

Focus on symbols, style

IU student studying presidential candidates

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Will the 1980 presidential campaign be based largely on issues or symbols? At this point, there are plenty of issues, and the field of candidates offers a variety of symbols which may reflect American political preference.

Darrell West of Eaton, Ohio, a doctoral student in political science at Indiana University, will make a study of candidates and campaigns trying to determine the role that political symbols will play in the race. He has a grant from the National Science Foundation for the research, which will continue through the campaign and into 1981.

West has already obtained promise of cooperation from the staffs of Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, John Connally, Howard Baker, and George Bush. He met Bush personally, and Bush indicated interest in the project, West said. He will return to Washington in December and seek similar

cooperation from Edward Kennedy and Jerry Brown.

West will talk with top staff members in the various campaigns and will study how they try to attract support from diverse groups of voters. He also will observe the importance each candidate places on issues and how the candidate sees himself as a symbol. He will attend nominating conventions of both parties and will follow the nominees during part of their campaigns to note any changes in strategies or philosophy as a result of getting the nomination.

In reviewing the candidates who have announced for the presidency, or who are expected to, West offered these opinions:

- Ronald Reagan — He will try to attract the establishment-oriented people. He has a way with rhetoric that makes him sound very convincing. He is Mr. Conservative and would likely be fiscally conservative concerning social problems but not in military spending.

- Jerry Brown — He is an independent candidate, hard to label. He seems to want to be all things to all people.

- John Connally — A businessman and professional politician. He has to fight the wheeler-dealer image. He is sensitive to the desires of the business community.

- George Bush — A thinking man who appears to have thought out the issues. Seems to have more emotional appeal.

- Howard Baker — As a moderate, he will attract the middle of the conservative spectrum. He is also young, good on television and popular among women.

- Jimmy Carter — Cannot campaign as he did in 1976. Will have to defend his presidential record. He is seen as honest, sincere and hard-working. Probably will cite need to continue in office in order to complete his programs.

- Edward Kennedy — Identified as a liberal and supporter of social programs. Charismatic leader. He has a problem in that he evokes strong emotions on both sides. Kennedy may have the ghosts of his brothers on his side.



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Leroy Rieselbach, left, professor of political science at Indiana University, confers with doctoral student Darrell West on West's project to study symbolism and issues among the 1980 presidential candidates.

Studies show that voters tend to express their choice on the basis of broad types of appeal rather than issues alone, West said. Even though there are many issues of great concern to the American public, emotional appeal and the perception of what candidates stand for could be a significant factor in the election, West pointed out. His studies will help determine if

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