Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions

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Politicians routinely appeal to the emotions of voters, a practice critics claim subverts the rational decision making on which democratic processes properly rest. But we know little about how emotional appeals actually influence voting behavior. This study demonstrates, for the first time, that political ads can change the way citizens get involved and make choices simply by using images and music to evoke emotions. Prior research suggests voters behave differently in different emotional states but has not established whether politicians can use campaigns to manipulate emotions and thereby cause *changes in political behavior. This article uses two experiments conducted during an actual election to show that: (1) cueing enthusiasm motivates participation and activates existing loyalties; and (2) cueing fear stimulates vigilance, increases reliance on contemporary evaluations, and facilitates persuasion. These results suggest campaigns achieve their goals in part by appealing to emotions, and emotional appeals can promote democratically desirable behavior*.

Observers have long recognized that politicians appeal to the emotions of citizens (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1944), and these appeals are a hallmark of the television advertising that dominates contemporary elections (Kaid and Johnston 2001; Nelson and Boynton 1997). Consultants see emotions as central to how political ads work (Kern 1989; Perloff and Kinsey 1992), while critics denounce ads that "appeal to emotion instead of reason" as manipulative and poisonous to democratic decision making (Kamber 1997, 36; Arterton 1992).[1] With all of this fuss about emotional appeals, it is surprising that we know little about their effects. Although political scientists have been fascinated with the impact of mass-mediated campaigns, their studies have largely ignored the role of emotion (Boiney and Paletz 1991).

This article tries to narrow the gap between practitioners who see emotion as central to "what works" and researchers who exclude emotion from their explanations. Both psychologists and political scientists recently have claimed that emotions play a fundamental role in reasoning and are as likely to enhance rationality as to subvert it (Damasio 1994; Kinder 1994; Marcus 2000). Drawing on these ideas, I examine the extent to which campaign ads affect voting behavior by cueing emotions. I find candidates can significantly alter the motivational and persuasive power of ads simply by using music and images to elicit emotions such as fear or enthusiasm. By using

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[1]Observers often see emotional appeals as a form of trickery that must be exposed. For example, see Patricia Lopez Baden, "When You're Watching a Political Ad—Watch It," *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, 27 September 1998, sec. A; James Bennet, "Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail," *New York Times,* 27 February 2000, sec. 6; John Lancaster, "Attacking MD's Gun Law; L.A. Consultant's Ads Play on Fear, Emotion," *Washington Post*, 16 October 1988, sec. A; Paul Taylor, "Consultants Rise via the Low Road," *Washington Post*, 17 January 1989, sec. A.

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experiments, this study contributes to research in political psychology by showing that appeals to emotion can *cause* changes in how citizens respond to political messages. The results not only add to our knowledge of advertising effects, but also show that emotional appeals can stimulate behavior, such as voting or reasoned choice, that is often seen as democratically desirable.

Emotion and the Effects of Political Communication

For many years, a consensus on "minimal effects" overshadowed research on campaigns and the mass media. One seminal work dismissed the power of emotional appeals: "Symbolic manipulation through televised political advertising simply does not work . . . television viewers effectively protect themselves from manipulation by staged imagery" (Patterson and McClure 1976, 115–16). Studies of media effects have since flourished and reversed the minimal view (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1996). Scholars have been especially preoccupied with negative ads and their impact on voter turnout (Lau et al. 1999). But most research in this field focuses on the content or tone of information, leaving the role of emotion largely untested.

However, there has been a renewal of scholarly interest in emotions, and recent research offers a promising basis for remedying past neglect. Political psychologists have shown that feelings about candidates and issues are distinct and strong predictors of preferences relative to cognitive considerations (Abelson et al. 1982; Conover and Feldman 1986; Kinder 1994). More recently, Marcus and colleagues (2000) have proposed the theory of Affective Intelligence, a sweeping application of psychological research on emotion to politics. They argue that two emotional systems lay a foundation for rational behavior by steering citizens between reliance on habits and more effortful thought processes, in accordance with the demands of the political environment. Making extensive use of the National Election Studies (NES), they show that anxious citizens are more likely to be attentive and make reasoned choices, while enthusiastic citizens tend to rely on party predispositions. Marcus and colleagues also suggest that the theory of Affective Intelligence may shed light on how campaign communication works (2000, 137–38).

This research establishes a solid starting point for understanding the place of emotion in mass politics, but it also leaves us uncertain about two vital questions: first, are emotions really the cause of the observed differences in political behavior? Despite a strong fit between theory and evidence, critics point out that survey data alone cannot demonstrate a causal role for emotions (Glaser and Salovey 1998; Isbell and Ottati 2002; Joslyn 2001). For example, anxiety about a president during a recession may lead fellow partisans to place a premium on skills and performance over party loyalty. But it is also plausible that dissatisfaction with the economy leads directly to both partisan defection and anxiety about the incumbent. It is even possible that anxiety is a by-product of breaking with party identification. In the end, we can not be sure from survey evidence whether emotions are a cause or consequence of changes in political behavior.[2]

The second uncertainty is related: what gives rise to the feelings reported in surveys? Can politicians use ads to elicit these emotions? Prior studies have paid more attention to the object of voter emotions than the source. Surveys can capture the referent of an emotion (e.g., anger *about* taxes) but cannot tell us whether ads have the capacity to sway voters by cueing emotions. A few studies have used experiments to show that citizens are emotionally responsive to the nonverbal behavior of leaders (Sullivan and Masters 1988) and political leaflets with emotional words or images are more persuasive (Hartmann 1936; Huddy and Gunnthorsdottir 2000; Roseman, Abelson, and Ewing 1986). Although we know that the central tool of modern elections—the televised ad—often uses images, music, and words to play to the emotions of voters, it remains to be seen whether in doing so ads can actually affect voting behavior.

This study seeks to improve our understanding of the causal links between advertising, emotion, and political behavior. I argue that psychological research provides a useful framework for explaining the impact of emotional appeals and then describe two experiments designed to test predictions during an actual election. The results show that cueing emotions with images and music can dramatically influence responses to campaign ads.

The Political Psychology of Emotional Appeals

Campaign consultants have intuitions about how emotions work, but they are not inclined to formulate or test precise propositions (Arterton 1992). We must turn elsewhere for assistance in explaining the impact of emotional appeals. A long line of research on public health campaigns suggests that fear appeals are more effective at changing behavior, especially when an appeal offers

[2] Marcus et al. (2000) use panel data to strengthen their claim that the first inference is correct. Their argument is even more compelling because they rely on measures that were not designed to test the theory. It is simply the nature of the evidence itself that leaves skeptics room to doubt.

recipients something to do to mitigate the danger. Most fear appeals in political ads fit this description by suggesting viewers vote a certain way. While findings from this literature have been fairly consistent, they have not reliably supported any one theory about how or why fear increases persuasion (Eagly and Chaiken 1993; Witte and Allen 2000). Another body of research suggests that people process information differently when they experience positive or negative moods. Positive moods lead to greater reliance on existing beliefs or heuristic ("top-down") processing, while negative moods lead to greater reliance on systematic ("bottom-up") processing (Schwarz 2000). Once again, the pattern of findings is rather robust, but scholars disagree about the mechanisms at work (Bless 2001).

Psychologists of emotion have begun to offer theories that help to link these and other strands of research on information processing, persuasion, and motivation. Dual or multiple channel models stress the importance of distinct emotional systems in assessing the significance of external cues and allocating resources for attention, reasoning, and action accordingly (Damasio 2000; Marcus 2000). Marcus and colleagues (2000) have applied these ideas to the study of mass politics with the theory of Affective Intelligence. Taken together, these developments lay a solid foundation on which to build an explanation for how emotional appeals in campaign ads work.

Emotions are responses to the significance that circumstances hold for an individual (Damasio 2000). If the brain detects a threat to our well-being, for example, we experience mental and physical changes associated with fear, usually before we are aware of it. Our own reaction is what often alerts us to the fact that something is wrong. In this article, *emotion* refers to underlying responses to the perceived relevance of external stimuli. *Emotional appeals* are communications intended to elicit an emotional response from some or all who receive them.

I focus on two emotions about which psychologists have learned a good deal and to which political ads commonly appeal—enthusiasm and fear. Theories of emotion differ greatly, but they agree on many of the causes and consequences of these two emotions (Damasio 1994; Gray 1987; Lazarus 1991; LeDoux 1996). *Enthusiasm* is a reaction to signals that have positive implications for a person's goals (i.e., things are going well). It reinforces commitment to those goals and strengthens the motivation to act or stay involved. If goals are not met, the result is disappointment and a diminished drive for pursuits. *Anxiety* or *fear* is a reaction to threat. Fear breaks a person out of routines, directs attention to relevant portions of the environment, and activates thinking about alternative courses of action. The motivational impact of fear is less certain, as it can stimulate constructive action to deal with a threat, withdrawal, or immobility, depending on the person and situation (Gray 1987; LeDoux 1996). Absent signs of threat, a person is calm and behavior is governed by routines.

Emotions are triggered when the brain perceives an object and determines its significance. However, the emotion systems often function outside of awareness, a fact critical to grasping the potential impact of advertising appeals. Because information is processed faster through these systems than the cognitive centers of the brain, attention and reasoning respond more efficiently to the flood of data pouring in from the environment (Damasio 2000; Zajonc 1998).

In applying these ideas, Marcus and colleagues (2000) refer to the disposition and surveillance systems. The former enables citizens to learn from experience and form predispositions. When their candidate, cause, or country is doing well, feelings of enthusiasm urge them to stick with allegiances and navigate politics by familiar rules of thumb. The surveillance system prepares citizens to respond to threatening conditions. Anxious feelings awaken the attentive and open-minded citizen for which political scientists have long searched. Because this dual system adapts behavior to the demands of the situation, Marcus and colleagues dub it "affective intelligence."

The way these systems monitor the environment offers clues to how emotionally evocative ads work. Cues that trigger emotions are primarily learned. Experience teaches us to associate objects with desirable, undesirable, or dangerous outcomes (Damasio 1994). Our brains record these connections in associative memory. We update associations automatically (i.e., without conscious effort) in light of new experiences. The emotion systems compare new information to what is recorded in memory. When we come across something familiar, our "gut reaction" is determined by a tally of past associations. Past associations help to translate newly received information into cues that trigger emotions.

We can begin to fit an understanding of the psychological mechanisms with the sorts of cues used to craft emotional appeals. Images, sounds, or even words that tap personal experiences or deeply ingrained symbols of success, failure, or danger, can help unleash the desired emotional response in an audience: foreclosure signs and pink slips target recession-afflicted workers; flags inspire patriots and veterans; the scream of sirens and echo of gunfire rattle a crime-wary public; a chant of "no justice, no peace" invokes the specter of racial discord and urban riots among whites, or structural discrimination and police brutality among blacks. Politicians use these cues

to strike "the responsive chord" to which consultant Tony Schwartz (1973) long ago alluded.

With this in mind, we can articulate hypotheses about how political ads that try to elicit these emotions will affect voting behavior. *Enthusiasm appeals*—featuring content and imagery associated with success and good times—should increase the desire to participate and reinforce the salience of prior beliefs in candidate choice. *Fear appeals*—featuring content and imagery associated with threat—should motivate a search for information, decrease the salience of prior beliefs, and encourage reconsideration of choices on the basis of contemporary evaluations. Note there is no general prediction for the impact of fear appeals on participation, though it may be possible to formulate more precise predictions based on individual and situational differences that are beyond the scope of this article (cf. Brader 2005; Rudolph, Gangl, and Stevens 2000). The predictions above contrast sharply with conventional wisdom, which says positive ads cause people to like ("approach") an endorsed candidate and negative ads cause them to dislike ("avoid") an attacked candidate (Brader 2005). Positive ads that elicit enthusiasm should not encourage approach behavior so much as they should promote the pursuit of existing goals. Negative ads that elicit fear should not necessarily incite avoidance, but instead release a person from the grip of a "standing decision" and make way for critical reflection.

Experimental Design and Data

I use an experimental design to test each set of hypotheses. Political scientists increasingly recognize the power of experiments to isolate aspects of the political environment as the cause of political behavior (Kinder and Palfrey 1993). Experiments permit stronger causal inferences by allowing researchers to rule out potential confounds through tight control over conditions and random assignment of subjects to exposure. They are particularly appropriate for the study of emotion in political communication (Glaser and Salovey 1998; Isbell and Ottati 2002). Because emotions are short-term responses that often escape awareness, their effect on attitudes occurs online, making it difficult to discern their contribution once an emotion has subsided. For this reason, observation in close proximity to when emotions are triggered is desirable.

Sample and Procedures

Subjects for this study were adult residents of Massachusetts, who in the summer of 1998 were faced with a Democratic primary race for governor. That race featured Scott Harshbarger, the incumbent attorney general, and Patricia McGovern, a former state senator. In all, 286 subjects from 11 communities participated over the course of 10 weeks leading up to the election. This sample closely resembles the state electorate in a number of ways, including sex (53% women), age (mean is 41), and race (89% white, 4% black). The median household income is slightly below average ($33,500). Finally, subjects are well educated on average (56% have a college degree), making them closer to the likely primary electorate than to the state population.

The study used flyers, radio announcements, and newspaper ads to recruit subjects. Subjects were told the study concerned what people learn from TV news, a typical deception used to mask the actual purpose and limit demand effects. Upon arrival, they were randomly assigned to an experimental condition and asked to fill out a questionnaire about their background, news habits, and views on major issues of the day. In order to avoid sensitizing subjects to campaign-related information, only four out of 65 questions in the pretest referred to the elections. A lab assistant then showed subjects to a viewing room, started a videotape, and left. All subjects saw the same pre-recorded local news program, into which one of several campaign ads had been inserted. After viewing the first half of a 30-minute broadcast (i.e., the portion focusing on "hard news"), subjects answered a series of open-ended questions about the program. The posttest went on to ask for their views on news content, issue concerns, opinions of public figures, inclinations to participate in politics, and attitudes regarding the upcoming elections. There was no mention of campaign ads until a manipulation check following the posttest. At the end, subjects were debriefed and received a small fee for their participation.

The study simulated reality in two ways that are particularly important for generalization: (1) exposure to ads was incidental, during a break in a news program that was ostensibly the focus of attention; and (2) ads were tied to an actual campaign in which subjects would soon decide whether to vote and for whom. Viewing occurred without supervision and sometimes in the presence of children or other subjects. As a result, the ads in this study faced hurdles in attracting attention similar to those faced by genuine ads and posed meaningful comparisons to voters.

Design and Manipulations

The experiments varied exposure to campaign ads that were specially created for this study using state-of-the-art

digital editing and professional narration. The goal is to see how, if at all, cueing emotions such as enthusiasm or fear alters the way citizens respond to political messages. In order to discern the impact of emotion, we must vary the degree or type of emotionality to which an ad appeals without altering the content or the quality of its argument. Thus, a critical aspect in the design is the separation of verbal content from the imagery and music intended to evoke emotion. A verbal message may elicit emotions, but it is difficult to separate cognitive and emotional reactions to the message. As a result, this study tests the impact of emotional appeals by manipulating the emotionality of nonverbal cues only.[3]

In principle, the most direct experimental test would pair three sets of cues (enthusiasm, fear, neutral) with an identical script. However, in practice, it is difficult to create a single script that can be realistically paired with all three of these cues. Fearful music and images would seem out of place next to a message full of praise and optimism. Likewise, enthusiasm-eliciting music and images would clash with a message dominated by gloom and condemnation. Therefore, this study employs a separate experimental test for each emotion. A relatively negative script serves as the baseline for testing the impact of fear cues, while a positive script serves as the baseline for testing the impact of enthusiasm cues. The scripts otherwise are kept as similar as possible. All follow the same narrative structure: The narrator frames the status quo on issues such as education, crime, and drugs, and then contrasts the two candidates. Positive frames suggest conditions are good and getting better, negative frames suggest they are bad and getting worse. All ads are "comparison spots" with elements of both attack and promotion.[4] For balance, otherwise identical versions promote Harshbarger or McGovern by switching their names.

The study uses three sets of nonverbal cues to manipulate emotionality. Neutral cues consist of relatively nonevocative images of local communities and government buildings, with no music. The same neutral cues form the backdrop for the baseline ads in each experiment (i.e., paired with a positive or negative script). A set of reassuring cues—uplifting music and warm, colorful images of children—is paired with a positive script to create an ad appealing to enthusiasm. A set of threatening cues—tense, discordant music and grainy, black-and-white pictures of violence and drug use—are added to a negative script to create an ad appealing to fear.

In sum, the study sets up two experimental tests or paired comparisons. The first contrasts positively framed ads with and without enthusiasm cues. The second contrasts negatively framed ads with and without fear cues. Direct comparison of the emotional ads must be chastened by recognition that they differ in two ways (i.e., verbal and nonverbal elements differ). Many studies have contrasted the effects of ads that deliver positive versus negative messages (Lau et al. 1999). The primary goal of this study is to learn what difference it makes when ads not only deliver such messages, but also try to elicit an (appropriate) emotional response. This study focuses on two common and very distinct types of emotional appeals, by examining the effect of adding enthusiasm cues to a positive script and the effect of adding fear cues to a negative script.

Manipulation Check

The music and images mirror those commonly used by consultants to elicit enthusiasm and fear (Kern 1989). Did the ads elicit the intended emotions? In order to obtain a manipulation check, the study employed *cued recall*: at the end of the posttest, subjects reported the extent to which the ad made them feel anxious, excited, and hopeful.[5] Enthusiasm responses are measured by combining the four-point scales for excitement and hope. The results indicate that the manipulations worked in the expected manner. In the fear experiment, subjects report higher levels of anxiety from viewing an ad with threatening images and music ($M_{anxiety} = 1.00$) than from viewing the baseline negative ad ($M_{anxiety} = 0.56$; $t = 1.91$, $p < .03$). In the enthusiasm experiment, subjects report higher levels of hope and excitement from viewing an ad with uplifting music and images ($M_{enthusiasm} = 2.81$) than from

[3]Consultants see images and music as key to emotion (Boiney and Paletz 1991). Nonverbal and verbal elements usually work in tandem, but verbal comprehension entails processing by nonemotional systems, making it difficult to separate emotion and cognition. If a script strengthens the emotional appeal, then this design understates the total impact of emotion.

[4]The ads are not as fully positive or negative as they would be if they were also pure promotion or attack ads. As a result, their emotional impact may be diluted.

[5]While these are not reliable measures of a mediating response because they were obtained *after* the dependent measures, they can provide a signal of original reactions. Direct measurement at the time of exposure carries risks. Self-report poses two problems: (1) emotions can occur outside of awareness, precluding accurate self-report (Damasio 2000); and (2) the very act of calling attention to an emotional state may alter subsequent evaluations (Schwarz and Clore 1983). Psychophysiological methods can detect responses that escape awareness (Larsen and Frederickson 1999), but strip away any semblance of realism. Both strategies weaken deception.

viewing the baseline positive ad ($M_{enthusiasm} = 2.11$; $t = 2.34$, $p < .01$).[6]

Measuring Motivation, Vigilance, and Persuasion

This study examines the effects of advertising appeals on three aspects of political behavior. The first is the motivation to get involved in the election. The second is attention and information seeking, which I group together under the label "vigilance." The third is persuasion or, more generally, the decision about which candidate to choose. I describe below how each of these dependent variables is measured.

There are two measures of motivation. In the posttest, subjects reported their *Interest in the Campaign* on a seven-point scale from "not interested at all" to "extremely interested" (rescaled from 0 to 1 for analysis). Only 26% expressed more than moderate interest, while 52% expressed less. Subjects also reported their likelihood of voting in the primary, from which I constructed a dichotomous measure of *Intention to Vote*, scored 1 for those who said they "definitely will vote" and 0 for all others. In the pretest, subjects indicated how often they follow politics and their general inclination to vote, allowing us to control for initial motivation and observe individual change more closely. Thus, results reported below are conditional on prior motivation.[7]

Several measures are used to test hypotheses about vigilance. At the end of the posttest, subjects were asked to recall whether they had seen a campaign ad and, if so, which candidate it promoted. *Correct Recall*, equal to 1 if a subject correctly recalls the ad and sponsor and 0 otherwise, provides an indication of how closely subjects paid attention to the ad. Roughly two-thirds correctly recalled these basic details. The hypotheses suggest that emotional cues may also affect the search for information relevant to the issues raised in an ad. Subjects were asked to list any news stories they recalled, yielding two measures as evidence of actual information seeking *after* exposure to the ad: *Recall of Related News* indicates whether or not a subject listed the news item most relevant to the theme of the ads (i.e., a report on schools). Nineteen percent did so. *Recall of Unrelated News* indicates the proportion of two unrelated new stories recalled by a subject.[8] While 49% listed both irrelevant stories, another 42% listed only one of them. The posttest also ascertained the desire for information by asking subjects to list issues they would like to hear more about from reporters or politicians. *Seek Related Information* is coded 1 if a subject listed an issue relevant to the ads—education, crime, drugs, or the election—and 0 otherwise. *Scope of Information Seeking* indicates the number of relevant issues listed. Thirty-five percent mentioned one relevant issue, while 9% mentioned more than one.

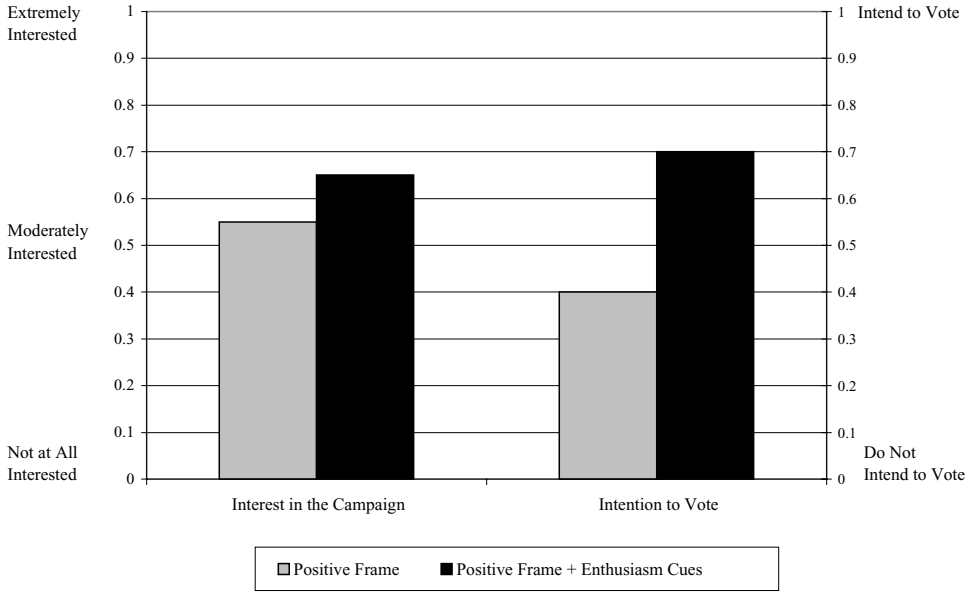
To assess persuasive power, we can examine changes in candidate preference. In the pretest, subjects were asked to name the candidate for whom they planned to vote. In order to reduce the risk of sensitizing subjects, the question did not identify candidates. As a result, only 30% could name a choice. However, the candidates were listed with other politicians in a standard feeling thermometer battery, providing additional information about initial preferences (57% rated the candidates differently). For those answering "not sure yet" on the vote question, the measure of prior preferences is based on the relative thermometer ranking of the candidates. In the posttest, subjects reported how they would vote if the election "were held today" and this time chose from a list of candidates (55% chose a candidate, the rest were undecided). From these items, I construct two measures of whether and how preferences change. The first is *Stability in Choice* and is coded 1 if there is no change in preference between the pretest and posttest and 0 otherwise. The second is

[6]The manipulation worked similarly for both parts of the scale: Positive cues increased feelings of both excitement (0.81 to 1.10) and hopefulness (1.30 to 1.71). If one looks at all ads, it is clear that message tone also contributes to emotional impact, underscoring the conservative nature of the design. From enthusiasm appeals on one extreme to fear appeals on the other, subjects report increasing levels of anxiety, $F(3, 181) = 4.82$ ($p < .003$) and decreasing levels of enthusiasm, $F(3, 181) = 4.96$ ($p < .003$). Earlier studies used emotional self-reports as the basis for classifying actual political ads into positive and negative "experimental" groups, ignoring other ways in which the ads differ (Lang 1991; Newhagen and Reeves 1991). If this procedure were followed here, we could be certain the two emotional ads cue distinct levels of anxiety ($t = 3.62$, $p < .001$) and enthusiasm ($t = 3.32$, $p < .001$). However, this approach is less desirable, because it departs from strict notions of experimental manipulation and assumes as a matter of design that the two sets of emotional cues have opposite effects.

[7]Despite randomization, initial motivation differs across cells, providing a further incentive to control for pretest measures. Multivariate estimation with controls and dummy variables for the emotional cues yields the same results as the conditional mean differences reported in the paper.

[8]Open-ended responses were coded by a research assistant and checked by the principal investigator. Given the directed nature of the questions (asking for a list of topics) and the limited number of news stories, coding was largely unproblematic. Answers that did not clearly match a news story fell into three categories that are not analyzed here: (1) less than two percent of subjects listed a topic that did not correspond to something in the video; (2) slightly over ten percent mentioned the political ad or, in an apparent reference to the ad, the election; and (3) ten percent made a broad or ambiguous mention of crime, drugs, or education, by which they could have been referring to the content of the ad, one of the news stories, or a non-existent story.

FIGURE 1 Effect of Enthusiasm Cues on Interest in the Campaign and Intention to Vote



Note: The left side of the figure displays the mean level of interest in the campaign reported by subjects in each experimental condition, controlling for pretest interest in politics, where campaign interest is measured on a seven-point scale that has been scaled from 0 to 1. The right side displays the mean self-reported intention to vote in the primary by subjects in each condition, controlling for pretest inclination to vote. N = 116.

Persuasion, coded 1 if a subject changes from opposition or indifference in the pretest to preferring the sponsor of the ad in the posttest and 0 otherwise.

Finally, emotional appeals are hypothesized to influence the criteria on which voters base their choice. To test these predictions, we can model the decision using multivariate estimation. The dependent variable, *Candidate Choice*, is derived directly from the posttest vote question and coded 1 if a subject prefers Harshbarger, −1 if he prefers McGovern, and 0 if he is indifferent between them. *Prior Preference*, which is included as an explanatory variable, is based on the pretest questions described above and coded identically to *Candidate Choice*.

The Enthusiasm Experiment

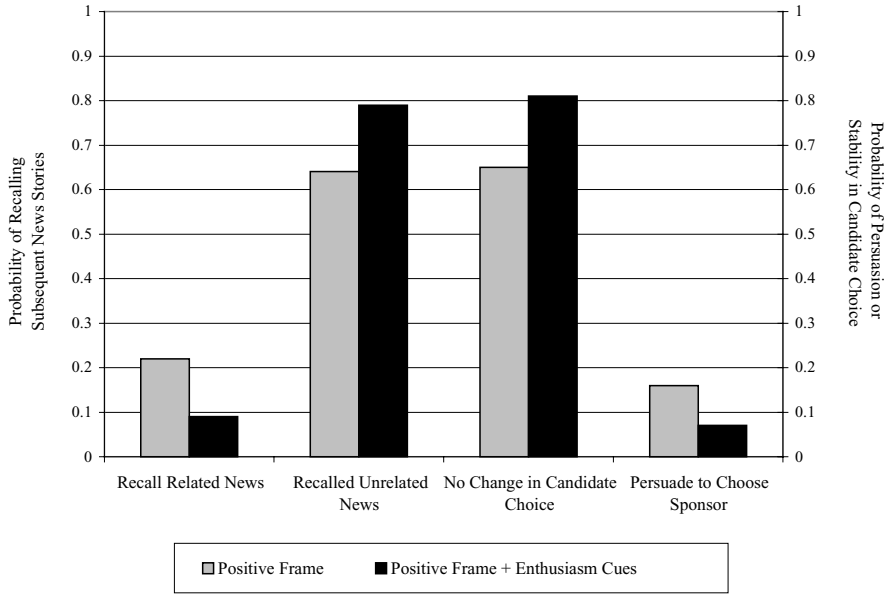
The first set of results concerns the impact of enthusiasm appeals. According to the hypotheses laid out earlier, enthusiasm appeals should encourage greater involvement in the election without necessarily triggering greater attention or thirst for information. They should also reinforce existing loyalties and thereby promote stability in candidate choice rather than persuasion.

Figure 1 compares mean levels of *Interest in the Campaign* and *Intention to Vote* for subjects exposed to positive ads with and without enthusiasm-evoking images and music. Enthusiasm cues increase interest in the campaign by one-tenth of the scale ($M_{difference} = .10$, $t = 2.40$, $p < .02$).[9] The size of this effect is equivalent to the difference in interest between the least- and best-educated subjects in the sample. A more dramatic effect is visible for *Intentions to Vote*: The self-reported likelihood of voting jumps 29 percentage points on average ($M_{difference} = .29$, $t = 2.00$, $p < .05$), suggesting enthusiasm appeals greatly improve the motivational power of political ads. This conclusion must be tempered, however, by the realization that motivation to vote is often low, leaving considerable room for improvement. Moreover, an experimental setting may reveal only a temporary boost that needs to be sustained by an entire ad campaign. The critical value of the experiment is its ability to isolate enthusiasm-eliciting music and images as a cause of increased motivation and one whose short-term impact is indeed substantial.

Although enthusiasm appeals stoke interest in the campaign, they do not appear to generate attentive or

[9] p-Values reflect two-tailed tests of statistical significance.

FIGURE 2 Effect of Enthusiasm Cues on Information Seeking and Candidate Choice



Note: In order from left to right, the figure shows: (1) the proportion of subjects recalling a related news story that followed the ad; (2) the proportion seeking more information on relevant issues; (3) the proportion showing stability (i.e., no change) between their pretest and posttest candidate preference; and (4) the proportion persuaded to support the sponsor of the ad (i.e., change from supporting the opposing candidate or indifference to supporting the sponsor). N = 116.

inquisitive behavior on the part of citizens. *Correct Recall* of the ad and its sponsor is only six percentage points higher among those exposed to enthusiasm ads, a difference that is statistically insignificant ($M_{difference} = .06$, $z = 0.69$, $p < .49$). When we look at recall of subsequent news stories, however, it appears that feel-good appeals encourage citizens to turn their attention away from the theme of the ad to other issues. As Figure 2 shows, enthusiasm cues diminish *Recall of Related News* from 22% to 9% ($M_{difference} = -.13$, $z = 1.62$, $p < .10$), while mean *Recall of Unrelated News* increases from 64% to 79% ($M_{difference} = .15$, $z = 2.12$, $p < .04$).[10] In contrast, the self-expressed desire to hear more information on relevant issues is higher in the enthusiasm condition, but this difference falls far short of significance, regardless of whether we look at any desire to *Seek Related Information* ($M_{difference} = .08$, $z = 0.76$, $p < .45$) or the *Scope of Information Seeking* ($M_{difference} = .16$, $t = 1.10$, $p < .28$). In sum, a decidedly mixed pattern of results suggests that enthusiasm appeals at best have no impact on vigilance and at worst turn the attention from voters away from the issues raised in the ad.

Evidence on candidate choice is considerably clearer. The right side of Figure 2 displays the probability of *Stability in Choice* and *Persuasion* for each experimental group. The share of subjects who prefer the same candidate before and after seeing the ad (i.e., *Stability in Choice*) increases sixteen percentage points with the addition of enthusiasm cues ($M_{difference} = .16$, $z = 1.94$, $p < .05$). Not surprisingly then, the rate of successful *Persuasion* is ten points lower, though this difference is not significant ($M_{difference} = -.10$, $z = 1.38$, $p < .17$). As predicted, enthusiasm appeals help to solidify existing preferences.

Psychologists suggest that emotional responses may affect not only a person's direct reactions, but also the extent to which she relies on existing beliefs instead of available information to make an evaluation (Bless 2001; Isbell and Ottati 2002). Marcus et al. (2000) contrast the weight anxious and complacent voters give to prior beliefs (party identification) and contemporary considerations (trait ratings and issue proximity) in presidential voting.

[10]A t-test is used to assess differences in *Recall of Unrelated News*. Alternatively, one could treat the original measure as a count and perform a Mann-Whitney test ($z = 2.34$, $p < .02$).

TABLE 1 Determinants of Candidate Choice by Ad Exposure (Enthusiasm Experiment)

	Ad Exposure (Experimental Condition)	
	Positive Frame	**Positive Frame + Enthusiasm Cues**
Simple Advertisement Model		
Prior Preference	1.32 (0.32)***	1.94 (0.29)***
Message of Campaign Ad	0.07 (0.17)	0.07 (0.17)
% Correctly Predicted	55.77	81.26
Improvement in % Predicted	17.31	42.20
Components of Choice Model		
Prior Candidate Preference	0.39 (0.14)***	0.75 (0.07)***
Issue Evaluations	1.04 (0.43)**	0.48 (0.29)*
Trait Evaluations	0.56 (0.32)*	0.19 (0.30)
Control Variables		
Age	0.36 (0.21)*	0.24 (0.15)*
Income	−0.06 (0.14)	0.09 (0.10)
Education	0.12 (0.14)	0.03 (0.10)
Marital Status	−0.04 (0.14)	0.05 (0.06)
Weeks left in Campaign	0.22 (0.13)*	0.18 (0.09)*
R^2 (adjusted)	0.31	0.74
N	52	64

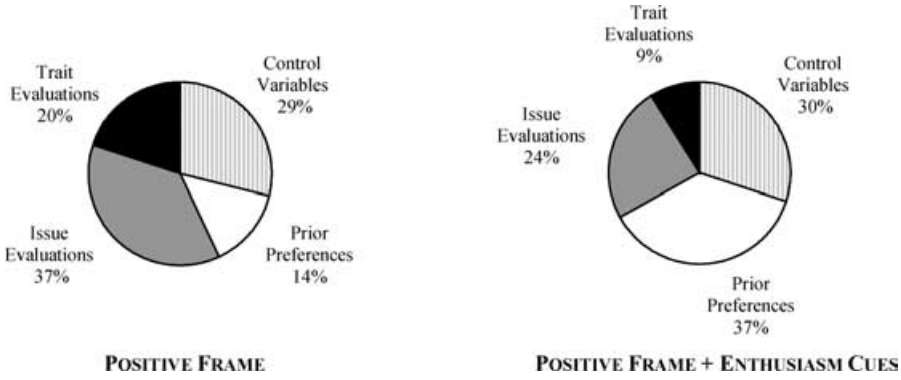
Note: Entries for the Simple Advertisement Model are coefficients (standard errors) from maximum likelihood estimation of an ordered probit model. *Message of the Campaign Ad* is coded the same as the dependent variable, *Candidate Choice* (i.e., 1 if the ad is pro-Harshbarger, −1 if it is pro-McGovern); in this way, a positive coefficient indicates a persuasive effect. Improvement scores reflect the increased predictive power of the model over the modal value of the dependent variable and are expressed in percentage points. Entries for the Components of Choice Model are coefficients (standard errors) from OLS regression in which all variables have been rescaled to fall on the interval from 0 to 1, including the dependent variable, *Candidate Choice*. Issue and trait evaluations are indices constructed from a series of questions in which subjects assessed candidates in terms of issues and leadership traits.
*$p < .10$, **$p < .05$, ***$p < .01$ (two-tailed).

I replicate their approach to see whether cueing emotions can alter the basic criteria of political judgment. First, the top of Table 1 offers a simple, multivariate version of what we saw in Figure 2, predicting *Candidate Choice* from prior preferences and the message of the ad (using ordered probit for the three-category dependent variable). Again, we see the choice of subjects in the enthusiasm condition is tied more closely to initial preferences, while the persuasive power of the ad does not differ. The Components of Choice Model at the bottom of the table allows us to directly compare the kinds of attitudes contributing to *Candidate Choice* in each experimental group. The model includes prior preferences and comparative evaluations of the candidates on issues and leadership traits, controlling for age, income, education, marital status, and the number of weeks left in the campaign.[11] In order to facilitate direct comparison of coefficients, estimates for this model are based on OLS regression and all variables have been scaled to a range of 0 to 1 (Achen 1982).

As we have already seen, prior preferences play a substantially larger role after exposure to enthusiasm appeals, $t = 2.48$ ($p < .01$). Note that enthusiasm appeals

[11] Issue and trait evaluations are indices formed from a linear combination of several measures. Issues-related measures include assessments of how well the candidates will handle education or crime and a tally of (open-ended) reasons for liking or disliking the candidates. Traits-related measures include assessments of how well four personality traits ("intelligent," "provides strong leadership," "gets things done," and "compassionate") describe the candidates. In the final index, evaluations of McGovern are subtracted from evaluations of Harshbarger.

FIGURE 3 Contribution of Prior Dispositions and Contemporary Evaluations to Candidate Choice (Enthusiasm Experiment)



Note: The pie graphs show the relative contribution of four factors (control variables, prior candidate preferences, comparative issue evaluations of the candidates, and comparative trait evaluations of the candidates) to *Candidate Choice* among subjects in each experimental condition, based on the "Components of Choice Model" reported in Table 1. All of the variables have been rescaled from 0 to 1 to allow for direct comparison of the magnitudes of the estimated effects (Achen 1982). The relative contribution of each factor to *Candidate Choice*, expressed as a percentage, is calculated by dividing the effect size by the sum of all effects, following the procedure proposed by Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen (2000, 113–20). N = 116.

strengthen prior convictions regardless of who sponsors the ad. Therefore, the ad simultaneously emboldens supporters and hardens the opposition, essentially polarizing those voters with preexisting preferences.[12] Contemporary considerations (i.e., trait and issue evaluations) are less salient in the enthusiasm condition, but the difference across groups falls short of statistical significance, $F(2, 98) = 1.92$ ($p < .15$). In addition to changes in the salience of explanatory factors, the substantially improved fit of the models in the rightmost column of Table 1 further underscores that enthusiasm appeals strengthen the stability and predictability of voters' choices.[13]

If we compare the relative contribution of explanatory factors to the overall model for each group of subjects, we get an even sharper picture of changes in the mix of criteria used by voters. Again following the procedure used by Marcus et al. (2000, 113–20) for purposes of comparison, we can calculate the relative contribution of each factor by dividing its estimated effect by the sum of all estimated effects in the model. Figure 3 shows the results. For viewers exposed to a less emotional positive ad, prior preferences contribute only one-fourth as much as contemporary evaluations. When enthusiasm cues are added, the contribution of prior preferences more than doubles and is on par with the combined contribution of issue and trait evaluations.

Discussion: Findings on the Impact of Enthusiasm Appeals

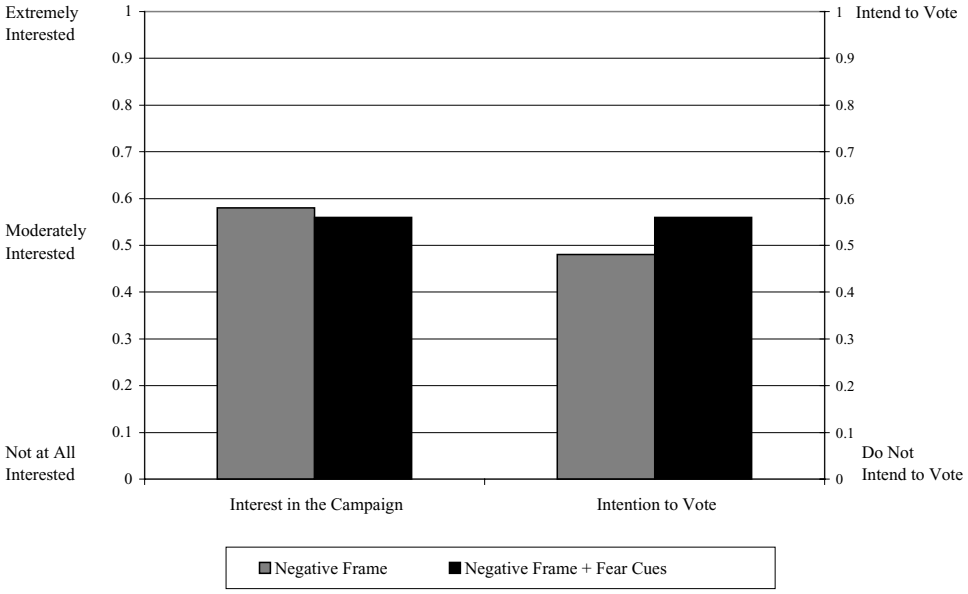
By wrapping positive messages in enthusiasm-eliciting music and images, campaign ads can remarkably change their impact on voters. Predictions for a motivational and loyalty-reinforcing impact of enthusiasm appeals are born out by the evidence. Voters exposed to these appeals show greater interest in the campaign, are more willing to vote, and rely more on preexisting preferences to choose a candidate. In addition, consistent with expectations, there is little evidence to suggest enthusiasm appeals promote vigilance; the clearest piece of evidence even suggests that enthusiasm appeals can turn the attention of voters to other issues.

These experimental findings build on previous work. Marcus et al. (2000) find a positive link between enthusiasm and interest, as well as the absence of a dynamic link between enthusiasm and information seeking, using NES public opinion data from 1980 to 1996. We now see that

[12] A more detailed analysis of this polarization effect is pursued elsewhere (Brader 2005).

[13] I also checked the relationship between emotional cues and ideology, as an alternative measure of prior beliefs. The salience of ideology did not change. However, in earlier presentations of those results, some argued that the pretest measure of ideology is far from ideal—a forced-choice question about the size of the government—and not necessarily appropriate to this choice.

FIGURE 4 Effect of Fear Cues on Interest in the Campaign and Intention to Vote



Note: The left side of the figure displays the mean level of interest in the campaign reported by subjects in each experimental condition, controlling for pretest interest in politics, where campaign interest is measured on a seven-point scale that has been scaled from 0 to 1. The right side displays the mean self-reported intention to vote in the primary by subjects in each condition, controlling for pretest inclination to vote. N = 118.

campaign ads can stimulate this pattern of behavior by cueing enthusiasm. The impact of enthusiasm on voting has not been previously shown. To see if there is similar support for the external validity of this new finding, I turn to the 2000 NES survey.[14] For consistency, I adopt the same model that Marcus et al. use to estimate the effects of emotion on interest: I regress (logit model) self-reported vote on total feelings of enthusiasm for the presidential candidates, controlling for education, strength of partisanship, and the extent to which a person follows politics. Feelings of enthusiasm indeed strongly predict voting ($b = 0.74$, s.e. $= 0.25$, $p < .002$).

The present study also extends what we know about the impact of enthusiasm on prior beliefs. Where Marcus et al. find anxious voters rely less on predispositions than *unworried* voters, we see here that cueing enthusiasm can actually cause voters to rely *more* heavily on prior beliefs. Moreover, the polarizing impact of positive emotional cues mirrors little-noted findings on the effects of leaders' happy/reassuring facial expressions (Masters and Sullivan 1993) and the use of positive emotive imagery in interest group fliers (Huddy and Gunnthorsdottir 2000).

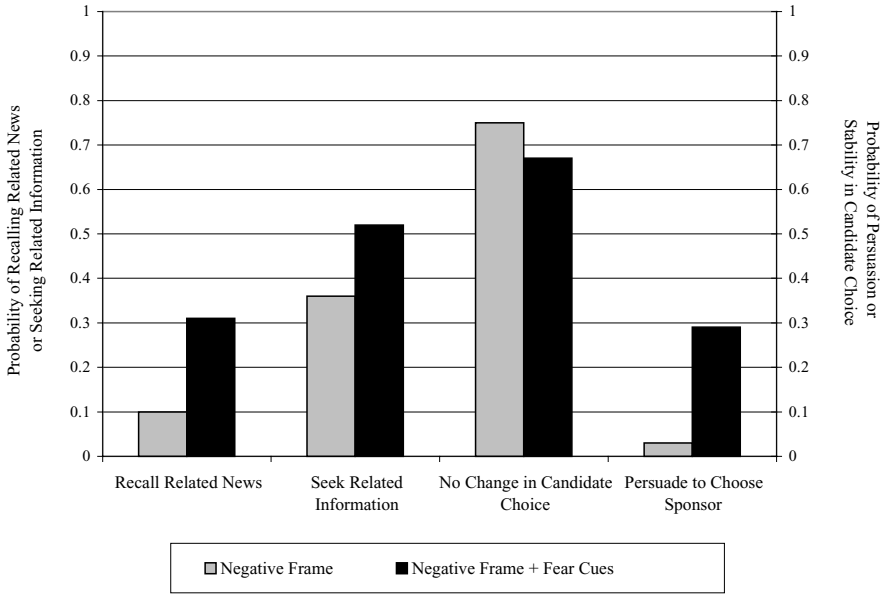
The Fear Experiment

The second set of results concerns the impact of fear appeals. According to the theoretical propositions set forth earlier, fear appeals should increase both vigilance and persuasion, the latter by reducing reliance on prior beliefs in favor of more "bottom-up" processing of the ad message and contemporary candidate evaluations. Predictions for the impact of fear appeals on motivating involvement in the election are less clear, as it has been argued that fear can prompt constructive action, withdrawal (flight), or no action at all (Gray 1987; Witte and Allen 2000).

Figure 4 displays *Interest in the Campaign* and *Intention to Vote* for subjects viewing negative ads with and

[14]The experimental design allows us to rule out the possibility that the differential impact of enthusiasm cues stems from social desirability bias. The real concern is that voting *intentions* are a low hurdle. Even if enthusiasm appeals cause a genuine rise in best intentions, they may not be strong enough to motivate citizens to *act* on those intentions. Social desirability affects all self-reports of participation, but the NES postelection measure eliminates the risk of respondents "lying to themselves" by voicing good intentions.

FIGURE 5 Effect of Fear Cues on Information Seeking and Candidate Choice



Note: In order from left to right, the figure shows: (1) the proportion of subjects recalling a related news story that followed the ad; (2) the proportion seeking more information on relevant issues; (3) the proportion showing stability (i.e., no change) between their pretest and posttest candidate preference; and (4) the proportion persuaded to support the sponsor of the ad (i.e., change from supporting the opposing candidate or indifference to supporting the sponsor). N = 118.

without fear-eliciting images and music. Levels of interest are nearly identical in the two groups ($M_{difference} = -.02$, $t = 0.47$, $p < .64$). Although subjects who saw fear ads appear somewhat more likely to vote, the difference is far too small to be statistically significant ($M_{difference} = .08$, $t = 0.74$, $p < .46$). In short, there is no evidence from this experiment to suggest that ads can stimulate interest or voting by appealing to fear.

Fear appeals should generate both alertness and a search for information relevant to assessing and addressing the threat. The results are mixed. Contrary to expectations, the proportion of subjects exhibiting *Correct Recall* of the ad is slightly lower and statistically indistinct from those exposed to the less emotional message ($M_{difference} = -.06$, $z = 0.71$, $p < .48$). As we move beyond attention to the ad, the evidence is more consistent with predictions (see Figure 5). Fear appeals improve *Recall of Related News* by 21 percentage points ($z = 2.29$, $p < .02$), but have no effect on *Recall of Unrelated News* ($M_{difference} = -.04$, $t = 0.61$, $p < .54$).[15] Fear appeals also seem to spur the desire to *Seek Related Information*, but our confidence in this finding is at best marginal: the share of subjects wanting to learn more on related issues is 16 percentage points higher in the fear condition ($z = 1.49$, $p < .14$). The finding is stronger, though only barely significant, when we consider the *Scope of Information Sought* (i.e., number of issues), which increases by 0.23 ($z = 1.74$, $p < .09$). In sum, there is no evidence that fear appeals increase attention to the ad itself. All remaining evidence on information-seeking points in a consistent direction, but only the effect of fear on improving recall of related news inspires confidence.

The evidence on candidate choice is again clearer. The right side of Figure 5 displays the mean values for *Stability in Choice* and *Persuasion*. The proportion of subjects maintaining the same preference in the pretest and posttest is eight percentage points less in the fear condition, but this difference is insignificant ($z = 0.94$, $p < .35$). Fear appeals do not merely unsettle existing choices, but rather push them in a specific direction. Fear ads are dramatically more effective at persuading viewers ($M_{difference} = .26$, $z = 3.19$, $p < .001$), with more than one in four voting for the sponsor even though they initially were indifferent or leaned toward the opponent.

[15] A Mann-Whitney test on *Recall of Unrelated News* shows the same result ($z = 0.61$, $p < .54$).

TABLE 2 Determinants of Candidate Choice by Ad Exposure (Fear Experiment)

	Ad Exposure (Experimental Condition)	
	Negative Frame	**Negative Frame + Fear Cues**
Simple Advertisement Model		
Prior Preference	1.47*** (0.28)	0.95*** (0.25)
Message of Campaign Ad	0.09 (0.18)	0.28* (0.15)
% Correctly Predicted	74.55	58.73
Improvement in % Predicted	21.82	14.29
Components of Choice Model		
Prior Candidate Preference	0.42*** (0.12)	0.11 (0.10)
Issue Evaluations	0.31 (0.52)	1.67*** (0.43)
Trait Evaluations	0.60 (0.56)	1.90** (0.91)
Control Variables		
Age	0.13 (0.22)	0.49*** (0.15)
Income	−0.12 (0.12)	0.13 (0.11)
Education	−0.01 (0.16)	−0.14 (0.12)
Marital Status	−0.17* (0.10)	−0.13* (0.08)
Weeks left in Campaign	0.24 (0.19)	0.16 (0.12)
R^2 (adjusted)	0.32	0.45
N	55	63

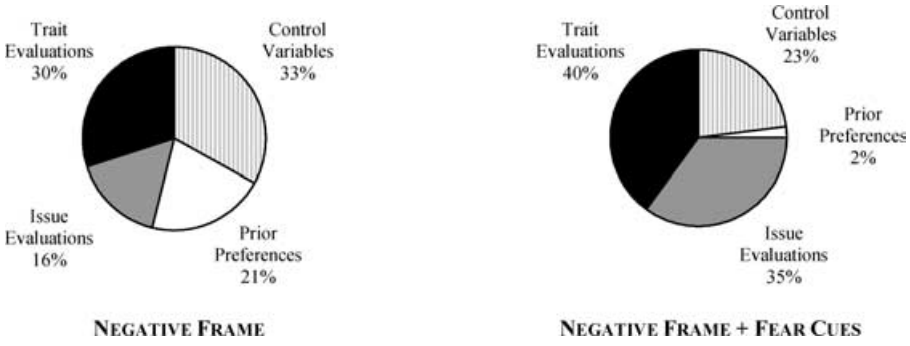
Note: Entries for the Simple Advertisement Model are coefficients (standard errors) from maximum likelihood estimation of an ordered probit model. *Message of the Campaign Ad* is coded the same as the dependent variable, *Candidate Choice* (i.e., 1 if the ad is pro-Harshbarger, –1 if it is pro-McGovern); in this way, a positive coefficient indicates a persuasive effect. Improvement scores reflect the increased predictive power of the model over the modal value of the dependent variable and are expressed in percentage points. Entries for the Components of Choice Model are coefficients (standard errors) from OLS regression in which all variables have been rescaled to fall on the interval from 0 to 1, including the dependent variable, *Candidate Choice*. Issue and trait evaluations are indices constructed from a series of questions in which subjects assessed candidates in terms of issues and leadership traits.
*$p < .10$, **$p < .05$, ***$p < .01$ (two-tailed).

As we did in the preceding experiment, we can examine how fear appeals affect the criteria voters use to choose a candidate. Table 2 displays a simple model reflecting the effects we have already seen in Figure 5 and the Components Model that includes prior preferences, issue and trait evaluations, and controls. Consistent with predictions for more "bottom up" processing, cueing fear causes voters to base their choice more heavily on issue and trait evaluations of the candidates, $F(2, 100) = 4.61$ ($p < .01$). Likewise, the impact of prior preferences is less in the fear condition, as expected, $t = 2.03$ ($p < .05$). Looking at the fit of models in Table 2, fear appeals introduce greater uncertainty (i.e., less predictability) in the Simple Model, but this disparity is reversed once contemporary considerations—whose salience is so dramatically increased by fear cues—are added for the Components Model. Finally, Figure 6 shows the relative contribution of each factor to the overall model, highlighting the quite distinct pattern of criteria used by voters in each group: subjects exposed to the less emotional negative ad rely on a balance of prior preferences, issue evaluations, and trait evaluations. With the addition of fear cues, contemporary considerations completely overwhelm prior preferences.

Discussion: Findings on the Impact of Fear Appeals

Campaign ads can significantly alter their influence over voters by packaging negative messages in fear-evoking music and images. Strong evidence of the persuasive power of fear appeals in political ads confirms

FIGURE 6 Contribution of Prior Dispositions and Contemporary Evaluations to Candidate Choice (Fear Experiment)



Note: The pie graphs show the relative contribution of four factors (control variables, prior candidate preferences, comparative issue evaluations of the candidates, and comparative trait evaluations of the candidates) to *Candidate Choice* among subjects in each experimental condition, based on the "Components of Choice Model" reported in Table 1. All of the variables have been rescaled from 0 to 1 to allow for direct comparison of the magnitudes of the estimated effects (Achen 1982). The relative contribution of each factor to *Candidate Choice*, expressed as a percentage, is calculated by dividing the effect size by the sum of all effects, following the procedure proposed by Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen (2000, 113–20). N = 118.

theoretical expectations and echoes findings from a decades-old research tradition on fear appeals in public health campaigns (Witte and Allen 2000). The shift in decision-making criteria caused by fear cues also provides a striking replication of the link between anxiety and political judgment found by Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen (2000) and complements their work by demonstrating that campaign ads can cue fear and thereby *cause* changes in political choice. There is some evidence to suggest that the effect of emotions on prior beliefs is broader than previously observed, affecting not just deeply socialized habits of party identification but even the "running tally" of candidate preferences. In this sense, the study does not replicate the work of Marcus and others as much as it extends it.

The hypotheses that fear increases attention and information seeking are only partially born out by the evidence. While none of the evidence is contradictory, the results are less compelling than for other effects. Earlier studies had found that political ads eliciting negative emotions improve memory for ad content (Lang 1991; Newhagen and Reeves 1991), but subjects in this study display no greater recall of the ad and its sponsor when exposed to a fear ad than when they are exposed to a less emotional negative ad. However, there is evidence that fear appeals provoke information seeking, at least in related news stories and perhaps in the self-conscious desire to learn more. This finding parallels public opinion evidence of a link between anxiety and both media attention and political learning (Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000).[16]

Theory and previous research suggest a complicated relationship between fear and motivation. Fear, it is thought, can provoke both withdrawal and engagement (Gray 1987; LeDoux 1996; Witte and Allen 2000). In the realm of politics, Marcus and colleagues (2000) find that anxiety does not boost interest or caring about the election but does provoke political actions *beyond* the vote. The present study similarly shows no tie between fear appeals and interest in the campaign. However, while subjects who saw a fear ad are somewhat more likely to intend to vote, the difference is not significant. Following the same procedure I used to examine enthusiasm and voting, analysis of the 2000 NES data yields similar results to the fear

[16]Given some of the sizable but insignificant effects in both experiments, it may be tempting to ask whether *emotional cues in general* increase motivation and vigilance. If we collapsed fear and enthusiasm cues together, analysis of variance would suggest that emotional cues increase intentions to vote, $F(1, 230) = 4.19$, $p < .04$, but the effect on desire for more information would fall shy of significance, $F(1, 230) = 2.51$ ($p < .12$). Regardless, a focus on two emotions and separate manipulations limits the ability of this experimental design to validate such claims.

However, the findings do cast doubt on the rival hypothesis that images and music simply make ads more interesting. Such a hypothesis might be based on the concepts of *arousal* and *vividness* (Fiske and Taylor 1991). General arousal cannot explain the distinct effects that depend on which emotion is being aroused. Vividness cannot account for why we see diminished recall in some cases and an attentive search for information in others.

experiment. The effect of anxiety on voting is positive but falls well short of significance ($b = 0.31$, s.e. $= 0.25$, $p < .22$).[17]

Conclusion: The Emotional Life of Campaigns

This study uses experiments to test the impact of emotion in political advertising. The evidence yields three major findings. First, campaign ads *can* use images and music to manipulate emotions and, in doing so, affect the behavior of voters. Second, conventional wisdom—that positive ads lead voters to like the sponsor and negative ads lead them to dislike the opponent—cannot begin to explain the distinct effects of enthusiasm and fear appeals.[18] For a more satisfactory explanation, we must turn to psychological theories that underlie specific emotions. The results, for the most part, support the theoretical propositions. Third, emotionally evocative ads do not simply sway voters directly, but change the manner in which voters make choices. When added to a negative message, fear-eliciting images and music stimulate "bottom-up" reasoning on the basis of contemporary evaluations. Enthusiasm-eliciting images and music, when added to a positive message, encourage fidelity to prior beliefs. The power of ads seems to come in eliciting emotions *while* delivering the argument to "vote for me." By stirring fear or enthusiasm, images and music seem to change the way viewers hear those words.

From Campaign Ads to Ad Campaigns

These findings have implications for how we think about election campaigns. In their landmark study, Lazarsfeld and colleagues (1944) set out looking for evidence of widespread conversion and found mostly reinforcement and activation. It turns out that these classic distinctions between persuasive and reinforcing effects of campaigns may be at least partially tethered to the emotions of voters. Affective Intelligence suggests that the extent to which times are ripe for mobilization or persuasion will depend considerably on the public "mood" (Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000). In troubled times, minds are more easily led; in good times, citizens are creatures of habit. This study suggests that politicians can have a hand in changing the emotional tenor of politics with serious consequences for political behavior.

Some caveats are warranted. First, we have more to learn about emotional appeals than can be revealed in a single experimental study. In one sense, this study merely begins to show what is possible if we take emotions seriously in the study of political communication. Emotions arise from assessments of what external events portend for the individual, and thus we should expect individual and contextual variation in response to a stimulus. We might ask whether fear and enthusiasm appeals work best when they resonate with current conditions or the existing feelings of viewers (cf. Roseman, Abelson, and Ewing 1986). Ads appeal to a wider range of emotions than the two discussed here. More experiments are warranted to replicate and extend the present findings, examine individual and contextual variation in the success of emotional appeals, and study a broader range of emotions. Future studies might also try to compare distinct emotional cues directly by adding them to the same, relatively neutral baseline. Given the strong advocacy nature of most political advertising, it is probably more feasible to use print or broadcast news stories as stimuli. News can be neutral in the sense of containing balanced information but given distinct emotional impact by accompanying images and where information is placed in the story.

Second, some effects appear to be dramatic, but we must be cautious about taking short-term changes at face value. Bursts of motivation are likely to fade if they are not renewed. Persuasion at the hands of one ad is likely to be challenged by competing ads and other sources. Of course, the purpose of ad campaigns is to keep the drumbeat going, and evidence from surveys suggests effects may accumulate to have a meaningful impact over the course of an election. Nonetheless, the strength of lab experiments comes in testifying to causal relationships, not in estimating the true strength of those relationships in the real world.

Future research must examine how often and in what ways the potential power of emotional appeals becomes a reality. Elections are not won or lost on the basis of an effective campaign ad, but may be won or lost with an effective *ad campaign*. Problems of data and measurement have long handicapped broad studies of advertising (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1996), but the availability of new data has made it possible to consider investigating campaign effects in ways that were unthinkable a few years ago (Freedman and Goldstein 1999). We are unlikely to sort campaigns cleanly according to a dominant emotion,

[17] Some argue that responses to fear are conditioned by feelings of competence (Eagly and Chaiken 1993). For example, Rudolph, Gangl, and Stevens (2000) use the 1980 NES panel to show that anxiety is tied to increases in campaign interest, but only for those high in efficacy. Such analysis is beyond the scope of this paper, but elsewhere I find the motivational power of fear appeals is much greater among those who are knowledgeable about politics (Brader 2005).

[18] Elsewhere I explicitly reject the simplistic hypotheses suggested by the conventional view. Enthusiasm appeals do not necessarily enhance favorable impressions of the sponsor, and fear appeals do not necessarily amplify unfavorable impressions of the opponent (see Brader 2005).

but discerning modest variation in their emotional tenor may allow us to test for similar effects at an aggregate level (Brader 2005).

Preying on Hopes and Fears?

We must not ignore normative questions about the impact of emotion in politics. Although I cannot do justice to such matters here, I wish to draw attention to a couple of issues. First, the persuasive power of targeting voter fears may well reaffirm popular notions of both the efficacy and ethical ambiguity of "negative advertising." But critics and scholars alike tend to glide over distinctions in types of negativity—for example, pessimism about the status quo, attacks on opponents, or attempts to elicit fear. Marcus and colleagues (2000) assert that anxiety plays a vital and rational role in the political process. From this perspective, fear appears to serve the goal of vigilance that Thomas Paine argued was the burden of a free people. We may choose to condemn attack politics or defend it as vital to competitive elections (Mayer 1996), but do we want to say it is an ethical transgression to warn people of a genuine threat?

Still, some may worry that ads will stoke fears beyond what is warranted. Concern that politicians "prey on the hopes and fears" of the masses is often rooted in a more general view that persuasion through logical argument is laudable, while persuasion through emotion is suspect. Yet both can be tools of manipulation. Political ads that trick people into acting contrary to their interests or on the basis of untruths should be criticized regardless of whether they make an appeal to emotion or logic. Although there is no question that emotions are prone to abuse, it is worth contrasting the effects of enthusiasm and fear ads with less evocative positive and negative ads. From the vantage of democratic theory, campaigns that stimulate either participation and fidelity or vigilance and reasoned choice, if not both, seem preferable to campaigns that fail to stimulate much of anything. We need to revisit our beliefs about what is proper in light of new research on the role that emotions play in campaigns and communication.

This leads to a second normative issue. Democratic theorists often place a premium on popular participation. Thus, low levels of voter turnout have been a topic of considerable concern. Researchers have wrestled extensively with the question of whether negative ads mobilize or demobilize citizens (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995; Goldstein and Freedman 2002). There is mounting evidence that emotions are tied to ebbs and flows of participation. In contrast to many aspects of public affairs, evidence to date suggests that emotion has a *positive* impact on getting citizens involved (Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000; Rudolph, Gangl, and Stevens 2000). This article presents experimental and survey evidence that appeals to enthusiasm stimulate the desire to vote. The debate on advertising and turnout is currently at a stalemate (Lau et al. 1999), but finer distinctions among positive and negative ads and recognition of the role of emotion may help advance this line of work. It would be difficult and probably undesirable to return to the organizational basis of nineteenth-century party politics that generated high levels of voter turnout, but it may still be possible to improve participation if we can find ways to recapture the emotional tenor of the festival-like campaigns of old (Popkin 1992).

Conclusion

Until now, we lacked hard evidence on whether emotions in general are an important part of political advertising, let alone how appealing to particular emotions might matter. This study confirms what some observers long held on faith: emotions can be central to whether and how campaign ads work. Although the goal of campaign organizations is to "get their message out," the art of electioneering lies as much in how that message is delivered. This study also contributes to research in political psychology by using experiments to provide more definitive evidence on the *causal* role of emotions in shaping political behavior. It extends earlier work to show that candidates can use campaign ads to elicit emotions and thereby influence the political behavior of viewers in predictable ways. The pattern of effects from two common types of emotional appeals is largely consistent with theoretical predictions and correlations observed in survey data. Taken together, survey and experimental studies provide greater confidence that the connections between campaign communication, emotional responses, and attitude change are neither causally spurious nor artifacts of the lab.

Appendix

Experimental Stimuli

Ads for this study were produced and edited into a prerecorded local news broadcast in a digital video editing lab. Some segments (e.g., weather and sports) were edited out to limit the focus to "hard" or "serious" news. The edited version was roughly 12 minutes in length and contained a variety of stories, none about the election. A commercial break in the middle of the broadcast contained ads for Boston Market, Maxwell House, and Toyota, followed by a single political ad. News stories before that commercial break discussed the retirement age of state troopers, the

parole of sex offenders, the arrest of a student who threatened to use pipe bombs at a high school graduation, and a lawsuit involving the actor Woody Harrelson. After the break, there were feature-length stories on a smoking ban in Boston restaurants and the seaworthiness of the U.S.S. Constitution, as well as a synopsis of an upcoming report on elementary schools.

Professional narration of the ads was generously provided by Marvin Kalb, formerly an award-winning journalist for CBS and NBC News. Please contact the author with any questions about the production or design. The scripts used in the ads follow:

Positive Crime Script: "There's good news in your neighborhood. The future looks bright for a generation of young people. The threat of violence and drugs is being erased. Children are better protected from crime than ever before. While [Scott Harshbarger/Patricia McGovern] pursued tougher sentences for violent criminals, [Patricia McGovern/Scott Harshbarger] opposed them. While [Scott Harshbarger/Patricia McGovern] led efforts to protect our children, [Patricia McGovern/Scott Harshbarger] did nothing. [Scott Harshbarger's/Patricia McGovern's] record has been praised by law enforcement officials. Massachusetts needs a Governor like [Scott Harshbarger/Patricia McGovern]."

Negative Crime Script: "It's happening right now in your neighborhood. A generation of young people is in danger. Violence and drugs threaten to destroy their future. More children are victims of crime than ever before. [Scott Harshbarger/Patricia McGovern] supports tougher sentences for violent criminals, [Patricia McGovern/Scott Harshbarger] opposes them. [Scott Harshbarger/Patricia McGovern] has a plan to protect our children, [Patricia McGovern/Scott Harshbarger] has no plan. [McGovern's/Harshbarger's] record has been criticized by law enforcement officials. Massachusetts cannot afford a Governor like [Patricia McGovern/Scott Harshbarger]. Vote for [Scott Harshbarger/Patricia McGovern]."

Positive Education Script: "There's good news in your neighborhood. The future looks bright for a generation of young people. Schools are less crowded and new programs make it easier to keep drugs and guns out. Test scores are rising and Massachusetts children are doing better than ever. [Scott Harshbarger/Patricia McGovern] has championed efforts to hire new teachers and to make schools safe. When it comes to education, [Patricia McGovern/Scott Harshbarger] has done nothing at all. [Scott Harshbarger's/Patricia McGovern's] record has been praised by leading educators. Our children need a Governor like [Scott Harshbarger/Patricia McGovern]."

Negative Education Script: "It's happening right now in your neighborhood. A generation of young people is in danger. Schools, already troubled by crowding, fight to keep drugs and guns out. Test scores are falling and Massachusetts children are falling behind. [Scott Harshbarger/Patricia McGovern] has a plan to hire hundreds of new teachers and to make schools safe. When it comes to education, [Patricia McGovern/Scott Harshbarger] has no plan at all. [McGovern's/Harshbarger's] record has been criticized by leading educators. Our children cannot afford a Governor like [Patricia McGovern/Scott Harshbarger]. Vote for [Scott Harshbarger/Patricia McGovern]."

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