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Throughout the past presidential elections, many have been bewildered by the results. What was it about that candidate that allowed him/her to win office? Is the question on many scholars’ minds. There are many subject matters to take into consideration. With the wide range of voters there’s of course a wide range of views and beliefs. However, there are common aspects that all voters look for in a presidential candidate. For one, all presidential candidates are in a state of comparison by the voters. Voters like to compare candidates to successful presidents and decide whether or not to vote based off that information. Voters also examine the past of the candidates in an attempt to discover any accomplishments that portrays their strengths. A candidate’s party identification is taken into consideration. Most times party identification is considered against the rivals and the incumbent president. Another aspect is the presidential candidate’s campaign. Whether or not he or she ran a successful campaign that shows dedication can help or hurt a candidate. While running a campaign voters are able to judge the candidate in any discretion of their liking. Surprisingly, appearance is a popular issue that voters are willing to vote or not for. Most importantly, in most scholars opinion is how well a presidential candidate is able to connect with the voters. The emotional factor is arguably the most assuring aspect of winning an election. Lastly, there are specific characteristics that voters find most appealing, like honesty and integrity.

**An Examination and Comparison of the Candidates**

Presidential candidates are carefully examined by many voters. In which, the candidates past reputation and accomplishments are taken into high consideration. Although this method may seem limited in choosing a president, it allows fellow commoners to compare a candidates past with other presidents who have accomplished a great deal. However, as stated before this method is limited. Comparing may be a possible way of foretelling a candidates presidential strengths but it may leave voters with detrimental effects because, “We are often disappointed in the quality of our candidates because we invariably measure them against an idealized composite of what our past greatest presidents and world leaders did, rather than against what our past presidents looked like prior to their becoming president (How We Elect Presidents 58)”. There have been presidents who definitely left their mark in history and had an overall good reputation. Voters seem to keep this mind when casting their vote. There are voters who have an ideological idea of what a presidential candidate should look like. Unfortunately, this leads voters to reject a candidate simply because he or she does not appear to resemble a successful president.

It is possible that voters also bear in mind what kind of accomplishments presidential candidates have made before entering the political world. For an example the current president of the United States, Barack Obama, can be viewed as individual who was very successful before running for president. One of his most notable achievements is “In 1988, Obama enrolled at Harvard Law School, where he excelled as a student, graduating magna cum laude and winning election as president of the prestigious Harvard Law Review for the academic year 1990-1991 (American President A Reference Resource)”. Achievements of this nature set standards for future candidates. Furthermore, voters will expect presidential candidates to achieve something similar. Standards of this nature can help bring about the most eligible presidential candidates. So, in a sense this is a sufficient way of voting or not voting for certain presidential candidates.

**Party Identification Plays a Significant Role**

Party identification can be another influencing factor regarding whether one votes or does not vote for a presidential candidate. Attitudes towards candidates can change within a short period of time. Issues can rise and bring a candidate under a bad light. However, it is less likely that voters will stray from their political party. In cases that involve voters changing their political orientation, it usually does not happen quickly. Voters keep remain loyal to their political especially from one election to the next. Therefore, it is more common to notice changes in party identification after an eight year period (Voting Behavior). So, evaluations of candidate qualities and government performance are distinctly short-term forces, capable of substantial shifts from one election to the next, whereas ones party identification tends to stay the same.

There are voters who only consider the candidate’s party affiliation. These kinds of voters can be seen as party loyalists. Important issues, public policy, and economic status may not be as important to these voters because they simply do not want a specific party governing the country. Another way in which party identification plays a role in how one votes, is how family party orientation influences voters. For an example, most young voters tend to identify with the same party as their parents. Seemingly, most young people vote for whomever their parents vote for. From personal experience, I have noticed many of my fellow classmates voting for whomever their parents vote for.

Whether or not the incumbent party did a good job as president can also determine how one votes. For instance, if a president, who identified with the Republican Party, was in office for two terms and was not very popular, the chance of another Republican becoming president is slim. In a case like this, the rival party would ultimately have the higher chance of being elected president. For confused voters or voters who are unsure of who to vote for, they may simply look no further than the party identification of the candidate. This can also apply to the many voters who are not aware of political policies and just want the satisfaction of having their party in office. As unfortunate as it may be, I have spoken with students who admit that they vote for a candidate simply because of the shared political orientation. As mentioned earlier many voters are left disappointed. It is possible that this can be a reason why so many voters are disappointed after they vote. Voters are sometimes ignorant to the many aspects of political policy and just vote for the candidate that “seems” like they would be a good candidate, regardless of their political orientation.

**Running an Effective Campaign Influences Citizens to Vote**

Dedication may be a very essential characteristic to have when running for president. It’s possible that many voters find the campaigning process, for presidential candidates, to be a screening of dedication. The campaigning process for a presidential candidate can be extremely extensive. Many voters are not aware that presidential candidates campaign for two to three years. In which, these years are hectic in many ways. There are meetings on almost a daily basis. Many press conferences and debates are held. The most shocking fact about campaigning is the amount of money that needs to be raised. Presidential candidates have raised hundreds of millions dollars (How We Elect Presidents 63). Yes, the campaign is to promote the ideas, beliefs, and public policy reforms of the candidate, but there can also be harsh consequences. With news reporters, journalists, and media outlets that stop at nothing when trying to find out personal information of presidential candidates, close relatives and irrelevant personal information are sometimes brought to national attention. For an example, Governor Sarah Palin is very much a victim of this kind of scrutiny. The press discovered that Sarah Palins young seventeen year-old unmarried daughter was pregnant. Sarah Palin was criticized and put into a negative light. It is possible that she lost a substantial amount votes due to this discovery. Many fail to realize that family issues like this are prevalent. Moreover, this incident did not have any indication of her ability as a potential vice president, even less of an indication of the person that she is. To put it plainly, this was a family issue that should have been kept private. This only shows what kind of consequences presidential candidates are faced with (How We Elect Presidents 63. Bad press is what presidential candidates are risking. Some voters may view this kind of risk as sign of presidential candidate’s dedication. This possibly shows that candidates are willing to put themselves and their relatives in in the hands of the cruel media.

**Superficial Voters**

Shockingly, many voters pass judgments based off of presidential candidate’s appearance. This may seem very superficial to some but it has been discovered that how well groomed a presidential candidate appears to be, results in more votes. Seemingly, how poorly groomed a candidate appears to be, affects the number of votes he or she receives. Voters are also interested in how a presidential candidate speaks. Whether they speak with confidence or not also affects the number of votes they receive (The Image and the Vote: The Effect of Candidate Presentation on voter Preference). Research says that voters who do not take a specific stance on issues but choose to vote, votes for the candidate who projects the best image, “A good example of this is provided by the news commentary on the 1984 Democratic presidential primaries. Attention centered on the role of image-the strength of Gary Hart's image and the weakness of the images of the initially more prominent Alan Cranston and John Glenn (The Image and the Vote: The Effect of Candidate Presentation on voter Preference)”. Indeed, the media also plays a role in portraying a candidate’s appearance. If a candidate makes one move that shows a bit of weakness, the media will go into a sort of frenzy, which may influence voters negatively.

**Candidates Must Connect With Voters**

To run a successful campaign includes at least one essential aspect and that is making a connection with the voters. Many scholars believe that voters are intrigued by a presidential candidate who can frame issues in a way that shows concern for voters, specifically. For example, While President Obama was speaking about health care improvements; he framed the issue in such a way that showed he really cared. He stated that he, himself, experienced health issues with his daughter. In which, his daughter was in need of immediate medical attention at one time. He went on to state how terrible it would have been if his daughter was not able to receive medical attention. He was trying to relate to the many individuals who may be in a situation that similar to the one he was in. He wanted to make it known that he understands the need for better health care and he also wanted to show how important this health care issue is to him. President Obama possibly gained more followers who may have discovered a connection with him after he told that story. Presidential candidates are known to gain more votes when they also present a compelling story like President Obama has done Drawing voters in emotionally is the best way to receive more votes and win an election, according to researchers (How We Elect Presidents 61). This belief contests that voters are more willing to vote for a candidate who can maneuver an issue in such a way that relates to the voters. Presidential candidates can win if they can express some common background history with the voters. In which many voters can therefore get a sense that the candidate is not just some polished politician but that the candidate is a real person with real feelings. Another president who exemplified making an emotional connection with voters was George W. Bush, “In his acceptance speech, where he billed it as `a talk from the heart', he was able to convey a sense of optimism and likability that worked to his favor (An assessment of the 2000 US presidential)”. George W. Bush uses that wise label, “a talk from the heart”, which clearly stood out to many voters. Most scholars would argue that the way to gain voters is to try a more sentimental approach. All candidates should ideally make an image of compassion. By doing so, voters can feel emotionally connected with the candidates and vote for those particular candidates. President Obama also connected with voters through his campaign. The Obama campaign consisted of plenty of imagery, visual aids, and logos to connect with voters, “The visual design components that were applied in the creation of the various media communications that promoted Obama probably helped the campaign’s message connect with many voters (Barack Obama’s 2008 Campaign for the U.S. Presidency and Visual Design)”. No matter if a candidate decides to use charismatic words to reel in voters or take advantage of the use of art, connecting with the voters somehow has led many presidents to the white house.

While the media can report hasty information about presidential candidates, the media can also be a very lucrative way to help gain votes for a presidential candidate. The campaign process is a process in which the voters are able to get an idea of where a candidate stands on important issues. The candidates are able to get exposure and establish an image for themselves as an individual. However, “over a half a century of academic research on elections has tended to doubt whether campaigns have an impact… (Just Crosstalk: Citizens, Candidates, and the Media)”. Scholars have a theory that a presidential candidate can run a very well organized campaign but still not win the election. Predictions can be made based off a few subjects: the popularity of the incumbent party, the distribution of partisans, and the state of the economy. These three subjects have been proven to predict the presidential campaign. Some argue that since there are predispositions for the presidential elections, there should be a decrease in the many campaigns that are being developed. It’s possible that scholars feel this way because, as stated before, the campaign process is expensive. With campaigns having arguable outcomes, there’s no need to have such extravagant campaigns. While there may be some substance to this argument, campaigns are still very important, there are some scholars who believe that a campaign is necessary. It will be extremely difficult to sell your candidacy without a campaign. The most lucrative way would be to have a well-financed campaign that provides exposure throughout the nation.

**What is Important about Candidates?**

Some scholars believe that the emotional factor is indication of how simple minded the populace can be. Yes, the emotional connection should be an important factor in how one votes but it should not be the deterring factor. It is argued that voters are quick to feel compassion when listening to a candidate’s speech however, a short time later, many will have no recollection on where their candidate stands on important issues. However, most voters remember which one they “liked” the best. Many argue that is not enough information to allow a voter to vote intellectually (Ignorant Voters 20)”. There have been candidates who realize this and take advantage of voters. It is a strategic way of allocating the most votes possible. Is this something that the nation should be proud off? Most scholars would argue no because it is believed that casting a vote based off a “gut feeling”, so to speak, is not the correct way to judge a candidate. It seems irrational to vote in this kind of fashion.

**Are Expectations Set Too High?**

Many voters are left disappointed when there is finally a President elected. Scholars argue that many times, voters expect too much from presidential candidates. In a sense, voters want a flawless individual to govern the country because; most voters seek a “perfect” candidate. In which, most voters expect candidates to possess only good characteristics. Many researchers argue that voters raise the bar unrealistically high. Many voters want vision, character, experience, organization, competence, intelligence stamina, agility, inspiration, judgment, wisdom, emotional stability, and strength. Lastly, most voters desire someone who shares the same political beliefs (How We Elect Presidents 59). When it comes to time to vote for a presidential candidate, there should be a method of weighing characteristics. Not one candidate is going to be able to have all the desired characteristics of a president. Therefore, instead of setting expectations extremely high, voters should wisely aim for specific characteristics.

Most voters are in search for a leader who can guide the nation towards a state of progression and prosperity. Be that as it may, honesty and integrity have been noted as the twom most desirable characteristics (An assessment of the 2000 US presidential election: A set of political marketing guidelines)”. When voters are deciding whether or not to vote for a presidential candidate, honesty and credibility are most desired. Voters want a president who can be straightforward under any circumstance. Leaders who will exercise their powers to the fullest when emergencies arise are exceptionally preferred.

In conclusion, many voters examine presidential candidates in a strict manner. Voters compare presidential candidates to past presidents who were successful. However, there are voters who feel the presidential candidate’s party orientation is the only determining factor when deciding to vote or not. For those voters who want to learn more about presidential candidates, they can by the campaigns that are held. Presidential campaign has major effects on the amount votes a candidate receives. Through campaigns, presidential candidates can appeal to many voters. The seriousness of the candidate is tested through the campaign that he or she runs. Surprisingly, many voters do not follow a campaign to find out information on public policies, rather to get an idea on how the candidates present themselves. For other voters, there is a need to make an emotional connection with a candidate in order to vote for them. Many argue that the emotional connection should not dictate how one votes. On the other hand, those who do not desire to make an emotional connection, expect certain qualities from a presidential candidate. In which, voters are left disappointed because no presidential candidate meets the expectations that are made by many voters.