting specialists who may have regarded retrospective voting as a universal phenomenon will be surprised by the null findings of this study (Weisberg and Hill 2001). And, finally, since this study examines the same decision factors for Spring presidential primaries and for the Fall general election, it is possible to compare the decision dynamic of primary voters and general election voters. We know from studies of their social and demographic traits that “spring voters” are not like “fall voters” (Kritzer 1980; Lengle 1981; Ranney 1968; Ranney 1972; Ranney and Epstein 1966). We do not know whether their decision dynamic also differs.

Other Factors That Could Affect Primary and General Election Voters

Determining whether Clinton’s personal image had an effect requires not only evidence on this hypothesized relationship but also control of rival hypotheses. What other factors could have affected voters? Clinton’s job performance, candidate images, electability, ideology, and party identification could have affected the choices of primary and general-election voters.³

Clinton’s Job Performance

Incumbent office holders are typically voted out of office only when there is widespread dissatisfaction with their performance. If the incumbent is popular, the party will usually re-nominate that office holder with little, if any, opposition (e.g., Reagan in 1984 or Clinton in 1996). However, if the incumbent is unpopular and seriously

jeopardizes the party's chance to keep the office, a viable challenger may emerge to compete for the nomination (e.g., Reagan v. President Ford in 1976 and Kennedy v. President Carter in 1980). If Vice President Gore were viewed as a surrogate for President Clinton, primary voters could have based their choice of Gore or Bradley on their evaluation of Clinton's job performance (Wattier 1990).⁴ Prior research also suggests that general election voters could have based their choice of Gore or Bush on Clinton's job performance (Fiorina 1981; Key 1966; Miller and Wattenberg 1985).

In the 2000 election cycle Vice President Gore had a difficult choice—whether and to what extent to run as a “surrogate” incumbent.⁵ If Gore ran as a surrogate for President Clinton, he would have tried to link his campaign to the positive accomplishments of the administration. That strategy, though, might have invited his rivals to associate him with Clinton's personal scandals (i.e., the Clinton Factor). Running as a non-incumbent would have provided Gore an opportunity to escape the Clinton Factor. However, that approach might have broken the linkage to Clinton's performance.⁶

It is assumed, albeit tentatively, that Gore campaigned, and perhaps was viewed by many voters, as a surrogate incumbent.⁷ Ceaser and Busch (2001, 57) substantially agree with this assumption:

Potential candidates on the Democrat side did ... face what was probably the closest approximation of incumbency ever witnessed in the person of Al Gore. As vice president, Gore enjoyed the support of Bill Clinton and served as an active and trusted member of the administration. In the style of modern vice presidents, he was assigned many important responsibilities and took part in most of the crucial decisions. Clinton chose Gore in 1992 not least because their political views were similar. The two were joined at the hip politically, to the detriment of intraparty challengers.

Candidate Images

David Broder and Malcolm Jewell remind us that popular images of candidates are fundamentally important in every election (Butler and Stokes 1976; Campbell et al. 1960; Conway and Wyckoff 1980; Kelley and Mirer 1974; Marshall 1984; Nimmo and Savage 1976; Wattier 1983b). To quote our discipline's favorite political reporter:

Elections are contests between individuals, not between philosophies.
Voters choose between Candidate A and Candidate B, not between

liberalism and conservatism, high or low taxes, permissive or restrictive abortion policies. (Broder 1987, 259)

In 1974, as states began to adopt presidential primaries, Malcolm Jewell opined that candidate images would emerge as important determinants of choice:

The structure of the presidential primary system makes it possible for a candidate to win primaries if he has a strong organization, plenty of funds, shrewd advisers, an appealing campaign style, and a good image on television. (Jewell 1974, 282)

Subsequent research has shown that images of candidates *on primary ballots* have had a stronger effect than electability (Abramowitz 1987; Abramowitz 1989; Norrander 1986), ideology (Marshall 1984; Norrander 1986; Wattier 1983b), or issues (Marshall 1984; Norrander 1986; Williams et al. 1976). It is essential that images of candidates be controlled. Perhaps the most interesting image factors in the 2000 election cycle were the *image liabilities*: the Clinton Factor, which has been discussed; and Bradley's heart problem, which probably contributed to his defeat in New Hampshire.

During 1999 Bradley emerged as the only viable alternative to Vice President Gore.⁸ Bradley's fundraising efforts kept pace with Gore's. Bradley actually raised more money in the third quarter--\$6.7 million to Gore's \$6.5 million. Bradley's poll standings improved both nationally and in key states. Gore's lead in Iowa narrowed, and some polls had Bradley leading in New Hampshire and in New York. Endorsements from party leaders (Senators Kerrey and Moynihan), former Clinton administrators (Robert Reich, former Labor Secretary), sports celebrities (20 NBA Hall of Famers and one future Hall of Famer, Michael Jordan), and interest groups ("Friends of the Earth," an environmental group critical of Gore's record) were added to Bradley's column. Gore's campaign lacked momentum just as Bradley's train picked up steam (Germer 2001). However, late in the fourth quarter, on December 10, 1999, Bradley left the campaign trail for treatment of a recurring health problem, an irregular heart beat (Dao 1999). News reports of this condition appeared and January 2000 tracking polls⁹ showed Gore leading in New Hampshire (Altman 2000; Dao 2000; Harwood 2000). What effect, if any, did news of Bradley's heart problem have upon primary voters in New Hampshire?¹⁰ Ceaser and Busch (2001, 83) have speculated: "Bradley's heart problem (and seeming

lack of candor surrounding it) may have swayed enough voters to cost him New Hampshire.”

Electability

Voters may support the candidate they perceive as having the best chance of winning an election (Abramowitz 1989; Abramson et al. 1992; Aldrich 1980; Bartels 1988; Norrander 1986). A successful campaign raises a great deal of money, gains endorsements of party and group leaders, discourages rivals from running, leads in the public opinion polls, attracts more news coverage, and receives the Fourth Estate’s imprimatur, “front runner” (Crotty and Jackson 1985; Gurian 1986; Gurian and Haynes 1993; Keech and Matthews 1977). The front-runner label provides a powerful cue: “Vote for me because I can win!” Voters might respond to that winning message for instrumental and expressive reasons.

Electability might function as an instrumental factor (Abramowitz 1989; Abramson et al. 1992; Stone, Rapoport, and Atkeson 1995). Voters not only evaluate candidates in terms of expected benefits, but also know that a candidate must have a realistic chance of winning before “fairer income taxes” can be delivered. Supporting a candidate with high “utility” but low electability seems irrational, especially when another candidate offers moderate utility and high electability.¹¹ In short, electability may be a sophisticated, rational-choice consideration (Downs 1957).

Electability might also function as a form of expressive behavior—citizens might support a candidate because they wish to be associated with a winner.¹² They might observe that one candidate has the “Big Mo,” causing them to act as political lemmings, jumping on the bandwagon along the way to victory (Abramowitz 1987; Gallup 1940; Schmitt-Beck 1996). Electability offers voters a simple, relatively easy, and convenient basis for choosing a candidate. Information is readily available as to which candidate seems to have the “inside track” to the winner’s circle (Keeter and Zukin 1983).

Ideology

Election campaigns are usually contests among candidates representing various ideological factions of a party (Polsby 1981). Those candidates frequently make

ideological appeals, and voters seem to respond to those appeals (Conover and Feldman 1981; Hedlund 1977-78; Holm and Robinson 1978; Lengle 1981; Levitin and Miller 1979; Norrander 1988; Wattier 1983a). It seems prudent to control for voter ideology.¹³ But why does ideology affect candidate choice?

Downs was probably the first to suggest that voters use political ideologies to make decisions. A voter simply “compares [candidate] ideologies and supports the one most like his own” (1957, 99). Downs assumes that an ideological identification represents a general political philosophy or belief system that organizes perceptions of political issues. An ideological vote is a form of instrumental political behavior; citizens use their vote (“means”) to affect the philosophical direction (“end”) of public policy.¹⁴

According to Downs, voting on an ideological basis is an alternative mode of action when voters are uncertain about the issue positions of candidates. Several aspects of primary elections may cause this uncertainty and therefore adversely affect the opportunity of voters to cast issue votes (Abramowitz 1989; Geer 1989; Gopoian 1982; Keeter and Zukin 1983; Marshall 1984; Norrander 1986; Wattier 1983b; Williams et al. 1976). The crowded primary schedule does not afford candidates an opportunity to articulate their stands on issues. The early primaries usually have so many candidates running that voters are not likely to have a great deal of knowledge about each candidate’s stand on issues. Candidates may emphasize general campaign themes, thereby avoiding specific statements about sensitive political issues. When candidates do emphasize their issue positions, the news media tend to ignore them and focus instead on the “horse race” (Jewell 1974; Patterson 1980; Patterson 1993).

Party Identification

A person’s identification with a political party has been viewed as a fundamental decision factor in practically every kind of electoral contest in which candidates from rival parties compete for popular support (Bartels 2000; Butler and Stokes 1976; Campbell et al. 1960; Converse and Pierce 1986; Hinckley 1980; Miller 1956; Miller 1991). Studies of primary elections have not examined the effects of party identification, focusing, instead, on other decision factors.¹⁵ There are at least two plausible reasons to exclude party identification from “models” of candidate choice in presidential primaries:

(1) since primaries are intramural contests, candidates would not, under normal circumstances, employ partisan cues to win support; and (2) since primaries are party affairs, only loyal party members would attend them.

Some anecdotal evidence, recalled from observations of nomination contests for some thirty years, suggests that candidates frequently make partisan appeals by raising questions about a rival's party loyalty.¹⁶ An example is Walter Mondale's use of rhetorical terms such as "real Democrats" and "anti-Democrats" to suggest that he was a Democrat and that his principal rival, Gary Hart, was not (Reeves 1984). Candidates frequently attack their rivals by suggesting that legislative votes for the opposition party's programs represent acts of partisan disloyalty (e.g., the finger pointing episode between Mondale and Glenn over Glenn's vote for Reagan's tax cuts). Republican candidates often claim that they are "Reagan Republicans." Taking New Hampshire's "no-tax" pledge" also seems to function as a Republican loyalty oath. In the 2000 election cycle Gore and his surrogates attacked Bradley for leaving the U. S. Senate, suggesting that Gore had "stayed to fight" while Bradley had quit the partisan fight (Dao, 1999a). In short, partisan cues are present in nomination contests.

The presumption that partisanship does not vary among primary voters is also questionable. Most states, as Carr and Scott have noted, "require voters to state a party affiliation on registration to be eligible to vote in a party primary election" (Carr and Scott 1984, 470). However, variation in partisanship could emerge for any number of reasons. Polling precincts are notoriously under staffed, which might give rise to lax administration of closed primaries. Although the National Democratic Party has tried to limit participation to Democrats only, exceptions are routinely granted (e.g., Wisconsin and Montana). Some states enforce partisan affiliation by requiring voters to make a public request for a primary ballot, a procedure that could transform a *de jure* closed primary into a *de facto* open primary (Jewell 1983). There is the widespread use of open primaries by Republican state parties because the GOP has not required its state organizations to close their primary doors to independents (Cook 2000). Even with partisan registration, if state law permits someone to engage in same-day registration, a great deal of mischief is possible.¹⁷ Finally, Geer's analysis suggests that "even in closed primaries ... self-identified independents and partisans of the opposition party still

constitute a sizable segment of the electorate” (Geer 1986, 1019). Estimating the effects of party identification seems necessary because variation from partisan to non-partisan is possible.

Data and Measures

An analysis of exit-poll data originally collected by Voter News Service (VNS) was performed to study the effect of the Clinton Factor on primary voters. Its effect on general-election voters was analyzed with survey data collected in the 2000 National Election Study (NES). VNS collected these data for a consortium of news organizations (ABC, AP, CBS, CNN, Fox News, and NBC). Primary voters, chosen randomly just after they had voted, were given self-administered questionnaires (see Appendix A for a description of sampling procedures). NES data were collected for a consortium of academic institutions (i.e., ICPSR). Eligible citizens, also chosen randomly, were interviewed (some in face-to-face interviews; others in telephone interviews) before and after the presidential election.¹⁸

VNS data serve the practical interests of journalists who provide immediate, election-night forecasts and interpretations. The VNS data collection process is driven by news judgments and deadlines, and, evidently, these concerns are best served by a simple, self-administered questionnaire. The NES data collection process is driven by the theoretical and methodological interests of scholars, and these concerns have created—over some fifty years—a complex, interviewer-administered questionnaire. Even though these studies have different populations, designs, and questionnaires, both data sets include survey items for the decision factors that are hypothesized to affect candidate choice in primary and general elections.

The VNS questionnaires were reviewed for relevant survey questions. Eleven exit polls for Democratic primaries included questions on Clinton’s job performance; party identification; ideology; and images of Gore, Bradley, and Clinton. In these exit polls respondents were asked, “Which of these qualities best describes why you voted for your candidate today?” This question was followed by a list of traits. One of the traits respondents could choose was: “He has the best chance to win in November.” This item

is an *electability criterion*: the format of the question implies that electability was a basis for choosing between candidates, not a measure of any one candidate's perceived chance of winning (Wattier 1990). The exit polls for New Hampshire and Delaware included a question about Bradley's heart problem. The Delaware questionnaire did not have measures of many of the other variables needed, so it was not analyzed.¹⁹

Since the NES questionnaire has multiple items for each decision criteria, items were selected that closely parallel the VNS items. The questions on Clinton's job performance (the traditional Gallup item), ideology, and party identification are either identical or very similar. The VNS "image" items for Bradley, Clinton, and Gore have only favorable and unfavorable as the possible responses. Therefore, NES feeling thermometers for Clinton, Bush, and Gore were recoded into positive (51 to 100) and negative (0 to 49) categories. An NES item on the expected winner was selected as a measure of electability.

The analytical task was to determine whether the Clinton Factor affects candidate choice, controlling for other decision criteria. This task was approached with two multivariate techniques: ordinary least squares (OLS) regression and logistic regression. Although OLS regression has some well-known limitations (Aldrich and Nelson 1984), its principal analytical power—its capacity to estimate the relative effects of predictor variables—was required. Since the measure (R^2) of overall model performance in OLS regression is of limited value, the summary measure produced by logistic regression, the percentage of cases correctly predicted, was used.²⁰

Results from these multivariate analyses are discussed in the next section of the paper; some raw statistical results are also presented in Appendix D. The prescribed coding requirements for binary logistic regression were followed, and Appendices B and C provide a detailed listing of concepts, question items, and variable codes for the VNS and NES studies, respectively.

Results

The 11 Democratic primaries were held on two dates, February 1 for the New Hampshire primary and March 7 ("Titanic Tuesday") for the other 10 primaries. Table 1 presents the popular vote and the VNS exit poll percentages for Gore and Bradley. The

popular vote seems to indicate that Gore’s bid for the nomination was not adversely affected by the Clinton Factor. Vice President Gore won each contest. The closest contest was in New Hampshire, where Gore won by 49.7 percent to Bradley’s 45.6 percent. In several March 7 contests—Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, and Ohio—Gore won by substantial margins. The Bradley-Gore contest was more evenly matched in New England (the “Yankee” primaries), but it was not really competitive after New Hampshire.

		Gore’s Percent		Bradley’s Percent ^a	
Date	State	Vote	Exit Poll	Vote	Exit Poll
1 February	NH	49.7	52.0	45.6	47.0
7 March	CT	55.4	55.0	41.5	42.2
7 March	GA	83.8	84.0	16.2	16.0
7 March	ME	54.0	54.6	41.3	41.3
7 March	MD	67.3	66.9	28.5	28.8
7 March	MA	59.9	60.4	37.3	36.8
7 March	MO	64.6	64.7	33.6	33.0
7 March	NY	65.6	65.0	33.5	34.0
7 March	OH	73.6	71.8	24.7	24.2
7 March	RI	57.2	56.5	40.6	41.2
7 March	VT	54.3	55.0	43.9	44.0

Popular Vote Source: Mayer (2001, 32).
^aBradley ended his campaign on March 9 with Gore having 33% of the delegates needed to win the nomination (Norrander 2000).

The VNS exit polls accurately represent the popular vote in each primary. The exit-poll percentages track the popular-vote results fairly closely. The only possible exception is in New Hampshire where the exit poll overestimates Gore’s vote by 2.3 points and Bradley’s vote by 1.4 points.

The Clinton Factor in Democratic Primaries

How well do personal evaluations of Clinton predict candidate choice in 2000 Democratic primaries? Figure 1 graphs the percent correctly predicted from three

logistic-regression analyses: two analyses with only one predictor variable (line with triangles for Clinton's image; line with squares for performance) and a multivariate analysis with seven predictors (black line with circles).

Figure 1 here

The effectiveness of Clinton's image as a predictor of candidate choice is quite erratic. It varies from a high of 83.9 percent in Georgia to a low of 62.0 percent in Connecticut and Massachusetts. The prediction rate averages 67.3 percent, but this measure is somewhat misleading (standard deviation, 6.8). The prediction rates in New England primaries are especially low.

Consider how well Clinton's performance predicts choice. Its effectiveness mirrors almost exactly Clinton's personal image; these two prediction rates are highly correlated ($r = .92$). Since performance seems to predict choice as well as personal image, instant election night analyses may have focused more on performance, surely the more traditional and perhaps also the more acceptable basis for choosing between Gore and Bradley. The statistical similarities between performance and personal image may have concealed the effects of the Clinton Factor.

The addition of other predictors dramatically increases the overall prediction rate to 81.6 percent. These prediction rates are less erratic (standard deviation, 3.7), and vary from a low of 77.5 percent in Vermont to a high of 88.8 percent in Georgia. The gaps between the lines (percentage point differences) visually indicate how much improvement the seven-variable model makes over the simple one-variable models. Comparing the image and fully specified models reveals some large percentage-point improvements in New England primaries: 16.4, 16.3, 19.7, and 14.3 in New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Vermont, respectively. The prediction rates observed for the fully specified model of candidate choice tend to affirm that relevant predictors have been included.

Figure 2 here

Figure 2 clearly depicts the effects of the Clinton Factor. Gore's exit-poll percents are graphed for primary voters who *approved* of Clinton's job performance.

I would have expected to find high percentages, in the high 80s or low 90s, voting for Gore.²¹ When primary voters liked Clinton (line with triangles), a high percentage of them supported Gore in only three primaries—92.0, 85.6, and 82.8 in Georgia, Maryland, and Ohio, respectively. Consider what happened to Gore’s vote when primary voters disliked Clinton (line with squares). In two primaries, New Hampshire and Vermont, Gore’s percent of the vote actually fell below 50 percent. In three primaries—Maine (51.7), New York (52.9), and Rhode Island (50.8)—Gore’s percent was only slightly above the 50 percent mark. In Georgia and Ohio Clinton’s image suppressed Gore’s expected vote, but not to the same extent. Clinton’s image seems to depress Gore’s expected vote by approximately 19 points (18.9) among voters who approved of Clinton’s job performance but personally disliked him.

Table 2 displays selected results from logistic-regression analyses that included all hypothesized decision factors (i.e., the seven-variable model). Only the results for Clinton’s image and performance are presented in order to examine, in greater detail, the effects of the Clinton Factor.

State	Clinton Image	Performance
NH	0.636*	3.263*
CT	0.652	2.085
GA	0.505*	2.004*
ME	0.646	1.369
MD	0.468*	1.559
MA	0.793	2.573*
MO	0.451*	0.980
NY	0.560*	1.896*
OH	0.537*	1.272
RI	0.382	2.627*
VT	0.639	1.787

* $p \leq .05$ testing H_0 : Odds Ratio = 1.00.

Note: An Odds Ratio > 1.00 indicates that a factor increases the odds of voting for Gore; an Odds Ratio < 1.00 indicates that a factor decreases the odds of voting for Gore. Clinton’s image is coded 1, unfavorable, and 0, favorable; performance is coded 1, approve, and 0, disapprove (see Appendix B).

The cell entries in Table 2 are the odds ratios for Clinton's image and performance.²² These variables were coded with the following expectations: voters who approved of Clinton's performance (coded 1) would be more likely to support Gore; those who personally disliked the President (coded 1) would be less likely to support the Vice President. I expected odds ratios greater than 1.00 for performance and odds ratios less than 1.00 for Clinton's image. As the results in Table 2 indicate, performance is statistically significant in five of the 11 primaries and Clinton's image is significant in six of them. All significant odds ratios are in the hypothesized directions.

These results indicate how the Clinton Factor produced mixed political consequences for Vice President Gore. In three primaries—New Hampshire, Georgia, and New York—both Clinton variables are significant, which suggests that Clinton's performance helped Gore (odds ratios > 1.00) about as much as Clinton's image (odds ratios < 1.00) hurt him, politically. In three primaries—Maryland, Missouri, and Ohio—Clinton's image is significant, but performance is not. In these primaries Clinton's negative personal image decreases the odds of voting for Gore, as expected, but this negative effect is not offset by a positive effect from performance. In only two primaries, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, does it seem that Clinton's performance helps the Vice President without a negative effect from Clinton's image. Finally, in three primaries—Connecticut, Maine, and Vermont—both Clinton variables are not statistically significant.

Figure 3 displays selected results from the OLS regression analyses. It displays the beta weights (standardized regression coefficients) for Gore's image, Bradley's image, Clinton's image, and Clinton's job performance.²³ Clinton's personal image has a statistically significant effect in eight of the 11 primaries; it affects whether primary voters selected Gore or Bradley in all but Georgia, Maine, and Massachusetts. Its overall effect is stronger than performance, party identification, and ideology (see pooled results in Appendix D). In Ohio and Missouri its effect is also stronger than electability. These results also indicate that performance is the *least* important decision factor. In only three primaries—New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Massachusetts—is Clinton's job performance statistically significant. In every primary except Massachusetts, Clinton's image has a stronger effect than Clinton's performance.

Figure 3 here

Images of the candidates, especially Gore's image, are considerably more important than Clinton's image and performance. Gore's image is the most important factor in eight of the 11 primaries. In Maine and Rhode Island the two candidate image variables have similar effects. Bradley's image has its strongest effect in his home state of Missouri.

Bradley's health is a significant factor in New Hampshire; voters who viewed Bradley's health as a consideration tended to support Gore, a beta weight of .16 (see Appendix D). This factor is not as important as the two candidate image factors, but it has a somewhat stronger effect than either Clinton's image or performance.

This finding raises an intriguing question: What if Bradley's heart problem had not become an issue (Ceaser and Busch 2001)? This hypothetical question was addressed with CLARIFY, a software program that estimates what a model would predict under different, user-specified conditions.²⁴ After estimating coefficients with only statistically significant factors (i.e., excluding ideology and party identification), I set Bradley's health to "0." This arbitrary action statistically removes health as a consideration for New Hampshire voters. The predicted values for Gore's percent are *45.5 percent* (OLS regression) and *39.8 percent* (logistic regression). If the statistical assumptions and techniques of CLARIFY are reasonable, we would have to conclude that Bradley might have won New Hampshire.

The Clinton Factor in the 2000 General Election

Why did voters in the November general election prefer Gore or Texas Governor Bush? Did the Clinton Factor sway general-election voters one way or another? Where was the Clinton Factor important?

A recent paper by Sides (2002) has demonstrated that voters experienced the 2000 presidential campaign differently depending on whether they lived in one of the "battleground" states (see note to Table 3). These states were where the Clinton and

Bush campaigns vigorously competed because the outcome was in question. As Sides (2002, 17) has stated:

A higher percentage of voters in battleground states report reading about the campaign in the newspaper as well as seeing campaign advertisements and programming, though here the [difference] in exposure to advertising is most substantively meaningful: in battleground states 84.6 percent of respondents report seeing campaign advertisements, compared to 69.2 percent in non-battleground states. Similarly, voters in battleground states are more likely to be contacted or receive mail from a party. For example, 44.8 percent of respondents in battleground states were contacted, as opposed to 34.8 percent of those in non-battleground states. Finally, there is evidence that respondents in battleground states were themselves more active in the campaign, in that more tried to influence others' vote and participated in a campaign activity of some sort.

Such dramatic differences in campaign experiences and behaviors clearly suggest that the battleground states are where to test for Clinton-Factor effects. While some groups (e.g., Democratic Leadership Council) were quick to criticize Gore for not using President Clinton more effectively, Thomas Mann opined: "Clinton would have done more harm than good with swing voters in battleground states" (Ceaser and Busch 2001, 31).

Was Clinton's personal image a significant factor in the battleground states? Results of separate logistic regression analyses for voters on "safe" ground and for those on "battle" ground, displayed in Table 3, indicate that Clinton's image had a significant effect on whether voters in battleground states supported Gore or Bush. In battleground states voters who disliked the President were more likely to support Bush than Gore (odds ratio, 0.54). Evidently, Clinton's image did not significantly affect voters on "safe" ground. Three factors seemed to affect voters on "safe" ground—Gore's image, Bush's image, and party identification (Kelley and Mirer 1974).

Clinton's job performance, though significant in Democratic primaries, seemed to have no effect in the presidential election (Weisberg and Hill 2001). In some presidential primaries positive effects from Clinton's performance tended to balance negative effects from Clinton's image. This "balancing" effect was not so evident in the general election.

Table 3. The Clinton Factor in the General Election

Predictor	“Safe” Ground	“Battle” Ground	Democratic Primaries
Gore Image	20.991*	7.029*	27.974*
Bush/Bradley Image	.021*	.009*	.037*
Clinton Image	.254	.054*	.563*
Performance	1.642	1.256	1.748*
Party Identification	9.467*	7.491*	1.465*
Ideology	1.617	1.841	.621*
Electability	1.010	1.550*	7.685*
Correctly Predicted	92.9%	91.1%	80.1%
N	356	343	8298

Note: States were divided into “safe” and “battle” areas following Sides (2002), who relied upon *The Cook Political Report* and *CNN*. The battleground states were: AR, AZ, DE, FL, IL, IA, LA, ME, MI, MN, MO, NV, NH, NM, OH, OR, PA, TN, WA, WV, and WI. Gore’s pollsters also defined these as battleground states (Jamieson and Waldman 2001, 91-93). Results for 2000 Democratic primaries were created by merging all cases into a single data file.

* $p \leq .05$ testing H_0 : Odds Ratio = 1.00.

As expected, candidate images are important decision criteria in both the spring primaries and the fall presidential election. Party identification is also important in both election seasons. Perhaps under “normal” political conditions, with more consistency in performance and personal evaluations, performance would emerge as a general decision criterion.

Discussion

The 2000 Democratic nomination contest appears to fit the *consensual* nomination pattern (Keech and Matthews 1977). An early favorite (Al Gore) faced a weak opponent (Bill Bradley), and the early favorite easily won the nomination. This characterization only fits the primary and caucus results; it does not fit the political-resources profile. Bradley was not necessarily a weak opponent. At the end of 1999 Gore was reported to have \$5.7 million cash-on-hand; Bradley actually had more money to spend, about \$8.3 million. Bradley also had more cash-on-hand at the end of the third quarter reporting period, \$10.7 million to Gore’s \$10.3 million.²⁵ From August 1999 to

December 1999, Gore was always the first choice of registered Democrats surveyed by the Gallup Organization, but Gore's lead seemed to be evaporating (Newport 2000). Although general-election, trial-heat polls showed both Democrats losing to Bush, Bradley seemed to be a stronger general-election candidate than Gore (Newport 2000). By January 2000, after the news of Bradley's heart problem, Gore's lead in the first-choice poll of registered Democrats widened considerably.

It seems that news of Bradley's heart problem damaged his electability, making him a weaker candidate. Some observers have suggested that Bradley was not a very effective campaigner (Ceaser and Busch 2001; Mayer 2001). However, the analysis reported in this paper has suggested that Bradley would have won the New Hampshire primary had his health not become an issue. Bradley might have fared better in other states, especially in New England primaries (Connecticut, Maine, Rhode Island, and Vermont) where his image was as favorable as Gore's. New Hampshire voters actually had a more favorable image of Bradley, 80.3 percent favorable to Gore's 72.5 percent. Another political factor made Bradley's bid for the nomination more difficult—Gore switched from running as an incumbent to running as a non-incumbent.

Several signs indicated that Gore campaigned as a non-incumbent. Gore distanced himself from the administration's policy toward Elian Gonzalez (Alvarez 2000; Seelye 2000). He moved the campaign headquarters from Washington, D.C., to Nashville, Tennessee, making him a Washington outsider (Johnson 2001). His announcement speech repeatedly emphasized "family," creating a stark contrast to the Clinton family (Gore 1999). His acceptance speech contained a politically significant line: "This election is not a reward for past performance" (Gore 2000). Two of his resume advertisements omitted his eight years as Vice President (Berry 2000; Richardson 2000). He selected Joseph Lieberman, a Clinton administration critic, as his vice-presidential running mate. With few exceptions (e.g., a New York fundraiser), Gore and President Clinton never campaigned together, a clear break from their teamwork in 1992 and 1996. In keeping with the maxim, "actions speak louder than words," recall how passionately the Gores kissed before the Democratic nominee delivered his acceptance speech. Was this a sign that their marriage was a different kind of relationship than what the country had witnessed the previous eight years? Finally, as Tseng (2002, 206) has

noted, “Gore did not mention Clinton’s name on the campaign trail or even in the debates.”

Gore’s campaign consultants also argued for non-incumbency. In Electing the President 2000: An Insider’s View (Jamieson and Waldman 2001), Gore’s consultants stated the following strategic consideration that applied to both the nomination and the general-election campaigns:

We couldn’t just run on the Clinton record. We couldn’t say that this election, to quote the convention speech, is “a reward for past performance.” We had to make it about the future: what to do with the prosperity, especially in a situation where voters had cognitive dissonance about Clinton. (Bob Shrum quoted on page 57)

It seems that the 2000 Democratic nomination contest was fought under unusual circumstances. Gore’s electability was limited by his ties to Clinton; Bradley’s electability, by his health. It seems that a tacit agreement governed their contest: Gore would not attack Bradley’s health, Bradley would not use Clinton’s scandals to attack Gore, and they both would focus the debate on the few policy issues that divided them. It was neither necessary to attack the Clinton administration, nor vital that it be defended.

No such implicit norm of electoral combat limited Republicans from launching various versions of the Clinton-Factor attack. Bush’s campaign advisors were well aware of the unique politics of the 2000 presidential campaign—a popular incumbent, with whom the Democratic nominee was associated, was personally disliked by potential swing voters (see Matthew Dowd’s remarks in Jamieson and Waldman 2001, 25).

Linking Clinton and Gore might be a way of moving some swing voters to Bush. Recall, for example, Bush’s frequent refrain, “I pledge to uphold the dignity of the office,” made with his right hand raised in the air. Two remarks by his running mate are worth quoting (Cheney 2000):

On the first hour of the first day, [George W. Bush] will restore decency and integrity to the Oval Office.

Mr. Gore will try to separate himself from his leader’s shadow. But somehow we will never see one without thinking of the other.

The billboard (see text box on page 20) the Republican Party placed next to Vice President Gore’s Nashville headquarters illustrates how Republicans made sure potential

voters would “never see one without thinking of the other.” The Republican attack argued: “Vice President Gore can’t restore honesty and dignity to the Oval Office because of his close (guilt by) association with President Clinton.”



According to the Republican Party press release issue on November 29, 1999:

The billboard will show Bill Clinton hugging Al Gore along with Gore's famous quote, "One of our Greatest Presidents," made at Clinton's post-impeachment pep rally. The advertisement is intended to emphasize the drag that Al Gore's support of Bill Clinton has had on his presidential campaign.

Source: Tennessee Republican Party. Press release and image are available from <http://www.tngop.org/gallery/sign.html>.

It seems as if the Gore-Bradley contest de-activated the Clinton Factor. Its effect was minimized, in part, by the Gore campaign acting as if there were no connection whatsoever. Despite this attempt to attenuate its effect, the exit-poll results reported here demonstrate that the Clinton Factor did have a significant effect on primary voters. The general election contest seemed to activate the Clinton Factor. Arguably, both camps helped this factor emerge (e.g., Gore’s debate performances and Republican attacks). The effect of the Clinton Factor was concealed in the spring by Gore’s unbroken string of victories in party caucuses and primaries. Its effect was revealed in the fall by Bush’s

victory, a contest decided, in part, by voters in battleground states whose choice of Gore or Bush the Clinton Factor affected. Based on the analyses reported here the answer to Bob Edwards's question to Gore about the Clinton Factor seems to be: Some spring voters and many more fall voters blamed Gore for the scandals and they got back at President Clinton through his Vice President.

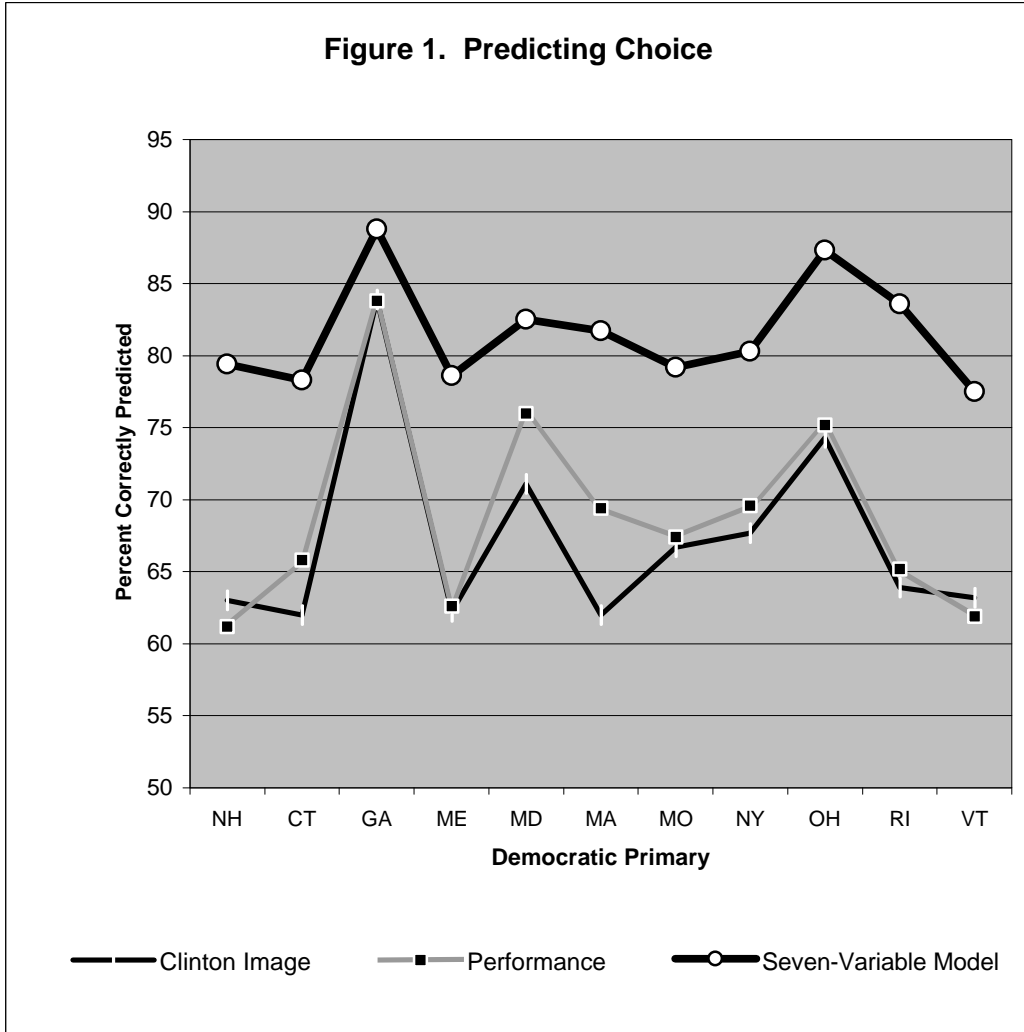
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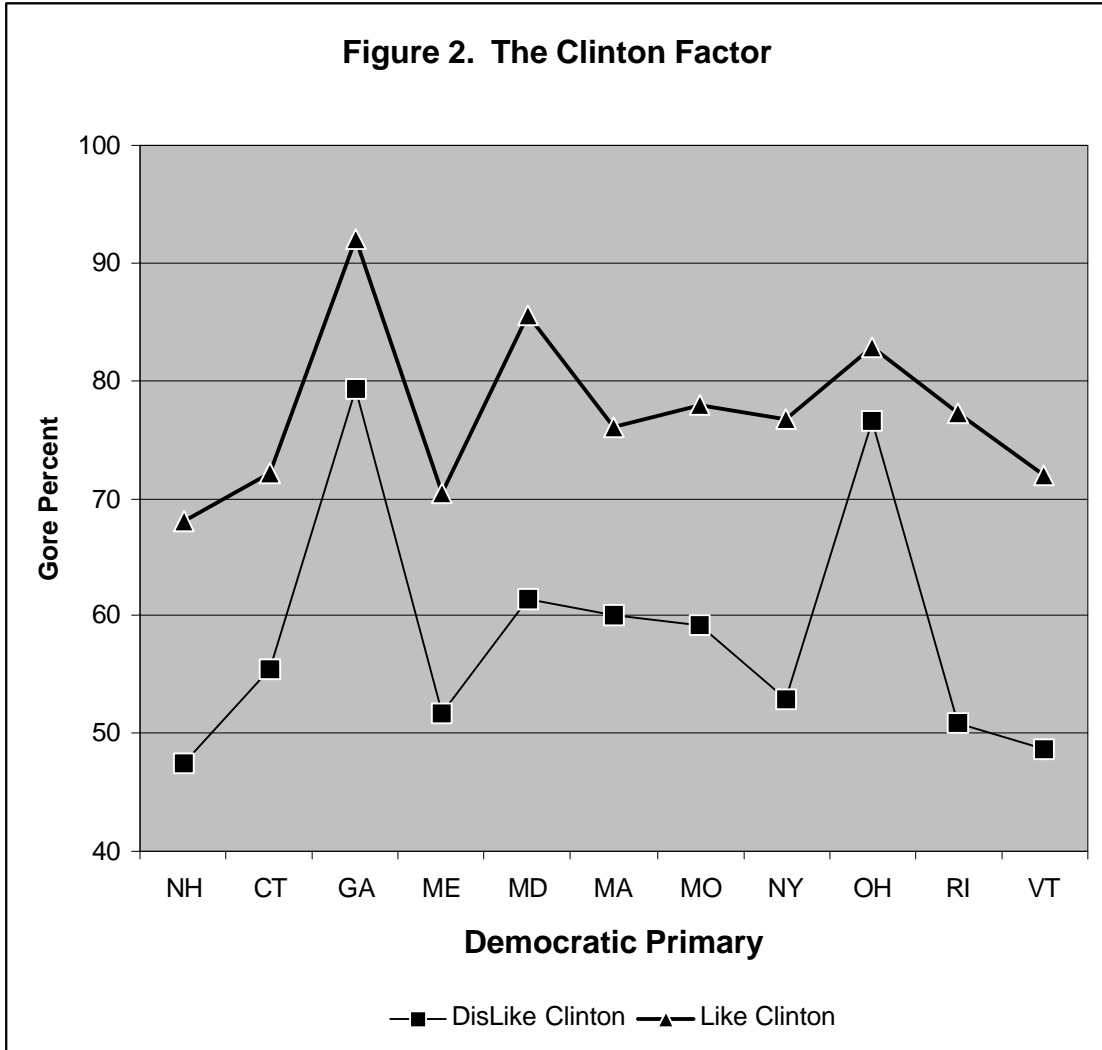
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Note: The variables for the Seven-Variable Model are: Gore Image, Bradley Image, Clinton Image, Clinton Popularity, Party Identification, Ideology, and Electability Criterion (see Appendix B for measures and Appendix D for the multivariate statistics). The model for New Hampshire also included Bradley's Health.



Appendix A. Exit Poll Methodology



HOW THE VNS EXIT POLL IS CONDUCTED

PLEASE NOTE: The first two paragraphs are a short description of the methodology suitable for broadcast or newspaper reports.

The VNS exit polls were developed and conducted by Voter News Service. VNS is an association of ABC News, CNN, CBS News, FOX News, NBC News and the Associated Press. The exit poll results are based on interviews with a probability sample of voters exiting polling places around the state on Election Day.

The error due to sampling for most state exit poll questions is approximately plus or minus 4 percentage points (see the attached chart). This means 95 times out of 100, samples like this one will have results within 4 points of what a complete count of all voters would show. Results based on part of the sample will have larger margins of error, as will groups of voters--such as Blacks--who are found disproportionately only in some precincts.

Sampling

The samples were selected in two stages. **First**, a probability sample of voting precincts within each state was selected that represents the different geographic areas across the state and the vote by party. Precincts were selected with a probability proportionate to the number of voters in each precinct. Each voter in a state had the same chance to have his or her precinct selected. There is one exception. In some states, precincts that have large minority populations were sampled at a higher rate than other precincts. The sample weighting (described below) adjusts the representation of these precincts to their correct share of the total vote. **Second**, within each precinct, voters were sampled systematically throughout the voting day at a rate that gives all voters in a precinct the same chance of being interviewed.

Weighting

The exit poll results are weighted to reflect the complexity of the sampling design. That is, the weighting takes into account the different probabilities of selecting a precinct and of selecting a voter within each precinct. For example, minority precincts that were selected at a higher rate receive a smaller weight than other precincts of the same size. There is also an adjustment for voters who were missed or refused to be interviewed, which is based on their observed age, race and sex.

NOTE: The exit poll results are only meaningful if they are weighted. Unweighted tabulations may be seriously misleading and should not be used for any reason.

Appendix A. (continued)

Sampling Error

The error due to sampling depends on, among other things, the number of respondents in each group.

The sampling errors below are for most voter groups. There are 95 chances in 100 that a sample result is within this many percentage points of the result that we would have obtained by trying to interview every voter.

The sampling error also depends on how many precincts have voters with the characteristic of interest. For example, black or high income voters may be found clustered in only a few sample precincts. A characteristic that is clustered in a few precincts has a larger sampling error than characteristics that are not clustered such as age or sex. Sampling error may be up to three times larger for clustered characteristics.

Example:

If there are a total of 1,000 respondents in the sample, the sampling error on the percentage of men voting for a candidate depends on the number of men in the poll. In this example, if there are 500 men, the table below shows that the sampling error is plus or minus 6.0%.

<u>Respondents In Base of Percentage</u>	<u>Error Due To Sampling (+/-)</u>
100	13.0%
250	8.0
500	6.0
750	5.0
1000	4.0
1500	3.5
2000	3.0
2500	2.5
5,000	2.0
7,500	1.5
10,000	1.3
12,500	1.1
15,000	1.1

Source: Voter News Service.

Appendix B: Concepts, VNS Questions, and Variable Codes

Concept	VNS Question	Variable Code
Candidate Choice	In today's Democratic presidential primary, did you just vote for: G Bill Bradley G Al Gore	1 = Gore; 0 = Bradley
Gore Image	Is your opinion of Al Gore: G Favorable G Unfavorable	1 = favorable; 0 = unfavorable
Bradley Image	Is your opinion of Bill Bradley: G Favorable G Unfavorable	1 = favorable; 0 = unfavorable
Clinton Image	Is your opinion of Bill Clinton as a person: G Favorable G Unfavorable	1 = unfavorable; 0 = favorable
Clinton Performance	Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling his job as President? G Approve G Disapprove	1 = approve; 0 = disapprove
Party Identification	No matter how you voted today, do you usually think of yourself as a: G Democrat G Independent G Republican G Something else	1 = Democrat; 0 = all other
Ideology	On most political matters, do you consider yourself: G Very liberal G Somewhat liberal G Moderate G Somewhat conservative G Very conservative	1 = liberal; 0 = all other
Electability Criterion	Which <u>one</u> candidate quality mattered most in deciding how you voted? (<i>Check only one</i>) G He is a strong and decisive leader G He has new ideas G He is not a typical politician G He has the right experience G He has the best chance to win in November G He stands up for what he believes G He is a loyal Democrat	1 = best chance; 0 = all other
Bradley's Health	Regardless of how you voted today, are you concerned that Bill Bradley's health would interfere with his ability to serve effectively as President? G Yes G No	1 = yes; 0 = no

Appendix C: Concepts, NES Questions, and Variable Codes

Concept	NES Question	Variable Code
Candidate Choice	Who did you vote for? (v001249)	1= Gore; 0 = Bush; all other = missing
Gore Image	Gore Feeling Thermometer (v000360) Note: Valid responses range from 0 degrees to 100 degrees; 50 is neutral	1 = favorable (51 - 100); 0 = unfavorable (0 - 49); all other = missing
Bush Image	Bush Feeling Thermometer (v000361) Note: Valid responses range from 0 degrees to 100 degrees; 50 is neutral	1 = favorable (51 - 100); 0 = unfavorable (0 - 49); all other = missing
Clinton Image	Clinton Feeling Thermometer (v000359) Note: Valid responses range from 0 degrees to 100 degrees; 50 is neutral	1 = unfavorable (0 - 49); 0 = favorable (51 - 100); all other = missing
Clinton Performance	Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling his job as President? (v000339)	1 = approve; 0 = disapprove; DK/NA/RF = missing
Party Identification	Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an independent, or what? (v000519)	1 = Democrat; 0 = other valid responses; DK/NA/RF = missing
Ideology	Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this? (v000447)	1 = liberal; 0 = moderate and conservative; DK/NA/RF = missing
Electability	Who do you think will be elected President in November? (v000485)	1 = Gore; 0 = Bush; all other = missing

Source: The 2000 National Election Study, Study Number 3131, available at <http://www.umich.edu/~nes/studyres/nes2000/nes2000.htm>

Appendix D. Multivariate Analyses for 2000 Democratic Presidential Primaries

	NH	CT	GA	ME	MD	MA	MO	NY	OH	RI	VT	Pooled
Gore Image	.43*	.44*	.40*	.37*	.42*	.46*	.29*	.43*	.49*	.35*	.43*	.42*
Bradley Image	-.27*	-.27*	-.25*	-.36*	-.29*	-.25*	-.40*	-.28*	-.32*	-.35*	-.31*	-.31*
Clinton Image	-.07*	-.10*	-.07	-.06	-.11*	-.03	-.13*	-.09*	-.06*	-.11*	-.07*	-.08*
Clinton Performance	.06*	.06*	.05	.04	.04	.09*	.00	.03	.02	.07	.04	.04*
Party Identification	-.03	.04	.10*	.04	.07*	.01	.05	.07*	.07*	.07*	.00	.04*
Ideology	-.03	-.03	-.06	-.06	-.06*	-.11*	-.01	-.06*	.01	-.12*	-.04	-.06*
Electability	.12*	.17*	.14*	.17*	.10*	.22*	.10*	.16*	.03	.17*	.13*	.14*
Bradley's Health	.16*	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
R ²	.46	.44	.35	.43	.44	.46	.34	.45	.52	.48	.42	.44
S.E. est.	.37	.37	.30	.38	.35	.36	.39	.36	.31	.36	.38	.36
N	732	860	604	581	881	883	566	1317	704	538	621	8298
Percent Predicted	79.4	78.3	88.8	78.6	82.5	81.7	79.2	80.3	87.3	83.6	77.5	80.1

Notes: NA = variable not available. Pooled results were created by merging all cases into a single data file.

* $p \leq .05$

¹ President Ford was probably hurt by his pardon of Richard Nixon.

² See the March 2001 symposium on “Election 2000 Coverage” in *PS: Political Science and Politics* 34 (1). Available from <http://www.apsa.net.org/ps/march01/>.

³ Specific policy issues are not examined. Policy issues have not mattered to primary voters (cf., Wattier 1990). The exit-poll questionnaires include only a few policy issues. Ideology might capture, to some extent, the effects of policy issues. See Weisberg and Hill (2001) for the effects of policy issues in the general election.

⁴ See Parent, Jillson, and Weber (1987) for a study of other kinds of contextual factors.

⁵ Primary voters also had a choice—whether, and to what extent, to give Gore credit for the accomplishments of the Clinton administration.

⁶ Vice Presidents sometimes run as surrogate incumbents, as did George Herbert Walker Bush in 1988; but they sometimes attempt to run as non-incumbents, especially under unfavorable political conditions (e.g., Hubert H. Humphrey in 1968). Some analysts have suggested that surrogate incumbency is not a realistic possibility—the electoral fortunes of Vice Presidents are not enriched by a good economy (Norpoth 2001). Other analysts have asserted that Gore would have won the general election if only he had campaigned more effectively as a surrogate incumbent (Ceaser and Busch 2001; Pomper 2001). *Electing the President 2000: The Insider’s View* indicates that Gore’s consultants were quite concerned with how to spin the “Clinton Factor” (i.e., popular evaluations of Clinton as a person) so as to gain Gore some tactical advantages. Presenting Gore as only a surrogate incumbent, with nothing else to offer, was not a viable option (Jamieson and Waldman 2001).

⁷ Mayer, to cite another authority, labeled Vice President Gore “a candidate . . . thoroughly identified with the incumbent administration” (Mayer 2001, 33).

⁸ Other Democrats mentioned as possible candidates were Warren Beatty, Dick Gephardt, Jesse Jackson, Bob Kerrey, John Kerry, and Paul Wellstone. All but Beatty announced in late 1998 or early 1999 that they would not seek the nomination. Beatty’s candidacy was probably just another way to promote his movie career and his recent movie, *Bullworth* (Germer 2001).

⁹ Visit <http://www.pollingreport.com/nh.htm> for these tracking-poll results.

¹⁰ Our analysis of this question is limited by the fact that Voter News Service asked about Bradley’s heart problem in only two states, New Hampshire and Delaware.

¹¹ This view of electability also presumes that primary voters, perhaps with the aid of Gallup’s trial-heat polls, can judge how well their preferred candidate would do in the general election against the viable candidates in the other party.

¹²Students of nomination politics have used the term electability to refer to voting for the expected winner by primary voters. Electability is similar to the bandwagon effect, a phrase commonly used to refer to voting for the expected winner by general-election voters (e.g., Schmitt-Beck 1996).

¹³ A previous study indicated that ideology had significant effects even when other factors such as electability, candidate images, party identification, and incumbent popularity were controlled (Wattier 1990).

¹⁴ An ideological identification might represent a mutual bond of identification among leaders and followers of a particular group (Conover and Feldman 1981). An ideological vote may simply indicate group support; the electoral outcome, which group should rule.

¹⁵ Stone, Rapoport, and Atkeson (1995) have developed a two-stage model in which party identification is one of the criteria used in the first stage to reduce the large, initial pool of candidates down to a smaller set that is evaluated in terms of utility. It would seem that the first stage they have proposed is unnecessary when winnowing of candidates occurs before Iowa and New Hampshire.

¹⁶Although made during a debate in the 1980 general-election campaign, Reagan's quip to John Anderson ("John, do you really prefer Carter to me?") is, perhaps, the best example of a partisan-loyalty appeal.

¹⁷ Comments made by William Gardner, Secretary of State for New Hampshire since 1976, to a reporter (Wickham 2000) reveal how much mischief is possible:

New Hampshire's own voter registration process is a mix of open and closed systems, Gardner explained. "We require the person to declare a party affiliation, but then we allow the person on the way out to undeclare," he said.

Technically, he said, when someone declares a party affiliation, you are agreeing to support the "principals and candidates" of that party. "But no one really asks that question," Garner admitted.

So independents are permitted to vote in either primary, by walking in on election day and asking to be switched from "undeclared" to a particular party. "Then on the way out you can say, 'I'd like to go back to being an independent; I've been a party member long enough,'" Gardner said.

Of the 64,000 independents who voted in the 1996 Republican primary, he said, "41,000 on the way out filed a card and said 'I want to go back'."

¹⁸ Visit <http://www.mich.edu/~nes/studyres/nes2000/nes2000.htm> for a detailed description of this national, pre-and-post-election study.

¹⁹Exit-poll questionnaires have a dynamic quality unlike NES or GSS questionnaires. The content of the VNS questionnaire seems to respond to breaking events in the campaign. For example, after Bradley and McCain ended their nomination campaigns on March 9, measures of voters' images of them were dropped from the questionnaire.

²⁰Logistic regression has its own limitations, especially the inherent difficulty of interpreting its coefficients. Since the logistic regression model is nonlinear, to quote Long (1997, 61), “no single approach to interpretation can fully describe the relationship between a variable and the outcome probability.”

²¹ This expectation is based on prior research and the fact that ninety-two percent (91.6%) of partisans (strongs, weaks, and leaners) who approved of their party’s incumbent president voted for the incumbent in presidential elections from 1972 to 2000 (Author’s analysis, American National Election Studies Cumulative Data File, 1948-2000, Study No. 8475).

²² The complete results of the logistic-regression analyses are available from the author upon request.

²³ This analysis assumes that the relative magnitudes of the beta weights indicate the relative effects of the predictor variables. The results for ideology, electability criterion, and party identification are reported in Appendix D.

²⁴ CLARIFY is described in King, Tomz, and Wittenberg (2000) and is available at King’s web site, <http://Gking.Harvard.Edu>.

²⁵ These figures are also from the *Political Money Line* web site.