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POLICY BY PERCEPTION: CAN SUBSTANCE SURVIVE?

NAFTA: PRINT VS. TELEVISION IMAGES OF THE DEBATE

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Mentor(s)

Director, Liberal Studies Program

Date
POLICY BY PERCEPTION: CAN SUBSTANCE SURVIVE?
NAFTA: PRINT VS. TELEVISION IMAGES OF THE DEBATE

A Thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts
in Liberal Studies

By

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School for Summer and Continuing Education
Georgetown University
Washington, D.C.
Date April 28, 1998
POLICY BY PERCEPTION: CAN SUBSTANCE SURVIVE?
NAFTA: PRINT VS. TELEVISION IMAGES OF THE DEBATE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to determine the differences between print and television news coverage by comparing it for two strategic dates during the peak period of coverage as the North American Free Trade Agreement headed for a vote in the U.S. House of Representatives. The two dates selected for the most intense evaluation were November 10, 1993, the day following a turning point debate between Vice President Al Gore and NAFTA opponent Ross Perot, and November 16, 1993, a crucial day before the historic vote when the outcome was still very much in doubt.

While concentrating on these dates for direct comparison, the investigation takes into account print news stories in the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* during the period running from November 1, 1993, to November 17, 1993, the day of the House vote. Because TV coverage was less extensive and confined by time limitations, a review of TV coverage was expanded to consider all major news reports on NAFTA back to the first of the year.

The results revealed that the print coverage provided significantly more depth and context than television. Some of the more useful television reports that
included basic information about NAFTA had appeared well in advance of the peak period in November as the campaign drove toward a vote.

Print did a superior job of informing the public about the substance of NAFTA than TV, which concentrated on the vote count and the effect the NAFTA vote might have on the president's stature. Neither, however, provided adequate information during the most visible period prior to approval of one of the most complex pieces of trade legislation in American history, a pact which continues to generate implications, effects and possible consequences for the economies of the U.S., Canada and Mexico.
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Introduction

This thesis will focus on the coverage by the print and television media on one public policy issue, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), over the course of the most intense period of public debate in 1993. In order keep the comparison relatively focused, the analysis will rely mainly on examples of printed news stories from *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. This analysis only utilizes news stories. It does not make use of any editorials as they are opinion, differ sharply from hard news, and generally, are read by a more informed audience. The print coverage of NAFTA is compared to a representative sampling of television reporting on NAFTA which includes NBC, CBS, ABC, CNN and Public Television's *MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour*.

It is important to acknowledge the author's possible bias. As a communications manager at the National Association of Manufacturers, it was my duty was to be an advocate and spokesperson for congressional approval of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Despite the partisan position occupied during the course of the NAFTA campaign, careful efforts have been made to interpret articles, transcripts and the review of video news footage with objectivity. Personal opinions on the issue have also changed somewhat from what they were at that time, although these are not relevant to how the issue itself was reported.
Although a number of public policy issues were debated in the period from 1992-93, NAFTA was unique in several respects:

(1) NAFTA was viewed as both an international as well as a domestic issue. This was true both during the 1992 presidential campaign, and in the contest for NAFTA votes in Congress that followed in 1993.

(2) Support for NAFTA was divided sharply—not between party lines, but along economic and educational lines. For the most part, upper- and middle-class, college educated citizens were considered more likely to support the trade pact. Lower-income, blue-collar, ethnic, and those with less education were, according to national surveys and focus groups, far less likely to support NAFTA.

(3) Unlike most public policy issues, NAFTA received editorial endorsements from more than 80 percent of major daily newspapers across the United States.

(4) NAFTA was one of the first international trade proposals that generated wide-spread and emotional national interest.

(5) For the first time in U.S. history, NAFTA was a trade agreement which contained provisions to attempt to prevent environmental exploitation.

A Word about the 1992 Presidential Campaign and NAFTA

NAFTA had been a target during the primary season in 1992 for Republican Pat Buchanan, but overall, it had received marginal press attention. It wasn’t until the third presidential campaign debate that NAFTA was introduced for serious discussion by
candidates President George Bush, Governor Bill Clinton and Texas billionaire Ross Perot. On Tuesday October 20, 1992, most major dailies carried complete transcripts of the remarks of the three candidates. The 90-minute forum covered more than 16,000 words and NAFTA only accounted for approximately one hundred words combined from the three White House contestants.

Ross Perot warned, “you implement that NAFTA, the Mexican trade agreement, where they pay people $1 an hour, have no health care, no retirement, no pollution controls, etc., etc., and you’re going to hear a giant sucking sound of jobs being pulled out of this country right at a time when we need the tax base to pay the debt.”

President Bush addressed NAFTA in the context of using it as one of many attempts to paint Governor Clinton as trying to take both sides of an issue. Bush basically asserted the problem with Clinton on NAFTA was that he was for it, but at the same time not sure about it. Bush’s core response on NAFTA was standard: “I think free trade is going to expand our job opportunity.” And in a remark directed at Gov. Clinton’s caution, “We need more free-trade agreements, not fewer.”

Clinton’s comments about NAFTA were delivered within the context of positioning himself between his two opponents. “I am the one who is in the middle on this. Mr. Perot says it’s a bad deal. Mr. Bush says it’s a hunky-dory deal. I say on balance it does more good than harm if we can get some protection for the environment so that the Mexicans have to follow their own environmental standards, their own labor
law standards.” Clinton also emphasized his desire for, “a genuine commitment to re-
educate and retrain the American workers who lose their jobs and reinvest in this
economy.”

Any opportunity to get beyond surface rhetoric on NAFTA was lost when Perot
then turned the segment into a discussion about foreign lobbyists and their influence on
U.S. lawmakers. This was the extent to which the 1992 presidential contest provided a
prime-time opportunity for a foundation of knowledge and reference regarding the
controversial North American Free Trade Agreement as it awaited a decision in the
Congress.

This emphasis on who was pro or con, with little discussion of the actual
provisions of NAFTA, was to continue as the pattern of coverage from the election up to
the vote on NAFTA in the House.
Chapter I  The North American Free Trade Agreement

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), between the United States, Mexico and Canada was a framework of working language designed to expand trade activity between the three nations. The goal was for North American manufacturers and service companies to work together more effectively in order to compete against foreign competitors in each individual participant’s nation, and in the global marketplace overall. NAFTA did more than just propose increased trade of products; its objective was to also broaden the dimensions of the regional market and expand labor skills.1

Representatives from Canada, Mexico and the United States announced the conclusion of NAFTA negotiations in August 1992. The proposed agreement was complicated and involved. The text consisted of more than 1,000 pages, not including annexes and additional side agreements that would be added.

On December 17, 1992, President Bush, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, and Mexico’s President Carlos Salinas de Gortari signed the proposed trade pact simultaneously, each in his own country. At the time of the signing it was the most comprehensive free trade agreement ever negotiated between trading partners in the

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same hemisphere. It was a first in that the parties included a developing country along with industrial nations.  

NAFTA was signed before fast-track expired. Fast-track was a negotiating process that allowed a President to submit trade agreements to Congress for approval or disapproval without allowing amendments to be added. Congress had approved fast-track authority by a more than two-to-one margin in May of 1991. The agreement signed in December of 1992 allowed 90 days for the governing legislatures in each of the nations to vote in order to enact or reject the NAFTA provisions.

NAFTA was an extension of the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Act signed in 1988. The major difference was that it added Mexico as a partner and required Mexico to adopt the same degree of liberalized trade Canada had accepted since 1988. But NAFTA expanded a number of concepts beyond what was contained in the 1988 Free Trade Act. NAFTA added provisions covering such items as intellectual property rights, rules dealing with local content, export performance, and matters related to transport.

The NAFTA agreement proposed phasing-out barriers to regional trade within ten years. This included all tariff and most non-tariff obstacles. It proposed to reduce all internal tariffs between the U.S., Canada and Mexico to zero at the end of fifteen years. Following the model of U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement, it would end all tariffs

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2 Ibid., 1.
between the three nations in 1998, but in the case of Mexico, tariffs for some items like agriculture would stay in effect for roughly fifteen years.

NAFTA added Mexico to dispute settlement procedures contained in the Free Trade Act in exchange for Mexico revising many of its trade laws and bringing regulations against illegal dumping of products more in line with those of the United States and Canada. Provisions also addressed rights and obligations connected with services and investment related to trade.

The agreement also sought to serve as a framework for resolving environmental disputes along the border areas of the participating parties.

Within fifteen years, if approved, NAFTA would produce free agricultural trade between the U.S. and Mexico with a 15-year phase-out of over-quota tariffs -- something previous efforts had failed to accomplish.³

The investment portions of the agreement eliminated most of the performance requirements on investment and created new opportunities for investment in important sectors of the Mexican economy such as chemicals and financial services.⁴

NAFTA agreed to open the financial services market in Mexico to the U.S. and Canada by the year 2000.⁵ It also proposed to remove all major barriers to ground transportation of products and barriers to increased telecommunications business.

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³ Ibid., 2-3.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid.
The agreement proposed to eliminate all tariffs and quotas on regional trade in textiles and clothing articles but kept in place highly restrictive rules for establishing duty-free status.

**Effect on the United States**

The Bush Administration said they expected NAFTA would produce an expanded export market for U.S. products. An increase in the American products already sold in Mexico, and the potential to extend into previously marginally-lucrative product sales areas and through expansion, would potentially boost the volume sale of U.S. products.\(^6\) The U.S. had already been capitalizing on the growing Mexican market for a number of years. NAFTA sought to expand, accelerate and formalize that trend. NAFTA would also give the U.S. a better framework to resolve disputes related to the environment, labor and intellectual property than existing laws or conventions.

President Bill Clinton inherited the NAFTA proposal from President Bush but he did not accept it as a finished deal. Clinton added side agreements, especially environmental side agreements, in an attempt to neutralize environmentalists' concerns that the pact would not be strong enough in enforcing protection along the U.S.-Mexican border. Reports were widespread of illegal dumping of chemicals or other waste, possibly by American companies with manufacturing plants in Mexico.

\(^6\) Ibid., 4.
Effect on Canada

Canada primarily saw virtues in NAFTA because it offered to enhance Canada’s free trade parameters in the American market. The earlier Free Trade Agreement had already addressed issues such as how automobiles were measured for regional parts-content in the 1988 FTA. Canada wanted increased access to the Mexican market for Canadian manufacturers even though those opportunities were not nearly as deep, nor offered as much growth potential as market penetration for the U.S. offered as much growth potential as market penetration for the U.S.

As in the U.S., NAFTA opponents in Canada were led by big labor, environmentalists and protectionist democratic politicians. The Conservative Party and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney were solidly behind it and the whole concept of free trade and open markets.

Effect on Mexico

Mexico expected to benefit from more capital coming into its economy and by reducing imports of technology and machinery from other nations outside North America. Supporters in Mexico were led by large corporations, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), and the Party of National Action (PAN). President Carlos Salinas de Gortari had invested a great deal of his political capital and prestige in support

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7 Ibid., 5.
for NAFTA. Salinas had touted it as recognition that Mexico’s economic growth had reached a point where the country had come of age as a trading partner.8

Selection of Materials

For the purposes of this analysis, print coverage will refer to news stories that appeared in the New York Times or The Washington Post during the debate in the fall of 1993. These two papers were chosen because they have been widely acknowledged as two of the most significant and respected major dailies in the country. They also serve a broad readership of all economic, ethnic, and gender backgrounds, which would not be the case with The Wall Street Journal.

Weekly news magazines such as Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World Report were excluded due to the need to keep sources at a manageable level, and because their space limitation, gloss, and readership would not be as representative as daily newspapers.

The selection of television coverage could not be reduced to one or two networks as such a review would be too severely limited. Thus, more than twenty segments of television news coverage of NAFTA broadcast on the evening news, or a comparable weekend news bloc, were collected from ABC, NBC, CBS, and CNN combined. On dates when more than one of the networks aired a report on NAFTA, one was selected as representative of the television coverage. These prime time, TV news broadcasts were

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8 Ibid., 3-4.
reviewed, evaluated, and compared with print coverage in the Post and Times for their
tone, length and degree of substance.

This analysis will confine the comparison to daily newspaper coverage vs. prime
time evening news coverage. This leaves out some significant television attention to
NAFTA which appeared on the Sunday news programs and panel shows, but the
audience for these programs is substantially smaller than for nightly newscasts. Nightly
news audiences are also a more diverse and representative national cross-section than the
more informed and educated audience for Sunday news programs.

During the final month before the House vote to approve NAFTA, more than 20
news stories ran on television and more than 40 ran in print. This peak period leading up
to and following the debate between Vice President Al Gore and Ross Perot was crucial
because it was the period during the entire NAFTA campaign when NAFTA visibility
and public awareness of the issue were at their highest point.

While the combined national audience for two major daily papers and the TV
networks amounts to millions, it’s important to point out that a national survey reveals
that only approximately 11 percent of Americans get their news from daily newspapers
and roughly 14 percent get their news from national TV. Much larger majorities receive
their news from local newspapers and local TV news. (See Appendix B.)
Chapter II Summary overview of coverage

The New York Times ran a total of forty stories on NAFTA between November 1st and November 17th, the morning of the vote on the trade pact. The Washington Post ran a total of 28 during this same period. The Post ran three stories on the 16th, the day before the crucial House vote and the Times ran four. The Post ran four stories on the 17th, the day of the vote, while the Times ran three. This newspaper coverage compares with a total of roughly twenty TV news reports focused on, or including significant mention of NAFTA, on ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN, and PBS’ MacNeil/Lehrer during the same period.

Less than a half dozen stories combined between the Post and the Times offered an in-depth description of NAFTA’s provisions and what these might do. Clearly the most information on what NAFTA was, from the basics to specific areas such as tariffs, immigration, investment, side agreements, and how key industries like autos and textiles might be affected, was the New York Times breakout that ran alongside “What Is In The Trade Pact: NAFTA Something To Offend Everyone,” by Keith Bradsher,1 on Sunday, November 14th on page A-14. The comparable piece in the Washington Post was “What’s at Stake As Trade Vote Nears On NAFTA,”2 by Peter Behr, on

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November 15th, which was published two days before the House vote. Only two other stories would devote more space to information specifically about the trade pact than to a focus on the vote count, Administration strategy, supporters’ or opponents’ quotable short bites, or peripherally related topics.

Throughout the NAFTA coverage from January 1993 on, network evening news ran a total of 53 different reports on NAFTA, or ten more cumulative stories for the year than the number of combined Post and Times stories for just the first 17 days of November. It is significant to note that in 1992, between the December 17th signing of the proposed NAFTA, and December 22nd, NBC, ABC, CBS, CNN and MacNeil/Lehrer aired a total of eight reports on NAFTA. Most of these reports were driven by the signing event itself, but the event forced TV news to explain what NAFTA was.

The most comprehensive of all the TV coverage, ran on The NBC Nightly News on December 17, 1992. Following anchor Tom Brokaw’s report on the signing ceremony, he introduced Garrick Utley3 for a six minute contrast piece on, as Brokaw put it, “who wins, who loses.” The story compared the optimism of Caterpillar Tractor Company workers in Illinois, seeing booming returns on business in Mexico, with Smith Corona workers in upstate New York, who had seen company jobs moved to Mexico and found it difficult to find jobs that paid the $8 to $11 an hour wage they had earned at Smith Corona. Despite the human interest devoted to the report, it also offered some

maps, statistics on the possible benefits and drawbacks of NAFTA, and the timetable it faced on Capitol Hill.

Unfortunately, the few reports that were more informative in terms of what NAFTA was, the background behind it, and what it proposed to do, ran well before the peak period of nearly daily print coverage in November. The reports were not repeated later, when the background they included about NAFTA would have added to reporting focused mainly on the struggle to round up votes by each side.

A total of nine TV news reports aired dealing with NAFTA between October 17th and October 26th. A high-profile products fair under tents on the White House lawn on October 19th signaled NAFTA was becoming a greater news priority. At this time all media became aware the President’s schedule was rapidly filling up with speeches and events devoted no longer to health care, but to NAFTA. This was the point when public awareness of NAFTA was beginning to grow due to the increased efforts by the White House to get its message out, and by labor groups, Ross Perot, and other NAFTA opponents to maintain what was universally believed to be the advantage. National and local daily newspapers, anticipating the upcoming House vote, began devoting more space to the war of words over NAFTA and the push for votes. As a result NAFTA became a frequent topic on radio talk shows across the country and this undoubtedly helped translate into increased newspaper and television coverage.

One of the more comprehensive TV reports on NAFTA in the formative period before the final November blitz ran on the MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour on October 21,
1993. The 15 minute feature package from PBS reporter Charles Krause\textsuperscript{4} was primarily devoted to environmental concerns about NAFTA and how it might affect residents and workers along both sides of the U.S.- Mexican border. The piece did include occasional references to NAFTA’s chronology and therefore provided more background and context than was typical of most network TV reports on NAFTA in 1993. The PBS segment pointed out that seldom a day passed that combatants over NAFTA were not trading salvos. The program stressed that the intensity level on NAFTA was growing in more locations than on Capitol Hill. That same evening, October 21\textsuperscript{st}, NBC featured an extended report by Lisa Myers\textsuperscript{5} at the White House that concentrated on Administration concerns about the upcoming NAFTA fight. It characterized President Clinton as in trouble on three domestic fronts and listed NAFTA third after health care and the budget. The nearly four-minute report devoted a full minute and a half to efforts by organized labor to oppose NAFTA. These efforts were shown to include a huge billboard of signatures from workers opposed to NAFTA sent to Capitol Hill. It featured NAFTA criticism from Rep. David Bonior (D-MI) and reported that House Minority Leader Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-GA) made an “unusual” Clinton ally, and that Gingrich no longer felt the Clinton Administration’s NAFTA effort was, “pathetic.” The report also carried scenes of farmers and pointed to concerns shared by citrus, sugar, and wheat growers and

\textsuperscript{4} Charles Krause, *MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour*, 21 October 1993, Media Research Center [Tape 6616], Alexandria, VA.

\textsuperscript{5} Lisa Myers, “Topic: Political,” *NBC Nightly News*, 21 October 1993, Media Research Center [Tape 6620], Alexandria, VA.
indicated side deals to allay those concerns might be necessary in order for the President to close what was believed to be a 40 vote gap on NAFTA.

On October 26th, CBS Evening News anchor Dan Rather reported President Clinton’s attempt to sell NAFTA had run into trouble and introduced a report by Bob Schieffer. Canada’s new Liberal Party Prime Minister was critical of the pact. The report began with a sense of urgency, but concluded with Mr. Clinton reporting he had talked to the prime minister-elect and anticipated no major NAFTA changes. The President’s Trade Representative Mickey Kantor was equally emphatic saying NAFTA was basically a “done deal.” The final focus was back to the Congress and the possibility the Administration could be as many as 50 votes short.

TV news tended to limit their participants in the unfolding NAFTA drama to a regular ensemble cast of spokespersons. On the pro-NAFTA side, President Clinton, Trade Representative Kantor, and Rep. Bill Richardson (D-NM) easily outdistanced other spokespersons used in TV news reports. Among NAFTA opponents, Rep. David Bonior, House Majority Whip Richard Gephardt, former presidential candidate Ross Perot, and, to a lesser extent AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland and Public Citizen President Ralph Nader were the spokespersons of choice. The Washington Post and the New York Times, in the dozens of stories each ran in the months prior to the intense crescendo in the first two weeks of November, had the opportunity to use comments from conservatively well

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6 Bob Schieffer, “Central America, Canada and NAFTA,” CBS Evening News, 26 October 1993, Media Research Center[Tape 6654], Alexandria, VA.
over 150 different individuals from the Administration, Congress, companies, business
organizations, labor groups, environmental organizations, and both blue and white collar
workers. In terms of providing different voices and angles during NAFTA coverage, the
pages of the Post and the Times provided a much broader pallet than the tight confines of
television coverage.
Chapter III  The Gore-Perot Debate

The NAFTA coverage crescendo came in November 1993. As the House vote on NAFTA’s fate neared, the Clinton Administration escalated its efforts to promote its pro-NAFTA message and to increase NAFTA visibility and recognition. On the night of November 5th, CNN World News1 introduced a CNN/USA Today poll showing NAFTA opponents outweighing supporters by a 46 to 38 percent margin, and 16 percent having no opinion.

A total of 14 major television news reports aired on NAFTA in the period between November 3rd 1993, and November 17th, the day the House voted to approve NAFTA. On November 5th, when it was announced that Vice President Al Gore and Ross Perot would face one another in a 90-minute exchange on NAFTA on CNN’s Larry King Live, on November 9th, NAFTA was established as a priority news item. The Washington Post and the New York Times combined had a total of seven stories about NAFTA the day after the Gore-Perot debate.

The Gore-Perot TV debate was the kind of high-visibility event that increased national public awareness of NAFTA and allowed the White House to create the perception that they had collected some momentum as a result of the consensus that Gore had bested Perot. The New York Times actually gave it more attention than the Washington Post, did on November 10th, the morning after, with front page coverage of

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1 Wolf Blitzer, CNN World News, 5 November 1993, Media Research Center [Tape '6699], Alexandria, VA.
Gore and Perot from the night before. “Gore and Perot Duel Over Trade Pact: Vice President Accuses Foe of Taking Stance for Personal Gain,” by David Rosenbaum, ran as the largest top headline along with a picture of the face-off between Gore and Perot. The story was a re-cap of the TV debate which, Rosenbaum wrote, was filled with “sarcasm aplenty.” It singled out several exchanges between the two, and noted “Mr. Gore seemed intent on trying to attack Mr. Perot and provoke him.” It reported on Gore recalling Perot had supported NAFTA until he ran for president, Perot’s prediction of massive American casualties in the Gulf War, and Perot’s claims that Mexico had spent $30 million on lobbying in the U.S. and the dangers of dealing with Mexico’s ‘one-party rule.” Gore had responded that the opening of Mexico’s economy was a sign of expanded democratic government. The continuation of the story on page B-15, running most of the right-hand side of the page, continued to focus on the sour tone of the debate. The only substantive mention of the NAFTA pact itself was a short paragraph reminding readers that the NAFTA agreement would “eliminate barriers” between the trading partners.

Maureen Dowd’s “Personalities and Pictures: A Made for TV Debate” in the *New York Times* was relegated to page B-14. The far left top column ran a pie chart of
the House vote break-out on NAFTA. Dowd’s story took up the rest of the top left section and middle of the page. Dowd referred to the debate as “Punch and Judy with charts instead of bats.” The story quoted a White House official conceding, “it’s chart wars.” Dowd’s piece concentrated on the view the debate did not exactly offer a primer on the pros and cons of NAFTA, but was rather a “confusing blizzard of facts and figures, almost all of them contradicting each other.” Dowd went so far as to ask if the TV contest didn’t raise the question of whether, “forums usually used by addiction-confessing movie stars and book-hawking authors can work well for substantive political discourse.” The story talked about how each man had used camera angles, how Perot tried to avoid looking at Gore, and it pointed out that Perot’s chair was adjusted so he appeared to be the same height as Gore.

Another story, “Exaggerations? Yes, Particularly By Perot,”4 by Keith Bradsher, ran in the left quarter of the Times page B-15. The story identified and attacked what it cited as “misleading and exaggerated arguments” that had been outlined in the debate. Among the points it mentioned were Perot’s claim the networks wouldn’t sell time to NAFTA opponents, Perot’s family’s stake in a free trade zone designated around the Fort Worth, Texas, airport, the inaccuracies of Perot’s figures on U.S. machinery exports and other American products shipped to Mexico. A second David Rosenbaum piece,

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which ran on the bottom left of page B-15, “Pact Has Few Votes From New York Region,” talked about how reluctant New York and New Jersey House members were to support NAFTA given concerns about their local economies, downsizing, and labor’s political pressure. It was about the politics of NAFTA in New York and New Jersey, not about the trade deal itself.

The *Washington Post* gave the Gore-Perot debate a smaller front page presence than the *New York Times* did. “Gore-Perot Trade Barbs on Trade Pact Debate: Vice President Accuses NAFTA Foes of ‘Politics of Fear’,” by Dan Balz and Peter Behr, took the middle quarter of page one as headlines about a Walt Disney theme park in Virginia dominated. The cover story was continued on page A-6 and was devoted mainly to recalling the exchanges between the Vice President and Mr. Perot. Gore was described as “aggressive” and Perot as “prickly.” The story moved quickly to point out that Gore seemed to have scored early by reminding the audience that Mr. Perot had predicted “40,000 Americans would be killed in the Gulf War.” Gore used the opportunity to suggest Perot was as wrong about NAFTA has he had been about his casualty prediction in the Gulf. It also indicated Gore’s comparison of Perot to supporters of the protectionist Hawley-Smoot tariff in the 1930s may have been effective

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in putting Perot on the defensive. The piece was devoted more to a replay and evaluation of tactics than substance.

The remainder of page A-6 in the Post was taken up by NAFTA as the Post offered a "Primer on NAFTA,"7 by Peter Behr. The bold box ran the full length of the page and covered 15 basic and concise questions and answers about NAFTA that would definitely help inform anyone unfamiliar with it.

Another story appeared on the page featuring two Democratic congressmen who had announced their support for NAFTA following the Gore-Perot Debate, entitled "Two Md. Congressmen Support NAFTA: Democrats Hoyer and Cardin’s Announcement Risks Longstanding Ties With Labor."8 The story, by Kent Jenkins, Jr., included a picture of the two lawmakers together in a Capitol office. It reported why the two had decided to support NAFTA despite warnings from labor. Rep. Ben Cardin (D-MD) said "I'm voting for NAFTA because it will create more jobs," while Rep. Stenny Hoyer (D-MD) commented, "the global economy is a reality that we can't make go away." The piece pointed out that both Hoyer and Cardin had received more than $30,000 from labor contributions in their previous campaigns. It reported that Hoyer felt he could vote for NAFTA because he didn't believe it would have a major impact on his

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district. The two Democrats coming out for NAFTA was characterized as a "small boost" to White House efforts to collect the necessary votes, which, at this stage, they clearly did not have.

The Post ran, "Clinton Plugs Away for NAFTA Backers: More Legislators Persuaded, but Administration may be 25 to 35 Votes Short in House". The Ann Devroy story ran horizontally across the top third of the page and was accompanied by a picture of House Speaker Thomas Foley, (D-WA). It focused on White House efforts to capture votes and the opposition's efforts to hold firm. It included a quote from the President that, "We're making progress." The rest of the content was devoted to the possibility that opponents might attempt to engineer a procedural vote to try to kill NAFTA, but that was not regarded as probable.

With the exception of CBS, television evening news reports the night after the Gore-Perot debate were remarkably similar. While ABC, NBC and CNN chose to pivot off reports from their reporter outside the White House commenting on the positive reaction by the Administration inside, then cutting to one or two excerpts of the exchange between Gore and Perot, and finally grabbing some pro and con reaction from House members on Capitol Hill, CBS looked at how the debate seemed to have

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influenced the public’s thinking on NAFTA, and whether it had shifted any numbers on Capitol Hill. The CBS Evening News report on the debate was the longest segment except for PBS’s MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour¹⁰ which, given its hour, commercial-free format, was able to devote longer packages to a recap of the debate, along with a report from Mexico City on the stakes for Mexico’s President Salinas, and the controversy over whether NAFTA would really tighten environmental standards.

CBS focused its report not on the White House or the Capitol, but rather examined how the debate had generated heated discussion on radio talk shows across the nation the following day, even allowing viewers to hear a bit of the audio as CBS flashed scenes of radio talk show hosts behind their microphones fielding calls from listeners earlier that day. One distinct sound bite allowed us to hear a caller complaining about Perot being rude and disrespectful of the vice president with the host firmly agreeing. CBS reporter Bill Plante¹¹ introduced a 3-minute report that said the debate wasn’t pretty but did offer plenty of “fireworks.” It featured two quick excerpts from the ‘testy’ exchange and showed how both sides claimed victory using comments from NAFTA opponent Rep. David Bonior and NAFTA advocate Rep. Bill Richardson. The segment concludes that the White House’s “roll of the dice” seemed to pay off because now

¹⁰ MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour, 10 November 1993, Media Research Center [Tape 6728], Alexandria, VA.
¹¹ Bill Plante, “NAFTA Showdown,” CBS Evening News, 10 November 1993, Media Research Center [Tape 6712], Alexandria, VA.
everyone was talking about NAFTA and that's what the Administration wanted.

Plante's close was similar to the opening most of the other networks used.

The other networks did very similar general "wrap ups" on the debate running from 2 to 3 minutes. They typically incorporated 5-10 second clips of the more harsh moments between Gore and Perot followed by 5 to 7 seconds of favorable reaction from White House spokespersons contrasted with NAFTA opponents. Rep. David Bonior was singled-out in particular among the NAFTA opponents for reaction, but Bonior put more importance on the fact the White House lacked the votes to pass NAFTA than on specific comments about the debate. Consumer advocate Ralph Nader was also a source of anti-NAFTA post-debate sound bites. The images all the networks used jumped from the debate confrontation to quick cutaways of the Hill, in some cases the Mexican border, shots of previous anti-NAFTA demonstrations and signs, shipping docks, and each White House correspondent doing their stand-up outside the White House.

The TV coverage was more about the hotter moments between Gore and Perot the night before, and the predictable claims by each side that it had gotten the best of the arguments, than about post-debate public perceptions and how changes in them might affect the tug of war for House votes before November 17th. TV offered no primer on NAFTA. The only information about what NAFTA was, was reduced to a few lines about its goal being to create a huge trade zone and to eliminate barriers to more trade with Mexico and Canada. Polls that appeared some 48 hours after the Gore-Perot
confrontation showed for the first time the public was now in support of NAFTA. Both print reporters and television news reported that the White House had clearly gained momentum since the debate, and while it was between 18 to 22 votes short, it was definitely making headway.
Chapter IV Coverage the Day Before the Vote

There was a definite shift in the focus of coverage for both the newspapers and television when Congress began a five day recess for Veteran’s Day on November 11th. Capitol Hill would not be the center of attention in the days remaining before the November 17th House vote, but rather coverage would focus on what the mood was like back home in congressional districts during the brief recess before the NAFTA vote.

Reports in the Times, Post, and on TV in the final days before the vote often concentrated on the deal-making going on as well as the vote watch.

On November 16th, the day before the House would vote on NAFTA, coverage was predictably intense. The New York Times ran a front page story on a new New York Times/CBS News poll, “Americans Split on Free Trade Pact, Survey Finds,” by Gwen Ifill. The results of a nationwide survey of 1,334 adults found 41 percent opposed to NAFTA, 37 percent in favor. 72 percent in the poll said they had heard “a great deal” about NAFTA, 26 percent said “not much.” Beside the story was a picture of House Majority Whip Richard Gephardt at an anti-NAFTA rally on Capitol Hill the day before. The story continued on page B-12, beneath a picture of Ross Perot on Capitol Hill. The story said the results indicated that “neither side in the trade-agreement debate has been successful in making a clear case to the public.” It also suggested, “Mr. Clinton’s strategy to sway voters by directly appealing to individual legislators rather than their

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constituents,” appeared to be valid.

“Supporters Assert Majority In House Back Trade Pact: Private Pledges Are Cited,”2 by Keith Bradsher, appeared at the bottom of page one and focused primarily on “deal-cutting and arm-twisting” the White House was engaged in with farm state lawmakers. It featured a quote from President Clinton saying “we’re going to get it,” balanced with the charge by AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland that Mr. Clinton had, “clearly abdicated his role as leader of the Democratic Party.” On page B-15 “Rally Against Agreement Fizzles Near a G.M. Plant,”3 by Thomas J. Lucek, reported that fewer than 100 had shown for a rally expected to attract 3,000. It featured a quote from the chairman of the local United Auto Workers Union, Guy Messina, explaining, “A lot of people here simply don’t realize that an important national issue like NAFTA can have a direct effect on their jobs.” A large photo ran to the left of the story showing several union members holding signs saying, “No NAFTA” and “Don’t Send My Job To Mexico.” Below and to the right of this story on B-15 was “Ottawa to Seek Deals if U.S. Rejects Trade Pact,”4 by Clyde Farnsworth. The story reported on Canada’s assertion that it would pursue expanded trade directly with Mexico even if the U.S. Congress were

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to vote NAFTA down the next day.

The *Washington Post* ran a large front page picture of anti-NAFTA union demonstrators in front of the Capitol below a bold headline reporting that a new poll showed President Clinton’s approval rating had weakened. In the right-hand quarter, below the fold was “Union Chief Jabs Clinton on NAFTA, AFL-CIO’s Kirkland: President ‘Abdicating’ Role of Party Leader,” by Dan Balz. The story focused on labor leaders being angry with the President for his offer to help protect Republicans who backed NAFTA, and mentioned that Clinton had pitched NAFTA to a crowd of 400 small business leaders at the White House and met with ten House members seeking their vote the day before.

The heaviest NAFTA coverage in the *Post* the day before the vote was concentrated on pages A-23 and 24. “Polls Show Nation Is Split on NAFTA: President’s Push Is Increasing Support,” by Peter Behr, dominated two-thirds of page A-23 and reported on an even split in the approval vs. disapproval findings of a new *Washington Post/ABC News* poll on NAFTA. It noted the dramatic reversal from the 45 percent to 33 percent rejection of NAFTA in September, and how Ross Perot’s approval had fallen from 54 percent to 33 percent. In the top right part of the page, “Clinton’s Commitment

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Evident in His Efforts: This Is Not A Minor Political Risk,” by Ann Devroy, included a picture of Rep. Dick Gephardt appearing the day before at a Hill rally against NAFTA. Devroy’s piece discussed how Mr. Clinton could have backed-out of the George Bush initiated trade pact months ago, but how his vigorous support for NAFTA had made him “the darling of Wall Street.” Former Bush political director Ron Kauffman credits Clinton, “they’re doing a great job on this now,” and House Minority Whip Newt Gingrich said of Clinton, “he has shown great persistence.”

On page A-24, “Are Labor Tactics on NAFTA Real Threats or ‘Tough Love’?” by Thomas B. Edsall, ran on the top right-hand side of the page alongside a cartoon of an AFL-CIO poster with a caricature of Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA). The story offered Pelosi as an example of the kind of how organized labor was not taking for granted any undecided lawmakers from districts were labor contributions had been significant. The article emphasized that organized labor was “the single most important source of cash for House and Senate Democrats.” Another minor piece that referred to NAFTA was “Hawley and Smoot Are Framed Again: Historic Legislators Scapegoated Before,” by Kevin Merida. The story appeared in the top left quarter of page A-19 along with small

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pictures of Hawley and Smoot. This was essentially a historical trivia piece on how the NAFTA debate had resurrected the names of the two infamous 1930s protectionists. NAFTA opponents bought large ads that ran on page A-16 on November 16th.

The theme for television reports roughly 24 hours before the NAFTA vote on November 16th, was of a battle coming down to the wire. *ABC World News Tonight* \(^{10}\) not only ran the most complete segment on NAFTA, ABC anchor Peter Jennings had an extra advantage. Jennings had an exclusive ten minute interview with the President. Jennings introduced the report from White House correspondent Brit Hume that preceded the Clinton interview by reporting the president was “getting close,” and “with so much prestige invested in passing the North American free Trade Agreement” it had been a “pretty good day” for the president. Jennings reported ABC’s count showed 209 in favor of NAFTA and the number was boldly highlighted across the screen. Hume reported that even though the tide had seemed to turn “unmistakably” in his favor, the president was keeping up an intense schedule promoting NAFTA. The scenes featured Mr. Clinton flanked by 15 of the 41 governors supporting NAFTA in the Rose Garden as he promised a “measure of protection” in next year’s election to congressmen who came under attack for backing NAFTA. The images conveyed a confident and hopeful Clinton promising presidential “thank you” notes to all members who voted yes the following day. NAFTA

\(^{10}\) Peter Jennings and Brit Hume, “The NAFTA Vote,” *ABC World News Tonight*, 16 November 1993, Media Research Center [Tape 6825], Alexandria, VA.
opposition was captured in scenes of independent truckers in their big rigs rolling past the Capitol in protest and Perot supporters who were upset they had been kept out of a meeting in the Capitol between members of the Florida congressional delegation and agriculture lobbyists. Hume also reported that previously undecided members had come out for NAFTA and that other members from farm states were saying their reservations had been resolved. Rep. Tom Lewis (R-FL) said, “If you ask for a number of things and you get most all that you ask for, well, then you certainly can’t turn your back.” Hume reported the last-minute “horse-trading” may be controversial, and, “it may not be pretty, but it beats losing.” Jennings then introduced his interview with President Clinton.

Jennings posed eight questions to the president. He first asked Mr. Clinton why he thought so much of his overall leadership was tied up in the NAFTA vote. Clinton responded that anytime you try to make many changes, “you put yourself on the line.” Jennings’ following two questions focused on how much a no vote on NAFTA might damage the president and why a Democratic president with a Democratic majority in Congress was having such a hard time selling NAFTA. Mr. Clinton defended his position, reminding Jennings that NAFTA was, “dead on arrival” before his election. He agreed that NAFTA was tied up in the general politics of insecurity. He acknowledged the public fears to be legitimate, but maintained “this agreement will make those things better, not worse.” The overwhelming majority of the exchange was not about what NAFTA was, or what it might do, but what a defeat would mean for the president and his
ability to lead. The most significant, if not the most startling thing, the President said during the entire interview didn’t come until two-thirds of the way through it, and was treated almost matter of factly by Jennings. Clinton said, “A lot of Americans don’t know that we can get out of this in six months if it turns out to be bad.” This appears to be the only mention of such an escape hatch, however Jennings did not follow up on it. In fact, it the segment, taped shortly before air time had clearly been edited before Jennings posed his next question. On the eve before the final activity before the vote, there were no specific questions such as “why do you support NAFTA so strongly?” or, “how do you respond to NAFTA opponents’ charges that this pact will cost more jobs than it will gain?” These did not come up in the feature exchange between Jennings and the president, which closed with the president’s admission he still lacked the votes, but, “now, I’ll be surprised if it doesn’t” pass. It offered no maps or graphics, no set-up piece about the background such as how we had come to this important vote on the North American Free Trade Agreement exactly one year after the signing of the proposed agreement by President Bush, Canadian Prime Minister Mulroney, and Mexican President Salinas.

*ABC World News Tonight*’s interview with Clinton combined with the package preceding it with Brit Hume meant ABC devoted more time to the subject of NAFTA than the other networks, which ran fairly similar reports focused mainly on White House efforts to collect the votes they needed and NAFTA opponents’ attempts to resist
Administration pressure. As far as what the NAFTA pact really was, none of the networks offered more than a few seconds of dialogue referring to the provisions of the trade pact that would remove trade barriers and establish the world’s largest free trade zone. CBS and NBC also anticipated the NAFTA vote in the context of President Clinton having to play host at the economic summit in Seattle the day after the vote. The attention was almost looking past the NAFTA vote to how a yes or no vote would affect the president’s stature as a world leader.
Chapter V. Conclusion

While by no means scientific, the sample comparison conducted here reveals certain important similarities in the coverage by the Post and Times and TV news. It also helps reveal critical differences beyond the time limitations that restrict TV reports on policy issues such as NAFTA and health care to 2-4 minutes of coverage. Television, with the occasional exception of MacNeil/Lehrer and CNN's extended flexibility, seldom had the time available to devote to the depth and variety of angles about NAFTA that the Post and Times had.

The two newspapers clearly did a better job than television of informing the public about NAFTA during the peak period of November. It was more consistent, examined different angles. Television covered the action as NAFTA closed toward a climax much the way it covers presidential elections. The focus was on who was up, who was down, and who said what today at rally or speech either in favor of, or opposed to NAFTA. The Post and the Times coverage and insight of the Gore-Perot debate particularly outdistanced TV which more often than not, simply replayed highlight of the exchange. Had time allowed for an expanded analysis reaching back to many months earlier, it would very likely have revealed an even greater ratio of newspaper to television coverage of NAFTA. Newspapers were more inclined to treat NAFTA as an issue they knew the public must absorb gradually. While TV news did run a couple of
reports early in 1993 that helped explain the basics of NAFTA, it failed to revisit these
more informative reports when the public needed as much information about what
NAFTA
was and would do, as it did information about the vote count on Capitol Hill and a tour
of each sides’ partisan spin about NAFTA on any given day.

What is striking is how the Post, Times, and TV networks all were more inclined
to wait for a major event to drive coverage of NAFTA, than to do ongoing NAFTA
coverage. NAFTA was moving toward a vote, regardless of whether or not the White
House made a full court press or ignored it, regardless of how many or few NAFTA
opponents spoke out, or what people in Mexico or Canada had to say about it. A
comparative analysis of health care would most certainly find a similar dynamic at work
in the coverage of that policy issue. Perhaps even more so because health care had a
much longer window than NAFTA during which it was addressed as a high national
priority by the president and by his opponents. But, faced with no hard and fast date to
live or die by as NAFTA, health care could be deferred. NAFTA had a fixed date for
implementation or the whole huge trade agreement would become null and void.

Newspapers are able to reinforce information on a subject over a period of
several days in a way that television cannot. On complex issues such as NAFTA, the
public would need at least as much reinforcement as on a major product before it truly
understood it. Some of America’s best-known companies stay that way because they
invest millions dollars in advertising to reinforce their message. Because television has fleeting market penetration and recognition requires repetition, advertisers selling products or political candidates know an ad may be shown as many as five to seven times before a viewer will fully absorb its message.

The word “NAFTA” certainly enjoyed a great deal of visibility and repetition in November of 1993, but the coverage in both mediums focused far less on the content of NAFTA than it did on the battle to win votes on it and the war of buzzwords between NAFTA supporters and opponents. The Post and the Times were less susceptible to reducing their coverage simply to the “game” of NAFTA, the daily vote watch, how its shifting fate might affect the president as a national and world leader, but a case can be made that both print and TV coverage were more in response to White House initiated events and statements than self-initiated. White House events were reported with precious little context, background or primers on the agreement. Had the media provided this type of material as early as six weeks out with some frequency, the public would surely have been better informed about what NAFTA was and how it had come to be, rather than just be familiar with who was for it, who was against it, and the critical deadline vote in Congress.

The dynamic of the NAFTA campaign was not very different from that of the presidential campaign that preceded it by a year. The crucial turning point came in a high-profile TV debate just a week prior to the vote. Public opinion swung dramatically
from strong opposition to a statistical dead-heat based largely on the perceptions that
emerged from the Gore-Perot debate and how both print and TV communicated them.
This almost overnight swing from negative to positive reflects the power of TV to
change public opinion based on what appears to be an emotional response to an image.

Neil Postman, in *Amusing Ourselves to Death* says:

> On television, discourse is conducted largely through
> visual imagery, which is to say that television gives us a
> conversation in images, not words. . . .¹

> The news of the day is a figment of our technological
> imagination. It is precisely a media event.²

In media events, as with the Nixon-Kennedy debate, the younger more attractive
spokesperson usually makes a more positive impression.

Polls confirmed what consensus had established. Vice President Gore had made
a far more positive impression with the viewers than Ross Perot had. The debate made
the public more aware that NAFTA was a priority issue, but did not greatly increase the
public's knowledge about an issue that had the potential to affect their economy, perhaps
even their jobs, for many years to come. A television event turned the tide. The public
decided and the media reinforced that Mr. Perot was far less popular in November of
1993 than he had been months before. But what if the vice president had debated

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¹ Postman, Neil, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*
² Ibid., 8.
Congressmen Gephardt or some other NAFTA opponent who could have made a more favorable impression than Ross Perot? It all becomes relative to the individuals and personalities involved, and they have become as important as the issues they discussed, perhaps even more so.

In all the material reviewed for this analysis, David Rosenbaum of the New York Times made the best attempt to put the debate about NAFTA in the proper context in an article published on November 11, 1993. In his piece, with “Beyond A Trade Pact, The Issue: Should The U.S. Expand Its Economic and Political Influence?” Rosenbaum did not write about personalities or quotable bites, the struggle for votes in the House, or even how the outcome would affect President Clinton’s perception as a leader at home or abroad, but rather raised serious questions that went to the core of what NAFTA was all about. He said NAFTA wasn’t really about tariffs or trade, domestic agreements on labor and the environment, and not even really about trade with Mexico. Rosenbaum suggested NAFTA, with the cold war ended, was really about whether the United States, “will try to expand its economic and political influence around the world or whether it will withdraw within its borders and try to go it alone.”

After this review of the TV network news coverage, and the coverage by two of America’s most respected and influential daily newspapers, it is easy to see neither our

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political leaders nor the media ever engaged the nation in this type of debate. If attempts were made earlier when NAFTA awareness and attention were much less they certainly not were not made when national awareness of the issue was at its highest during the period examined here.

Despite all the books, articles and editorials that have been written criticizing newspaper coverage, newspapers continue to uphold a higher standard when it comes to providing information to the public than television. TV demands quick, simple, and visual answers and conclusions for impatient viewers with short attention spans. TV newscasts have almost become episodes in a drama series. On a complex issue such as NAFTA, do short and simple, and simply-framed reports provide answers or communicate real information beyond the score of the game, the time on the clock and the roster of players? Does it allow us to dig for the truth? The evidence examined supports that it does not. The evidence also supports that newspapers are increasingly influenced by the national TV mindset. In Media Circus, Howard Kurtz, press critic for the Washington Post, demonstrates the subtle erosion.

In 1986, nearly all the Post’s front-page stories were of the hard news variety. In 1991, there were page one-stories on suburban traffic jams, innovative schools, kids left motherless by crime, drivers who run red lights, food labeling, teenage boredom....According to a summary of a 1993 newsroom survey, many staffers still believed the paper “concentrates too much on incremental government,
institutional and policy stories at the expense of news about ‘real people,’ social trends and change.”

Nevertheless, newspapers still provide far more depth and breadth in coverage than television news. In “Who’s In Charge? How the Media Shape The News and The Politicians Win Votes,” Philip Seib reports that Walter Cronkite, the one-time dean of television news anchors, once acknowledged the limitations he saw in TV news. Cronkite indicated he wanted to end many of his newscasts with the words, “for more information, consult your local newspaper.” Perhaps, it would be a major contribution to better policy-making and a more informed public if Dan Rather, Peter Jennings, Tom Brokaw, CNN and PBS news teams ended all their news coverage with Cronkite’s suggested disclaimer. On an issue as complex as NAFTA, those print resources should be brought to bear well in advance of the final climax of the media’s coverage of the “game” and its outcome.

The House approved NAFTA by a 234 to 200 margin even though the outcome had been in definite doubt less than 24-hours before. From the time NAFTA was signed by the leaders of the United States, Canada and Mexico in December of 1992, both newspapers and television had nearly an entire year to inform and educate the American people about one of the most complex and comprehensive pieces of economic and trade

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legislation ever to be adopted. The Clinton Administration’s preoccupation with health care did cause an extensive delay in their devoting priority attention to NAFTA. But reporters were aware for many months that NAFTA would face a critical House vote on a specific date. The outcome in the Senate was never an issue and never in doubt.

The analysis reveals that newspapers better appreciated that NAFTA was a complex piece of trade legislation, and a multi-faceted issue domestically, and internationally. Television news chose instead to cover NAFTA in much the same context it covers presidential campaigns. There were precious few times TV news actually examined NAFTA. There is irony in that mostly, when TV did provide rare substance related to NAFTA, it was on CNN and PBS where the audiences were far smaller, yet already more informed than the regular viewers for CBS, NBC, and ABC news programs. The NAFTA vote was a certainty. NAFTA’s outcome was very much in doubt, yet it was not until a crisis level was reached less than two weeks before the vote, and until a TV debate starring the vice president and a former presidential candidate forced the issue to center-stage, that all media finally treated it as a priority issue. The TV event boosted awareness of NAFTA to its peak, and dramatically changed NAFTA’s fortunes. In the end, it was a personality contest between Albert Gore and Ross Perot and Gore won. The following day, few Americans knew much more about the substance of NAFTA than they had prior to the TV event. Instead of using its enormous power to help inform millions of Americans about one of the most
significant pieces of trade and economic legislation in history, TV covered the horse
race, concentrating not on what NAFTA was or might mean, but who was up and who
was down in the fight over NAFTA.

News coverage the day after the NAFTA vote generally re-capped the vote and
the highlights of the abbreviated campaign. Once again the news media, and television
in particular, told us less than little or nothing about what NAFTA implementation might
mean. The preferred focus was on how President Clinton's big political victory would
enhance his stature as he hosted an economic summit with other world leaders in Seattle
where new trade initiatives would be discussed. Once again, the American people were
denied the opportunity to learn what NAFTA approval really meant. Fortunately, *The
Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and other daily newspapers across the country
appreciated that many Americans wanted more background, context and substance
regarding the historic vote that had just occurred. Information that went beyond a replay
of the game just completed. Television didn't bother to explain NAFTA
implementation. TV had already shifted its focus to the next game coming up.
APPENDIX A

Timeline of Key NAFTA Dates

September 25, 1990  President Bush formally announces the United States’ intention to pursue a free trade agreement with Mexico.


May 23-24, 1991  Congress provides a two-year extension of fast track trade negotiating authority to the president by defeating two proposals aimed at blocking negotiations with Mexico.

March 14, 1992  Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton delivers a major speech to anti-NAFTA labor audience. Clinton tells the crowd he supports the concept of NAFTA, but must first see details before he can support the pact.

August 12, 1992  NAFTA negotiations are concluded.

September 8, 1992  The Bush Administration releases an official copy of the trade agreement for congressional review. Candidate Clinton continues to withhold his support of NAFTA pending further review of the details.

September 18, 1992  President Bush informs Congress that he intends to sign NAFTA.

October 4, 1992  Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton endorses NAFTA for the first time. Clinton says he will not re-open negotiations but does call for side agreements on labor, environmental and import surge issues.

December 17, 1992  President Bush signs the NAFTA agreement, ensuring the act will be considered by Congress under fast track negotiating rules, which do not allow amendments.

August 14, 1993  Side agreements on labor, environmental and import surge issues are completed and signed.

September 14, 1993  President Clinton recruits the support of former Presidents Ford, Carter, Bush, and written support from Reagan as he announces full-fledged blitz for NAFTA.

September 28, 1993  Congressional committee action begins on draft legislation implementing NAFTA into U.S. law.

November 9, 1993  Vice President Al Gore debates NAFTA opponent Ross Perot on CNN’s Larry King Live


November 20, 1993  U.S. Senate approves NAFTA by a 61-38 vote.

December 8, 1993  President Clinton signs NAFTA into law.

January 1, 1994  NAFTA takes effect as official law and policy and implementation
APPENDIX B

Where We Get Our News: Survey of 800 Americans
64% watch TV
27% read newspapers
5% listen to talk radio

TV Viewers
65% get their news from local TV news
14% from local weeklies
11% from a national daily
1% from USA Today

Most Frequently Watched Television Networks
22% NBC  20% ABC
18% CBS  11% CNN
6% FOX  2% PBS

Which Section of the Newspaper Do You Read First?
49% Front section
9% Sports
7% Local
5% business
14% Don’t read the paper

Which is the most powerful at Effecting Change the Media or Government?
67% media
23% government
5% neither

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