

**There You Go Again: An Analysis of Jimmy Carter's
Debate Tactics in his Debate with Ronald Reagan**

by

George Smaragdis

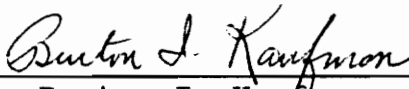
Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

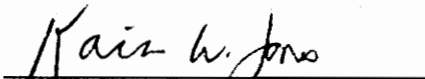
MASTER OF ARTS


IN

HISTORY

APPROVED:


Burton I. Kaufman, Chair


Kathleen W. Jones


Robert E. Denton, Jr.

May 9, 1996

Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: Carter, Debates, Elections, Politics, Reagan

LD
S655
V855
1996
S637
c.2

Abstract

THERE YOU GO AGAIN: AN ANALYSIS OF JIMMY CARTER'S DEBATE WITH RONALD REAGAN

by

George Smaragdis

Burton I. Kaufman, Chairman

History

This thesis contains three chapters. Chapter One provides an analysis of Carter's campaign for president. Carter's battle with Kennedy in the Democratic primary is examined. Additionally, an analysis of Carter's acceptance speech at the Democratic convention and an overview of the fall campaign is provided.

Chapter Two has two foci. First, to present a holistic analysis of the debate, this chapter presents an analysis of the questions which were posed to the debaters. Moreover, it argues that Carter's debate preparation books enabled Carter to ignore certain questions and to recite a pre-written answer which reflected the overall strategy of his campaign. The second portion of this chapter delineates Carter's debate tactics, and in the closing portion of this analysis, it will become evident that Carter attempted to use the debate to appeal to specific segments of the population as well as to deny Reagan the "credibility threshold." It will be argued that Carter's debate strategy was fundamentally guided by this concept.

Chapter Three will demonstrate that Carter did not achieve either of his debate objectives: Carter was unable to make a persuasive case to blue-collar males, and he was unable to deny Reagan the "credibility threshold." Finally, this chapter evaluates the relative success of Reagan and Carter in achieving their primary debate objectives.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Burton Kaufman for directing this thesis. Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Kathleen Jones and Dr. Robert Denton for serving as my committee members. The suggestions of all these persons has improved the quality of this thesis.

I would like to especially thank my sister, Joyce Smaragdis. She carried me when I could go no farther.

Finally, this thesis is dedicated to my parents John George Smaragdis and Litsa John Smaragdis. They gave me life and love. And I love them with all of my heart.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. THE PRIMARIES AND FALL CAMPAIGN	12
3. JIMMY CARTER'S DEBATE STRATEGY	35
4. REAGAN'S SUCCESS	66
5. CONCLUSION	80
Reference List	84
Vita	90

Introduction

Modern televised Presidential debates are highly visible, often dramatic, and tension filled events. Consequently, they have attracted the attention of numerous scholars and journalists.¹ Robert Denton has written that "Presidential debates are not only part of our political history, they have

¹ The following is a select list of publications on debates:

Elizabeth Drew, Election Journal: Political Events 1987-1988, (New York: William Morrow, 1989).

Susan Hellweg, Michael Pfau, and Steven Brydon, Televised Presidential Debates: Advocacy in Contemporary America, (New York: Praeger, 1992).

Sidney Kraus, Televised Presidential Debates and Public Policy, (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1988).

Sidney Kraus, ed., The Great Debates: Background-Perspective-Effects, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962).

Sidney Kraus, ed., The Great Debates: Carter vs. Ford 1976, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979).

Martel Myles, Political Campaign Debates: Images, Strategies, and Tactics, (New York: Longmans, 1983).

Lee Mitchell, With the Nation Watching, (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1979).

Joe Swerdlow, Beyond Debate: A Paper on Televised Presidential Debates, (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1984).

Judith Trent and Robert Friedenber, Political Campaign Communication, Principles and Practices, (New York: Praeger, 1983).

Theodore White, The Making of the President 1960, (New York: Atheneum, 1961).

become part of the political process."² The study of presidential debates can therefore yield valuable insights into the political process.

Robert Friedenbergr, in his essay "Patterns and Trends in National Political Debates: 1960-1992," argued that the strategies of presidential debaters can be divided into two distinct spheres. The first set of strategies are designed to achieve issue oriented goals. Issue oriented strategies attempt to: "target specific audiences and then . . . [address] issues that will have a maximum impact on the targeted audiences."³ The second set of strategies are image oriented. According to Friedenbergr, utilizing these strategies enable presidential debaters to achieve one or more of the following goals: "creating a positive image of themselves"; "positively modifying their existing image"; "creating a negative image of their opponent"; or "negatively modifying their opponent's existing image."⁴ Therefore, presidential debates are carefully planned, strategically oriented activities.

² Robert Denton, "Series Forward," in Rhetorical Studies of National Political Debates, 1960-1992, (Westport: Praeger, 1994), viii.

³ Robert Friedenbergr, "Patterns and Trends in National Political Debates: 1960-1992," in Rhetorical Studies of National Political Debates, 246.

⁴ Ibid., 252.

As suggested above, debates are highly important within the context of presidential campaigns. They can either damage or aid a presidential candidate. Goodwin Berquist argued that Gerald Ford's comment that Poland was not under Soviet control (made during a debate with Jimmy Carter in 1976) caused him significant damage. Berquist has written: "Gerald Ford's blunder about the Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe . . . raised anew the question about the President's ability to handle the wide ranging demands of the office."⁵ Conversely, John F. Kennedy's debates with Richard Nixon in 1960 arguably aided his bid for the presidency. Theodore Otto Windt has written that the debates helped Kennedy to: "demonstrate that he was the equal of Nixon and thereby gained support from both influential political figures and many people in the general public . . . In other words, the debate gave legitimacy and momentum to his campaign."⁶

While most commentators agree that presidential debates are important, the level of their importance, within the context of presidential campaigns, is hotly debated. Susan Hellweg, Michael Pfau and Steven Brydon surveyed the literature concerning the impact of presidential debates and

⁵ Goodwin Berquist, "The 1976 Carter-Ford Presidential Debates," in Rhetorical Studies of National Political Debates 1960-1992, 38.

⁶ Theodore Otto Windt, "The 1960 Kennedy-Nixon Debates," in Rhetorical Studies of National Political Debates, 24.

concluded: "Much discord in political communication has centered on the question as to whether or not political debates produce changes in viewer attitudes towards candidates, thus influencing voting."⁷

Jimmy Carter's debate with Ronald Reagan in 1980 presents a strong case that debates can have a significant impact on voters. Pat Caddell, Carter's pollster, and Richard Wirthlin, Reagan's pollster, both concluded that the debate significantly altered voters' perceptions of both candidates. Joe Swerdlow summarized Richard Wirthlin's and Pat Caddell's findings: "Wirthlin discovered that Reagan had picked up two points and Carter had lost five. Caddell concluded that . . . [Reagan] had gained eleven points on trustworthiness, and that the notion that he 'shoots from the hip' had decreased by seventeen points."⁸ Wirthlin later concluded: "The debate was one-if not the major-conditioning event that established the foundation for the landslide."⁹ Moreover, Gladys Engel Lang argued that: "without the televised debates in 1960 and 1980, neither Kennedy nor Reagan would have been elected: the course

⁷ Susan Hellweg, Michael Pfau, and Steven Brydon, Televised Presidential Debates, Advocacy in Contemporary America, (New York: Praeger, 1992), 111.

⁸ Ibid., 119.

⁹ Ibid.

of history would have been changed."¹⁰ Even though Lang's contentions cannot be substantiated, it will become evident that Carter's debate with Ronald Reagan was important within the overall context of the 1980 presidential campaign. Consequently, the analysis which this thesis presents is an analysis of a pivotal historical moment within the context of a very important presidential campaign.

Both Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan made reference to their debate in their memoirs. Carter recalled the debate with almost bitter language, while Reagan remembered it fondly. In his memoirs, Carter included a portion of his diary made after the debate. The diary stated: "In the debate itself it was hard to judge the general demeanor that was projected to the viewers . . . He [Reagan] has his lines memorized, and he pushes a button and they come out. Apparently [he] made a better impression on the TV audience than I did."¹¹ In contrast, Reagan recollected: "The debate went well for me and may have turned on only four little words. They popped out of my mouth after Carter claimed that I had once opposed medicare benefits for Social Security recipients. It wasn't true and I said so: '*There you go again*

¹⁰ Ibid., 101.

¹¹ Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith, Memoirs of a President (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 565.

. . .'"¹² As is clear from these passages, Reagan, not Carter felt that he had won the debate.

Important members of Carter's campaign staff also recollected the debate in bitter or somber terms. Gerald Rafshoon, recalling the advantage the debate gave Reagan, commented: "The wolf [Reagan] was no longer at the door. He was inside, running through the house."¹³ Pat Caddell stated: "In the end good performances are rewarded, and so are bad performances. We had kept the focus on the opposition for months-but how long can you keep away the winter snow?"¹⁴ Caddell also seemed to regret the fact that the debate had occurred. He told journalist Elizabeth Drew: "I just wish we hadn't debated."¹⁵ Hamilton Jordan reported that after he watched the debate with other members of Carter's campaign someone commented: "'He's [Reagan] a goddamn actor,' someone said. 'And a good one,' I added."¹⁶

The quality of debate itself, according to Presidential

¹² Ronald Reagan, An American Life, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 221.

¹³ White, America in Search of Itself, 405.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Kurt Ritter and David Henry, "The 1980 Reagan-Carter Debate," in Rhetorical Studies of National Political Debates, 87.

¹⁶ Hamilton Jordan, Crisis, The Last Year of the Carter Presidency, (New York: Berkley Books, 1982), 337.

historian Theodore H. White, was exceptional. He wrote: "Of all the presidential debates, it was, perhaps, the finest I have heard."¹⁷ The debate, according to White, addressed many of the major issues which faced America: "War and Peace . . . Inflation . . . the Decline of the Cities . . . Iran . . . SALT . . . Oil and Energy . . . Leadership Ability."¹⁸ Perhaps the quality of the debate is matched by the quality of the scholarship devoted to it. The debate has been scrutinized by journalists, historians, and those working in the field of communications studies, and this thesis will rely on the scholarship of writers from all of the aforementioned fields.

Jack Germond and Jules Witcover's text, Blue Smoke and Mirrors, How Reagan Won and Why Carter Lost the Election of 1980, devoted one chapter to the debate. Germond and Witcover, both journalists, covered the 1980 campaign. Their analysis of the debate, while thoroughly engrossing, is not completely satisfying, for Germond and Witcover did not include Carter's debate preparation books in their analysis. Additionally, the majority of their chapter was devoted to the events which preceded the debate. Ultimately, Germond and Witcover argued that Carter's strategy was to undermine Reagan

¹⁷ White, America In Search of Itself, 403.

¹⁸ Ibid.

but the "Amy Carter" blunder was the defining moment of the debate.

Presidential historian Theodore White, in his America in Search of Itself, came to conclusions similar to those of Germond and Witcover. However, lacking the inside sources which Germond and Witcover were privy to, White was, by and large, unable to account for the strategic and tactical maneuvers executed by Carter during the debate. White's analysis was concentrated on what he saw in the debate itself. He concluded that "on points, and in the text, the two had come out even. But on image and personality, there could be no doubt that Reagan had won the edge."¹⁹ He also highlighted the "Amy Carter" episode, and he argued that this comment undermined Carter's strong critique of Reagan's desire to engage in an arms race with the Soviets.

Arguably, the most satisfying account of the debate has been forwarded by Kurt Ritter and David Henry in their "The 1980 Reagan-Carter Presidential Debate." This essay incorporated much of the analysis of the debate made by those working in the communications studies field. In their essay, Ritter and Henry utilized studies which offered systematic quantitative analyses of the debate. They reported that according to one study: "Carter's debating style produced

¹⁹ Ibid.

twenty-one attacks against Reagan, but only one reply to attacks made by Reagan. In contrast, Reagan attacked Carter sixteen times and replied to Carter's attacks fifteen times."²⁰ Ritter and Henry argued that these findings are consistent with Carter's debate strategy. According to Ritter and Henry, Carter's debate strategy was based on three imperatives. First, he should attack Reagan but not debate him. Second, he should appeal to target voters. Third, he should capitalize on Reagan's mistakes. Ritter and Henry also critiqued journalistic analysis of the debate. They argued that the style vs. substance distinction between the candidates had no merit: Reagan was superior in both. They also argued that the "Amy Carter" comment was not fatal. Finally, they maintained that Carter's debate preparation books, which were stolen by people in the Reagan campaign, were not a decisive factor in the outcome of the debate.

Index

This thesis presents an analysis of Carter's debate strategy based on an examination of his debate preparation books. However, this thesis does not offer a complete study of Jimmy Carter's debate with Ronald Reagan. That is, the origins and dynamics of Ronald Reagan's debate strategy are not examined; the origins of Carter's debate strategy are not

²⁰ Ritter and Henry, "1980 Reagan-Carter Debate," 82.

presented; and an analysis of the interplay between the debaters and their audience is not presented. The fundamental thesis of this project is that Carter attempted to use the debate to portray Reagan as an unviable candidate, but that Reagan successfully thwarted Carter's attempts and consequently won the debate.

This thesis contains three chapters. Chapter One provides an analysis of Carter's campaign for president. Carter's battle with Kennedy in the Democratic primary is examined. Additionally, an analysis of Carter's acceptance speech at the Democratic convention and an overview of the fall campaign is provided. This chapter's purpose is to contextualize the debate and highlight trends which were seminal in the campaign and also played important roles in the debate.

Chapter Two has two foci. First, to present a holistic analysis of the debate, this chapter presents an analysis of the questions which were posed to the debaters. Moreover, it argues that Carter's debate preparation books enabled Carter to ignore certain questions and to recite a pre-written answer which reflected the overall strategy of his campaign. The second portion of this chapter delineates Carter's debate tactics, and in the closing portion of this analysis, it will become evident that Carter attempted to use the debate to appeal to specific segments of the population as well as to

deny Reagan the "credibility threshold." The "credibility threshold" was the point which all non-incumbent challengers must pass to become an acceptable, viable potential president.²¹ It will be argued that Carter's debate strategy was fundamentally guided by this concept. The discovery of this concept was made through research at the Jimmy Carter Library.

Chapter Three will demonstrate that Carter did not achieve either of his debate objectives: Carter was unable to make a persuasive case to blue-collar males, and he was unable to deny Reagan the "credibility threshold." Finally, this chapter evaluates the relative success of Reagan and Carter in achieving their primary debate objectives.

²¹ Gerald Rafshoon, "Memo to the President--EYES ONLY," Campaign Strategies, 1980, Susan Clough File, Box 34, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.

Chapter One

This chapter presents a brief reconstruction of the events which led to the Cleveland debate. It is based primarily on the two most thorough accounts of the 1980 campaign: Blue Smoke and Mirrors and The Pursuit of the Presidency. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a historical context for the analysis of the debate, which is the focus of this thesis.

Primaries

At the start of the 1980 Presidential campaign, Ronald Reagan did not strike fear into the hearts of Carter's campaign officials. In fact, during the Republican primaries, they were eager to face Reagan as an opponent. They underestimated him. They thought he was a bemused, befuddled old man who would not be able to handle himself in a national campaign. In the words of Gerald Rafshoon, one of Carter's trusted advisors, Ronald Reagan was "old and simple."¹ Sam Popkin, a Carter campaign official, emphasized that Reagan "could not handle the complex problems of the Presidency."²

¹ Gerald Rafshoon, "Memo to the President -- EYES ONLY," Campaign Strategies, 1980, Susan Clough File, Box 34, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA, 38.

² "Memo from sam to phc 10/18/80," Debate Background Material-Comparison of Carter, Reagan, and Anderson, Susan Clough File, Box 35, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.

Throughout the fall campaign, Carter's campaign staff continued to underestimate Reagan, but on election day, Ronald Wilson Reagan defeated James Earl Carter as decisively as any incumbent president has been beaten. This thesis will examine the factors which contributed to Reagan's decisive victory. But before engaging in such an analysis, it is necessary to briefly recapitulate the events which led up to the 1980 campaign.

The United States did not prosper during Carter's presidency. By 1980, inflation had reached eighteen percent, and the unemployment rate was at eight percent.³ Economic stagnation was only one of Carter's many challenges. On November 4, 1979, Iranian terrorists seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran and took fifty-three Americans hostage.⁴ As a result of these factors, many in the Carter campaign believed that the majority of American people did not want him as President.⁵ He was a weak president by 1979; in fact, because

³ Jack Germond and Jules Witcover, Blue Smoke and Mirrors, (New York: Viking Press, 1981), 163.

⁴ Richard Harwood, "Americans--1980," in The Pursuit of the Presidency 1980, (New York: Berkley Books, 1980), 306.

⁵ Pat Caddell participated in a convention devoted to the campaign held at Harvard University from December 5-7, 1980. In the course of this conference, he discussing the strategic assumptions of the campaign said: "we started with the understanding that two to one, the American people did not want Jimmy Carter to be president . . ."

Jonathan Moore, The Campaign For President, 1980 in Retrospect

of his political weakness Ted Kennedy hoped to beat him in the primaries and secure the Democratic nomination for president. For purposes of this thesis, this prelude to the general election--Carter's primary battle with Kennedy--can serve as a prologue foreshadowing some of the main themes that emerged over the course of the fall campaign and during Jimmy Carter's debate with Ronald Reagan on October 28, 1980.⁶

Kennedy did not like Carter. He did not like him as a man. He did not like his politics. For his part, Carter did not like Kennedy. They were opposites. Carter was (and is) an intensely devout southern Baptist whose parents worked for a living; Kennedy was (and is) a northern Catholic whose family is highly prominent. After displaying an initial reluctance to become a candidate, Kennedy challenged the president who, except for party affiliation was, in many respects, his antithesis.⁷

Despite the legacy of his brothers, Ted Kennedy could not escape his own past. The Chappaquiddick incident, which conjured images of sexual and moral impropriety, loomed in the background of his candidacy. However, he was a tenacious

(Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1981), 199.

⁶ Theodore H. White in his America in Search of Itself similarly used Carter's primary battle against Kennedy as a prologue to his discussion of the fall campaign.

⁷ Germond and Witcover, Blue Smoke and Mirrors, 48-49.

campaigner, and his bid to become the Democratic nominee for president almost certainly hurt Carter's reelection chances. Perhaps the damage Kennedy inflicted was best exemplified by his appeal to Democratic voters throughout the campaign. According to journalist T.R. Reid: "Kennedy's traditional liberalism clearly had its appeal to some Democrats. . . The outpouring of emotion--an uproarious mixture of cheers, tears, laughter, and roars of affection--that greeted his forthright statement of liberal doctrine at the Democratic convention would seem to indicate that Kennedy's view still had a place in the party's heart."⁸

The hostage crisis, which would ultimately hang like an albatross on Carter's neck, initially helped him in the spring of 1980 (at the height of Kennedy's bid for the presidency). Journalist Martin Schram has written: "Carter found himself in a new image of leadership--aided immeasurably by the crises in Iran. And he rode that newfound image to victories over a challenger who once looked unbeatable."⁹ Carter proclaimed that he would not actively campaign and instead devote all of his energies to freeing the hostages. This "Rose Garden" strategy initially enabled Carter to stay above the fray and

⁸ T.R. Reid, "Kennedy," in Pursuit of the Presidency, 78.

⁹ Martin Schram, "Carter" in Pursuit of the Presidency, 86.

simultaneously hinder Kennedy from focusing the primaries on Carter's leadership and record.¹⁰ After a series of political problems, Carter abandoned this "Rose Garden" strategy and began actively campaigning against Kennedy. This development and Kennedy's dubious past ultimately helped Carter to secure the primary votes he needed to gain his party's nomination for president.¹¹

The Convention

Carter's acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention in New York City on August 14, 1980 foreshadowed many of the rhetorical strands which emerged during the debate. At the beginning of his speech, Carter spoke about the gravity of the office of the President. He said: "The life of every human being on Earth can depend on the experience and judgment and vigilance of the person in the

¹⁰ Theodore White substantiated this claim. He wrote: "Muzzled from an attack on Carter's foreign policy by the surge of patriotism that followed the Iranian kidnappings, he stuttered . . ."

Theodore H. White, American in Search of Itself, The Making of the President 1956-1980, (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 296.

¹¹ Burton Kaufman corroborated this analysis. He wrote: "In response to his mounting political problems, Carter decided to abandon his Rose Garden campaign in favor of a more public candidacy . . . As Carter returned to the campaign trail his ascendancy over Kennedy seemed assured."

Burton Kaufman, The Presidency of James Earl Carter, Jr., (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 176.

Oval Office."¹² Clearly, Carter suggested to viewers that his opponent would inherit an office that required tremendous patience or disaster might ensue. He implicitly suggested that Reagan was unfit for such responsibility, and his election might mean "the end of the life of every human being on Earth." According to Germond and Witcover, Carter emphasized that Reagan was not a man who "could be trusted with his finger on the nuclear button."¹³ Carter's words substantiate Germond and Witcover's claim. Later in his speech, Carter said: "He [the President] must protect our children--and the children they will have--and the children of generations to follow. He must speak and act for them."¹⁴ These comments put Carter's "Amy Carter" blunder into perspective. Carter was not seized by a new-found inspiration in the debate. Rather, the "Amy Carter" comment was merely the personalization of previous attacks on Reagan. Reagan, Carter hinted, was so fearsome that he threatened children. At the convention, this rather oblique stab at Reagan went over relatively smoothly. But under the glaring lights of the

¹² Jules Witcover, "Election of 1980," in History of American Presidential Elections 1789-1984 (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986), 233.

¹³ Germond and Witcover, Blue Smoke and Mirrors, 206.

¹⁴ Ibid., 233.

debate, this tactic proved to be an unmitigated disaster.¹⁵

Although Carter's furtive jab was well-received, on the whole, his nominating convention went poorly. Kennedy remained bitter about his defeat, and although nominally loyal to Carter and the party, he did much to damage both. After Carter's acceptance speech, Kennedy was supposed to come on-stage with other prominent Democrats as a sign of unity and singularity of purpose. Kennedy arrived at Madison Square Garden late and possibly after having had a few drinks.¹⁶ Kennedy walked onto the platform and shook Carter's hand rather coldly. He then walked past him and greeted the other Democratic dignitaries on the stage. Kennedy did not join hands with Carter (a customary practice) as a sign of shared unity. Hamilton Jordan, the director of Carter's campaign, described the situation in his memoirs: "He [Kennedy] walked over to the President, waved to the crowd, and circulated

¹⁵ Jimmy Carter acknowledged this in his memoirs. He wrote: "My comment during the debate about Amy's concern over nuclear weapons made her the most famous antinuclear advocate in America because of the ridicule it aroused from Governor Reagan and the news reporters. This was an unpleasant episode, and my political team reproved me for the damage."

Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith, Memoirs of a President, (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 564.

¹⁶ Germond and Witcover quote a Carter aide who suspected that Kennedy, prior to coming to Madison Square Garden, had had "a couple of pops."

Germond and Witcover, Blue Smoke and Mirrors, 193.

around the podium . . . The arms raised together--the symbol of a united party--never came."¹⁷ Thus, the leader of the free world--at his own nominating convention--followed around a bitter, possibly inebriated man in the vain hope that he would give him his full support. As this incident illustrates, Carter was in a very weak political position entering the campaign against Reagan. According to Schram: "Jimmy Carter was viewed by the public as seriously flawed when he began his campaign to win renomination and he was viewed much the same way when he finally had the nomination numerically won."¹⁸ Moreover, the state of domestic and foreign affairs were damaging to Carter: inflation was high, jobs were scarce, Americans were being held hostage in Iran, and the Soviet Union refused to leave Afghanistan.

Malaise and the Press

To catch the country's mood on Labor Day 1980, the Washington Post sent a reporter, William Prochnau, across America to record what he saw. During his travels, Prochnau took a raft trip in Oregon with his nephew Steve and afterwards wrote:

In the forests along the river strong, sinewy young men like Steve are gathering ferns for florists instead of trees no one wants. This is because no one is building

¹⁷ Hamilton Jordan, Crisis, The Last Year of the Carter Presidency, (New York: Berkley Books, 1982), 315.

¹⁸ Schram, "Carter," 87.

houses because no one can afford the mortgage because some one in far-off Washington decided to put the clamps on . . . At the Mouth of the Umpqua, in Reedsport and down the Oregon Coast in Coos Bay, the mills are chewing up finished lumber, which no one wants to buy, and converting it to chips for pulp, which people don't need mortgages to afford. It's as if Chrysler were transforming its unwanted Imperials into beer cans because financing isn't needed for a six pack.¹⁹

This passage warrants analysis because it gives the reader an indication of the feeling of alienation which seemed to permeate America in the fall of 1980.

America's economy, by the end of Carter's presidency, was poor and sickly. By Labor Day 1980, unemployment was at eight percent; inflation hovered at thirteen percent; the U.S. was importing twenty-four percent more oil than in 1977; and finally, the budget was sixty-one billion dollars in debt.²⁰ As Prochnau indicated, it was increasingly difficult to buy a house. Food, clothing and gas took more out of the average American's wallet. Further exacerbating those factors was the weather: the summer of 1980 had been very hot. New Jersey had to ration water; crops withered, and thousands of farm animals lay prostrate or dead in the fields from the intense heat.

Perhaps more importantly, American hostages were being held in Iran. And America, ostensibly the greatest power the world had ever known, was unable to secure their release.

¹⁹ Harwood, "Labor Day 1980," in Pursuit of the Presidency, 276.

²⁰ Ibid., 279.

Analyzing the Iranian situation, Burton Kaufman has written: "For President Carter the taking of the embassy was a nightmare . . . [but] the United States simply lacked the military capability to rescue the hostages."²¹ Added to this, the Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan, and the United States was unable to check its chief rival's aggression. Although Prochnau did not refer the reader to foreign policy issues in his article, he nonetheless wanted to make his readers understand the general feeling of helplessness which seemed to permeate America. Richard Harwood, in summarizing polling data, corroborated Prochnau's analysis. In analyzing the findings of polls conducted at the end of Carter's presidency by the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research, Harwood wrote: "only 19 percent of the people were "trusting" in their attitudes towards government; 52 percent were cynical."²² A survey conducted by the firm of Yankelovich, Skelly and White found: "67 percent of the people persuaded that America was "in deep and serious trouble."²³ This cynicism has been commonly referred to as malaise. Malaise is a word often associated with Carter's last year as President.

²¹ Kaufman, The Presidency of James Earl Carter, 160.

²² Harwood, "Americans-1980," 7.

²³ Ibid.

In the summer of 1979, Carter, against the wishes of the majority of his staff, held a summit at Camp David to formulate a bold new energy policy. According to Patrick Anderson, Carter's former speech writer, Carter "rejected a nuts-and-bolts on the energy crisis, and instead embraced Pat Caddell's mumbo-jumbo about a national crisis of the spirit."²⁴ Carter's speech was dubbed by the press as the "Malaise Speech." Carter did not use this word in his speech: he never said that the country was in a malaise. Nevertheless, the term malaise came to characterize the state of America during the last year of Carter's presidency.

The word malaise offers a window of understanding into Carter's relations with the press. Harwood, in his introduction to Pursuit of the Presidency, discussed the impact of the use of the word malaise:

We began this book with Barry Sussman's exploration of "malaise," a word Jimmy Carter discovered in the summer of 1979 to describe the failings of the American people. This 'malaise,' we concluded had little to do with personal lives or capacities or the personal hopes and fears of Americans. It was rather an expression of a widespread loss of faith in the competence of the great institutions of our society, most notably in the competence of the institution of government and the men who directed it."²⁵

In this passage, Harwood maintained that Jimmy Carter used the

²⁴ Patrick Anderson, Electing Jimmy Carter, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 167.

²⁵ Harwood, "Labor Day 1980," 277.

word malaise to describe the feelings of the American people. Although Carter's speech was unsuccessful and certainly not one of his better performances, the press affixed a label to him that became an important factor in the rest of the campaign. This is a striking example of how the press' interpretations can help to construct one's understanding of the present and the past.²⁶

The Presidential Campaign

The fall campaign in 1980 lasted over two months, as election day was on the fourth of November. Late August and September were more successful months for Carter than October.

²⁶ Germond and Witcover reported that Pat Caddell complained to them that the "malaise" incident was "an example of what the press can do by latching onto a term." Germond and Witcover, Blue Smoke and Mirrors, 36.

Harwood also corroborated the notion that the press can affect one's understanding and perception. When discussing the impact of Reagan's verbal errors, he wrote: "But as they [the verbal blunders] were rendered by the media and transmitted to the electorate, they took on a life of their own. They lent credence to the charge that Reagan was too old and old-fashioned, too simple-minded or shallow to occupy the White House. They terrified his advisors . . ."

Harwood, "Labor Day 1980," 284.

Paul Smith also concurred the contention that the press affected the perception of the presidential candidates. In his book on the 1980 campaign, Electing A President, he wrote: "Because the news media have . . . large audiences, they are of overwhelming importance in communicating with other systems that are necessary to the campaign's success (such as contributors, local volunteers, and voters)."

Paul Smith, Electing A President, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982), 215.

During August and September, the Carter campaign's strategy seemed to be working well. Moreover, Reagan showed enough vulnerability for the Carter campaign to have hope for a victory.

In late August and early September, Reagan made verbal blunders and questionable foreign policy statements which seemed to undermine his credibility. In an appearance before a group of Christian fundamentalists, Reagan said that he had misgivings about Darwinian evolution and thought "creationist" theory might be taught in schools. While such a statement would have pleased Christian fundamentalists, it was not well-received by others.²⁷ Reagan seemed to indicate that perhaps he was not intellectually grounded in contemporary existence.²⁸

Reagan's remarks about Taiwan also caused significant damage to his campaign. Throughout the campaign, he

²⁷ According to Germond and Witcover Reagan's comment "was hardly the thing to say for a candidate who was trying to resolve widespread doubts about his intellectual capacity."

Germond and Witcover, Blue Smoke and Mirrors, 215.

²⁸ Germond and Witcover, in relating the impact of Reagan's "creationist" remark, wrote: "A week later we were conducting random interviews in a largely Jewish neighborhood in Queens and found that almost everyone had heard about it [Reagan's comment]. 'What does he think?' a waiter in the delicatessen asked rhetorically. 'Science has been wrong all these years? It makes you wonder.'"

Ibid.

maintained that he would seek to reconstruct official ties with Taiwan. However, Taiwan had lost official status when the U.S. had normalized relations with China. The fact that his running mate was instrumental in the process to normalize relations with China did not help the matter. Reagan's remark on Taiwan cast doubt on whether Reagan was competent to handle the complex foreign policy issues a president must face. In analyzing this situation, Germond and Witcover wrote that in late August: "The controversy doomed Bush's mission; the Chinese complained that Reagan "has insulted one billion Chinese people and had "failed to reassure" the Chinese leadership on the nature of the relationship between the two powers in the future . . . [this situation] was being viewed at home as an example of the pitiable naivete of the Republican ticket."²⁹

Perhaps one of Reagan's most problematic statements was his accusation that Carter appealed to racists by opening his campaign in Tuscumbia Mississippi; at a state fair in Michigan on Labor Day weekend, Reagan alleged that Tuscumbia was the "birthplace of the Ku Klux Klan."³⁰ Reagan's statement was factually incorrect. Tuscumbia Mississippi was not the birthplace of the Ku Klux Klan--the modern Klan was

²⁹ Ibid., 216.

³⁰ Ibid., 220.

founded by William Simmons in Stone Mountain Georgia in 1915. Additionally, Reagan's statement seemed uninformed: Carter had very strong ties to the African-American community throughout his presidency. Furthermore, Reagan's comment could have been perceived as an indictment of the South as a racist enclave. Reagan himself understood the gravity of his error. He later reflected on his comments and said: "I shouldn't have said it, because the minute after I said it, I knew this was what would be remembered . . . When it was over and we got into the car, the first thing I said to our own guys in the car there, I said, 'I could have bitten my tongue off.'"³¹

Lastly, in September, Reagan stated that trees could possibly cause pollution. This statement seemed to suggest that Reagan lacked an understanding of biology and ecology. Moreover, Reagan's seeming ignorance of the function of trees indicated a fundamental misunderstanding of the environment and humankind's role in it. When considering the fuller context of his comments, it is arguable that Reagan attempted to justify the cutting down of trees by the lumber industry; as a rationale, he forwarded the notion that trees could be

³¹ Reagan, in his memoirs recollected the role that the race issue played in the campaign. He wrote: "he [Carter] implied that I was a racist pandering to Southern voters . . . I think the voters saw through these false and mean spirited attacks."

deleterious to humans.

By the end of September, all of the little gaffes began to add up.³² Reagan's verbal mistakes dominated the news, and Reagan was being privately ridiculed by some reporters.³³ In contrast, Carter gained strength in the polls. At the end of September, Barry Sussman of the Washington Post conducted a poll in eight large and electorally important states: New York, Michigan, Ohio, Texas, New Jersey, Illinois, Florida, and Pennsylvania. The poll indicated that Carter's "good guy" image was thoroughly intact. The results also showed that thirty-five percent of the people supported Carter, thirty-three backed Reagan, and twelve percent endorsed Anderson.³⁴

September was the best month of campaigning Carter had had in quite some time. Carter assailed Reagan on two issues. First, Carter suggested that a Reagan presidency would divide the country along racial lines. Second, he argued that if Reagan were to become president, he would involve America in

³² Hamilton Jordan concurred with this analysis. In his memoirs, he wrote: "An ABC-Harris poll confirmed that Reagan's blunders were really hurting him: by a margin of 82 to 15 percent, the persons surveyed agreed that Ronald Reagan 'seems to make too many off-the-cuff remarks which he has trouble explaining or has had to apologize for making.'"

Jordan, Crisis, 322.

³³ Germond and Witcover, Blue Smoke and Mirrors, 218.

³⁴ Ibid., 288.

unnecessary conflict.³⁵

In early September, Carter gave an interview on a Los Angeles television station in which he said that Reagan had a "repeated habit" of advocating military force: "I think in eight or ten different instances in recent years, he [Reagan] has called for the use of American military force to address problems that arise diplomatically between nations. I don't know what he would do if he were in the Oval Office..."³⁶

In late September, Carter participated in a town meeting in Torrance California. In a question and answer session, Carter advised his audience that this election: "will help to decide what kind of world we live in. It will help decide whether we have war or peace. It's an awesome choice."³⁷ Clearly, Carter argued that a Reagan presidency might be

³⁵ Paul Boller concurred with this analysis. He wrote: "In mid-September . . . he [Carter] began suggesting that Reagan was both a racist and a warmonger."

Paul Boller, Presidential Campaigns, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 359.

Reagan agreed also agreed with this argument. He has written: "I wanted true arms reduction--Carter went around the country suggesting I was a warmonger who, if elected, would destroy the world."

Reagan, An American Life, 220.

³⁶ Germond and Witcover, Blue Smoke and Mirrors, 247.

³⁷ Ibid, 244.

unsafe, and his line of attack in September, which was initially successful, foreshadowed his debate tactics. Carter's emphasis on race issues also resulted in a similar success.

As previously mentioned, Reagan's accusation that Carter courted the Klan backfired. Reagan had lost political capital when he accused Carter of racism; in effect, he lost his ability to stay above the fray, for if he was attacking Carter, there was nothing unseemly in Carter's attacking back. Essentially, Reagan's comments allowed Carter to get away with more strident attacks against Reagan without the press accusing him of being unduly harsh against his opponent. Harwood wrote: "Carter and his advisors knew precisely what they were doing in their September attacks . . . And there was no evidence that these attacks had damaged perceptions of Carter's own 'character.'"³⁸

Reagan's second area of vulnerability on race was not instigated by any mistakes he or his campaign made. Shortly after the Republican convention, a group of Klansmen endorsed Reagan. Reagan immediately repudiated the endorsement. But well into September, Carter's campaign continued to emphasize the endorsement. Carter, while giving a speech to southern African-American political activists, said: "You've seen in

³⁸ Harwood, "Labor Day 1980," 289.

this campaign the stirrings of hate and the rebirth of code words . . . in a campaign reference to the Ku Klux Klan relating to the South . . . Hatred has no place in this country."³⁹ Clearly, Carter used Reagan's vulnerability on the race issue to his advantage. On the one hand, he accused Reagan of associating the Klan with the South as a whole. On the other, he argued that Reagan injected racism into the campaign and that he was somehow linked to hatred in America. Parren Mitchell, a well known African-American activist campaigning on Carter's behalf told the same audience: "I am going to talk about a man [Reagan] who has embraced a platform that some men known as the Ku Klux Klan said couldn't be better if they'd written it themselves . . . who seeks the presidency of the United States with the endorsement of the Ku Klux Klan."⁴⁰ Mitchell was much less subtle than Carter when he linked the Klan to Reagan. Mitchell said that Reagan had embraced the Klan's positions when in fact the opposite had occurred; the Klan embraced Reagan's positions. Andrew Young, also campaigning on Carter's behalf, played the race card in a much more explicit manner. Young said that Reagan's espousal of "states' rights" meant that "it's going to be all

³⁹ Ibid., 286.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

right to kill niggers when he's president."⁴¹ Obviously, Reagan said nothing of the sort. Arguably, such an attack is beyond the rhetorical boundaries of American politics, and perhaps not surprisingly, Carter campaign's strategy, based on vituperation and the indictment of Reagan's character, soon backfired.

October was as salubrious for Reagan's campaign as it was harmful for Carter's. Reagan became increasingly confident: his verbal errors became far more infrequent and his campaign made no major tactical errors. In contrast, Carter's campaign stalled, and as his attacks on Reagan continued so much so that the press hounded him on the so-called "meanness" issue.⁴²

October witnessed a great accumulation of political and moral capital for Reagan. A major source of this capital resulted from his treatment by the CBS evening news on the night of October 7. Reporter Bill Plante's story concerned

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Jody Powell, Carter's Press Secretary commented on the meanness issue in his memoirs. He wrote: "The meanness issue was the belief on the part of many journalists that Jimmy Carter was being mean and unfair and ugly to Reagan . . . they also decided that this was a significant political issue, meaning that the electorate was or should have been interpreting the President's behavior in the same way as the journalists."

Jody Powell, The Other Side of the Story, (New York: William Morrow, 1984), 47.

Reagan's contradictory positions on "abolishing the inheritance tax, subjecting big unions to antitrust laws, aiding Chrysler and New York."⁴³ CBS repeatedly put a big white X over Reagan's face after showing footage of each individual inconsistency. Although CBS later apologized, this episode ultimately served as a mitigating factor against future attacks on Reagan's integrity. In response to public outcry, the press was less apt to abuse Reagan.⁴⁴ More importantly, Reagan appeared to be the innocent and unjustly aggrieved party; that is, he was viewed as an affable fellow who had been unfairly attacked. Germond and Witcover echoed this assertion: "Reagan, of course, remained the innocent, offended but always benign bystander."⁴⁵ Reagan continued to cultivate this image, and it was the most important and successful tactical decision of his campaign, which paid huge dividends in the debate.

As previously mentioned, Carter's vigorous attacks throughout the campaign steadily drew the ire of the press. During a campaign speech in Chicago, Carter argued that a Reagan presidency might separate "black from white, jew from

⁴³ Richard Harwood, "October," in Pursuit of the Presidency, 297.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Germond and Witcover, Blue Smoke and Mirrors, 263.

christian, North from South, rural from urban."⁴⁶ Immediately after this speech, key decision makers in Carter's campaign recognized that this comment would draw the ire of the press. Hamilton Jordan recollected: "I felt sick as Jerry [Rafshoon], Pat [Caddell], and I met to discuss the President's latest, ill-advised charge. 'We have a major problem on our hands,' I argued, 'and we are going to have to eat a little crow to put this 'meanness' thing behind us.'"⁴⁷

As October continued, there was no surprise. Reagan's strategists had been warning throughout the campaign that Carter might pull an "October Surprise" and win the election. By this they meant that Carter might secure the release of the fifty-two hostages still held in Iran and thereby win the election through an outpouring of good will. This did not happen.⁴⁸ However, despite the successes of the Reagan campaign, their lead was insecure. According to Pat Caddell, Carter's pollster, many voters were not firm in their support

⁴⁶ Jordan, Crisis, 330.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Gary Sick in his monograph October Surprise alleged that the Reagan campaign made a deal with the Iranian government to delay the release of the hostages until after the election. Essentially, Sick argued that the Reagan campaign stole the election. This argument, while interesting, is counterfactual. That is, it will never be known for certain what would have happened if the hostages were released before the election.

of Reagan.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, Carter and Reagan had not yet debated. Carter's campaign decided that they would only debate Reagan one-on-one. They feared that a debate with Reagan and Anderson would put the President in the untenable position of having to stave off the attacks of two of his rivals. By mid-October, Anderson was no longer a viable candidate, and the Reagan campaign agreed to a one-on-one debate. Reagan's campaign officials, with a rare dissenter, felt confident that Reagan could face Carter and not come out the worse for it.⁵⁰ In contrast, the Carter campaign was wary of facing Reagan. Germond and Witcover argued that despite their success against Ford in 1976, Carter's campaign staff preferred not to debate.⁵¹ However, with the Anderson impediment gone, Carter's strategists felt the president had to debate Reagan.⁵² Thus, with the consent of both campaigns, Carter and Reagan were to debate on October 28 in Cleveland, Ohio.

⁴⁹ Jordan, Crisis, 334.

⁵⁰ Germond and Witcover, Blue Smoke and Mirrors, 271.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² In a memorandum from Hamilton Jordan and Bob Strauss, Tim Smith, a Carter campaign official, wrote: "We are on record as favoring four or five head-to-head debates between the two major party candidates." By late October, Carter had not debated Reagan once. The onus was on him to debate.

"Memorandum from Tim Smith to Hamilton Jordan and Bob Strauss," Preliminary Debate Discussions, Susan Clough File, Box 38, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA

Chapter Two

This chapter has two foci. First, to present a holistic analysis of the debate, this chapter offers an analysis of the questions which were posed to the debaters. Such an analysis highlights the issues which were raised during the debate and establishes its overall tone. Additionally, it will be argued that some of the questions posed by the journalists criticized Carter's record. However, there is no evidence to suggest that Carter lost the debate because of the journalists.¹ Ultimately, Carter's failure was due to his own mistakes and Reagan's skilled performance.

Prior to the debate, Carter's campaign prepared thorough debate preparation books. As will be demonstrated, these books, which were written in a question and answer format, enabled Carter to ignore certain questions and to recite a pre-written answer which reflected the overall strategy of his campaign. The second portion of this chapter delineates Carter's debate tactics and strategy, and in the closing portion of this analysis, it will become evident that Carter attempted to use the debate to appeal to specific segments of the voting populace as well as to deny Reagan the "credibility threshold."

¹ Jeffrey McCall, "The Panelists as Pseudo-debaters: An evaluation of the questions and questioners in the presidential debates of 1980," Journal of the American Forensic Association 21: 102.

The Setting

The Cleveland debate--which took place one week prior to election day--was sponsored by the League of Women Voters Education Fund.² On Tuesday October 28, Reagan and Carter met at the Cleveland Ohio Convention Center Music Hall, the site of the debate.³ According to Theodore White the city of Cleveland warmly welcomed the debaters.⁴ The debate itself, which lasted ninety minutes, was viewed by an estimated one-hundred million viewers (a record number of viewers in 1980).⁵

Prior to the debate, Carter had won the coin toss which determined who would be the first respondent to the panel's questions. However, instead of choosing to speak first, Carter's campaign officials asked to have Reagan open the debate; they hoped to exploit any nervousness he might have felt.⁶ Reagan accepted this offer, and to the disappointment of Carter's campaign, Reagan seemed calm and composed on

² "Transcript of the Presidential Debate," in The Pursuit of the Presidency 1980, (New York: Berkley Books, 1980), 359.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Theodore H. White, America In Search of Itself, The Making of the President 1956-1980, (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 403.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Hamilton Jordan, Crisis, The Last Year of the Carter Presidency, (New York: Berkley Books, 1982), 335.

stage. Hamilton Jordan, Carter's campaign manager, watched the debate on television and described the appearances of the candidates as they went to their respective podiums: "Reagan [was] looking relaxed, smiling, robust; the President, erect, lips tight, looking like a coiled spring, ready to pounce, an overtrained boxer, too ready for the bout."⁷ Seated in front of Carter and Reagan were a panel of journalists, who were to pose questions to both candidates. Howard Smith, of ABC News, was the moderator of the debate. The panel itself was comprised of: Marvin Stone, editor of *U.S. News and World Report*; William Hilliard, assistant managing editor of the *Portland Oregonian*; Harry Ellis, of the *Christian Science Monitor*; and Barbara Walters, of ABC News.⁸

As demonstrated in Chapter One, journalists played an important role in the 1980 campaign by transmitting information about the candidates to the public; consequently, any holistic treatment of the debate must include an analysis of the role which the panel of journalists played in setting the tone of the debate. For even if the candidates, at times, avoided their questions, their questions, at times, affected

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "Transcript of the Presidential Debate," 360.

the dynamics of the debate.⁹

Format

The debate itself was divided into two sections. In the first section, Stone, Ellis, Hilliard, and Walters asked both candidates, each in their turn, the same question, and then each journalist asked a follow-up question which was based on the answer which the candidate provided. Additionally, after the candidates' answer(s), the other candidate was given the opportunity to make a rebuttal. The first portion of this analysis will focus on the questions posed by the journalists during the first half of the debate. The second portion of this analysis will examine the second half of the debate in which no follow-up questions were posed; during this portion of the debate, each journalist asked both candidates a question and the other candidate was given the opportunity to make a rebuttal; the process repeated itself until every

⁹ Jeffrey McCall's essay "The Panelists as Pseudo-debaters: An evaluation of the questions and questioners in the presidential debates of 1980" is the only study which has examined the questions posed to Carter and Reagan. The purpose of McCall's essay was to improve the quality of subsequent debates. McCall argued that, based on the 1980 debates, the questions in subsequent debates should be free of bias and should be posed in a tone reflecting good will rather than hostility. While the analysis in this chapter does not make the same claims as those of McCall, his work is referenced to provide a historiographical context.

journalist asked their questions.¹⁰

Before beginning an in-depth analysis of the questions that were posed to the candidates, it is important to briefly examine Carter-press relations in a broader context. As discussed in Chapter One, Carter's relationship with the press was often strained. This strain was evident both in the debate and during the campaign itself. In order to fully grasp the role which the press played in both the campaign and the debate, it is necessary to briefly reconsider Carter's relationship with the press in the months preceding the debate.

Carter and the Press in the Fall of 1980

Jody Powell, Carter's Press Secretary, spent the majority of his time serving as a liaison between the media and Carter. In his memoirs, Powell analyzed the state of Carter-press relations during the 1980 campaign. Although his analysis of Carter-press relations was not neutral, his observations do highlight the dynamics of Carter-press relations as perceived by a member of Carter's campaign staff. According to Powell, the "liberal" press was extremely sensitive against claims of bias: "they were worried about the allegations that the 'eastern liberal press' was always unfair to the candidate

¹⁰ "Transcript of the Presidential Debate," 360.

from the right."¹¹ Accordingly, Powell argued that the press atoned for their rough treatment of past Republican candidates by being critical of Carter.¹² Additionally, Powell maintained that: "many of the reporters who covered the White House had decided that they did not like Carter. Some now argue that this opinion was fully justified, but few maintain that it did not exist."¹³ Certainly, Powell's observations should not be taken as absolute truth, but they do help to substantiate the claim that prior to the debate, Carter's relations with the press were strained.

Journalists, themselves, corroborated Powell's observations. In the early fall of 1980, Edward Walsh of the *Washington Post*, who had been covering Carter throughout his term, sent a memo to his colleague Richard Harwood. Walsh had recently written a story about the frustration running through the Carter campaign. Walsh's story ran under the headline: "Carter Campaign Stalls." After this story ran in the paper, he received a telephone call from Pat Caddell. Walsh wrote:

The day the story ran Pat Caddell [a Carter confidant] called me, as he had called other reporters. He was beside himself with frustration . . . [Caddell said]: "This meanness stuff has gotten way out of hand. It's ridiculous. If Ronald Reagan is elected president you

¹¹ Jody Powell, The Other Side of the Story, (New York: William Morrow, 1984), 42.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

people will have a lot to answer for . . . Most reporters covering Carter hate his guts but most of them are going to end up voting for him.¹⁴

According to Walsh, Caddell was quite clearly sensitive to media criticism of the President. But more importantly, Walsh's memo to Harwood seemed to confirm Caddell's observations. In this memo he also wrote: "Caddell had a point. Hate is his word, and far too strong, but there is no question that Carter has few friends or sympathizers in the press corps. He never has . . . he is the kind of man who seldom or ever gets the benefit of the doubt from the reporters covering him."¹⁵

Mark Rozell, in his systematic study of Carter-Press relations in his text The Press and the Carter Presidency, echoed Powell's and Walsh's sentiments on the press' attitudes towards Carter during the campaign. In his book, which is the only full-length study of Carter's media relations, Rozell systematically documented the press' criticisms of Carter during the fall of 1980. According to Rozell: "Norman Miller blasted Carter for 'ugly smears,' 'gutter politics,'

¹⁴ Richard Harwood, "October," in Pursuit of the Presidency, 302.

¹⁵ Ibid.

and 'mean spirited wildly exaggerated attacks' on Reagan."¹⁶; "Timothy Schellhardt's story "Carter and Meanness" characterized the President as 'mean, vindictive, humorless.' Similarly, *The Washington Post* depicted Carter as a 'politician gone haywire.'¹⁷ Walter Isaacson of *Time* wrote that "Carter's strident personal attacks had crossed the line of propriety for a presidential campaign,"¹⁸ and a, "U.S. News and World Report story claimed that Carter had alienated voters with his harsh rhetoric."¹⁹ These instances of Carter's strained relationship with the press are but a handful of the anecdotal evidence which Rozell offered in his substantive proof of the press' rather critical stance on Carter.

In the analysis which follows, it will be argued that the questions posed by the panel of journalists were also, at times, critical of Carter. More specifically, the strain which characterized Carter's relationship with the press was evident in the debate.

Questions and (No) Answers

¹⁶ Mark J. Rozell, *The Press and the Carter Presidency*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 184.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Walter Isaacson, "A Vow to Zip his Lip," *Time*, October 20, 1980, 16-17.

¹⁹ Rozell, *The Press and Carter Presidency*, 184.

Because Marvin Stone opened the debate with the first question, it seems fitting to open this discussion with an examination of his question. After an introduction by Howard Smith, Stone asked Reagan a question concerning the uses of military force. However, before asking his question, Stone offered some of his own commentary; this commentary, which preceded the question, was very important.²⁰ Stone divided his comments into two sections. The first section highlighted a critique of Carter's record, while the second pointed to a potential trouble spot with Reagan's position. Stone said: "President Carter has been criticized for responding late to aggressive Soviet impulses, of insufficient build-up of our armed forces, and a paralysis in dealing with Afghanistan and Iran."²¹ Stone then shifted his focus to Reagan: "You have been criticized for being all too quick to advocate the use of lots of military muscle-military action-to deal with foreign crises."²²

In analyzing this question, it is evident that Stone was more critical of Carter than of Reagan. He critiqued Carter's record in three separate spheres. According to Stone, the President's record was one of inadequacy, tardiness, and

²⁰ McCall, "Panelists as Pseudo-Debaters," 103.

²¹ "Transcript of the Presidential Debate," 360.

²² Ibid.

penultimately "paralysis." Clearly, this was a critical characterization of Carter by Stone. Reagan, in turn, was criticized for being too quick to act, to eager to engage the United States in military combat. This was by no means a kind characterization. But arguably, it was not as critical as the assertions made about Carter.

In contradistinction to Stone's questions, William Hilliard's questions were no more critical of Carter than of Reagan. Hilliard asked:

the decline of our cities has been hastened by the continual rise in crime, strained race relations, the fall of the quality of public education, persistence of abnormal poverty in a rich nation, and a decline in the services to the public. The signs seem to point toward a deterioration that could lead to the establishment of a permanent underclass in the cities. What, specifically, would you do in the next four years to reverse the trend?"²³

Reagan responded that to ameliorate this problem, he supported tax incentives for businesses who created jobs in the inner cities. Carter replied that his administration had an excellent record of appointing minorities to important positions in government.

While Hilliard's question focused on domestic issues, Walters addressed foreign policy issues. As discussed in Chapter One, the American hostages held in Iran played an

²³ Ibid., 370.

important part in the campaign and the debate.²⁴ Consequently, Walters' question about the hostages was particularly important. Walters asked President Carter: "do you have a policy for dealing with terrorism wherever it might happen, and, what have we learned from this experience in Iran that might cause us to do things differently if this, or something similar, happens again?"²⁵ Carter responded that the most serious terrorist threat came from radical nations with atomic weapons. Carter continued that his administration (as well as past administrations) had worked to limit the number of countries which possess nuclear weapons.²⁶ He concluded: "When Governor Reagan has been asked about that, he makes the very disturbing comment that non-proliferation, or the control of the spread of nuclear weapons, is none of our business."²⁷ Barbara Walters then asked a follow-up question relating to the possible lifting of the embargo against Iran if the Ayatollah released the hostages. Carter explained that if the Iranians released the hostages he would merely unfreeze

²⁴ Ronald Reagan, An American Life, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 218

Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith, Memoirs of a President (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 564.

²⁵ "Transcript of the Presidential Debate," 375.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 376.

assets which would allow Iran to acquire goods they had already purchased. As the first of Carter's answers to Walters indicates, Carter did not respond to her question on terrorism and the hostages.

In this particular instance, Walters' question to Carter, and Carter's inability to answer it, affected the tone of the debate. After Carter avoided Walters' question, Reagan opened his response: "Barbara, you've asked that question twice. I think you ought to have at least one answer to it."²⁸ Carter's refusal to answer Walters' question gave Reagan the opportunity to undermine his opponent.²⁹

Clearly, during this portion of the debate, some of the question were critical of Carter, and, in one instance, the tone of the debate was affected. During the second half of the debate, in which each candidate was given the opportunity to make rebuttals, the trends outlined in the first half continued.

Rebuttal

Stone also opened the second portion of the debate by asking Reagan:

You suggest that we scrap the Salt II treaty already

²⁸ Ibid., 377.

²⁹ Hamilton Jordan argued that Carter poorly handled some of the questions which were posed to him.

Jordan, Crisis, 336.

negotiated, and intensify the build-up of American power to induce the Soviets to sign a new treaty-one more favorable to us. President Carter, on the other hand, says he will again try to convince a reluctant Congress to ratify the present treaty on the grounds that it is the best we can hope to get. Now, both of you cannot be right. Will you tell us why you think you are?"³⁰

After Reagan's response, in which he argued that Salt II did not benefit the United States, Stone asked the same question of Carter. Carter responded that Reagan had a disturbing pattern of never supporting arms control agreements. The question allowed each candidate to clarify his position and to suggest how his opponent differed from him. Moreover, in this instance, Stone's introduction, which preceded the question, was neutral to both candidates. The next interlocutor, Ellis, was not.

Ellis asked Carter:

Mr. President, as you have said, Americans, through conservation, are importing much less oil today than we were even a year ago. Yet U.S. dependence on Arab oil as a percentage of total imports is today much higher than it was at the time of the 1973 Arab oil embargo, and for some time to come, the loss of substantial amounts of Arab oil could plunge the U.S. into depression . . . Can the United States develop synthetic fuels and other alternative energy sources without damage to the environment, and will this process mean steadily higher fuel bills for American families?"³¹

In analyzing Carter's question, it is important to note that he first highlighted an achievement of the Carter

³⁰ "Transcript of the Presidential Debate," 380.

³¹ Ibid., 384.

administration, the reduction of foreign oil imports, and then minimized the importance of that achievement. When Ellis suggested that U.S. oil imports represented a grave threat to the American economy, he argued that, under Carter's administration, the nation had been allowed to drift into an economically perilous position. As such, Ellis' question was critical of Carter's record.

In contrast to Ellis' question, Barbara Walters' final question was innocuous to both candidates. In fact, Walters did not ask a question, instead she requested that both candidates "tell us his [their opponent's] greatest weakness."³² This statement allowed each candidate to make an appeal to the American people based on the perceived inadequacies of their opponent.

In the above analysis, it has been argued that on the whole the press was critical of Carter not only during the campaign, but also during the debate itself. Now that some of the questions have been analyzed, the issues raised, and the general tone of the debate has been established, this chapter will examine Carter's reaction to the questions. It will be argued that Carter largely ignored the questions and instead concentrated on achieving the strategic goals his campaign had

³² Ibid., 393.

developed.³³

Debate Tactics

The debate served as a microcosm of the entire campaign; the strategies of the campaign were reflected and fulfilled in the tactics of the debate. Carter's debate tactics were grounded in two notions: using issues to appeal to well-defined target groups and de-legitimizing Reagan. Careful analysis of Carter's debate preparation books substantiate these two claims. First, Carter's handling of foreign policy issues was guided by Gerald Rafshoon's concept of the "credibility threshold." Second, with respect to domestic issues, Carter's debate preparation books advised that he use his responses to appeal to target groups selected by campaign strategists.³⁴

³³ Hamilton Jordan corroborated this argument. He wrote: "The President was carefully following . . . [the] game plan, mentioning the issues and problems and sounding the code words and phrases intended to appeal to the diverse groups in the Democratic constituency."

Jordan, Crisis, 336.

³⁴ This argument is corroborated by the structure of the debate preparation books. For instance, the pages dealing with "Jobs/ Urban Policy" are structured in the following format:

QUESTION: What have you done to benefit minorities and others who live in urban areas? What is your urban policy?

Target Group:

Minorities, urban dwellers, liberals.

Domestic Issues

Carter's campaign considered the Reagan-Kemp-Roth tax proposal a cornerstone of Reagan's economic platform.³⁵ As such, during the campaign, Carter attempted to discredit this proposal.³⁶ The significance of this tax proposal in the overall campaign was akin to its significance during the debate. Derived from a "trickle down" theory of economics, Reagan's tax proposal advocated cutting taxes to spur economic growth. Specifically, Reagan advocated cutting taxes for wealthier Americans to catalyze investment in the economy and to create new jobs. As was evidenced during the campaign and in the debate preparation books, Carter disagreed with this proposal and sought to undermine it.³⁷

When asked by Stone what steps his administration would take to control inflation, Carter responded: "I notice that

Answer

"I have carried forward and enhanced the Democratic Party's for urban areas and those who live in them . . ."

"Jobs/Urban Policy," Debate Briefing Materials 2, Jody Powell File, Box 8, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.

³⁵ "The Economy," Debate Background Material, Susan Clough File, Box 35, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.

³⁶ Jordan, Crisis, 332.

³⁷ Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith, Memoirs of a President, (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 539-540.

Governor Reagan recently mentioned the Reagan-Kemp-Roth proposal, which his own running mate, George Bush, described as voodoo economics, and said that it would result in a 30 percent inflation rate."³⁸

In a section containing rebuttals to Reagan's economic proposals, the preparation book stated: "His own running mate called his [Reagan's] plan 'economic voodoo which would lead to 30% inflation.'" ³⁹ Carter's response to Stone, which was aimed at portraying Reagan's economic policies as ridiculous and dangerous, was clearly pre-scripted.⁴⁰ Although Carter's response did not address the question Stone posed, his answer was consistent with his strategy as outlined in his preparation books: de-legitimize Reagan.

Economic issues were not the only issues with which Carter was prepared to attack Reagan. Another tactic devised by the Carter campaign (which also sought to undermine Reagan's credibility) was to capitalize on Reagan's stance on the environment, which had been problematized and ridiculed by

³⁸ "Transcript of the Presidential Debate," 366.

³⁹ "Rebuttal to Reagan Charges," Debate Briefing Materials 2, 1980 Campaign File, Box 8, Jody Powell File, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

the press.⁴¹ Carter's campaign wanted to use Reagan's "weakness" on the environment to appeal to voters.⁴² By raising the environmental issue in the debate, the Carter campaign believed it could appeal to: "Target Group: Environmentalists, women, liberals."⁴³ To gain the support of this group, the campaign followed two tactics. First, Carter would argue that his administration maintained an excellent balance between economic growth and environmental protection. Second, Carter would portray Reagan as an enemy of the environment.

According to his debate preparation books, a question about the environment should be responded to as follows: "But I do not believe economic growth or energy development require a sacrifice of our basic environmental protections."⁴⁴ Not

⁴¹ Jack Germond and Jules Witcover, Blue Smoke and Mirrors, How Reagan Won and Why Carter Lost the Election of 1980, (New York: Viking Press, 1981), 224.

⁴² "Environment/Energy - Growth," Debate Briefing Materials 1, 1980 Campaign File, Jody Powell File, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.

⁴³ Ibid.

It is interesting to speculate why the Carter campaign believed that the environmental issue would appeal to these groups. Although Carter's debate preparation books do not offer an explanation, Dr. Kaufman has suggested that, perhaps, based on the Carter campaign's polling data they believed that women and liberals were especially concerned with environmental issues.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

surprisingly, during the debate when Carter responded to a charge by Reagan that the U.S. was not producing enough coal, Carter said, "he [Reagan] blames coal production on regulations-regulations that affect the life and the health and safety of miners, and also regulations that protect the purity of our air and the quality of our water and our land."⁴⁵ Clearly, Carter's response corresponded to the tactics outlined in his debate preparation books.

To further undermine Reagan's position on the environment, Carter's debate preparation book advised him to say: "I am also concerned that he [Reagan] appears to want to weaken the Clean Air Act, which is so important to a healthier environment."⁴⁶ Again, during the debate, Carter's response on issues concerning clean air were concordant with the aforementioned strategy as outlined in the debate preparation books. Specifically, during the debate, when Reagan commented that he, "took charge of passing the strictest air pollution laws in the United States,"⁴⁷ Carter responded: "As a matter of fact, the air pollution standard laws that were passed in California were passed over the objections of Governor Reagan,

⁴⁵ "Transcript of the Presidential Debate," 386.

⁴⁶ "Environment/Energy - Growth," Debate Briefing Materials 2, 1980 Campaign File, Box 8, Jody Powell File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁷ "Transcript of the Presidential Debate," 387.

and this is a very well-known fact."⁴⁸ As was the case with Carter's response to Reagan on the production of coal, Carter's rebuttal to Reagan was consistent not only with Carter's debate preparation books, but also his overall campaign strategy. In short, Carter argued that Reagan was a danger to clean air and a threat to the environment.

On the surface, it appears that Carter's strategy on the environmental issue was fairly quotidian. After all it was (and is) common for a candidate to attempt to undermine his opponent during a debate. Carter's discussion of the environment, however, attempted to accomplish something specific. Carter's campaign had defined a group to whom the environmental issue was important and sought to win the support of that group.

Foreign Affairs and the Credibility Threshold

One of Rafshoon's main strategies for the campaign was to deny Reagan the "credibility threshold."⁴⁹ This, Rafshoon explained, is the moment which "exists for every non-incumbent challenger in which a majority of the public decides that the person, even if he is not their choice, is qualified and able

⁴⁸ Ibid., 388.

⁴⁹ Jordan, Crisis, 338.

to be President."⁵⁰ Moreover, "failure to pass the minimum threshold of relative acceptability, competence and qualification will always doom the challenger."⁵¹

This threshold became a focus of the campaign and a focus of the foreign policy portion of the debate.⁵² For Carter, according to Rafshoon's polling, was viewed as both wrong and also in many ways incompetent.⁵³ Gerald Rafshoon shared the results of his polling data (in which Carter's negative image was confirmed) with the President. The results were as follows:

[1] In every state at least 1/3 of the primary voters gave Carter a negative personal rating.

[2] On the 'soft' job question, Carter got a disapproval in five of the six states. The 4 point job scale questions (excellent, good, only fair, poor) were abysmal.

[3] Substantial percentages disagreed that the President was qualified for the office.

[4] The protest question is staggering. The notion that Carter can't handle the job and a new President is needed passed everywhere -- often by huge margins.⁵⁴

Even in the face of these findings, Rafshoon advised

⁵⁰ Gerald Rafshoon, "Memo to the President -- EYES ONLY," Campaign Strategies, 1980, Susan Clough File, Box 34, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.

⁵¹ Ibid., 23.

⁵² Jordan, Crisis, 338.

⁵³ Gerald Rafshoon, "Memo to the President -- EYES ONLY," Campaign Strategies, 1980, Susan Clough File, Box 34, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Carter that if Reagan could be portrayed as dangerous, his ability to cross the "credibility threshold" would be hindered; Carter could thus win the election despite his unpopularity. For "even if a President is viewed as wrong, or incompetent -- amazingly he is by definition 'safe.' He has proven that he will not blow the world sky high."⁵⁵ As the debate progressed, Carter's portrayal of Reagan as a threat to peace became more pronounced, and by portraying Reagan as an unsafe alternative, Carter fulfilled an integral part of the campaign's overall strategy.

Responding to a question concerning the uses of American military power, Reagan commented that Carter had cut funding for a number of different weapons programs. Carter responded: "Governor Reagan has advocated the injection of military forces into troubled areas, when I and my predecessors - both Democrats and Republicans - have advocated resolving those troubles . . . peacefully, diplomatically, and through negotiation."⁵⁶ Carter later continued: "the best weapons are the ones that are never fired in combat, and the best soldier is one who never has to lay his life down on the field of battle."⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ibid., 23.

⁵⁶ "Transcript of the Presidential Debate," 365.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Carter's response set up a comparison between himself and Reagan. First, Carter hinted that unlike Reagan, he was in the mainstream; that is, his policies were similar to policies followed by Republicans and Democrats alike. Consequently, Reagan, by disagreeing with his policies, was by implication, outside of the mainstream. Moreover, he was dangerous. Carter intimated that a Reagan presidency could endanger American lives. Thus Carter, in his response, once again attempted to deny Reagan the "credibility threshold."

Midway through the debate, Stone asked the candidates about nuclear proliferation. Jimmy Carter closed the discussion and his response with the comment: "I had a discussion with my daughter, Amy, the other day, before I came here, to ask her what the most important issue was. She said she thought nuclear weaponry - and the control of nuclear arms."⁵⁸ Here, Carter once again attempted to make the threat of nuclear weapons more real. By using his daughter's fears, he hinted at the effects nuclear war would have on innocent children.⁵⁹ Carter went on, "The control of these [nuclear] weapons is the single major responsibility for a president, and to cast out this commitment [SALT II] of all presidents, because of some slight technicalities that can be

⁵⁸ Ibid., 384.

⁵⁹ Jordan, Crisis, 336.

corrected, is a very dangerous approach."⁶⁰ Carter obviously implied that Reagan's position could lead to possible nuclear destruction, nuclear destruction that Amy Carter, the daughter of the President, was thinking about. There was nothing in Carter's debate preparation books which advised Carter to mention the nuclear fears of his daughter. But even though his campaign's decision makers did not advise him to mention his daughter, his decision to mention her was arguably informed by Rafshoon's concept of the "credibility threshold." For a candidate whose policies could possibly endanger the lives of children was neither "safe" nor "acceptable."

The portrayal of Reagan as a radical, with strange ideas outside the mainstream of his own party, was another key element of Carter's debate strategy.⁶¹ The Carter campaign believed that although Reagan was running as a Republican, his ideas were in fact different from those of past Republican presidents.⁶² When discussing Reagan's opposition to SALT

⁶⁰ "Transcript of the Presidential Debate," 384.

⁶¹ A portion of the debate preparation books which articulated Carter's debate themes stated that he should emphasize the fact that: "Reagan has: been a leader of an extremist, reactionary part of the Republican party."

"Carter Debate Themes," Debate Background Materials, Susan Clough File, Box 35, Atlanta GA, 2.

⁶² The section entitled "Debate Themes" also stated: "Reagan has: offered an agenda that will destroy the progress and programs developed under recent . . . Republican Presidents."

II, Carter said, "now he wants to throw in the wastebasket a treaty to control nuclear weapons . . . negotiated by myself and my two Republican predecessors."⁶³ Carter explicitly linked his policies to the policies of other Republicans. Thus, Reagan, by opposing SALT II, was not only wrong but also far outside of the mainstream of his own party. Carter alleged that because of his radicalism, Reagan wanted to take this treaty, negotiated over a course of seven years by three presidents and "discard it, do not vote, do not debate, do not explore the issues, do not finally capitalize on this long negotiation-- that is a very dangerous and disturbing thing."⁶⁴ Carter concluded the aforementioned response by saying "[Reagan's proposals] would mean the resumption of a very dangerous arms race. It would be very disturbing to the American people. It would change the basic tone and commitment that our nation has experienced since the second World War, with all our presidents, Democratic and Republican."⁶⁵ Carter purposefully used the words "dangerous" and "disturbing" to describe Reagan. Presidential historian Theodore White has written: "The Rafshoon/Carter

Ibid.

⁶³ "Transcript of the Presidential Debate," 381.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 382.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 383.

commercials emphasized . . . who do you want in the White House with his finger on the button of Holocaust?"⁶⁶ Again, Carter's debate tactics reflected the overall emphasis of the Carter campaign.

As stated at the start of this chapter, the very last question of the debate, posed by Barbara Walters, asked each candidate to describe the single greatest weakness of his opponent. Carter replied: "This is a contest between a Democrat in the mainstream of my party . . . as contrasted with Governor Reagan, who in most cases does not typify his party, but in some cases, there is a radical departure by him from the heritage of Eisenhower and others."⁶⁷ After making this statement, Carter ignored the limitations imposed by the question, and listed a second weakness: "his long-standing inclination, on the use of American power, not to resolve disputes diplomatically and peacefully, but to show that the exercise of military power is best proven by the actual use of it."⁶⁸ This answer is a summation of the two main themes which Carter utilized in the foreign policy portions of the debate to deny Reagan the "credibility threshold." Ultimately, his overall strategy came down to two very simple

⁶⁶ Theodore H. White, America In Search Of Itself, The Making of the President 1956-1980, 395.

⁶⁷ "Transcript of the Presidential Debate," 393.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

messages: Reagan is radical, outside of the tradition of his own party, and Reagan is a threat to peace.

Verbal Blunders, Mental Acuity, and the Credibility Threshold

As detailed in the previous chapter, during the final month of the election, Reagan led Carter in the polls. But some in the Carter campaign, including Gerald Rafshoon, believed that Reagan's lead and his position were insecure. Rafshoon argued that Carter, despite his perceived failings, was tested. Reagan was not.⁶⁹

Even if this were true, Reagan was still ahead in the polls and by late October, and Reagan had not seriously undermined his chances of becoming president. However, a presidential debate was (and is) a highly stressful activity, and Rafshoon argued that in more pressure filled situations, Reagan "will make one or two or three big mistakes that will cause the public to say: 'There it is. I knew it.'"⁷⁰ Thus, in the debate, Rafshoon anticipated a decisive victory, a victory which would make Reagan seem unfit in the eyes of Americans and thus secure the election for Carter. Carter's

⁶⁹ Gerald Rafshoon, "Background Analysis," Campaign Strategies, 1980, Susan Clough File, Box 34, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.

⁷⁰ Gerald Rafshoon, "Memo to the President -- EYES ONLY," Campaign Strategies, 1980, Susan Clough File, Box 34, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA, 2.

campaign also believed Reagan would be unable to defend himself against Carter's attacks.⁷¹ As will be argued in the Chapter Three, this strategy was based on an underestimation of Reagan's mental and verbal acuity.

Carter's campaign further believed that highlighting Reagan's alleged simplemindedness would help to deny him the credibility threshold. Sam Popkin advised Carter to "increase the sense of simplicity behind Reagan we need to point out over and over that Presidents can't duck the hard ones . . . We cannot call RR old and simple, but we can emphasize the simplicity of his approach."⁷² Carter was to: "make clear that there is a marked difference between you and Reagan in knowledge and experience . . . he's inexperienced you understand complexities; he doesn't."⁷³

Carter utilized the issue of national defense to

⁷¹ Jody Powell, "Memo from Jody Powell to the President," Debate Briefing Materials 1, Jody Powell, Box 8, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.

Gerald Rafshoon, "Background Analysis," Campaign Strategies, 1980, Susan Clough File, Box 34, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.

⁷² "Memo from sam to phc 10/18/80," Debate Background Materials 1, Susan Clough File, Box 35, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.

⁷³ "Answer and Rebuttal Objectives," Debate Briefing Book-Foreign Policy and National Security 1, Susan Clough File, Box 35, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.

implement this strategy;⁷⁴ Stone, in the first question of the debate, offered Carter an opportunity to undermine Reagan. As stated previously, Stone asked Carter: "Specifically, what are the differences between the two of you on the uses of American military power?"⁷⁵ Carter spoke about his experience and the many careful decisions he had made. He then critiqued Reagan's position on national defense issues. He stated: "H.L. Mencken said that for every problem there's a simple answer. It would be neat and plausible and wrong."⁷⁶ Carter then concluded his answer: "I might also add that there are decisions made that are . . . profound in nature . . . That is what I have tried to do successfully by keeping our country at peace."⁷⁷ In short, Carter's response had very little to do with the specific question Stone asked. But once again, Carter's answer was directly related to the

⁷⁴ A portion of the debate preparation books concerning Reagan's failings stated:

The President can refer to Governor Reagan's worrisome habit of laying down a specific line of action and then either adding or implying, "or else." Ultimatums have no place in a nuclear world. These belong to an earlier age when we could talk big, flash a big stick and back up our statements by placing a single destroyer or two at risk. "Reagan Weaknesses," Debate Briefing Material 1, Jody Powell, Box 8, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.

⁷⁵ "Transcript of the Presidential Debate," 362.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 363.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

overall strategy of his campaign.⁷⁸ Carter contended that Reagan advocated simple solutions to complex problems. Carter, therefore, implied that Reagan's policies were the product of simplistic reasoning. Carter also argued that Reagan might have a difficult time with the profound problems which a President must face and might therefore lead the country to war.

Fundamentally, the Cleveland debate was much more than a questions and answer session. Indeed, Carter's answers did not always reflect the specific questions he was asked. Carter's answers were, however, indicative of his campaign's overall strategy. In the debate, the Carter campaign had specific objectives they wanted to accomplish. On domestic issues, they wanted to establish the fact that a Reagan presidency would ruin all the progress made during the Carter administration and thus harm the nation. To accomplish this, Carter directed very succinct messages to very specific groups. In foreign affairs, Carter sought to portray Reagan as a dangerous threat to peace. To do this, Carter relied

⁷⁸ Rafshoon argued that for Carter to win the election the campaign must highlight Reagan's "simplicity of view and experience that raises real questions of whether he can handle the complex problems of the Presidency."

Gerald Rafshoon, "Memo to the President -- EYES ONLY," Campaign Strategies, 1980, Susan Clough File, Box 34, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA, 38.

primarily on the populace's fears of nuclear warfare. By painting Reagan as a radical, a potential warmonger, Carter sought to deny Reagan the "credibility threshold."

While Carter portrayed Reagan as a dangerous irresponsible man, Reagan made no statements to suggest that he was a warmonger. Additionally, Reagan did not commit a major blunder. Carter's campaign hoped (and expected) that Reagan would make verbal mistakes in the debate. In fact, Carter's debate strategy was based on this premise. Why this premise was faulty, and how it led to Reagan's victory in the debate will be examined in the following chapter.

Chapter Three

For the most part, Carter, in contrast to Reagan, did not achieve his debate objectives. In the first place, Carter failed to make a persuasive case to blue-collar males, who comprised one of his primary target groups.¹ More importantly, Carter was unable to deny Reagan the "credibility threshold."

Target Group

To appeal to blue-collar males, Carter's campaign staff attempted to assess which issues were important to them; according to Carter's campaign, this target group was primarily concerned with defense issues.² To win their support, the President had to "be firm and confident, which doesn't mean being hawkish--just laying out the facts and the record."³

During the campaign, Reagan had alleged that America's military capabilities had fallen behind those of the Soviet

¹ "National Defense," Debate Briefing Material 2, Jody Powell File, Box 8, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA, 2.

² The portion of Carter's debate preparation book which addressed defense issues listed the target group as: "Blue-collar and male."

Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Union.⁴ The debate provided an opportunity for Carter to respond to this criticism and thus procure the votes of this target group.⁵

To achieve this objective, Carter's campaign developed four possible tactics which countered Reagan's charges that Carter had allowed the United States' military supremacy to be threatened by the Soviet Union. The first tactic attempted to neutralize Reagan's critiques by suggesting that his attacks were quotidian examples of political rhetoric. Carter was to respond to a Reagan attack as follows: "Almost every election the party on the outside accuses the party on the inside of allowing the Russians to take over the world."⁶ Carter, by making such a statement, would not address the issues raised in Reagan's critique; instead, he would argue that Reagan's critique (and not his record) was faulty. This tactic coincided with Carter's debate strategy which attempted to focus attention on Reagan rather than on Carter's record.⁷

The second tactic also coincided with Carter's overall

⁴ Ronald Reagan, An American Life, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 217.

⁵ "National Defense," Debate Briefing Material 2, Jody Powell File, Box 8, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "Memo from Jody Powell to the President," Debate Briefing Materials 1, Jody Powell File, Box 8, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.

campaign strategy. The debate preparation book stated that Carter should reply in the following fashion: "In 1976 Governor Reagan said the policies of President Nixon and President Ford and Secretary Kissinger had made us number two to the Soviet Union. Now he makes the same allegations against me."⁸ Although this tactic also attempted to undermine Reagan's criticisms by arguing that his critique was common to politicians in both parties, Carter would contend that Reagan had been an inveterate assailer of past President's defense policies. Therefore, Carter would have argued that Reagan himself--rather than the critique--was the problem.

The third approach had a similar focus, but it presented problems in relation to the first. Carter was advised to say: "I never accused President Ford of letting the United States become #2, because it was not true. No President would allow this to happen."⁹ It would be difficult for Carter to argue that all challengers accused incumbent presidents of losing the cold war, because he would also have to argue that he was the lone exception to this rule. This tactic implied that Carter was purer than other politicians. But, as Patrick

⁸ "National Defense," Debate Briefing Material 2, Jody Powell File, Box 8, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.

⁹ Ibid.

Anderson has argued, Carter's moralism caused him many political problems.¹⁰

In contradistinction to the previous three tactics, the fourth put the focus on Carter's record: "When I took office, the defense budget had declined for seven out of eight years - - a 35% decrease -- since I have been in office, it has increased every single year."¹¹ This pre-scripted answer was the most factually substantive response, and could have rescued Carter's record from Reagan's criticisms.¹² During the debate, this was the response that Carter utilized, despite the fact that it differed substantially from the other three responses.

Carter's decision to follow this course, and more importantly, Reagan's response to Carter's assertions, stymied Carter's efforts to appeal to blue-collar males. In response to Stone's first question on the uses of military force (examined in Chapter Two), Carter said:

The fact is that this nation, in the eight years before I became president, had its own military budget decreased. Seven out of eight years the budget commitments went down, 37 percent in all. Since I've been in office, we've had a steady, carefully planned,

¹⁰ Patrick Anderson, Electing Jimmy Carter, The Campaign of 1976, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 168.

¹¹ "National Defense," Debate Briefing Materials 2, Jody Powell File, Box 8, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.

¹² Ibid.

methodical but very effective increase in our commitment to defense.¹³

In this response, Carter twice repeated that the defense budget went down in seven of the eight years prior to his term. Arguably, Carter repeated this claim to further emphasize his contentions. But Reagan was not only able to undermine Carter's response (and consequently Carter's appeal to blue collar males), but also to neutralize Carter's efforts to deny him the "credibility threshold."

After Carter finished his response, Reagan replied:

I question the figure about the decline in defense spending under the previous Administrations in the preceding eight years to this Administration. I would call to your attention that we were in a war that wound down during those eight years, which of course made a change in military spending because of turning war to peace.¹⁴

Reagan accomplished a number of different goals in this portion of his response. He reiterated the general trends in defense spending which Carter quoted in a broader context, and by contextualizing, he damaged Carter's argument. More importantly, he undermined Carter's assertions with little direct confrontation. Reagan stated that he "questions" Carter's figures; he did not call the President a liar.

¹³ "Transcript of the Presidential Debate," in The Pursuit of Presidency 1980, (New York: Berkley Books, 1980), 363.

¹⁴ Ibid., 365.

Instead, he suggested that Carter's statements were inaccurate. By demonstrating none of the belligerence which Carter attributed to him, Reagan counteracted Carter's efforts to deny him the "credibility threshold."

Reagan continued: "I also would like to point out that Republican presidents in those years, faced with a Democratic majority in both houses of Congress, found that their requests for defense budgets were very often cut."¹⁵ Here, Reagan clearly asserted that the cuts in military spending were the fault of Democratic Congresses rather than Republican Presidents. This appeal to partisan sentiment most likely appealed to his traditional base. Thus Reagan, in the first portion of his answer, not only complicated Carter's assertions, he also appealed to his supporters. In the next portion of his response, Reagan counterattacked.¹⁶ He stated:

Now, Gerald Ford left a five-year projected plan for a military build-up to restore our defenses, and President Carter's administration reduced that by 38 percent, cut 60 ships out of the Navy building program that had been proposed, and stopped the . . . the B-1, delayed the Cruise missile, stopped the production line for the Minuteman missile, stopped the Trident or delayed the

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Reagan also defended himself against Carter's charges that he was outside of the mainstream of his party. Reagan, by drawing upon the history of his party to support his position, seemed to belie Carter's allegations and consequently Carter's attempts to deny him the "credibility threshold."

Trident . . .¹⁷

Reagan, in this response, countered Carter's general assertions with specific facts; he listed, in detail, the programs Carter had cut, and in so doing placed the debate's focus on Carter's record. The concrete evidence which Reagan provided: delaying the Cruise missile, stopping the B-1, delaying the Trident missile, not only demonstrated his reasoned understanding of national defense issues (thus helping him to cross the "credibility threshold"¹⁸), but also rooted Reagan's response in factual evidence. The Republican candidate argued that the matter was simple: Carter had cut these programs.

Finally, Reagan complicated the war and peace issue. He stated: "and now [Carter] is planning a mobile military force that can be delivered to various spots in the world, which does make me question his assaults on whether I am the one who is quick to look for use of force."¹⁹ As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Carter attempted to portray Reagan as a threat to peace. Reagan countered this tactic by suggesting

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, Carter attempted to utilize Reagan's perceived vulnerability on national defense issues to deny him the "credibility threshold."

¹⁹ Ibid.

that Carter was in fact belligerent. By using the word "assaults" to describe Carter's attempts to deny him the "credibility threshold," he placed the emphasis on Carter: he undermined Carter's record and neutralized Carter's criticisms that he was prone to violence.

Carter's rebuttal to Reagan's response further demonstrated his inability to respond to Reagan's attacks and thus appeal to this target group. The President did not challenge the statistics which Reagan cited, nor did he challenge the veracity of Reagan's allegations. Instead, he reiterated that Reagan was a threat to peace: "Governor Reagan has advocated the injection of military forces into troubled areas... But I will always remember that the best weapons are the ones that are never fired in combat...Strength is imperative for peace, but the two must go hand in hand."²⁰

According to political communications scholars Kurt Ritter and David Henry, Pat Caddell had urged Carter to "attack Reagan, but not debate him."²¹ That is, Carter was to undermine Reagan but not to challenge his responses. Thus, Carter's refusal to address Reagan's responses may have resulted from a tactical decision made by a member of his

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Kurt Ritter and David Henry, "The 1980 Reagan-Carter Presidential Debate," in Rhetorical Studies of National Political Debates 1960-1992, (Westport: Praeger, 1994), 81.

campaign. Considering the above analysis, it appears that this tactical decision was problematic.²²

Carter's loss to Reagan on November 4th supports the conclusion that Carter's appeals to blue-collar males had failed. In his systematic analysis of the voting patterns of the 1980 election, Walter Burnham compared the success of Ford and Reagan in appealing to this target group; he concluded: "Blue-collar workers swung most heavily in the gross occupational classifications used in this survey (8.5 percent)--in fact, producing a Reagan lead of 1 percent."²³ Carter was similarly unable to appeal to a number of male voters. According to Burnham: "the male vote shifted fully ten percentage points from 1976 to 1980 (51 percent for Carter to 41 percent four years later)."²⁴ While it is difficult to claim that Carter's performance during the debate alienated these voters, the polling data indicates that was not able to

²² Ritter and Henry argued: "Carter employed a 'hit and run' style of debate: Carter launched an attack, Reagan replied, and Carter ignored Reagan's rebuttal.

Ibid.

²³ Walter Burnham, "The 1980 Earthquake: Realignment, Reaction, or What?" in The Hidden Election, Politics and Economics in the 1980 Presidential Campaign, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 104.

²⁴ Ibid., 105.

successfully appeal to them.²⁵

Debate Objectives

Kurt Ritter and David Henry summarized the key points of Reagan's debate strategy. They argued that to win the debate, Reagan had to: "keep the debate focused as much as possible on Carter's record . . . Whenever possible, weave your major theme into your responses: 'Jimmy Carter has had his chance and has blown it . . . I offer promise-hope.'"²⁶ Ritter and Henry concluded that Reagan successfully achieved all of his debate objectives.²⁷

Reagan successfully focused the debate on Carter's record.²⁸ In his penultimate speech achieved, he asked voters: "I think when you make that decision [to vote], it might be well if you would ask yourself, are you better off

²⁵ Burnham also corroborated the notion that national defense issues were important to middle income males and that Carter lost their support because they thought that Carter had let America's military prestige flounder. He wrote: "men were especially repelled by Carter's record in office, and perhaps precisely by his image of humility and long suffering in the face of extreme provocations such as the Iranian hostage situation."

Ibid., 106.

²⁶ Ritter and Henry, "1980 Reagan-Carter Presidential Debate," 77.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Burton Kaufman, The Presidency of James Earl Carter, Jr. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 205.

Reagan, An American Life, 221.

than you were four years ago? Is it easier for you to go and buy things in the stores than it was four years ago?"²⁹ Clearly, Reagan's message addressed the material well-being of his listeners. The United States was in a period of economic difficulties by the fall of 1980, and by focusing on America's economic woes, Reagan ensured that his message would have a great deal of resonance with his audience.³⁰

Reagan continued to emphasize economic themes, he asked: "Is there more or less unemployment in the country than there was four years ago?"³¹ By posing this question, Reagan again placed the debate's emphasis on Carter's economic record.³² By highlighting the economic insecurity felt by many Americans, Reagan once again emphasized the importance of the material conditions his viewers' lives.³³ Thus, Reagan

²⁹ "Transcript of the Presidential Debate," 399.

³⁰ Judith Trent and Robert Friedenbergl echoed this analysis. In an analysis of Reagan's speeches during the 1980 campaign, they wrote: "Because the economy and national security are issues that vitally affect all citizens, they were appropriate to use with most audiences."

Judith Trent and Robert Friedenbergl, Political Campaign Communication, Principles and Practices, (New York: Praeger, 1983), 175.

³¹ "Transcript of the Presidential Debate," 399.

³² Ritter and Henry, "1980 Reagan-Carter Presidential Debate," 80.

³³ Hamilton Jordan corroborated this analysis. Reflecting on the questions with which Reagan ended the debate, he wrote: "What a narrow and selfish premise, I

shaped the focus of the debate to his advantage.³⁴

Reagan then appealed to the populace's concern over America's position in the world.³⁵ He asked: "Is America as respected throughout the world as it was? Do you feel that our security is as safe, that we're as strong as we were four years ago?"³⁶ By arguing that America's stature had declined, Reagan hinted that Carter had been unable to maintain America's power and prestige. Therefore, Reagan implicitly focused attention on Carter's foreign policy failures (the hostage crisis and the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan) without actually mentioning them.

Lastly, Reagan attempted to make the election a referendum on Carter's record. He stated: "And if you answer all of those questions 'yes,' why then, I think your choice is very obvious as to whom you will vote for." Here, Reagan argued that voters should vote for Carter only if they felt he was a successful president. If they did not, he offered

thought, asking people to choose their President based solely on their present condition. Nevertheless, it was our idea, and now Reagan had turned it against us. [italics in original]

Hamilton Jordan, Crisis, The Last Year of the Carter Presidency, (New York: Berkley Books, 1982), 337.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Kaufman, Presidency of James Earl Carter, 205.

³⁶ "Transcript of the Presidential Debate," 399.

himself as a viable replacement: "If you don't agree, if you don't think that this course that we've been on for the last four years is what you would like to see us follow for the next four, then I could suggest another choice that you have."³⁷ Reagan's closing statements were (and are) widely regarded as highly effective.³⁸

The central thesis of this chapter--that the debate was a success for Reagan--is corroborated by polling data taken shortly after the debate. A Newsweek poll found that 34 percent believed Reagan won, while 26 percent believed Carter was victorious. An ABC News-Harris poll found that 44 percent believed Reagan won the debate, while 26 percent believed Carter won. Finally, a CBS News-New York Times poll found that 6 percent of the respondents changed their vote because of the debate, and among these voters, Reagan won two new votes for every vote Carter won.³⁹

In conclusion, Carter's campaign did not expect Reagan to be as adept a debater as he was. Moreover, Carter did not achieve his debate objectives. He was unable to appeal to blue-collar males; he failed to convince Americans that

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Reagan, An American Life, 221

Kaufman, Presidency of James Earl Carter, 205.

³⁹ Ritter and Henry, "1980 Reagan-Carter Presidential Debate," 86.

Reagan was a threat to peace; and he failed to capitalize on Reagan's blunders, for there were none. Caddell advised Carter to give "Reagan enough rope to hang himself with foolish simplistic answers."⁴⁰ But, Reagan's answers were cogent, clear, and effective. In contrast, Carter's debate strategy--based on a gross underestimation of Reagan--was fundamentally flawed. In reality, Reagan, not Carter, achieved his primary debate objectives. Moreover, Carter's attempts to deny Reagan the "credibility threshold" were predicated upon an assumption that Reagan would not be able to defend himself against Carter's attacks. This assumption was incorrect. Reagan successfully emphasized that he was neither belligerent nor violence prone. His responses demonstrated a verbal and mental acuity which the Carter campaign did not believe he possessed.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 84.

Conclusions

On January 22, 1981, Jimmy Carter returned to Georgia from Wiesbaden, West Germany. Carter had flown to Wiesbaden to welcome the fifty-two Americans who had just been released by Iranian terrorists. As he and his erstwhile Chief of Staff, Hamilton Jordan, sat on the plane, Carter turned to Jordan and said: "1980 was pure hell-the Kennedy challenge, Afghanistan, having to put the SALT treaty on the shelf, the recession, Ronald Reagan, and the hostages . . . always the hostages!"¹ As Carter intimated, 1980 was a difficult year for him both personally and politically. Kennedy's vigorous and often bitter challenge to his nomination damaged Carter's reelection hopes. Moreover, many Americans had become disillusioned by the recession which had settled over the American economy. Finally, Carter waged an unsuccessful campaign against Ronald Reagan which culminated in his loss of the Cleveland debate.

Chapter One of this thesis presented an overview of the fall campaign which highlighted the trends which Carter alluded to in his comments to Jordan. Chapter Two and Three were focused on Carter's debate with Reagan in Cleveland. This thesis has argued that the Cleveland debate was a critical moment in the 1980 campaign for President. The

¹ Hamilton Jordan, Crisis, The Last Year of the Carter Presidency, (New York: Berkley Books, 1982), 1

Carter campaign desired a decisive victory over Reagan during the debate. Many in Carter's campaign also suspected that under the pressure of the debate, Reagan would make verbal blunders. Reagan, however, made no verbal blunders. Carter also used the debate to raise issues which his campaign felt were important to electoral target groups. During the debate, however, Carter was unable to appeal to blue-collar males, one of his primary target groups. Finally, Carter attempted to utilize the debate to deny Reagan the "credibility threshold." This threshold, as articulated by Gerald Rafshoon, was the point which all prospective presidential candidates must cross to become secure and viable. Carter's campaign staff believed that Reagan's staunch support of the military and his past verbal errors would aid them in denying Reagan this threshold. However, during the debate, Reagan demonstrated that he was a "safe" choice. Hamilton Jordan, in his memoirs, wrote: "It looked as if Reagan had marched across it [the credibility threshold] tonight in Cleveland."²

From the results of the election, it is clear that Carter's debate strategy, which was essentially negative, was unsuccessful. More specifically, Carter's campaign attempted to portray Reagan as an even more unattractive candidate than Carter, but in the process offered no substantive case for

² Ibid., 338.

Carter's reelection. Therefore, as soon as voters realized that Reagan, if president, would not destroy the world, Carter's hopes for reelection were dashed. Arguably, it was not a Herculean task for Reagan to demonstrate that he would not bring about nuclear armageddon.

It is impossible to state with certainty that Carter would have been reelected had he followed a different strategy. Nevertheless, it is clear that the strategy which Carter followed was predicated upon an underestimation of Reagan's verbal and mental acuity. This miscalculation proved to be highly damaging to Carter's reelection chances.

Reagan's victory over Carter, in the estimation of both liberals and conservatives, was significant. In 1981, Thomas Ferguson and Joel Rogers predicted that Reagan's victory would mean a: "sharpening of class divisions, turmoil in the cities, and a general coarsening of American life."³ Reagan, in his inaugural address, presented a different vision of what his presidency would entail. He stated: "it is my intention to curb the size and the influence of the federal establishment . . . It is time to reawaken this industrial giant, to get government back within its means, and to lighten our punitive

³ Thomas Ferguson and Joel Rogers, "The Reagan Victory: Corporate Coalitions in the 1980 Campaign," in The Hidden Election, Politics and Economics in the 1980 Presidential Campaign, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 53.

tax burden."⁴ Regardless of ideological perspective, it is clear that Reagan's victory over Carter in 1980 proved to be a turning point in recent American political history.

The night after the debate, Carter encapsulated a fundamental aspect of the debate. He dictated the following notes: "But anyway, he [Reagan] accomplished his purpose; we accomplished ours. We'll see whose basic strategy is best when the returns come in next Tuesday."⁵ As has been discussed in this thesis, Reagan's strategy and performance during the debate were superior to Carter's. Carter did not lose the debate: rather Reagan won it.

Carter utilized all the means available to him to get reelected. But during the debate, he was unable to convince enough people that a Reagan presidency might mean nuclear annihilation. Moreover, Reagan convinced enough Americans that he was a better alternative than Carter. By contrast, Carter did not offer enough Americans a reason to vote for him. In conclusion, Carter's debate strategy was fundamentally flawed, and with the "credibility threshold" crossed, Reagan decisively defeated him.

⁴ Ronald Reagan, An American Life, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 227.

⁵ Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith, Memoirs of a President, (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 565.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Unpublished Primary Sources:

- "Answer and Rebuttal Objectives." Debate Briefing Book- Foreign Policy and National Security 1. Susan Clough File, Box 35. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- Brzezinski, Zbigniew. "Memorandum for the President." Debate Briefing Materials 1. Jody Powell File, Box 8. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "The Economy." Debate Background Materials 1. Susan Clough File, Box 35. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- Eizenstat, Stuart. "MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT." Debate Background Materials 1. Susan Clough File, Box 35. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "Environment/Energy - Growth." Debate Briefing Materials 1. Jody Powell File, Box 8. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "Environment/Energy - Growth." Debate Briefing Materials 2. Jody Powell File, Box 8. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "Carter Debate Themes." Debate Background Materials. Susan Clough File, Box 35. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "Closing Statement." Debate Briefing Materials 1. Jody Powell File, Box 8. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "Debate." Jody Powell Memoranda. Jody Powell File, Box 10. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "Debate Material." Debate Briefing Materials 1. Jody Powell File, Box 8. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "Economic Answer." Debate Briefing Materials 1. Jody Powell File, Box 8. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "Foreign Policy and National Security Issues." Debate Background Materials. Susan Clough File, Box 35. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "GOALS." Debate Briefing Materials 2. Jody Powell File, Box 8. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.

- "Handling of the Economy." Debate Background Materials. Susan Clough File, Box 35. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "Iran: Hostages." Debate Background Materials. Susan Clough File, Box 35. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "Jobs/Urban Policy." Debate Briefing Materials 2. Jody Powell File, Box 8. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "KEY LINES TO USE AT BEGINNING OF COMMENTS ON REAGAN." Debate Briefing Materials 2. Jody Powell File, Box 8. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "Leadership." Debate Background Materials. Susan Clough File, Box 35. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "Memo from sam to phc 10/18/80." Debate Background Materials Comparison of Carter, Reagan, and Anderson. Susan Clough File, Box 35. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "Most Notable Reagan Quotes." Debate Background Materials. Susan Clough File, Box 35. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "National Defense." Debate Briefing Materials 2. Jody Powell File, Box 8. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- Popkin, Sam. "Balloon Popping." Debate Background Materials. Susan Clough File, Box 35. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "POSITION IN THE WORLD." Debate Briefing Materials 2. Jody Powell File, Box 8. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- Powell, Jody. "Memo from Jody Powell to the President." Debate Briefing Materials 1. Jody Powell File, Box 8. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- Rafshoon, Gerald. "Background Analysis." Campaign Strategies, 1980. Susan Clough File, Box 34. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- _____. "Memo to the President -- EYES ONLY." Campaign Strategies, 1980. Susan Clough File, Box 34. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.

- "Reagan's California Record." Debate Background Materials. Susan Clough File, Box 35. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "Reagan Charges Against Carter." Debate Background Materials. Susan Clough File, Box 35. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "REAGAN CURRENT POSITIONS." Debate Background Materials. Susan Clough File, Box 35. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "Reagan Themes: Foreign Policy and National Security." Debate Background Materials. Susan Clough File, Box 35. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "Reagan Weaknesses." Debate Briefing Materials 1. Jody Powell File, Box 8. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "Rebuttal to Reagan Charges." Debate Briefing Materials 2. Jody Powell File, Box 8. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- "Record as Governor." Debate Briefing Materials 1. Jody Powell File, Box 8. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.
- Smith, Tim. "Memo from Tim Smith to Hamilton Jordan and Bob Strauss." Preliminary Debate Discussions. Susan Clough File, Box 38. Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta GA.

Published Primary Sources:

- Carter, Jimmy. Keeping Faith, Memoirs of a President. New York: Bantam Books, 1982.
- Harwood, Richard, ed. The Pursuit of the Presidency 1980. New York: Berkley Books, 1980.
- Jordan, Hamilton. Crisis, The Last Year of the Carter Presidency. New York: Berkley Books, 1982.
- Powell, Jody. The Other Side of the Story. New York: William Morrow, 1984.
- Reagan, Ronald. An American Life. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990.

Secondary Sources

Books:

- Adams, William C. Television Coverage of the 1980 Presidential Campaign. Norwood: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1983.
- Anderson, Patrick. Electing Jimmy Carter. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994.
- Boller, Paul. Presidential Campaigns. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- Ballinger, John, ed. The Campaign for President, 1980 in Restrospect. Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1981.
- Chagall, David. The New Kingmakers. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981.
- David, Paul, and David H. Everson. The Presidential Election and Transition. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983.
- Drew, Elizabeth. Election Journal: Political Events 1987-1988. New York: William Morrow, 1989.
- Ferguson, Thomas, and Joel Rogers, eds. The Hidden Election, Politics and Economics in the 1980 Presidential Campaign. New York: Pantheon Books, 1981.
- Ferguson, Thomas, and Joel Rogers. Right Turn: The Decline of the Democrats and the future of American Politics. New York: Hill and Wang, 1986.
- Friednberg, Robert V, ed. Rhetorical Studies of National Political Debates 1960-1992. Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1994.
- Germond, Jack, and Jules Witcover. Blue Smoke and Mirrors, How Reagan Won and Why Carter Lost the Election of 1980. New York: Viking Press, 1981.
- Hellweg, Susan, Michael Pfau, and Steven R. Brydon. Televised Presidential Debates: Advocacy in Contemporary America. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1992.

- Kaufman, Burton I. The Presidency of James Earl Carter, Jr. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993.
- Kiewe, Amos, ed. The Modern Presidency and Crisis Rhetoric. Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1994.
- Kraus, Sidney. Televised Presidential Debates and Public Policy. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1988.
- _____, ed. The Great Debates: Background-Perspective-Effects. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962.
- _____, ed. The Great Debates: Carter vs. Ford 1976. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979.
- Mitchell, Lee. With the Nation Watching. Lexington: Lexington Books, 1979.
- Myles, Martel. Political Campaign Debates: Images, Strategies, and Tactics. New York: Longmans, 1983.
- Trent, Judith S., and Robert V. Friedenbergl. Political Campaign Communication, Principles and Practics. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1983.
- Rozell, Mark J. The Press and the Carter Presidency. Boulder: Westview Press, 1989.
- Schlesinger, Arthur, Jr., ed. History of American Presidential Elections 1789-1984. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986.
- Sick, Gary. October Surprise: America's Hostages in Iran and the Election of Ronald Reagan. New York: Random House, 1991.
- Smith, Craig Allen, and Kathy B. Smith. The White House Speaks: Presidential Leadership as Persuasion. Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1994.
- Smith, Paul. Electing a President. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982.
- Swerdlow, Joe. Beyond Debate: A Paper on Televised Presidential Debates. New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1984.
- White, Theodore H. America in Search of Itself, The Making of the President 1956-1980. New York: Harper and Row, 1982.

White, Theodore H. The Making of the President 1960 New York: Atheneum, 1961.

Articles:

Berquist, Goodwin F., and James L. Golden. "Media Rhetoric, Criticism, and the Public Perception of the 1980 Presidential Debates." Quarterly Journal of Speech 67 (1981): 125-137.

Brydon, Steven R. "The Two Faces of Jimmy Carter: The Transformation of a Presidential Debater, 1976 and 1980." Central States Speech Journal 36 (1985): 138-151.

Friedenberg, Robert V. "'Selfish Interests' or the Prerequisites for Political Debate: An Analysis of the 1980 Presidential Debate and Its Implications for Future Campaigns." Journal of the American Forensic Association 18 (1981): 91-98.

McCall, Jeffrey M. "The Panelists as Pseudo-Debaters: An Evaluation of the Questions and Questioners in the Major Debates of 1980." Journal of the American Forensic Association 21 (1984): 97-104.

Rowland, Robert. "The Substance of the 1980 Carter-Reagan Debate." Southern Speech Communication Journal 51 (1986): 142-165.

Tiemens, Robert K., Susan A. Hellweg, Phillip Kipper, and Steven L. Phillips. "An Integrative Verbal and Visual Analysis of the Carter-Reagan Debate." Communication Quarterly 33 (1985): 39- 42

Vita

George Smaragdis received his B.A. from the College of William and Mary in Virginia. He is the recipient of a National Merit Special Scholarship and has been designated as an A.P. Exam Scholar. He has made frequent contributions to the *Collegiate Times* editorial page. His writing has also been published in *The Washington Post*.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George Smaragdis". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.