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BOLETIN DE PSICOLOGIA

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POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

Volume 18, Number 1

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THE IMPACT OF SCANDAL ON CANDIDATE EVALUATIONS: AN EXPERIMENTAL TEST OF THE ROLE OF CANDIDATE TRAITS

Carolyn L. Funk

Correlational studies have found candidate traits to be an important determinant of vote preferences but cannot rule out reverse causality processes in explaining these findings. The present study demonstrates the independent impact of trait inferences on candidate evaluations using experimentally controlled candidate profiles of hypothetical U.S. congressmen. Using the scandal situation as a testing ground, this experiment examines whether task-relevant, competence traits actually have greater impact on political judgments than the more general, warmth-related trait qualities. Two types of scandals are considered (marital infidelity and tax evasion), both implying negative trustworthiness characteristics of the officeholder. Results demonstrate that trait inferences do have a causal impact on global evaluations. Consistent with past survey studies, competence qualities appear to be more important than warmth qualities but only for those with greater political information levels.

ASSESSING THE PUBLIC'S UNDERSTANDING OF CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM: EVIDENCE FROM ARGENTINA

Mark P. Jones

Constitutional and institutional reform is occurring at an impressive rate throughout the world. To explain the dynamics of reform the scholarly literature has focused almost exclusively on political elites. Analyses of the role played by public opinion in the constitutional reform process have been largely missing. This study takes an initial first step toward understanding the role played by public opinion through an analysis of public understanding of selected constitutional reform issues in Argentina. The evidence indicates that the Argentine public has a fairly sophisticated understanding of the issues involved in constitutional and institutional reforms are incomplete. The article also provides a point of departure for future studies of the complex elite-mass interaction that occurs during reform.

**PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL POLITICS IN NORWAY:
SOME DO, SOME DON'T; SOME WILL, SOME WON'T**

Per Arnt Pettersen and Lawrence E. Rose

Using data from two national surveys conducted in 1990 and 1993, this article investigates seven modes of sociopolitical behavior and one form of potential political participation in the context of Norwegian local government. Results indicate that factors associated with alternative modes of activity vary; different types of people tend to choose different channels of involvement. The most pronounced difference is found between activities directed toward influencing public opinion and those intended to influence political decision making more directly. Whereas the former mode is more typically chosen by younger, well-educated single women living in urban areas, the latter is more characteristic of married, better educated men living in smaller municipalities. Findings are characterized by a high degree of stability over the prior considered. Only in the case of voting is there a suggestion of some possible change. After decades in which socioeconomic status variables have been of little significance for voting in Norway (a situation explained by the mobilizing effects of organizations), an effect of education was found in the 1993 survey. Also noteworthy is the distribution of participation among the population: rather than being cumulative, different forms of political involvement are relatively widespread.

**AGE DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL DECISION MAKING:
STRATEGIES FOR EVALUATING POLITICAL CANDIDATES**

Ellen D.B. Riggle and Mitzi M.S. Johnson

To investigate age-related differences in strategies used to evaluate political candidates, an experimental study employed protocol tracing techniques with a computerized information matrix. Forty younger and forty older adults gathered information about and evaluated candidates in national and local elections. Older adults accessed less information but took longer to examine information and make choices. Differences in strategic processing suggest that young adults were more likely to organize their information searches by issues and to eliminate candidates based on issue stances. In contrast, older adults were more likely to organize their information searches by candidates and to engage in satisfying.