Candidate Character Traits in Presidential Elections (Routledge Research in American Politics and Governance)

David B. Holian, Charles L. Prysby

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Voter perceptions of the personal traits of presidential candidates are widely regarded to be important influences on the vote. Media pundits frequently explain the outcome of presidential elections in terms of the personal appeal of the candidates. Despite the emphasis on presidential character traits in the media, the scholarly investigation in this area is limited.

In this book, David Holian and Charles Prysby set out to examine the effect that trait perceptions have on the vote, how these perceptions are shaped by other attitudes and evaluations, and what types of voters are most likely to cast a ballot on the basis of the character traits of the presidential candidates. Using the American National Election Studies (ANES) surveys, the authors find that traits do have a very substantial effect on the vote, that different candidates have advantages on different traits, and that the opinions expressed by media pundits about how the candidates are viewed by the voters are often simplistic, and sometimes quite mistaken. Character traits are important to voters, but we need a better and more complete understanding of how and why these factors influence voters.

An essential read which provides a clear and original argument to all those interested in furthering their understanding of the importance of candidate character traits for the quality of American elections and democracy.

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