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Schema theory: An application to political communication

Nitz, Michael Earl, M.A.

The University of Arizona, 1991

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SCHEMA THEORY: AN APPLICATION
TO POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

by

Michael Earl Nitz

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
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In the Graduate College
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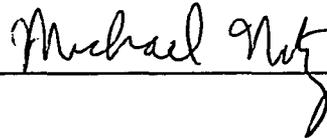
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This thesis has been approved on the date shown below:

Henry C. Kenski
Henry C. Kenski
Professor of Communication
and Political Science

November 27, 1991
Date

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ABSTRACT

Political schema research (Kinder, Peters, Abelson, & Fiske, 1980; Miller, Wattenberg, & Malanchuk, 1986) has centered on the schemas voters use to select presidents. Unfortunately, political researchers have all but neglected the state and local level. Consequently, this thesis focuses on the schemas voters use to select governors to determine if these schemas differ from schemas used to select presidents. This thesis also tests the relationship between political sophistication and the use of certain schemas to select a governor.

Surveys were administered to 563 adults waiting for jury duty. Results indicate the schemas voters use to select governors differ from those used to select presidents. Political sophistication is positively related to usage of issues and performance schemas. Further research should explore political schemas at state and local levels.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

People are faced with an overwhelming supply of information. In order to cope with this information, people need cognitive shortcuts. Fiske and Taylor (1984) note that "assumptions about other people enable all of us to function" (p. 139). This thesis will focus on one of these assumptions--schemas. First, the origins of the schema concept will be explored. Second, various definitions of schemas will be offered, culminating in a working definition that will be used for this thesis. Third, literature on schemas will be reviewed, with special emphasis on formation of schemas, types of schemas, and the functions that these schemas serve. The results of this literature review will then be extended to the domain of political communication. This section will examine how people acquire political knowledge, the functions political schemas serve and types of political schemas. This section will also state research questions and hypotheses designed to expand the body of knowledge on political schemas.

Rationale

Individuals organize thoughts about others into broad categories or schemas (Fiske & Taylor, 1984). These schemas

serve many useful functions, including two most relevant to this thesis. Schemas provide a basis for making more confident predictions and influence the weighting of evidence brought to bear in making decisions (Lodge & Hamill, 1986). Schemas also provide criteria for selecting information and guidelines for processing that information.

Researchers have found that people organize their political thoughts in a similar manner (Lau & Sears, 1985). Consequently, schemas also influence one's **political** decisions and evaluations of candidates. Voting is one of the many political decisions that people make. Lau (1985) and Milburn (1991) note that schemas are predictive of voting behavior. If schemas influence voting decisions, then it is important to know **what** these schemas are in order to better understand political cognition and communication.

This question has stimulated research into discovering the schemas that people use to evaluate and select political candidates. Unfortunately, most political schema research looks at the schemas voters use to select **presidential** candidates (Kinder, 1978; 1985; Kinder, Peters, Abelson, & Fiske, 1980; Miller, Wattenberg, & Malanchuk, 1986). Two notable exceptions to this body of research include research examining the schemas voters use to select congressional candidates (Miller, 1990) and research examining the schemas voters use to select state supreme court justices (Squire &

Smith, 1988). Research at the gubernatorial level is relatively non-existent.

This thesis explores the schemas that citizens use to support gubernatorial candidates. Research focusing on governors is important for three reasons. First, Miller (1990) has shown clear differences in voters' schemas across different political levels (presidential vs. congressional). This thesis will attempt to see whether these differences extend to the gubernatorial level. Second, while governors serve an executive function similar to presidents, they seem to be more involved in the legislative process than presidents. Third, governors seem to be closer to, and more involved with, their constituents than presidents. Thus, are the schemas used to evaluate governors more analogous to schemas used to evaluate presidents, members of Congress, presidents and members of Congress, or are they unique to a state and local level?

This thesis will attempt to answer several questions. First, what schemas do voters use to select a governor? Second, are the schemas used to select a governor different from those used to select a President or member of Congress? Third, does political sophistication determine the schemas voters use to select a governor? Before one can delve into research on political schemas, however, it is first necessary to discuss the background of the schema concept.

History of the Schema Concept

Origins. The schema concept arose out of research on person and object perception. It was first formulated by Immanuel Kant, who "sought to explain what he called the **synthetic a priori**, the means by which knowledge might begin with experience and yet not derive from experience" (Beniger & Jones, 1990, p. 154). Fiske and Taylor (1984) note that the schema concept is based on the assertion that people actively construct reality and create meaning, incorporating information from the real world onto this meaning. This assumption stems directly from Gestalt psychology: "the schema concept builds on the constructive or interpretive view of perception by positing that organized prior knowledge shapes what is perceived and recorded in memory" (Fiske & Taylor, p. 142).

Research endeavors in three areas have led to the formulation of the schema concept. First is research on person perception (Asch, 1946; N. H. Anderson, 1974; 1981). Research in this area has led to the positing of two models explaining how people comprehend incoming information. The configural model states that an impression is made up of traits (Fiske & Taylor, 1984). However, these traits have meaning only in relation to other traits in a particular context. For example, an intelligent Saddam Hussein might be seen as devious, while an intelligent George Bush might

be seen as wise. The second model is an algebraic one in which each individual trait is evaluated in isolation and then combined with other traits to make an overall judgment. For example, when observing a politician for the first time, one would simply average together all the politician's good and bad aspects.

While both of these models have some conceptual value, both are non-falsifiable. Consequently, a second area of research, nonsocial memory, evolved. This domain of research produced cognitive schema theories that offered an advantage of being able to describe generalizations and inferences in terms of guiding frameworks or schemas (Hastie, 1981). For example, Kinder, Peters, Abelson, and Fiske (1980) found that voters who felt an ideal president should be able to solve economic problems were much more likely to use this criterion in evaluating the current president.

The third area of research focuses on object categorization. Several categorization models are based on the concept of prototypes, "typical or ideal instances of a category" (Fiske & Taylor, 1984, p. 146). According to this view, no single set of attributes defines a category. Rather, people can ascertain the average of a category by exposing themselves to particular, varying instances of the category (Cantor & Mischel, 1979). If these individual

instances resemble the category prototype, they will be placed in that category. Interestingly, Fiske (1982) found that it may not be beneficial to represent the prototype of a category as she discovered that prototypic politicians were met with negative affect.

Schema Literature

Definitions. At this point, it is necessary to offer a definition of schema that will serve as a guide for this thesis. Bartlett (1932), one of the originators of the schema concept, defines a schema as "an active organization of past reactions, or of past experiences, which must be supposed to be operating in any well-adapted organic response" (p. 20). Contemporary researchers define schemas in a similar manner. Fiske (1982) defines schemas as "general knowledge structures, abstracted from experience with instances containing richly interconnected information about the attributes of the most usual instance" (p. 60). G. Mandler (1982) defines schemas as "representations of experience that guide action, perception, and thought" (p. 3), while Milburn (1991) describes schemas as "the cognitive structures that individuals use to organize political and social information" (p. 72).

A combination of these definitions best serves the aims of this thesis. A schema will be defined, therefore, as a cognitive structure, abstracted from experience with

instances, that represents organized political knowledge and guides political action, perception, and thought.

Types of schemas. There are four types of social schemas (Fiske & Taylor, 1984; Taylor & Crocker, 1981). Person schemas deal with a person's traits and goals and involve "people's understanding of the psychology of typical or specific individuals" (Fiske & Taylor, p. 149). A person schema might be what a typical conservative is like or what a specific conservative, e.g. Barry Goldwater, is like.

A second type of schema is a self-schema. A self-schema contains information about one's self and will influence what is seen first in others (Fiske & Taylor, 1984; Wyer & Srull, 1981). For example, a person who is involved in the pro-life movement might focus on a candidate's stance on abortion. This notion of self-schema influencing perceptions of others is consistent with Kinder et al's (1980).

A third type of schema is a role schema. Role schemas are norms and behaviors associated with a particular social position and focus on "broad social categories, such as age, race, sex, or occupation" (Fiske & Taylor, 1984, p. 149). An example of a role schema would be a schema for presidents (Kinder et al, 1980) or governors. Inherent in these schemas would be information associating appropriate traits

or behaviors with a particular role. For example, should a governor be competent, honest, or both?

The fourth type of schema is an event schema. Event schemas include "shared understandings of what typically happens on certain occasions" (Fiske & Taylor, 1984, p. 149). An example of an event schema would be a schema for a political campaign or a political debate. By providing a sequence, event schemas help one fill in missing blanks with consistent information, remember facts, and clarify ambiguous material.

Schema development. Schemas change as they develop out of repeated exposure with instances (Fiske & Taylor, 1984). As schemas develop, they become more complex, abstract, and moderate. In addition, schemas become more organized and compact. Fiske and Taylor assert that this "frees up the capacity to notice discrepancies and to assimilate exceptions without altering the schema" (p. 175). Finally, schemas become more conservative, or more resistant to change over time.

Fiske and Taylor (1984) make a crucial point in terms of this thesis when they state that people abstract schemas from similar events or instances. This point is amplified by Taylor and Crocker's (1981) finding that schemas basically develop and change with experience. The more one

is exposed to instances of a particular type, the more abstract one's schema for that type becomes.

This thesis emphasizes this abstraction of schemas through exposure to instances in both its guiding definition of schema and in operational definitions utilized in the hypotheses. The more one participates in political events such as voting, signing petitions, volunteering time, or donating money, the more abstract one's political schemas become. In other words, one becomes more of an expert (Fiske & Kinder, 1981; Fiske, Kinder, & Larter, 1983) or a political sophisticate (Lodge & Hamill, 1985; Milburn, 1991).

Functions of schemas. Schemas serve a variety of useful functions. Taylor and Crocker (1981) contend that schemas lend structure to experience, increase the speed of information processing, enable perceivers to fill in missing data from a stimulus, and provide a basis for evaluating experience. Graber (1984;1987) notes that schemas aid in the organization and evaluation of new information and in determining what information will be noticed, processed and stored. Finally, well-developed schemas help one generalize from one problem domain to another (Anderson, J. R., Greeno, Kline, & Neves, 1981) and help one break a problem into "manageable, minimally interacting parts" (Jeffries, Turner, Polson, & Atwood, 1981, p. 279).

Political Schemas

This thesis is mainly interested in the **types** of schemas people use to select political candidates, specifically gubernatorial candidates. Political schemas are analogous to schemas in other social dimensions. Political cognition researchers have recognized the value of the schema concept and have noted its useful applications to political communication (Axelrod, 1973; Lau, 1985; Torney-Purta, 1990). This section will examine how people acquire political knowledge, or develop schemas, the functions served by political schemas, and the various types of schemas that voters use to select candidates.

Acquisition of political knowledge. People acquire political knowledge (and develop political schemas) in a method similar to schema development in other areas. Torney-Purta (1990) notes that "schemas and the processes by which they change provide a link between political socialization research and current psychological theory about cognitive development" (p. 99). She notes that incoming information is organized by two processes- assimilation and accommodation. In assimilation, information is incorporated and stored either conceptually or piecemeal. In accommodation, information changes a schema through either weak or radical restructuring. Bartal and Saxe (1990) cite two key factors influencing the way

in which political acquisition unfolds: 1) cognitive capacity, which involves an individual's basic cognitive skill and style; and 2) epistemic motivation, which involves motivation to have validity, closure and specificity in one's knowledge structures.

In sum, people's political schemas become more developed through increasing exposure to political instances (Krosnick & Milburn, 1990). Individuals' schemas vary in complexity (Lodge & Hamill, 1986), if only because humans vary in terms of their cognitive capacity, motivation (and ability) to process information, and in their sheer amount of exposure to political instances (Bar-Tal & Saxe, 1990; Kosicki & McLeod, 1990). Some voters will be willing and able to process the voluminous amount of information present in a political campaign. These voters will pay more attention to news about the candidates and the issues and will donate time and/or money to a campaign (i.e., expose themselves to more political instances).

On the other hand, many people really do not care about politics. These people never volunteer time or money for a candidate, never write letters, and rarely, if ever, vote. This group most likely comprises the majority of the American public (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; Sniderman, Hagen, Tetlock, & Brady, 1986). Between these two extremes of political diehards and political non-

activists are people who usually vote and may donate an hour or two at the local campaign headquarters, but that is the extent of their political participation.

Thus, people's political schemas vary in terms of their complexity and development. In addition, voters vary in their ability to use schemas efficiently (Fiske & Kinder, 1981; Graber, 1984; Lodge & Hamill, 1986; Milburn, 1991; Miller, Wattenberg, & Malanchuk, 1986). Some people can access their political knowledge base faster than others. They then use this knowledge to make inferences and decisions that are quicker than others' inferences and decisions. This diversity in people's knowledge bases has been the focus of a particular domain of political schema research.

Experts vs. novices. Research has indicated a distinct difference between experts and novices in terms of their ability to process political information (Fiske, 1982; Fiske & Kinder, 1981; Fiske et al., 1983; Fiske, Lau, & Smith, 1990; Judd & Downing, 1990; Krosnick, 1990; Krosnick & Milburn, 1990; McGraw & Pinney, 1990). Milburn (1991) asserts that individuals vary in the accessibility of their political constructs and that this variance reflects "individual differences in political sophistication" (p 76). Milburn states that while experts' schemas contain more information, experts can retrieve this information more

quickly than a novice can. Paradoxically, Milburn discovered that while the activation of political sophisticates' schemas enables them to recall more inconsistent information, it also reduces the complexity of political thinking once an individual's schema is activated (p. 81).

According to Milburn (1991), the complexity of thinking is reduced because people utilize heuristic processing, or take cognitive shortcuts, in order to make sense of incoming information. Milburn notes while this form of processing has the advantage of enabling political sophisticates, or schematics, to recall more information at a faster rate, it can lead to cognitive errors. The main error is a "consistency bias" in which schematics recall more policy statements that are consistent with a candidate's party than are inconsistent with it (Lodge & Hamill, 1986, p. 505).

Scholars have cited additional information-processing advantages inherent to experts. Experts, or political sophisticates, have abstract organizing principles (i.e. schemas) that help them encode and generate political judgments with greater efficiency (Fiske, Lau, & Smith, 1990; Judd & Downing, 1990, p. 121). Krosnick (1990) states that experts "tend to view information in terms of large, meaningful patterns...and represent this information at a deeper, more principled level in terms of broad categories"

(p. 3). Novices, on the other hand, represent information in a more piecemeal fashion. These broad categories should be particularly well developed among sophisticates (Fiske & Kinder, 1981; McGraw & Pinney, 1990).

Much research in this area has been conducted by Fiske and her colleagues (Fiske, 1982; Fiske & Kinder, 1981; Fiske et al., 1983). The results of this work indicate distinct differences between experts and novices in terms of their ability to use schemas. Fiske assessed the content and affect of subjects' schemas about politicians and then presented targets who varied in degrees of schematic fit. She found that novices who do not possess a politician schema do not notice a lack of fit, whereas experts do. When a schematic match occurs for experts, the associated affect for those who possess the relevant schema is cued. For example, a politician who looks like one is not at all favored by those who know about politicians (Fiske, 1982).

While this expert-novice distinction is useful conceptually, it is plagued by shortcomings. First, most research has operationalized expertise as a categorical variable--one either is an expert, or is not (Fiske, 1982; Fiske & Kinder, 1981; Fiske et al., 1983; Lodge & Hamill, 1986). It is likely, however, that expertise could be better conceptualized as a continuous variable since people are exposed to varying amounts of political instances.

Lau and Sears (1985) took a step in this direction with their four phases of expertise. Phase one, composed of rank novices, involves only very rudimentary knowledge and specific, concrete examples of a general concept(e.g., a liberal is someone like Ted Kennedy) (p. 353). As people's schemas develop and gain knowledge, they move into the second phase and become stereotypic novices. Only the most representative attributes of a concept are known. For example, a conservative favors higher spending on defense. There is also a bias for schema-consistent information, so perhaps Lodge and Hamill's (1986) experts were only "phase two experts."

Most people never reach the third phase of relative expertise. In this stage, people have multiple issues and elements associated with a schema. For example, a person would know that a liberal favors more spending for the poor, less defense spending, and perhaps national health insurance. At the fourth phase, one is a true expert. Processing is automatic, yet Lau and Sears (1985) note that the individual elements of the schema do not enter awareness. It would take longer for absolute experts to process schema-inconsistent information since the individual elements of the schema would have to be "brought into active awareness" (Lau & Sears, p. 354).

It appears that these four phases are more categorical than continuous. There are bound to be people who fall on a boundary between two phases. Lodge and Hamill (1985) note that expertise is acquired only through "exposure and practice" (p. 505). Judd and Downing (1990) assert that "exposure to political information and behavioral participation in politics may lead to greater exposure to others' political opinions and may therefore facilitate the formation of political opinions.." (p. 51). Hence, the variable of expertise could be reclassified as political participation, or to borrow a phrase from Milburn (1991), political sophistication.

Political sophistication will be operationalized more specifically in the methods section. For the moment, it will suffice to say that since people are exposed to varying amounts of political instances or information, their level of political sophistication will vary, resulting in a **continuum** of schema development from true novice (politically unsophisticated) to true expert (politically sophisticated).

The second shortcoming of expert-novice research is more easily resolved. The subjects generally used in any experiment on expertise (or schema research in general) are college students. While college students offer an advantage as a population of convenience, they offer a distinct

disadvantage in this research area due to the fact that most college students are political novices. Fiske's experts were thus experts only relative to other college students. Therefore, this thesis will obtain subjects from a courthouse jury pool.

Types of political schemas. The schemas people use to select political candidates are essentially derivatives of the four basic schemas--person, role, self, and event--mentioned above. Milburn (1991) lists four types of schemas--person, role, self, and political. His definition of person schemas is strikingly similar to Fiske and Taylor's (1984). He defines person schemas as "containing knowledge and beliefs about typical people, their characteristics, and their intentions" (p. 73).

In terms of politics, person schemas would contain knowledge about the characteristics of typical politicians. Candidates can even create a person schema for their opponent that affects voters' subsequent evaluations. For example, Bush applied the "liberal" label to Dukakis early in the 1988 presidential campaign. Consequently, this label influenced both the encoding and the retrieval of subsequent information about Dukakis (Milburn, 1991, p. 83-84).

Milburn (1991) draws on the work of Markus (1977) in defining a self-schema. A self-schema is a "hierarchically organized knowledge and belief structure relevant to the

self" (Milburn, p. 74). Milburn states that people recognize information relevant to their self-schema. In the political domain, McGraw and Pinney (1990) found that on-line processing of political information is enhanced if that information is acquired with a specific goal in mind. Relatedly, Kinder and Sanders (1990) state that citizens' opinions on an issue can be dramatically modified in relation to how the issue is framed. Markus (1977) notes that the existence of schemas about self facilitates processing of information about the self on dimensions relevant to the schema. For example, people who see themselves as highly liberal may pay more attention to liberal issues or candidates. Their liberal orientation will also guide their evaluations of candidates.

Role schemas operate in a similar manner. Some people are gender schematic and pay close attention to gender-related information. Milburn (1991) summarizes research in this area with the finding that role schemas are so powerful that subjects often incorrectly remember characteristics about people presented in videotapes that were not there, but were consistent with the stereotype. Subjects could be shown a videotape of a person who is described as a politician. Subjects would recall more information consistent with the person being a politician. However, subjects would also recall information consistent with the

politician stereotype, even if this information was non-existent in the videotape.

People are also able to blend various political role schemas into a variety of different combinations. For example, there are role schemas for politicians, women, and women politicians.

Milburn's (1991) fourth type of schema, political, occupies the main interest of this thesis. Political schemas are essentially a combination of the three schemas mentioned above and additional schemas that voters use specifically to evaluate political candidates. Numerous scholars have attempted to identify these schemas. Lau (1985) utilized responses from the National Election Study (NES) surveys and found four different political schemas used by voters-issues, groups, personalities, and parties. Miller (1990) also used NES survey data as well as data from the 1988 Senate Election study (SES). From survey responses, Miller identified six categories of political schemas that people use to select congressional candidates: competence, reliability, integrity, charisma, appearance, and responsiveness.

Kinder (1985) asked interviewees to judge the degree to which presidential candidates possess a series of traits. Interviewers then asked how much the trait fitted the subject's impression of the 1984 presidential and vice-

presidential candidates. Kinder found that the traits clustered into four groups of personal schemas--competence, leadership, integrity, and empathy. Kinder's results were replicated by McCann (1990). Hamill, Lodge, and Blake (1985) identified three schemas similar to both role and self-schemas: class (rich/poor), partisan (Republican/Democrat), and ideological (liberal/conservative). Analogous to self-schemas, Hamill et al. found that individuals who held one of these schemas were more accurate in their analysis of issues relevant to that schemas. For example, Hamill et al found that persons who held a class schema were more accurate in judging Reagan's positions on economic policy issues than noneconomic issues.

In sum, political schemas are acquired and developed in a manner analogous to schemas in other fields. Political schemas also incorporate three of the four basic types of schemas (Fiske & Taylor, 1984; Taylor & Crocker, 1981)-- person, role, and self. However, political schemas are also a class unto themselves since they go beyond these three schemas and incorporate new schemas such as party, class, issues, and group identification.

Functions of political schemas. Political schemas serve the same functions as their counterparts in other categories. Lodge and Hamill (1986) provide an excellent

summary (p. 506) of the findings in the schema functioning literature that directly relate to political cognition (Lau & Sears, 1985).

In terms of political communication, schemas: 1) provide categories for labeling people, places and events, 2) facilitate the chunking or grouping of information into larger, more meaningful, and more easily retrievable categories, 3) influence what information will be attended to, encoded, and retrieved, 4) facilitate the recognition, recall and ease of retrieval of schema-relevant information, 5) enable the individual to make inferences from incomplete data by filling in missing information, 6) provide a basis for making more confident decisions and predictions, and 7) influence the weighting of evidence brought to bear in making decisions and evaluating probabilities (Lodge & Hamill, p. 506).

These last two functions constitute the primary interest of this thesis. The guiding definition stated that schemas guide political action. Research cited above (Lau, 1985; Milburn, 1991) stated that these schemas influence voting decisions. Self-schemas are best equipped to explain this phenomenon. Markus (1977) notes that an overweight person will pay close attention to the physical build of others. Relatedly, if a person is pro-choice, they should be more likely to evaluate a candidate's stance on abortion.

A person whose political schema contains the notion that a good governor should be competent will be more likely to evaluate a governor in terms of competence.

Thus, people hold particular schemas about themselves. They use these schemas to evaluate themselves and others. This thesis is interested in those schemas people use to evaluate gubernatorial candidates. If researchers know what schemas guide voters' evaluations of political candidates, then they will be better able to predict voting behavior (Lau, 1985; Milburn, 1991). Unfortunately, research in this area has been narrowly focused.

Schemas and voting. With few exceptions (Miller, 1990), most scholars have looked at the schemas used by voters to select **presidential** candidates. This research has produced mixed results in terms of identifying the most important schema. Many researchers (Conover & Feldman, 1989; Downs, Kaid, & Ragan, 1990; Fiske, 1982; Gopoian, 1982; Graber, 1984, 1987,; Kinder, 1978; 1985; Kinder et al., 1980; Miller, Wattenberg, & Malanchuk, 1986; Sullivan & Masters, 1988) have asserted that a candidate's personal traits are the most important schema for voters. These personal traits include competence, integrity, reliability, leadership, strength, empathy, and a voter's emotional attraction towards a candidate.

Party identification, while declining (Romero, 1989), is still an important (Jacoby, 1988; Lodge & Hamill, 1985; Sears, 1990), especially in local elections (Squire & Smith, 1988). Squire and Smith studied responses to a 1982 California poll surveying whether state supreme court justices should be confirmed or removed based on whether they had been nominated by Jerry Brown or Ronald Reagan. They found that in the absence of any information about a candidate, subjects relied on the candidate's party affiliation to make their voting decision. Squire and Smith note that "nonpartisan elections are easily turned into partisan elections in the minds of voters" (p. 170).

Issues are also an important schema for voters. The relative importance of certain issues seems to vary by study. Conover and Feldman (1984) discovered that domestic (economy, racial and social affairs) and foreign affairs issues are two key criteria used to evaluate candidates. Socioeconomic issues are a key consideration for many voters (Jacoby, 1990; Kinder, Adams, & Gronke, 1989; Lockerbie, 1989). Experts and novices differ in their preference for issues as a decision criteria. Basically, research has found that experts use issues more than novices to evaluate political candidates (Milburn, 1991; Sniderman et al., 1986).

Of all the schemas alluded to, issues are probably the **most** consistent with the concept of a self-schema. The more important an issue is to a voter, the more likely it is that the voter will use this issue to evaluate a candidate. For example, a voter particularly concerned about the environment will notice a candidate's position on this issue more than other issues and will be more motivated to make environment-related inferences from other issues and traits. This phenomenon in which voters use a particular political schema to guide their voting preferences, has been documented by several researchers (Erber & Lau, 1990; Hamill et al., 1985; Rapaport, Metcalf, & Hartman, 1989; Sigelman & Sigelman, 1982). An exception to this self-interest type of schema was unearthed by Sears, Lau, Tyler and Allen (1980). Sears et al found that conditions facilitating more self-interested political attitudes, such as political sophistication or perceiving a policy area as a major national problem, had no effect on either policy preferences or voting behavior. Rather, symbolic attitudes (ideology, party identification, and racial prejudice) had major effects on voters' evaluations of political candidates.

Thus, people have political schemas that can influence their voting decisions. Voters vary in the schemas that they consider important in selecting a political candidate. Some people may feel charisma is important. Others may feel

integrity is crucial. Still others may feel strongly about a certain issue and may use the candidates' stances on this issue as a key decision-making factor. The key point is that people use these schemas to guide their voting decisions.

Hypotheses. Very little empirical work has focused on the assessment of non-presidential candidates (Miller, 1990). Miller attempted to remedy this deficiency by focusing on public judgments of Senate and House candidates. Nevertheless, much work still needs to be completed in assessing the schemas voters use to select public officials other than presidents. Research focusing on schemas at the gubernatorial level is non-existent. Consequently, this thesis attempts to look at the schemas people use to select gubernatorial candidates. This section will offer three research questions and several hypotheses.

RQ1: What is the single most important schema that voters use to select a governor?

RQ2: Do voters use the same schemas to select gubernatorial candidates as they do to select presidential candidates?

RQ3: Do voters use the same schemas to select gubernatorial candidates as they do to select Senate and House candidates?

The answers to these questions are admittedly unclear (Miller, 1990). This thesis will seek to identify schemas voters use to select gubernatorial candidates and compare

these schemas to those used to evaluate presidential and congressional candidates. Hopefully, the results of these comparisons will stimulate more political schema research at the state and local level.

The first two hypotheses are an effort to move beyond the expert-novice distinction. It was stated that political sophistication could be more accurately conceptualized as a continuous, rather than categorical, variable. This set of hypotheses strives to reflect this continuous nature of political sophistication. Political sophistication will be defined as the degree of a person's interest in politics and knowledge of political leaders (Lodge & Hamill, 1986, p. 505). This definition is consistent with political cognition research citing the importance of knowledge (Conover & Feldman, 1984; Lodge & Hamill, 1986; Markus, 1977) and with Lodge and Hamill's assertion that expertise is acquired only through exposure and practice.

H1:As a person's political sophistication rises, the likelihood that they will use issues to evaluate gubernatorial candidates will rise.

H2:As a person's political sophistication rises, the likelihood that they will use personal traits to evaluate gubernatorial candidates will fall.

These hypotheses are consistent with general findings that experts use issues more than novices to evaluate political candidates (Milburn, 1991; Sniderman et al.,

1986). Yet, recent research findings indicate that personality traits are "stressed highest among the best-educated voters" (Graber, 1987, p. 117). At first glance, this may seem contradictory to the findings of Milburn and Sniderman et al. However, Miller (1990) noted that judgments of personal character are relevant to performance in office as they deal with competence and responsiveness more than charisma or personal appearance. Graber and others (Miller, 1990; Miller et al., 1986) attribute this finding to better-educated voters (political sophisticates) realizing that, in addition to issues, personality traits such as competence, integrity, reliability, and responsiveness are critical to a president's success in office. Thus, political sophisticates use **both** issues and certain personality traits to evaluate political candidates.

Miller (1990) breaks personality traits into two components: 1) performance criteria, which include competence, integrity, responsiveness, and reliability, and 2) personal character traits, which include charisma and personal features. Political sophisticates are more able to make inferences from the former traits about whether a candidate will respond to people's needs and perform competently, reliably, and honestly. In addition, political sophisticates are more able to relate these traits to various issues. This is consistent with the fact that

political sophisticates have more organized, well-developed schemas. Consequently, the following set of hypotheses attempts to determine whether politically sophisticated voters will use **certain** personality traits more than others in evaluating a gubernatorial candidate.

H3: Politically sophistication is more closely associated with the use of performance traits (competence, integrity, reliability, and responsiveness) than personal character traits (charisma and personal features) when one is evaluating a gubernatorial candidate.

In other words, political sophistication should be able to predict a voter's use of these performance traits over personal character traits.

For the purposes of these three hypotheses, personality traits will be defined as judgments about the personal character of a candidate, using Miller's six dimensions (Miller, 1990; Miller et al., 1986) . The first dimension, competence, reflects judgments about a candidate's political experience and qualifications for office. The second dimension, integrity, deals with trustworthiness. The third dimension, reliability, refers to the ability to follow through and get the job done. It also refers to a candidate's dependability, strength, decisiveness and responsibility. The fourth dimension, charisma, encompasses a candidate's abilities to get along with and inspire people to mobilize politically. The fifth dimension, personal

features, incorporates traits such as age, race, gender, religion, wealth, and previous occupation. The sixth dimension, responsiveness, refers to the candidate's service to the district/state, bringing projects into the district/state and remaining close to voters (Miller, 1990, p. 534).

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants

The participants were 563 adults who had been summoned to the county courthouse in a large southwestern city for jury duty. After being initially processed in a large room, and while awaiting assignment to a jury panel, prospective jurors were invited by the researcher to fill out a survey (See Appendix 1) on political communication; access to the jury pool was granted by court authorities. Those who agreed to participate comprised a diverse cross-section of the community, as would be expected of a jury pool. It was not feasible to record refusals to participate, but they were rare--certainly less than 1 in 15. The county draws prospective jurors from a list of licensed drivers. Most age groups were well-represented: 26% of respondents were 18-29 years old, 33% were 30-44 years old, 32% were 45-64 years old, and 9% were 65 years or older. Approximately 44% were men and 56% were women. 41% were Democrats, 37% were Republicans, 8% were Independents, and 13% were not registered. This sample was also representative in terms of voting patterns in other elections. Approximately 63% of this sample voted as opposed to 37% who did not vote.

Measures

Political Sophistication. Political sophistication was operationalized using a conglomeration of scales from various researchers (Fiske et al., 1983; Fiske et al., 1990; Judd & Downing, 1990; Kinder et al., 1980; Miller, 1990; Miller et al., 1986). Political sophistication was composed of three components: experience (participation), knowledge, and interest. The experience component was assessed using a five item scale that asked respondents to rate (on a 1-7 point scale) the frequency of their participation in various political activities such as voting or donating time and money. The reliability of this scale (Cronbach's alpha) was .78. The interest component was assessed in a similar manner by asking respondents to rate how frequently they discuss politics and consume various forms of media. The reliability of this scale was .70. The knowledge component was assessed using a five-point scale of open-ended questions such as "Who is the mayor of Tucson?" and "What political party does Senator DeConcini belong to?" The reliability of this scale was .64. One item, "Who is the secretary of state in Arizona?" was deleted since only 16 people answered it correctly.

These three components were then combined to create an additive index to be used for statistical analyses. The reliability of this combined political sophistication scale

was .61. For means on these scales, please see Table 1. This operationalization of political sophistication is similar to that of other researchers (Fiske et al., 1983; Lodge & Hamill, 1986) and consistent with research showing that political involvement is correlated with information level and political activity (Sears, 1990).

Political Schemas. Political schemas were operationalized using Miller (1990) as a guide. First, Miller's six voting criteria, or schemas (competence, integrity, charisma, personal features, responsiveness, and reliability), were collapsed into a six item scale. Party and issues were added to make this an eight-item scale. Respondents were then asked to rate (on a 1-7 point scale) the importance of each of these items in helping them decide to vote for a governor. The reliability of this scale was .76. Second, the traditional open-ended "likes/dislikes" questions were employed in this study. This set of questions asks, "Is there anything in particular that you liked/disliked about (name of candidate)?" Since these questions were used in the 1988 SES study and in all of the NES studies, it is possible to "compare public cognitions of candidates across different levels of office" (Miller, p. 527). One last open-ended question was included in an attempt to tap voters' political schemas. Respondents were asked, "What was the single most important factor in your

voting decision in the recent runoff election between Fife Symington and Terry Goddard?"

These open-ended questions were incorporated in the hope that they would provide a useful companion to the close-ended questions in trying to determine the schemas people use to select governors. More importantly, some have noted that open-ended questions allow one "to examine the respondents' frame of reference without imposing any structure on the responses" (Miller, 1990, p. 527; Miller et al., 1986).

Open-ended Coding. Open-ended responses were coded by the researcher. Responses to the like/dislike questions were coded using a scheme similar to those in NES and SES studies. The categories were a candidate's party ("I always vote Republican/Democrat"), leadership ability (competence-"I liked his past experience as mayor or businessman"), personal qualities (integrity-"Candidate X is an honest man"), issue stances, campaign issues (campaign style-mudslinging, TV ads), philosophy (liberal/conservative), and a miscellaneous category that included responses such as, "I just did/didn't like him".

Categories thought to be especially relevant to a gubernatorial level were also included--for example, a candidate's experience (general and political), government management abilities (efficiency-"Candidate X will/will not

raise taxes, overspend, or balance the budget"), and group connections (big business, special interests, man of the people, etc).

Responses to the single most important criterion question were coded using Miller's six criteria--competence, integrity, reliability, responsiveness, charisma, and personal features. Party, leadership (general mention), and issues were added to the coding scheme. Issues were subdivided into general issues, social issues, and economic issues.

The frequency of responses to these open-ended questions was taken to indicate the relative salience of various characteristics (Miller, 1990). Responses were considered mutually exclusive. The extent to which these responses fit into various categories was taken to reflect the importance of these categories. The category with the highest amount of responses was deemed to be the single most important criterion used to evaluate either candidate.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Political sophistication scale

The three scales reflecting political sophistication-knowledge, interest, and participation (all alphas in excess of .64) were submitted to a principal components factor analysis, which indicated that the three scales loaded moderately on a single factor. The loadings were .46 for interest, .46 for participation, and .41 for knowledge.

Hypothesis Tests

The first hypothesis predicted a positive relationship between political sophistication and the use of issues as a schema to select gubernatorial candidates. This hypothesis was tested using a Pearson product-moment correlation. This hypothesis was confirmed as a significant positive correlation was found between the variables, $r(562) = .32$, $p < .01$. Thus, political sophistication is closely associated with the use of issues as a schema to evaluate a gubernatorial candidate.

The second hypothesis, which posited a negative relationship between political sophistication and the use of personal traits to evaluate a gubernatorial candidate, was

not confirmed. A Pearson product-moment correlation found no relationship between the variables, $r(562)=.01$, NS.

The third hypothesis stated that political sophistication is more closely associated with the use of performance schemas (competence, integrity, reliability, and responsiveness) than personal character traits (charisma and personal features) when one is evaluating a gubernatorial candidate. The results of this analysis indicate significant confirmation of this hypothesis (See Table 2). The results seem to show that competence and integrity are the two schemas most closely associated with political sophistication. Reliability and responsiveness come next in importance. Finally, charisma, and especially personal features are essentially unrelated to political sophistication.

Supplementary Analyses

Respondents were divided into three levels of political sophistication--high, medium, and low-- in an attempt to further tap the association between political sophistication and various schemas. Respondents were divided by taking the mean on the combined political sophistication scale ($M=8.27$) and obtaining values one standard deviation ($SD=2.73$) above and below the mean. All subjects less than or equal to one standard deviation above the mean (5.54) were classified as high political sophisticates ($n=81$). All subjects greater

than or equal to one standard deviation below the mean (11.00) were classified as low political sophisticates ($n=80$). Subjects falling between 5.55 and 10.99 were classified as moderate political sophisticates ($n=402$). These sub-samples were then utilized in subsequent analyses.

An analysis of responses to the open-ended and like/dislike questions showed that issues was the primary schema used by high sophisticated voters to guide their voting decision (See Table 3). Issues were also the single most important schema cited by moderate sophisticated voters, though to a lesser extent than the highly sophisticated voters. Low sophisticated voters rated responsiveness as the most important schema. Competence was also rated highly by both high and moderate sophisticated voters. Interestingly, high sophisticated voters rated integrity highly, yet moderate sophisticated voters rated party more important.

Analysis of the like/dislike questions showed competence was the primary schema high sophisticated voters used to evaluate Terry Goddard (See Table 4). Issues and integrity once again scored high. Moderate sophisticated voters also relied on competence, though to a lesser extent than high sophisticated voters. Low sophisticated voters relied on campaign issues such as mudslinging. Interestingly, Fife Symington's group connections were the

number one factor in high sophisticated voters' evaluations of him (See Table 5). Competence, integrity, and issues followed close behind, however. Moderate sophisticated voters relied more on competence and experience while low sophisticated voters relied on both competence (leadership) and campaign issues. It should be noted at this point that the more sophisticated voters were much more opinionated (See Tables 3-5).

Each of the sub-samples was then analyzed using Miller's (1990) six criteria in addition to party and issues. Means were then obtained for each sub-sample using this eight-item scale. The results of these analyses show that high and moderate sophisticated voters score highly on issues, competence, reliability, and responsiveness (See Table 6). Low sophisticated voters score lower, though not by much. The key difference is that low sophisticated voters rely on personal traits more than high and moderate sophisticated voters.

Last, means were obtained for each sub-sample on the interest, participation, knowledge, and political sophistication scales (See Table 7). The results indicate that high sophisticates, as would be expected, know more, participate more, are more interested, and are more politically sophisticated.

Thus, the results of these supplementary analyses, particularly the open-ended responses, offer additional support that political sophistication is closely associated with certain traits used to evaluate a gubernatorial candidate. These traits include issues, competence, integrity, reliability, and responsiveness. High and, to some extent moderate, sophisticated voters use these traits more than low sophisticated voters to evaluate a gubernatorial candidate.

Research Questions

The first research question posited: What is the single most important criterion used by voters to evaluate a gubernatorial candidate? Based on the results summarized above, and analyzing the sample as a whole, issues taken as a single category seem to be the most important criterion or schema (See Table 8). Party identification, however, still plays an important role in the voting process; at least at the local level. Competence and integrity also occupy prominent roles in voters' evaluations of gubernatorial candidates.

The second research question posited: Do voters use the same criteria to select gubernatorial candidates as they do to select presidential candidates? The answer to this question is yes and no. Consistent with the findings of Kinder et al. (1980), respondents in this study emphasized

personal traits such as competence, trustworthiness, and strong leadership as being important attributes of a good gubernatorial candidate. Issues were also very important criteria. However, respondents emphasized additional criteria (See Tables 9 & 10) such as a candidate's group connections and party affiliation. Therefore, the schemas voters use to evaluate gubernatorial candidates, while similar to presidential schemas, incorporate unique features of their own.

The third research question stated: Do voters use the same criteria to select gubernatorial candidates as they do to select Senate and House candidates? Once again, the answer seems to be yes, as respondents placed strong emphasis on competence, integrity, reliability and responsiveness as key criteria used to evaluate gubernatorial candidates (See Table 2). These findings are consistent with Miller's (1990), which should be expected since Miller's results were combined into an eight-item scale used in this study. The responses to the open-ended questions also indicated a reliance on these criteria (See Tables 8 & 9 & 10). Yet, the results of this study clearly show that voters use additional schemas to evaluate gubernatorial candidates, some of which take precedence over Miller's criteria. These additional schemas include a

candidate's group connections, party affiliation, and especially issue stances.

Thus, respondents' schemas for evaluating gubernatorial candidates are analogous to both presidential and congressional schemas. Yet respondents cite certain additional schemas, including a candidate's group connections, party affiliation, and issue stances. Party affiliation and issues are particularly important.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

Schema Effect

The first goal of this study was to determine if voters' reliance on issues to evaluate a gubernatorial candidate increases as their political sophistication increases. The confirmation of this hypothesis bolsters the findings of various political schema researchers who assert that voters, especially those who are politically sophisticated, place strong emphasis on issues when evaluating candidates (Conover & Feldman, 1984; Lau, 1985; Milburn, 1990; Sniderman et al., 1986). Furthermore, it extends their findings to the gubernatorial level. Issues, particularly socioeconomic and educational issues, were a key consideration for many voters in the Symington-Goddard race.

This finding can be explained by the concept of self-schemas. Certain issues were apparently highly salient political schemas for voters. They then used these schemas to evaluate Symington and Goddard. Another explanation for this finding, and the findings overall, is the nature of the Arizona gubernatorial race. Symington narrowly defeated Goddard in the November election. However, he did not

receive the mandatory 50% of the vote. Thus, a runoff election was held which Symington eventually won. By the time of the February runoff, voters had become fatigued by the incessant negative campaigning. Many voters remarked that they voted for the "lesser of two evils." In light of this scenario, it is possible many voters went back to the lesson from high school civics that issues are important and wrote this down on their questionnaire.

The failure to confirm the second hypothesis suggests that voters may be more rational than previously thought. While some respondents cited superficial and trivial personal traits, most notably the candidates' appearances and Goddard's marital status, as being the important schemas guiding their voting decisions, the frequency of these citations was low. Responses to the open-ended questions tended to emphasize personal traits related more to performance criteria such as competence and integrity. This finding supports the work of Miller and his colleagues (Miller, 1990; Miller et al., 1986). These results can also be explained by civics lessons or other similar socialization processes. Respondents may have chosen competence and integrity as important schemas merely because they have been socialized to do so. Furthermore, voters' choices of competence and integrity may have been a by-product of their disgust with the campaign. In other words,

voters may have selected a candidate on the basis of who was the least dishonest or least incompetent. None of these two candidates was particularly well-liked.

The third hypothesis posited that political sophistication is more closely associated with the use of performance related schemas such as competence, integrity, reliability and responsiveness than personal character traits such as charisma or personal features when one is evaluating a gubernatorial candidate. The confirmation of this hypothesis is one of the strengths of this study. This study clearly illustrates, regardless of the statistical analysis utilized, that competence and integrity, and to a lesser extent reliability and responsiveness, are schemas that voters, especially politically sophisticated voters, feel are important when evaluating a gubernatorial candidate. These results are supported by extant research in the political schema field (Kinder, 1985; McCann, 1990; Miller, 1990; Miller et al., 1986).

In sum, the results of the first and third hypothesis clearly show that one's political sophistication is closely related to the use of schemas such as issues, competence, integrity, reliability, and responsiveness to evaluate a gubernatorial candidate. Political sophisticates are apparently more adept at using a wider variety of political schemas than political unsophisticates when evaluating a

gubernatorial candidate. Furthermore, politically sophisticated voters were much more likely to have an opinion than politically unsophisticated voters. This finding supports research done in the area of political opinionation (Campbell et al., 1960; Krosnick & Milburn, 1990; Sigelman, 1981).

Research Questions

While intended as exploratory analyses, the three research questions in this study yield some illuminating answers that not only support the results of the hypotheses, but also provide potential avenues for future research.

The first research question asked respondents to rate the single most important schema in their evaluation of a gubernatorial candidate. Consistent with the results of the hypotheses, issues, competence, and integrity were the predominant schemas. The candidates' stances on social and economic issues were of particular relevance to voters--a finding congruous with the findings of Jacoby (1990), Kinder et al. (1989), and Lockerbie (1989).

It also appears that party identification is still an important factor at the local level. Various researchers (Jacoby, 1988; Lodge & Hamill, 1986; Sears, 1990; Sears et al., 1980; Squire & Smith, 1988) would tend to agree with this finding. Interestingly, Jacoby notes that party identification can actually affect a person's issues

positions. Although this point merits future research, it was beyond the confines of this study to investigate it. Nevertheless, party identification has a strong impact on voters' evaluations of gubernatorial candidates.

The second research question asked if voters use the same schemas to evaluate governors as they do to evaluate presidents. It appears from the results that while some schemas are similar, voters also use schemas unique to the gubernatorial level. For example, voters feel competence, integrity, and issues are important characteristics of a governor. These characteristics are identical to those for presidents (Kinder et al., 1980; Conover & Feldman, 1984). Voters also strongly rely on a candidate's group connections and party affiliation.

The third research question asked if voters use the same schemas to evaluate governors as they do to evaluate congressional candidates. Responses indicate a pattern similar to the previous question. Voters in this study tended to use schemas identical to Miller's (1990; Miller et al., 1986). These schemas included competence, integrity, reliability, and responsiveness. Once again, however, voters relied strongly on a candidate's group connections and party affiliation. The strongest emphasis seemed to be placed on a candidate's issue stances.

Thus, Miller's (1990) assertion that "when candidate evaluations influence the vote decision, the focus is primarily on their personal character rather than their policy positions or partisan ties," (p. 8) is only partially correct. Granted, personal traits such as competence and integrity are most important. Yet issues, group connections, and party ties are important enough to classify them as schemas unique to a gubernatorial level.

An interesting dilemma is produced when one pairs the fact that issues, regardless of voter sophistication level, was the single most important schema used to evaluate a gubernatorial candidate with the fact that competence and group connections were the most important schemas used to evaluate Goddard and Symington. These conflicting results could have been due to the unique nature of the election. After all, this was an election that was highly distasteful and boring to many voters. Second, voters may have certain self-schemas guiding their evaluations of governors in general and other self-schemas guiding their evaluations of specific gubernatorial candidates.

Third, the discrepancy could have been caused by the question wording on the survey. Voters were asked abstract questions about the schemas they use to evaluate a governor and then were asked specific questions about the schemas they used to evaluate Goddard and Symington. This

difference between the answers to abstract and specific questions could be explained by Kinder et al. (1980) who found that voters' conceptions of an ideal president differed from their conceptions of current presidential candidates.

In sum, voters, especially political sophisticates use a wide variety of political schemas to evaluate a gubernatorial candidate. These schemas include competence, integrity, reliability, responsiveness, issues, party, group connections, and many others. The notion of self-schemas appears to be a primary tool in explaining these results. Voters' political self-schemas seem to place strong importance on issues, personality characteristics, party, and group connections. These self-schemas could have developed in response to family, media, or other societal influences. The critical point, however, is that voters use these self-schemas to evaluate others, namely gubernatorial candidates.

Individuals use many of the same schemas to evaluate a governor as they do to evaluate a president or a congressperson. This is not surprising as Milburn (1991) and Lau (1985) note that individuals use the same schemas when evaluating different political objects. Nonetheless, there are certain schemas unique to the gubernatorial level.

This variation in schema use across political levels could

be the result of the uniqueness of the election, the nature of the questions asked, or more likely the possibility that voters expect different things from governors than presidents or members of Congress. For instance, governors may be expected to be more involved in the legislative process. Future research should attempt to ascertain if these schemas are unique to other state and local levels as well.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study that need to be addressed in future research. The first limitation deals with the environment in which the study was carried out. Respondents completed surveys in a large waiting room filled with approximately 200-300 people. Therefore, the respondents had the opportunity to discuss their answers with their neighbors which could have influenced their subsequent answers. However, any disadvantage resulting from this limitation is far outweighed by the fact that using the jury pool produced a more adequate, cross-sectional sample than the college students generally used in a large part of schema research.

Second, the time during which the study was conducted could have affected the data. The study was performed during the summer months, almost 4 months after the runoff election between Symington and Goddard. Respondents may not

have remembered the reason(s) why they voted for either candidate. Consequently, they may have conveniently checked off criteria they **felt** were good criteria rather than the criteria they actually used in the election. However, the detail present in the open-ended responses seemed to suggest that respondents did remember the election and their reasons for selecting a particular candidate.

Third, since only the researcher coded the open-ended responses, there was no intercoder reliability. Therefore, the open-ended data should be interpreted with caution. The similarity of the open-ended responses to the close-ended data suggests, however, that both were at least moderately consistent in measuring voters' schemas.

Fourth, respondents may have had trouble expressing their opinions in an open-ended question format. This was a possibility as a large number of open-ended questions were left blank. Reilly and Doherty (1989) state that people have good self-insight, but are unable to effectively express this insight through common experimental procedures. Perhaps future schema researchers could utilize more interviews that would allow respondents, especially lower educated ones, a different means of expressing their opinions. Once again, however, the detail present in many of the open-ended responses seems to suggest that people were able to express their opinions adequately.

Furthermore, respondents who left their open-ended questions blank may have been able to express their opinions adequately, but did not want to either due to fatigue, boredom, or apathy.

Finally, the knowledge scale created two problems in this study. First, it had the lowest reliability of any scale. This most certainly was the key reason for the low combined reliability. The question, "Who is the secretary of state of Arizona?", was deleted since almost no one answered it correctly. In addition, the questions that were included were answered correctly by a large percentage of the respondents suggesting the questions were too easy.

The second problem relates to the validity of the knowledge scale. The validity was probably low since most respondents either scored high on a question or scored low (secretary of state question). The only exception was the question asking, "Who is the mayor of Tucson?". There was some variance among responses to this question.

It was deemed necessary to combine interest, knowledge, and participation into a single measure of political sophistication. Research shows that people's schemas become more developed or sophisticated through exposure to instances (Krosnick & Milburn, 1990). These instances would seem to include a person's exposure to types of media, political campaigns, family discussions on politics, school

classes, and a whole host of other political events. In order to be a true sophisticate, a person would need to have participated in at least some political event other than voting (i.e. signing a petition), have interest in politics, and have at least some knowledge about the political process. Nevertheless, future research should ensure that knowledge questions are really separating respondents by levels of sophistication.

Despite these limitations, the study had several strong points that should be noted. First, this study moved away from using college students as a sample. Past research made conclusions about experts and novices based on college students. However, these college students were only experts relative to other college students. This study therefore attempted to use a cross-section of the community in order to obtain a better sample with which to measure the effects of political sophistication. This assertion would be supported by Sears (1987) who states that the use of college students as a sample in social science research should be discouraged.

Second, political sophistication was operationalized as a continuous variable. People are naturally exposed to a varying amount of political instances. It is thus more appropriate to operationalize political sophistication on a continuum from politically sophisticated to politically

unsophisticated voters rather than artificially classifying people into high, medium, and low levels of sophistication. The politically sophisticated sub-samples were formed in an attempt to buttress the findings of the hypotheses.

Finally, and most importantly, this study extended the domain of schema research to the gubernatorial level. As Miller (1990) notes, research in this area had been narrowly focused at the presidential level. Research at the gubernatorial level is non-existent. Consequently, this study was an effort aimed at exploring the schemas citizens use to select gubernatorial candidates. Although the schemas used to select governors are similar to those used to select presidents and congresspersons, it was shown that there are schemas unique to the gubernatorial level. However, more research is needed at the state and local level to see if these differences really exist.

In addition to identifying schemas outside the presidential level, the following areas should be addressed in future schema research. First, as Lau and Sears (1985) note, more precise cognitive measures need to be compared to measures soliciting free recall data, i.e. open-ended questions in order to determine if both types of measures elicit similar responses. This study found some similarities between the two types of measures, but much more work is needed. Second, scholars should examine how

schemas develop and change with experience (Taylor & Crocker, 1981). This would be particularly interesting for political researchers in that voters' schemas could change as they become older, more educated, or cross over party lines. Third, once schema typologies have been identified, schema research needs to "show how these schemas are put to use" (Fiske et al., 1983, p. 397). Fourth, future studies should investigate the effects of various demographics variables on schemas used to select a governor. Research suggests that certain demographic variables such as age or education can have an effect on a person's political opinions (Krosnick & Milburn, 1990; Sigelman, 1981).

Political communication research is essentially interested in the voting process. Political schema research is a type of political research uniquely suited to studying the voting process since it examines the factors guiding decisions, how people make these decisions, and finally, how various **types** of people make these decisions. Consequently, political schema research should continue unabated, especially at the state and local levels. For as Torney-Purta (1990) notes, "Schemas are important, but unmeasured outcomes of political socialization and would be a useful addition to the outcome measures employed in political research" (p. 98).

APPENIDIX A

SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION
The Center for the Study of Political Communication is conducting research to examine how people evaluate state and local candidates. We are not interested in persuading you to vote for a particular candidate. Rather, we are conducting a study on voters' evaluations of political candidates. If this questionnaire is completed, it will be assumed that consent has been given. Thank you for taking the time to participate in our study.

We'd like to ask you some questions about your political opinions. For each question, please circle the number that best represents your political opinion. For example, on question 1, circling 1 would indicate that you do that behavior very frequently and circling 7 would indicate that you do that behavior very infrequently. Feel free to circle any number that you like. Please answer all the questions.

How often do you:

	Very Frequently				Very Infrequently		
1. Read or look into a daily newspaper	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Watch all, or part of the local TV news	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Watch all, or part of the national TV news	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Contribute money to a political candidate's campaign	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Volunteer to help the candidate of your choice win an election	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Discuss politics with your family	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Discuss politics with your friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Write a letter to your U.S. senator or representative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Vote in state/local elections	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Vote in national elections	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. With what political party, if any, are you registered?
____ Rep. ____ Dem. ____ Other ____ Not registered

12. What political party does George Bush belong to?

13. What political party does Senator Dennis DeConcini belong to? _____

14. Who is the governor of Arizona? _____

15. Who is the secretary of state for Arizona?

16. Who is the mayor of Tucson? _____

17. Did you vote in the special February Arizona gubernatorial runoff between Symington and Goddard? ____ Yes ____ No

If YES, GO TO QUESTION #27
If NO, GO TO QUESTION # 28

18. In the recent gubernatorial election between Fife Symington and Terry Goddard, what was the single most important factor in your voting decision? _____

19. Was there anything in particular that you liked/disliked about Fife Symington? _____

20. Was there anything in particular that you liked/disliked about Terry Goddard? _____

Please rate the following items in terms of their importance to you in your selection of a governor. If the item is very important to you, then circle 1. If the item is not very important to you, circle 7. Feel free to circle any number.

	Very Important					Not Very Important	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. Candidate's political party	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. Candidate's stance on issues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. Candidate's competence	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. Candidate's reliability	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. Candidate's responsiveness to voters' needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. Candidate's charisma (ability to get along with & inspire people)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. Candidate's reliability (capacity to follow through and get job done)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. Candidate's personal features(i.e age, race, gender, religion, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. Other _____ (please fill in if necessary)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Now we'd like to ask you a few questions about yourself.

30. Gender _____M(1) _____F(2)

31. Age

(1) 18-29 _____

(2) 30-44 _____

(3) 45-64 _____

(4) 64+ _____

32. Your education(check the one that applies)

(1) Less than eight years _____

(2) Some high school _____

(3) High school graduate _____

(4) Some college _____

(5) College graduate _____

(6) Graduate work _____

THIS COMPLETES OUR SURVEY!! THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR
HELP!!!

APPENDIX B

STATISTICAL TABLES

Table 1
Means of Respondents*
on Interest, Knowledge, Participation,
and Political Sophistication

<u>Criterion</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Interest**	3.2	1.37
Knowledge***	.56	.94
Participation**	4.5	1.29
Political Sophistication@	8.3	2.73

* $n=563$

** (For interest and participation, 1=highly sophisticated, 7=highly unsophisticated)

*** (For knowledge, 0=highly sophisticated, 4=highly unsophisticated)

@For political sophistication, the values ran from 2.00 (Very highly sophisticated) to 18.00 (Very highly unsophisticated)

Table 2
The Association of Political Sophistication*
With Various Schemas/Criteria

<u>Schema/Criterion</u>	<u>r</u>
Competence	.36**
Integrity	.35**
Responsiveness	.26**
Reliability	.22**
Charisma	.07ns
Personal Features	.01ns

*N=563

**p < .01

Table 3
 Frequency Distributions of Respondents
 Single Most Important Criterion for Voting
 (by Sophistication)

<u>Criterion</u>	High*	<u>Percentage</u>	
		Med**	Low***
ISSUES	29.5%	19.1%	1.3%
<u>Economic issues</u>	12.3%	3.1%	--
Pro-business factors	4.9%	1.7%	--
General economic factors	2.5%	.7%	--
Tax stance	2.5%	.7%	--
Balanced budget	1.2%	--	--
Other economic issues (i.e. jobs)	1.2%	--	--
<u>Social issues</u>	11.0%	10.8%	--
Education	7.4%	5.5%	--
Abortion	1.2%	.7%	--
Gun control	1.2%	.5%	--
Other issues (i.e. environment, MLK holiday, etc)	1.2%	4.1%	--
<u>General issues</u> (no specific mention)	6.2%	5.2%	1.3%
COMPETENCE	19.8%	14.1%	--
Background	9.9%	9.4%	--
Political experience	9.9%	3.7%	--
INTEGRITY	11.1%	4.6%	--
General mention	3.7%	2.0%	--
Scandal involvement	2.5%	--	--
Group connections (public vs. private interest)	2.5%	.7%	--
Trust/distrust	1.2%	.7%	--
Didn't like mudslinging	1.2%	1.2%	--
PARTY	9.9%	11.9%	1.3%

"Table 3 (continued)"

Frequency Distributions of Respondents
Single Most Important Criterion for Voting
(by Sophistication)

Criterion	Percentage		
	High*	Med**	Low***
PERSONAL FEATURES	8.7%	9.0%	--
General(liked/disliked him)	2.5%	2.5%	--
Lesser of two evils	2.5%	3.5%	--
Other personal features	2.5%	3.0%	--
Appearance	1.2%	---	--
CONCERN FOR ARIZONANS	4.9%	2.0%	2.6%
Stands up for Arizonans	3.7%	1.5%	1.3%
Responsiveness	1.2%	.5%	1.3%
LEADERSHIP	2.5%	3.0%	1.3%
NO OPINION	5.0%	4.5%	1.0%
	91.4% [@]	63.7% ^{@@}	7.8% [#]

* $n=81$ ** $n=402$ *** $n=80$

@NOTE: 8.6% of the highly sophisticated sample did not vote in the election and thus did not have to answer this question.

@@NOTE: 32.8% of the moderately sophisticated sample did not vote in the election and thus did not have to answer this question.

#NOTE: 91.2% of the low sophisticated sample did not vote in the election and thus did not have to answer this question

Table 4

Frequency Distributions of Responses to the Question:
 "Was there anything in particular that you liked/
 disliked about Terry Goddard?"
 (By Levels of Sophistication)

Response	Percentage		
	High*	Med**	Low***
Experience	14.8%	7.1%	2.6%
Liked Phoenix mayor	6.2%	3.2%	--
Has political experience	6.2%	2.5%	1.3%
Experienced	1.2%	1.4%	1.3%
Lacks political experience	1.2%	--	--
Personal Qualities	11.0%	3.8%	2.6%
Honest/sincere	7.4%	2.1%	--
Dishonest/insincere	1.2%	--	--
Reference to his marital status	1.2%	1.0%	--
Good speaker	1.2%	--	--
Other Personal Qualities	--	.7%	2.6%
Issues	9.8%	6.4%	--
Liked his educational views	7.4%	3.0%	--
Pro-government aid	1.2%	.5%	--
Other issues	1.2%	2.9%	--
Leadership	8.6%	7.1%	2.6%
Typical politician	3.7%	4.0%	--
Lacks business experience	2.5%	--	--
Listens to people	1.2%	.7%	1.3%
Understands groups' needs	1.2%	.9%	1.3%
Weak/Indecisive	--	1.5%	--
Campaign Issues	8.6%	5.5%	5.1%
Disliked mudslinging	4.9%	3.2%	2.5%
Disliked campaign style	3.7%	1.7%	1.3%
Other	--	.6%	1.3%
Miscellaneous Reasons	6.1%	2.9%	2.6%
Just disliked him	2.5%	1.7%	--
Just liked him	1.2%	.7%	1.3%
Disliked way he came to office	1.2%	--	--
Other reasons	1.2%	.5%	1.3%

"Table 4 (continued)"

Frequency Distributions of Responses to the Question:
 "Was there anything in particular that you liked/
 disliked about Terry Goddard?"
 (By Levels of Sophistication)

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>		
	High*	Med**	Low***
Group connections	4.8%	1.6%	--
Represents common man	2.4%	.7%	--
Represents big business	1.2%	.9%	--
Represents special interests	1.2%	--	--
Government Management (Efficiency) (overspends, inefficient)	2.5%	.2%	--
Philosophy (Too liberal)	2.5%	1.7%	--
Party	1.2%	3.2%	1.3%
No opinion	21.0%	53.7%	83.8%
	90.9% [@]	93.2% ^{@@}	100% [#]

* $n=81$

** $n=402$

*** $n=80$

@NOTE: Since 8.6% of this sample did not vote, they did not have to answer this question.

@@NOTE: 32.8% of the moderately sophisticated sample did not vote in the election and thus did not have to answer this question.

#NOTE: 91.2% of the low sophisticated sample did not vote in the election and thus did not have to answer this question

Table 5

Frequency Distributions of Responses to the Question:
 "Was there anything in particular that you liked/
 disliked about Fife Symington?"
 (By Levels of Sophistication)

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>		
	<u>High*</u>	<u>Med**</u>	<u>Low***</u>
Group connections	20.9%	10.0%	2.6%
Supports big business	8.6%	4.2%	1.3%
Involvement in S&L scandal	8.6%	3.2%	1.3%
Supports special interest groups	3.7%	2.6%	--
Leadership	9.8%	9.5%	6.5%
Like business experience	8.6%	5.2%	--
Strong/decisive	1.2%	1.2%	--
Other Reasons	--	--	6.5%
Experience	8.5%	4.1%	2.5%
Lacks political experience	3.7%	3.5%	2.5%
Experienced	1.2%	.6%	--
Not experienced	1.2%	--	--
Undependable/unreliable	1.2%	--	--
Has political experience	1.2%	--	--
Personal Qualities	8.5%	9.0%	2.6%
Honest/sincere	3.7%	1.5%	--
Dishonest/insincere	1.2%	1.2%	--
Likeable	1.2%	.8%	--
He's a family man	1.2%	2.0%	--
Other negative personal qualities	1.2%	3.5%	2.6%
Issues	7.3%	5.9%	--
Don't like education stance	3.7%	1.7%	--
Anti-government aid	1.2%	1.5%	--
Favors lowering taxes	1.2%	1.0%	--
Won't crack down on pollution	1.2%	1.7%	--

"Table 5 (continued)"

Frequency Distributions of Responses to the Question:
 "Was there anything in particular that you liked/
 disliked about Fife Symington?"
 (By Levels of Sophistication)

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>		
	High*	Med**	Low***
Campaign Issues	5.0%	4.3%	5.1%
Disliked mudslinging	2.5%	2.7%	2.5%
Disliked campaign style	2.5%	1.6%	2.6%
Party	1.2%	3.1%	1.3%
Government Management (Efficiency)	1.2%	.5%	--
Miscellaneous Reasons (Just didn't like him)	1.2%	3.2%	3.9%
No opinion	27.2%	48.3%	76.3%
	90.8%**	98.1%@@	100%#

* $n=81$

** $n=402$

*** $n=80$

@NOTE: Since 8.6% of this sample did not vote, they did not have to answer this question.

@@NOTE: 32.8% of the moderately sophisticated sample did not vote in the election and thus did not have to answer this question.

#NOTE: 91.2% of the low sophisticated sample did not vote in the election and thus did not have to answer this question

Table 6
Means of Respondents on Various Schema
Criteria (By Sophistication)

<u>Criterion</u>	High*		Med**		Low***	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Party	4.1	1.99	4.0	2.00	5.0	1.60
Issue	1.3	.79	1.8	.98	2.6	1.90
Competence	1.3	.74	1.5	.98	2.7	1.90
Integrity	1.2	.60	1.4	.80	2.7	1.80
Responsiveness	1.4	.74	1.7	.98	2.3	1.80
Reliability	1.4	.56	1.6	.97	2.1	1.80
Charisma	2.8	1.34	2.9	1.40	2.3	1.90
Personal features	5.3	1.68	5.2	1.80	3.5	1.70

* $n=81$

** $n=402$

*** $n=80$

NOTE: Means are based on a seven point scale where 1=very important and 7=not very important

Table 7

Means of Respondents by Level of Sophistication
on Interest, Knowledge, Participation, and Political
Sophistication

<u>Criterion</u>	High*		Med**		Low***	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Interest	1.5	.52	3.1	1.1	4.9	.99
Knowledge	.06	.24	.40	1.7	1.9	1.3
Participation	3.0	.88	4.5	.94	6.3	.92
Political Sophistication	4.5	.95	8.0	1.5	13.15	1.4

* $n=81$

** $n=402$

*** $n=80$

NOTE: For interest and participation, 1=highly sophisticated and 7=highly unsophisticated. For knowledge, 0=highly sophisticated and 4=highly unsophisticated. For political sophistication, 2=highly sophisticated and 18=highly unsophisticated.

Table 8

Frequency Distributions of Respondents'
Single Most Important Criterion for Voting

<u>Criterion</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
ISSUES	18.8%
<u>Social issues</u>	9.5%
Education	5.0%
Environment	2.0%
Abortion	.7%
Gun control	.5%
Other	.5%
Martin Luther King holiday	.4%
Law enforcement	.4%
<u>Issues (General Mention)</u>	4.8%
<u>Economic issues</u>	4.2%
Pro-business	2.0%
Tax stance	.9%
General	.9%
Budget	.4%
Other economic related issues	.4%
COMPETENCE	12.3%
Background	6.6%
Political Experience	3.7%
General Experience	1.6%
Other reasons	.4%
PARTY	10.1%
PERSONAL FEATURES	7.6%
Lesser of two evils	2.8%
Other (sexual preferences, marital status)	2.5%
Liked/disliked candidate	2.1%
Personal appearance	.2%

"Table 8 (continued)"

Frequency Distributions of Respondents'
Single Most Important Criterion for Voting

<u>Criterion</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
INTEGRITY	5.2%
General honesty/dishonesty	2.0%
Disliked Mudslinging	1.1%
Candidate's group connections (public vs. private interest)	.9%
Trust/distrust	.4%
Candidate's tie-in to scandals	.4%
Other	.4%
LEADERSHIP	2.9%
Candidate's political beliefs	1.4%
Other	.5%
General mention of leadership	.4%
Vision	.2%
Reliability	.2%
Charisma	.2%
CONCERN FOR ARIZONANS	2.5%
NO OPINION	4.0%
	63.1%*

*NOTE: 37% of the sample (n=212) did not vote in the election and thus did not have to answer this question.

Table 9

Frequency Distributions of Responses to the
Question: "Was there anything in particular you liked/
disliked about Fife Symington?"

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Candidate's Group Connections	10.7%
Supports the rich/big business	4.4%
Involvement in S&L scandal	3.7%
Supports special interest groups	1.8%
Other group connections	.8%
Leadership	9.6%
Liked business experience	5.0%
Other	1.2%
Strong and decisive	1.1%
Typical politician	.7%
Not a typical politician	.4%
Not independent/run by others	.4%
Poor at explaining himself	.4%
Lacks business experience	.4%
Personal Qualities	9.1%
Miscellaneous reasons (ugly, born with silver spoon in mouth, lacks ideals, dumb, etc)	2.2%
Honest/sincere	1.4%
Other negative personal qualities	1.1%
Dishonest/insincere	1.1%
He's a family man	.9%
Understands Arizona's problems	.4%
Practical	.4%
Don't know him	.4%
Like his smile	.4%
Handsome	.4%
Former military man	.4%

"Table 9 (continued)"

Frequency Distributions of Responses to the Question:
 "Was there anything in particular that you liked/
 disliked about Fife Symington?"

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Issues	5.8%
Don't like his education views	1.8%
General assessment of issues	.8%
Other issues(law enforcement, gun control, wages,PUC,etc)	.8%
Won't crack down on pollution	.7%
Don't like his anti-abortion views	.5%
He's against the poor	.4%
Like his education views	.4%
He's against higher taxes	.4%
Experience	4.9%
Lacks political experience	2.7%
General responses	1.0%
Experienced	.4%
Not experienced	.4%
Will do a good job	.4%
Campaign Issues	4.9%
Disliked his mudslinging	2.7%
Disliked his campaign style	1.4%
Other campaign issues(TV ads)	.8%
Miscellaneous Factors	2.9%
Just dislike him	1.8%
Other reasons	1.1%
Party	2.6%
No opinion	13.0%
	63.5%*

*NOTE: 37% of the sample (n=212) did not vote in the election and thus did not have to answer this question.

Table 10

Frequency Distributions of Responses to the
Question: "Was there anything in particular you liked/
disliked about Terry Goddard?"

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Personal Qualities	9.1%
Honest/Sincere	2.5%
Miscellaneous Qualities (gay, not a family man, good speaker)	1.6%
Dishonest/insincere	1.2%
Didn't like him being single	.7%
Public servant	.5%
Other positive personal qualities	.5%
Understands the state's problems	.5%
High principles	.4%
Ugly	.4%
Humanitarian	.4%
Liked his father's record	.4%
Leadership	7.3%
Typical politician	3.4%
Weak/indecisive	1.1%
Other leadership mentions	1.0%
Listens to the people	.9%
Lacks business experience	.5%
Too arrogant	.4%
Experience	7.0%
Has government experience	2.8%
Liked record as Phoenix mayor	2.5%
Experienced (General mention)	.9%
Other mentions of experience (reliable, will do good job, etc)	.8%

"Table 10 (continued)"

Frequency Distributions of Responses to the Question:
 "Was there anything in particular that you liked/
 disliked about Terry Goddard?"

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Issues	6.4%
Liked education views	3.4%
Miscellaneous issues	1.4%
Pro-government aid	.7%
Will protect environment	.5%
Like abortion views	.4%
Campaign Issues	6.2%
Disliked his mudslinging	3.4%
Disliked campaign style(TV ads)	2.0%
Other issues	.8%
Miscellaneous Issues	3.4%
Just disliked him	1.6%
Just liked him	.9%
Other reasons(symathy)	.8%
Party	2.6%
Group Connections	2.1%
Represents public interest	.7%
Other group connection reasons (Isn't tied to special interests)	.6%
Represents common man	.4%
Tie-in with S&L scandal	.4%
Philosophy	1.7%
Too liberal	1.1%
Good liberal	.6%
<u>No opinion</u>	<u>17.5%</u>
	63.7%*

*NOTE: 37% of the sample (n=212) did not vote in the election and thus did not have to answer this question.

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