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# THE POLITICS OF EMOTIONS, CANDIDATES, AND CHOICES

Heather E. Yates



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The Politics  
of Emotions,  
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palgrave  
macmillan

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ISBN 978-1-137-51526-1      ISBN 978-1-137-51527-8 (eBook)  
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-51527-8

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016939241

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Printed on acid-free paper

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*To mom, dad, brother, and sis  
For your unconditional love and support*



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## Vindicating the Emotional Citizen

**Abstract** Open and competitive elections, coupled with citizen participation, shape virtually all ideas about democracy. There are certain expectations and assumptions underscoring conceptualizations about the democratic participation of citizens and often the role of emotions is noticeably absent. This chapter outlines traditional approaches in political behavior research and considers more contemporary theories that justify the role of emotion in human cognition especially in political contexts. The chapter outlines the base academic assumptions that underscore the work and advocates the position that campaigns matter in shaping context in which voters are making choices in American politics.

It was called “hard-cider campaigning” when a political campaign functioned as popular entertainment for the masses. Before technological advances in mass communication, the nineteenth-century observer harbored expectations for spectacle from candidates and their political campaigns. Substantive campaign issues were secondary and the party organizations preferred it that way. Campaigns resembled something like a vaudeville act consisting of parades, floats, marching bands, and rallies and impressive lineups of popular glee clubs, church yard picnics, and free whisky (yes, free libations) were used liberally to rouse voters (Davidson et al. 1991). Up close and personal contact with candidates was unavoidable and a whisky-soaked crowd was an optimal audience for political

grandstanding. One Kentucky politician said that his electoral success depended on one political strategy: “the way to men’s hearts is down their throats” (Davidson et al. 1991). Gaining support from the average nineteenth-century voter was incentivized by devices that depended more on eliciting voters’ emotions, passions, and appetites than anything that appealed to an individual’s elevated sense of sophistication and reason.

Emotions are a durable feature of American campaigns and elections. Few observers of contemporary elections can deny that feelings are important elements in campaigns and, in turn, voters’ choices. Yet, that does not imply that the methods once used to rouse voters’ emotions correspond to those of the present. Politics are innately emotional because Americans have deeply internalized intersecting identities that get politicized in the public domain in one form or another. Because of this, American political history offers anecdotal evidence of the innately passionate environment of politics. Impassioned politics by any means necessary were “politics as usual” in the early years of American democratic elections. In contemporary contexts, emotions are on display through the use of patriotic symbols, symbolic imagery, and speech presented to the mass audience of spectators through technological advances. The campaigns utilize calculated and targeted strategies designed specifically to appeal to voters’ emotions. Emotional cues are delivered not only via mass media, but there is an increasing amount of self-selected content delivered by the advent of the Internet and social media. Political campaigns in the twenty-first century may appear increasingly emotional. With the rise in polarized political parties and the increase in voter frustration and political splinter groups promoting “anti-establishment” philosophies, it is expected that campaigns will involve voters more emotionally than other periods in history. This book examines the inherently emotional culture of politics and when reviewing the research available on the role of emotions in politics; it clarifies how the non-emotive, substantive issues of a candidate’s platform become emotionally charged.

There are some key academic assumptions that frame this examination of emotion in American elections. First, campaigns matter. There are two approaches to studying elections and one is that candidates’ actions, what they say and do, their strategies, and political events, determine electoral results. The other tends to ignore campaigns altogether and uses economic indicators to forecast outcomes. The examination of emotion in elections here is based on the approach that campaigns matter. Second, traditional political science research on behavior and participation has

reliably excluded the impact of voters' emotional responses. Third, the vindication of the role emotion has in politics and the proposal of including it as a variable in voting behavior research. Political environments activate feelings because it is a space where voters experience them. Surveys tap into the feelings expressed as responses to cues within the political environment. So, attention to political contexts is important when studying the influences of voters' feelings in their political choices. Feelings are not just cognitive motivators of political action but are active in candidate and issue appraisal.

### THE POLITICAL ANTAGONIST: FEELINGS

Emotions, as they are conventionally understood, are the traditional antagonistic actors in classic research on political behavior. Scholars of democratic elections tend to view the role of feelings as adversaries in the assumptions informing citizenry as they are shaped by classic philosophy. However, contemporary campaign strategists tend to appreciate the role of emotions differently than the predecessors of Western civilization. Open and competitive elections coupled with citizen participation shape virtually all ideas about democracy. There are certain expectations and assumptions underscoring conceptualizations about the democratic participation of citizens and often the role of emotions is noticeably absent.

Plato wrote that humans needed to be guided by “undistorted ethical truths, suppress passionate appetites, and desire rational things such as knowledge and justice” (Plato *The Republic* [1992]). Plato's legacy helped Western culture redefine the practice and expectations of democratic citizenship. Such conceptualizations articulated expectations that voters were to act as impartial judges by practicing critical and rational deliberation when presented with political choices. Democratic theory explains that public policy reflects voters' aggregate preferences and those preferences can only be fully articulated by rational actors who are fully aware of their goals and political aims (Dahl 1973, 1998). The notion is that healthy democracies are systems where officeholders reflect the expressed preferences of their constituents and voters hold a sense of civic obligation to participate in the process as an informed, dutiful citizen. These expectations result in treating feelings as an undesirable element of voting because feelings are thought to invoke irrational biases that are best held at bay.

While this premise is an ideal situation for a robust democracy, scholars have grown frustrated with the evidence of lackluster citizens. If voter

preferences are to be adequately translated into public policies, then the reflection of those policies are only as good as the citizens who express their opinions. This communicates the expectation to the voter to be an informed participant in order to secure the most reliable expression of policy preference.

Classic democratic theory forces upon us an intellectual choice between reason and emotion. The former enables us to imagine Plato's world driven by the rational desire for freedom, justice, and rights equitably enjoyed and protected. According to George Marcus (2002), the latter allows us to reach and motivate people without the guide for reason (to the ire of rationalists). Various emotions exert important but potentially different policy consequences, and different emotions influence the interpersonal nature of how people work together in a democracy despite differences (Hatemi and McDermott 2012). This is why emotions are interpreted as destructive forces that lead voters to what are popularly dismissed as irrational judgments. Barry (2002) relies on components of rationality (as defined by political economy) to define citizenry by promoting the rational benefits experienced in a democracy, which includes freedom from socialized incentives, coercive obligations (referring to political bosses), and partisan loyalties, along with the citizen's civic obligation to evaluate political information impartially.

Aristotle's classic thesis declared that humans were, by nature, political animals guided by the rational urge to commune with others to establish governments. The Greek philosophers emphasized reason as the supreme human virtue of sophistication. Marcus (2002) agrees with Aristotle that humans are creatures naturally attracted to social association, but disagrees that social attachments in the political realm are guided by "rational" urges. Rather, those communal bonds are emotional connections because emotion is an explicit requirement of citizenship, inasmuch as the connections among interest, party, and loyalty are used to secure the connections among voter, party, and candidates for national office (Marcus 2002, p. 36). Now cue the contemporary campaign strategist; emotion plays a central role in bonding voters to the parties, the issues, and, ultimately, the candidates. In contemporary politics the ubiquitous visualization of politics through the uses of symbols facilitates emotional bonds among voters in a democracy (Edelman 1978; Marcus 2002)

The expectation that citizens equally share civic obligation and responsibility to participate in a critical and informed fashion has not translated

into longitudinal consistency in public opinion and has given way to frustrations among researchers within political science. Inconsistencies in public opinion over time have been explained by implicating citizens' lack of ideological commitment or knowledge of political issues.

So the problem that has emerged in the study of political behavior is the interpretation of opinion trends in survey research. Some interpreted the lack of stable trends as the questionable quality of the voter. Not until psychological models emerged were these issues addressed. The first models of political behavior emerged in the *American Voter* (1960) and later in the *Civic Culture* (1976). Never before had the idea of voters' feelings and their influence on attitudes toward politics been acknowledged or investigated. The evolution of the study of emotions in politics has been informed by interdisciplinary efforts to study the role of emotions in human cognition.

### TRADITIONAL APPROACHES IN VOTING BEHAVIOR RESEARCH

Niemi and Weisberg (2001) claim that fundamentally the study of voting behavior is about what determines a vote. There are two schools of thought that guide research questions about what determines a vote choice. One perspective is a rational choice approach and the other is a psychological approach. Both have influenced the entire field of political science and continue to influence voting behavior research.

Conventional expectations of voters in American politics assumed that they make decisions based on a habitually meticulous and critical calculus predicated on utilitarian explanations of decision making (Downs 1957; Fiorina 1978). These and more recent interpretations of economic voting models state that all political behavior has a purpose and is done for specific reasons (Lowi et al. 2010). Simply, voters have goals and work to achieve those goals through political means. Rational political behavior operates on an assumption that voters engage in a process by which they weigh the risks of their political options and think through the costs and benefits of their political decisions while speculating about future effects (Lowi et al. 2010). This formulates the expectation that voters, under the rubric of rational choice, evaluate their choices by a process of forethought, deliberation, and calculation that is commonly referred to, by political scientists, as voter sophistication.



While economic voting models may confront voters with a cognitively burdensome standard, psychological approaches comparable to the one advanced in the *American Voter* (1960) redefine voter sophistication in more accessible terms. Campbell et al. (1960) claim that party identification is just one among several psychological components that voters rely upon to make political choices. Party identification is defined as the “psychological identification, which can persist without legal recognition or evidence of formal membership and even without a consistent record of party support” (Campbell et al. 121, 1960). Party identification is a cornerstone of electoral politics and voting behavior research because it is the single most effective predictor of vote choice (Campbell et al. 1960; Converse 1964; 2000; Neimi and Weisberg 1993; Greene 1999; Brewer 2005). According to the *American Voter*, party identification is also important for its utility in studying other aspects of the American political system. Party identification signals a reasonably stable voter and, under normal electoral circumstances, a predisposed loyalty to a party organization (Wattenberg 1998, 8; Converse 2000).

A political party, as an organization, functions as a source of political information that delivers cues to voters, which, in turn, they utilize to evaluate the validity of political campaigns, candidates, and issues (Campbell et al. 1960; Wattenberg 1998; Miller and Shanks 1996). The concept of party identification has provided a traditional framework to understand voting behavior. Research suggests that over time partisanship is a relatively stable political identity (Converse et al. 1960; Wattenberg 1998; Converse 2000). This offers a positive outlook for the stability of democracy because steady partisanship serves as a “stabilizing influence on public opinion and consequently on the political system” (Wattenberg 1998, 10). In view of economic voting models, the theoretical framework offered by the psychological model of voting offers a reconceptualized notion of what voter sophistication means.

The psychological framework of political behavior advanced by Campbell et al. also explains other important psychological devices used by voters when making political judgments. The *American Voter* makes distinctions between party affiliation and voter ideology. Ideology is a key component in formulated political attitudes. There are various ways to understand and interpret the meaning of ideology. Scholars concede that the term is well worn and therefore suffers from distortion (Converse 1964). The earliest operationalization of the term comes from Campbell et al. (1960) and describes the function of ideology as

idea, which “connects various facets of social, political and economic experiences” (Campbell et al. 1960, 192). It supplies the individual an “attitude structure” that gives meaning to a series of particular events observed in politics, “which are bound together by some form of constraint or functional interdependence” (Converse 1964, 207). In short, ideology is a tool of political summary. More recent iterations have simply referred to the familiar political continuum of the “left” and “right” or the liberal and conservative. Contemporary interpretations have narrowed the function of ideology to mean “a set of beliefs about the role of government that shapes responses to a wide range of specific policy issues” (Green and Coffey 2007, 303).

### VINDICATING EMOTIONS IN POLITICS

The behavioral revolution in political science created a revised set of expectations for democratic citizenship and its by-products were criticisms of voting behavior that overlooked the influence of voters’ feelings. The role of feelings in politics is reconsidered in recent research on voting behavior. New research, mostly informed by social psychology, provides political science a foundation in which to redefine the role of emotions as less irrational, more complex, and a reasonable element within political decision making. Feelings are presented in this research as politically valid and aid voters significantly as they negotiate the complexities of contemporary campaigns. Feelings play a potentially useful role in helping voters’ judge political candidates when confronted with overwhelming amounts of information about a political campaign, issue, or candidate.

The environment context and campaign narrative is important in cueing emotional appraisals of political information and choices. The culture of modern politics has been transformed by the influences of candidate personality, campaign issues, and the tone of news media coverage. With the increased displays of emotion and affective cues in modern media, opinion news broadcasts, and editorial publications, combined with increased access to social media, the campaign narratives have been transformed. So why do campaigns appear more emotional in recent decades? The nature of the media and the political environment of low-information campaigns and uninformed voters seem to provide a context where displays of emotion resonate more heavily than deliberation in the minds of voters.

## INTERPRETING THE MEANING OF EMOTION

In campaign research, credible surveys have successfully tapped into a variety of emotional dimensions. In this research, the four emotions of pride, hope, fear, and anger are analyzed for their effects in campaign contexts. It is important to understand what a specific emotion conveys in explicit social or political contexts. Broadly, emotions provide a practical function for human existence and in social life. Emotions provide a sense of meaning for life and aid humans in interpreting their surroundings and navigating the environment. Positive emotions reinforce successful goal pursuits while negative emotions provide unpleasant reminders that something has gone wrong (Snyder 2000).

The implications for political contexts are that voters rely on their feelings to give meaning in political situations, toward candidate traits and public policy. It is reasonable to expect that voters rely on feelings to navigate the messages conveyed by political campaigns and to interpret the impact of government policies.

### *Hope and Pride*

On the dimension of positive emotions, hope and pride convey specific meanings for those experiencing these specific feelings. The emotion of hope is disarming and at the individual level it enables people to feel empowered and they have the agency to engineer their future. When applied to society, feelings of hope are attributed to constructed notions of common or shared social goals. When accomplished by a large group, the sense of positive feeling is accentuated by belonging to a collective unit and a sense of meaning on a grander scale. The sense of goal achievement provides satisfaction that is often expressed through pride. Pride is a feeling that is often used to denote positive attitudes toward past and present activities (Ben-ze've 2000).

### *Fear and Anger*

As emotions situated on the negative dimension, fear and anger convey specific signals about environmental stimuli. Applied to politics, fear is an emotion that closely resembles the effects of anxiety. Fear is an emotion that stimulates a motivational state. It is an adaptive device that serves a couple of functions. As a practical function, fear enhances the probability of individual survival and as a social function it promotes and maintains social structures (MacDonald 1985). In politics, fear is often perceived as an ambiguous signal about the environment. It often aids humans in

assessing risks posed by a particular environment. Fear is often interpreted in impersonal ways in the absence of explicit circumstances or personal threats. Fear is associated with feelings of helplessness exacerbated by the inability to assign blame. It is a rational reaction to ambiguous threats.

Anger, on the other hand, is a sensation experienced in response to perceived personal affront to an individual's values or beliefs (Steenbergen and Ellis 2006). Furthermore, the emotion of anger is a more forceful, intense sensation that motivates punitive attitudes toward the perceived source of the attack on one's values and beliefs.

### AFFECTIVE INTELLIGENCE THEORY AND THE AFFECT TRANSFER THESIS

There are two approaches that build a theoretical link between traditional and more contemporary approaches in research on voting behavior. The Affective Intelligence Theory (Marcus et al. 2000) and the affect transfer thesis (Huddy and Gunthorsdottir 2000) concentrate on feelings as a key component in political judgment, which indirectly influences electoral results. The central research question focuses on how voters interpret their feelings as political information and the affect transfer thesis narrates the process that voters undergo when they attribute their feelings toward a candidate to their appraisals of campaign issues. As noted previously, research in political science on voting behavior and public opinion considered the emotions at the center of this inquiry as irrational and largely destructive. This negative view of emotion, as a superficial response in politics, was a traditional view in democratic theory.

There is evidentiary support to suggest that voters' emotional responses to candidates are positively correlated with political knowledge and participation (Granberg and Brown 1989; Marcus and MacKuen 1993). Also consistent with the findings from previous psychological research, these political studies demonstrate that feelings exhibit the characteristic immediacy and automaticity of emotional responses apart from cognition in respondent reactions to political "situations" encountered. What Granberg and Brown (1989) explained was that survey respondents described that they may or may not have "liked" a candidate, but could not immediately explain their reasons. Their findings support the observed phenomenon in psychology studies that purport the immediacy of affect before cognition. Regardless of cognition, their findings still determine that voting behavior can perhaps be better understood by studying individual emotional responses to stimuli in the political environment. Most studies on emotional reactions to political

candidates replicate one another and test emotional responses to candidates or parties to explain political behavior (voting).

The affective intelligence theory “is a theory about how emotion and reason interact to produce a thoughtful and attentive citizenry” (Marcus et al. 2000, 1). It is a theory that draws on a combination of research provided by neuroscience, physiology, and experimental psychology. Marcus and his colleagues explain that through interactions of feeling and thinking, many voters rely on their emotions as a source of political information to evaluate candidates in a political environment. The theory also emphasizes that the mental processes of feeling and thinking are not adversarial, but complementary (Marcus et al. 2000, 2002, 2006). One effective model that demonstrates the utility of the Affective Intelligence Theory is Marcus’s *Emotional Citizen* model (2002). It illustrates the infusion of thinking with feeling, which is inevitably translated into political judgments. Recent literature expresses difficulty in satisfying questions about the nature of voters; however, those questions are made easier to examine couched in the affective intelligence theory. George Marcus’s careful analysis of the dispositional and surveillance cognitive systems in specific political contexts such as the presidential elections of 1984 and 1988 suggests that political cues and communication are made powerful through contextual manipulation (Marcus et al. 2000). This theory answers previous critics on questions about how the feeling–thinking connection works in the cognitive process with the added utility of understanding how it works in political contexts. This project examines the influences of voters’ emotional responses to presidential candidates within the political environment of a campaign cycle. The affective intelligence theory offers the theoretical link between thinking and feeling that holds implications for other political judgments made by voters, in this particular case, judgments made about specific campaign issues.

The study of emotion in politics has determined that emotional reactions are meaningful. However, one critique of this type of research is that the emotional–cognitive link cannot be modeled in statistical software because of the limited understanding of human cognition (Simon 1967; Marcus et al. 1996, 2000). Marcus’s research results address the critique of lack of comprehension about how emotions influence cognition so now that we are closer to modeling the linkage between feeling and thinking. This project builds upon the affective intelligence theory and is enhanced by the application of the affect transfer thesis.

The affect transfer thesis (Huddy and Gunthorsdottir 2000) is specifically applicable as a device that helps describe how voters may rely on their feelings to make political judgments. When discussing the attributes

of transferring emotion from one object on to another, there is a characteristic of attribution occurring, meaning that voters attribute their feelings toward a candidate to their judgments about issues associated with a candidate's campaign. This thesis is furnished from the results of a psychological experiment that tested attribution of emotion experienced after being exposed to affective imagery. The thesis explores the assumption that emotional appeals may work best among the least informed and least engaged citizen, but evidence suggests that the opposite is true. Huddy and Gunthorsdottir's (2000) original study tested issue activists belonging to related advocacy organizations in an experiment and found that highly engaged activists generated the strongest emotional response to issue-related persuasive appeals. The affect transfer thesis is a valuable foundation for this research project because the thesis provides for a theoretical connection between emotional responses and attribution of those feelings to political judgments.

There are new applications for the Affective Intelligence Theory and the affect transfer thesis to political environments. This book's central focus is on the characteristic of attribution of one's own feelings toward a presidential candidate on to a judgment made about campaign issues associated with the candidate. In effect, a voter may transfer his or her feelings toward a candidate to judgments about that candidate's campaign. Based on the affect transfer thesis, the expectation is that citizens who are highly involved in politics may express stronger emotional responses toward candidates than non-affiliated voters. The affect transfer thesis is particularly important to analyzing how voters may make attributions of their feelings toward a candidate to other information in the presidential campaign, thus relying on their feelings toward a candidate to make judgments about campaign issues.

### THE PLAN FOR THE BOOK

One of the goals of this research is to examine the question—*do voters' feelings toward political candidates influence their support of campaign issues?* It is commonly observed that the less voters seem to understand about a subject, the more they rely on their feelings to guide judgments. Often, a voter knows how he or she feels about an issue before they understand the issue. This question reflects the importance placed on the idea that emotions influence political judgments—not just about candidates, but about how those feelings are transferred to voters' assessments of campaign issues. This book provides a renewed understanding for the role emotions have in making political

judgments. In 1960, the *American Voter* provided a cornerstone of research helping generations of political scientists understand voter participation and the determinants that influence vote choice. This project proposes adding another variable to the list of enduring predictors used in voting behavior research. This study advances a new way of viewing the role of emotion in political contexts and how voters utilize their emotional responses toward candidates to inform their own attitudes on campaign issues.

The scope of this book focuses on the role of emotions in the specified time frame of a general presidential election cycle, defined as the fixed interval between Party conventions and the November general election. There are four emotional dimensions (hope, pride, fear, and anger) examined over the course of three presidential election cycles in 2004, 2008, and 2012. Each cycle studied examines campaign issues, policies, and the idiosyncrasies which shaped each campaign's narrative and provided the context in which voters were receiving and evaluating political cues. Specifically, this book looks at the implications of voters' feelings toward presidential candidates. It examines how voters' candidate affect response gets attributed to appraisals of specific policies or campaign issues. Furthermore, the substantive examination of three presidential campaign cycles offers insight to why it seems some candidates "can do no wrong" while others were seemingly defeated before they even got started.

The outline of this book proceeds in the following way—Chapter 2 surveys some of the traditional theoretical approaches to voting behavior in political science and cognitive theories of emotion while advocating the idea that political campaigns are the new marketplace of emotions. Chapter 3 examines the 2004 reelection campaign of George W. Bush and the emotional tone of Bush's campaign narrative and how it influenced his reelection victory. Chapter 4 analyzes the historic presidential campaign of 2008. The unusual political conditions mobilized the electorate in ways not observed in recent elections. The narratives of Barack Obama and John McCain are analyzed and the influence of voters' feelings expressed toward the presidential candidates on policy preferences are examined. Chapter 5 delves more deeply into the complexities of race and gender as they were highlighted by the 2008 campaign. The effects of race and gender on candidate image and how the voters responded are analyzed. Chapter 6 examines the campaign context of the 2012 presidential contest and how positive emotional dimensions were still successfully cued even though the campaign narrative of both candidates were profoundly more muted than in 2008. The chapters offer a deep examination of the specific political envi-

ronments that underpinned voters' emotional judgments of the candidates and how those feelings were transferred to evaluations of campaign issues.

The book concludes with a discussion of the implications and consequences of emotions in democratic elections. The chapter reviews the important insights gained from the evidence that may offer insights to the key demographics, narratives, and emotions that will be of consequence in the 2016 presidential election.

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## The Marketplace of Emotions

**Abstract** This chapter promotes the position that political campaigns are the marketplace for emotions. Feelings are important in the cognitive process and to decision making. Key literature that established the connection between feeling and thinking is explored in addition to how political campaigns facilitate an environment specifically designed to activate this nexus between feelings and decisions. Every political campaign is contextually unique and therefore certain circumstances may invoke different feelings about candidates and political issues altogether. The political campaign is conceptually deconstructed to its basic elements and explored for its strategic endeavors to frame choices for voters in ways that elicit specific emotions.

If the mind is the marketplace of ideas, then political campaigns are the marketplace of emotions (Westen 2007). Political environments are highly emotive for several reasons. Whether political campaigns are sources of popular entertainment or just a contemporary political strategy, a consensus among political scholars is that elections are becoming more laden with emotive tactics.

Traditionally, emotions have been dismissed as conduits leading to irrational and destructive consequences for the democratic citizenry. Only recently have researchers determined that emotions demonstrate utility in cognitive processes, which do not lead to unreasonable or destructive outcomes (Marcus et al. 2000; Westen 2007). Like studies conducted prior to

this, the function of feelings in political cognition is vindicated as an organic process attached to cognition that is both rational and constructive, leading voters to reasonable choices. The commonly celebrated expectation of democratic participation streams from a constructed image of the dispassionate citizen. However, Aristotle referred to humans as “political animals,” and it is worth mentioning that all animals have varied levels of habits and instincts necessary for social and literal survival. Humans possess a sophisticated cognitive system, in which emotions serve a vital adaptive function that aids in human acclimation and adaptability. Whether it is navigating prehistoric society for actual survival or maneuvering the political environment of presidential elections, humans interpret their emotional responses as critical information about their environment (Marcus 2000, 2002).

The American election calendar obligates citizens to navigate a political environment every four years to make decisions about the next transition of power. This is when campaigns have an effect. There are diverse views about the effectiveness of political campaigns and the utility derived from studying campaign effects. The two predominant approaches to studying presidential elections involve the effects of campaigns or predicting electoral outcomes by studying economic factors (Ceaser et al. 2013). Here, it is believed that campaigns matter and the events framing a candidate’s quest for office influence electoral results. There are some elemental components of a political campaign where emotions are involved, which should be revisited. There are contextual features of a political campaign that involve events and trends that occur during the general election’s time period. Context also refers to the broader realities involving economic, political, and cultural conditions of American society. The basic activities of a campaign involve tactics aimed at persuasion of citizens and mobilizing voters to go to the polls to cast a vote in favor of a particular candidate (Sides et al. 2015).

Campaigns may appear more emotive now than they were perhaps historically characterized due in part to the celebrated construct of deliberative democracy that idolized the rational aspects of candidates and voters. Contemporary campaigns have mostly been connected to their historical roots of emotive appeals and slightly camouflaged entertainment features. The emotive components of the political environment are deconstructed in order to analyze the role emotions have in political contexts. Starting with the unit of analysis, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that feelings are a rational element of human cognition. Although emotions serve a basic and important survival function, they are suscep-

tible to manipulations, which make it necessary to examine the campaign effect due to the premise that campaigns are framing choices for voters and those frames are strategically crafted with the aim of appealing to the voters' emotional cognition, who then interpret those emotional responses into actionable choices.

## THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THINKING AND FEELING

Voters are not blank canvases susceptible to any and every political message. Rather, voters enter the political environment already motivated by values and emotion-laden beliefs about how things should be morally, interpersonally, or esthetically (Watson and Tellegen 1985; Redlawsk 2006). This is the marketplace of emotions, where candidates must navigate and manipulate in order to get voters to perceive alignments between their already internalized value-laden perspective of the world and the candidate's political position (Caprara et al 2007). By securing emotional bonds between themselves and voters, a candidate increases his or her likelihood of getting elected.

Much of what is now understood about how thinking and feeling are connected was infused into political science through interdisciplinary methods. Borrowing from psychology and neuroscience, political scientists have tested the function of emotional reactions in political contexts (Granberg and Brown 1989; Marcus and McKuen 1998; Marcus et al. 2000; Marcus 2000, 2002; Redlawsk 2006). Findings suggest that individuals recognize how they feel about a particular political party, candidate, and policy or platform issue before they understand why they feel that way. When considering the role emotions play in political behavior, researchers suggest that measuring individual emotional responses may be a more effective instrument of description for voting choices than other cognitive studies (Granberg and Brown 1989). Research in psychology furnished the connection between thinking and feeling; "while feelings and thoughts both involve energy and information, the first class of experiences is heavier on energy, whereas the second is heavier on information" (Inhelder and Piaget 1958, 347).

According to R.B. Zajonc (1980), feeling and thinking are connected in the cognitive process where previously it was assumed that cognition occurred separately from feeling; "in nearly all cases, however, feeling is not free of thought, nor is thought free of feelings" (Zajonc 1980; 154). Another important foundation established by Zajonc's research determined that individuals require little understanding of a stimulus before emotional

responses are activated; “objects need to be cognized very little—in fact, minimally” (Zajonc 1980; 154). It is also important to acknowledge that feelings are dependent on environmental cues. Context assigns meaning to emotions experienced in specific environments. When emotional evaluations occur, the primary cognitive process is always one that involves feeling before thinking. Environmental inputs are extremely important to take into account because an individual’s preliminary response to the environment is emotional. The evaluation of the environment then governs subsequent choices made about appropriate actions to take. The implications of the cognitive connection between feeling and thinking in political contexts will potentially reconceptualize approaches to studying voting behavior.

Zajonc’s conclusions establish three valuable points. First, once an emotional judgment is made, it is rarely reversible because of the level of individual confidence expressed in one’s own feeling toward an object or stimulus. It simply “feels” valid and humans like to trust their own feelings when making decisions. Second, emotional responses are immediate and automatic; they occur outside of conscious awareness, which also implies that it is highly improbable that an individual can actively suppress immediate emotional judgment. Third, emotional judgments are not necessarily guided or dependent upon cognition. This implies that while emotion may be independent of cognition, it certainly guides cognitive responses.

When studying campaigns and elections, Kinder (1986) suggested investigating the emotional underpinnings driving the public’s reactions to candidates because candidates often mobilize the masses by appealing to values, group associations, and identities (all of which evoke feelings). For reasons that are unclear, questions engaging the role of emotion in politics had not been pursued until Marcus (1988) conducted the first study of voters’ feelings in the 1984 presidential election. Other significant contributions that aided collective understandings about the operation of the brain came from neuroscience, which informs much of the research about emotion and decision making. It is necessary to understand the structure and function of emotion by knowing the managing subsystems of emotion inside the brain’s sophisticated neurological network. There are two independent emotional subsystems that are important to understand in this research. They are the dispositional and surveillance systems, which enable humans to manage thoughts and consciousness along with the capacity of adaptability (Marcus et al. 2000; Redlawsk 2006). While the dispositional system monitors daily activities, the surveillance system monitors novelties and threats introduced into the surrounding environment.

Attention to the role emotion plays in political decision making does not overtly characterize it as a heuristic, but it demonstrates some heuristic-like attributes (Kuklinski and Quirk 2000, 2001). This coupled with Zajonc's contributions suggests that there may be cognitive limitations to information processing. When the human mind and senses are overwhelmed with stimuli, the adaptive function is to employ a cognitive short cut known as a heuristic. Oftentimes, emotion offers that heuristic. Lau and Redlawsk (2006) state that "people generally want to make good decisions—they just cannot do so in the idealized manner described by models for rational processing" (Lau and Redlawsk 2006, 25). Voters are not incapable of making reasonable choices; the implications of previous studies challenge researchers to redefine the perception of what makes a reasonable and rational political judgment.

To understand how emotion ultimately relates to political cognition and the political environment, we first must understand the mechanisms of cognition and cognitive evaluation. The rational voter research presents models that suggest voters evaluate information in a detached manner. Interdisciplinary research suggests that this is not always the case. Contributions made by psychology and political science suggest that cognitive processes are not independent of emotional guidance.

While the conscious mind is otherwise occupied with routine cognitive processes, emotions enable parts of the human mind, also referred to as "adaptive unconscious," to process and judge the physical world quickly, enabling quick decision making (Wilson and Bar-Anan 2008). Psychology experiments reveal that people's "automatic responses correspond poorly to their self-reported attitudes" (Wilson and Bar-Anan 2008). Psychologists theorize that people cannot access the multiplicity of mental functions simultaneously. The brain is a machine of efficiency and related mental processes do not readily expose full self-awareness. Therefore, emotion is an important device in human decision making when navigating the physical world. There are similarities in political contexts and in making political decisions.

Research conducted on the intensity of emotion as a motivational state provides insights about the magnitude of influence of negative and positive emotions (Brehm 1999). Some emotions arouse motivational states when others do not. Brehm defines motivational state as an urge that one has to respond in a certain way (Brehm 1999, 2). It is further surmised that negative emotions are characterized as "active" emotions and positive emotions are characterized as "passive" emotions. Brehm's research suggests that

positive emotions are equally as intense as negative emotions. This finding underscores theories on the role emotions play in political contexts.

Contemporary research on political judgment employs concepts from political psychology, mainly personality analyses (of candidates), coupled with considerations about emotional responses to candidates' personalities. It is important to understand that personalities in politics are important to voters' political judgment. Emerging theories purport that political environments envelope more of these kinds of judgments rather than absorbing cues and evaluating information. Ultimately, voters make decisions about people, not information, and therefore measuring emotion also involves analyzing the underlying cognitive complexities that are happening simultaneously when voters are making decisions about a candidate.

### FEELINGS ARE CONTEXT DEPENDENT

The research on campaigns and elections routinely dismissed the potential contributions garnered from understanding the influence emotions have on voting behavior. However, understanding voters and their choices is a long-standing endeavor in political science. So much so that political science has two schools of academic thought (Columbia and Michigan schools of thought) that are dedicated to understanding and interpreting voting behavior in American elections.

Scholars treated emotion as an undesirable element to political decision making. However, interdisciplinary research on the connection between feelings and cognitive processes has led to renewed exploration of the literature to examine how emotions influence voters' decisions. Emotion in politics is more prevalent than previous research has demonstrated. The theories of cognition in political contexts examine how voters respond to political symbols, candidates, and political issues (Marcus et al. 2000). Normative voting behavior theories explain that partisans make decisions by relying on commitments to long-term factors, whereas independents and weak partisans are more receptive to short-term factors (Marcus and Mackuen 2000)

Interdisciplinary research validates the role emotions play in political campaigns, voters' attitudes, participation, appraisals, and ultimately vote choice. Surveying a political context (the political campaign) is necessary to recognize how emotions matter in making political judgments. In American politics, understanding political processes as a democratic method tends to be a traditional view advanced by scholars such as Robert

Dahl (1998). Dahl defined effective participation, voting, and political information as key elements to the democratic process. At the center of this discussion of democracy and its preferable democratic traits are the expectations of the voter.

Most research addressing the subject of emotion's role in cognitive assessment is interdisciplinary in nature and only recently has experienced an infusion into the political science field of study. Most studies researching political cognition fail to interpret the importance of emotional responses to political cues. At this stage, enough research has been conducted to establish that emotions hold a valuable place in the political environment (Marcus et al. 2000; Marcus 2002; Redlawsk 2006).

Over time, traditional cognitive models have critiqued voter behavior, particularly non-partisan, as unstable, unreliable, and even unsophisticated (Marcus 2002; Redlawsk 2006). However, cognitive models may not have delved deeply enough to study the psychological forces involved in such attachments like party identification and, in this case, vote choices. Cognitive models were not expansive enough to capture all the inner workings of the voters' minds; "any attempt to explain political action by considering only its cognitive roots is certain to result in only a partial explanation" (Redlask 2006).

Since voters are expected to make political decisions at the ballot box, studying the process of how this decision is realized involves several complicated components that are at work simultaneously. There is a large body of knowledge that has explored and tested the question of how voters make their choice. Until recently, much of the political science research has ignored affect in information processing possibly because studying the affective components of cognition can be difficult for the reason that affective reactions are difficult to verbalize.

## THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

While not the emphasis of this project, it does recognize the palpable effects of news media on the campaign's narrative and candidate image. During political campaigns, the media tends to concentrate on the secondary qualities of candidates and exaggerate political personalities. Research on the influence of media on public opinion suggests that the media influences the direction of public opinion, regardless of how significant or marginal; particularly when the media reframes secondary topics to become mainstream news coverage, the media holds the capacity to influence the



mood of political discourse and the criteria voters employ to make their political judgments.

Much of politics is conducted in the mass media and is therefore a necessary medium to consider in a project such as this one. Candidates embark on the arduous process of reaching the largest number of voters by the most expedient means. A candidate's campaign organization carefully crafts the message, defines issue positions, strategy, presentation, and image, and disseminates information about the candidate to teach, inform, and persuade. Media studies have concluded that political framing can have electoral consequences. This project builds upon that finding and examines the possible effects on public opinion in the 2008 presidential campaign, specifically on the public's perception of women and racial candidates for high office.

The American media takes on a prominent role and function in reaching voters because it is also an industry operating in a consumer-oriented economy and society. Viewers are also treated as consumers because they are not only appraising information; they are consuming it with the aid of emotive characteristics. When viewers consume media, they evaluate information, events, and situations with respect to their novelty, pleasantness, goal attainability, culpability, and compatibility with internalized values and beliefs (Wirth and Schramm 2005).

A number of media studies (Brants 1998; Grabe et al. 2001; Chong and Druckman 2007) have commented on the increasing trend of entertainment-orientated news and the emotionalization of information coupled with the decline of objectivity in broadcast media and radio talk shows. General findings support the conclusions that emotional pictures in news engage viewers' emotions coupled with the use of negative pictures, which are used to increase viewer interest and attention (Lange, Newhagen and Reeves 1996). Many news programs and broadcast networks rely on partisan or ideological frames when delivering information about candidates. In electoral contexts, there is interplay of partisan, ideological, and emotive components when voters evaluate information about political contenders (Campbell et al. 1960; Green et al. 2002). These conclusions yield implications for the particular media coverage viewers consume in election cycles.

The 2004 presidential campaign is an example of how the media possibly amplified Bush's negative personality traits defined by his public faux pas and awkward statements. Media coverage likely exaggerated the influence of the faith-based and organized interests that represented the conservative Republican base and suggested a much larger conservative social movement than actually existed (Campbell 2007).

Conversely, in 2008, Obama received enthusiastic and overwhelmingly positive media coverage, possibly leading to similar exaggerations that benefitted Obama's presidential campaign. However, it is not suggested that the 2008 media coverage overstated the enthusiasm of the voters—but the emphasis here is the influence the media has on the political environment to under- or overstate the actual status of events and issues on the campaign.

## MANIPULATIONS OF THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

Data provided by psychology research indicate that most expressions of feeling are in response to a contextually defined environment, which is subject to manipulation. This is salient to voting behavior research. Political campaigns seem to be more emotive than in previous decades and the trends suggest that American politics will continue to get more emotional. One possible explanation for this trend are the components of the political environment that are subject to manipulation by varied strategies, which compete for voters' attention and, more specifically, their feelings. Many environmental manipulations are transmitted through the media. The media have an effect on how voters view the world. When the first presidential debate was televised in 1960, the way voters related to candidates changed from previous campaigns when they were managed entirely by the party.

Along with family and schools, the media became a vehicle for political socialization transmitting images and rhetoric that shapes the political culture and campaign environments in which voters were making political decisions (Vermeer 1995). The emotive disposition of broadcast media is made clear in the way the media portray politics, and viewers begin to form expectations and social norms about politics, campaigns, and candidates (Light 2000). Since the USA has nationwide media, voters in all regions of the country respond to similar perceptions of what it means to be an American and what criteria should be applied in judging political activity (Bradley et al. 1996; Bartsch et al. 2008).

Political scholars identify these trends as the electoral effects of media bias (Gentzkow and Shapiro 2005; Bernhardt et al. 2008).

The electoral effects of social media are undergoing examination as this research is being done. Social media through venues such as Facebook, Twitter, and others that offer feeds to continuous conversation are a new area being exploited by political campaigns and activists. However, private

citizens are also utilizing social media to disseminate their own personal attitudes and opinions. One observation about the effects of social media is that it has the potential to facilitate and engage highly emotive (and more ideologically pure) voters rather than other media environments. Voters utilizing social media such as Twitter may be disseminating more politically and ideologically extreme attitudes that would not be exposed otherwise through broadcast media or radio talk shows (Gilbert and Karahalios 2009; Bollen et al. 2011). The implications are that social media potentially reflects an extreme political mood and the electoral effects are still unknown.

The media is but one vehicle that delivers emotional cues to the electorate. Presidential campaigns orchestrate the advertising and publicity (personal appearances) to reach as many voters as possible while retaining control over the content of the messages. Presidential campaigns try to manipulate the media into reporting on what the campaign dictates and what will be most helpful to advancing the campaign (Vermeer 1995; Scher 1997). There is a new range of media to manipulate on the campaign trail from celebrity talk shows (*The View*) to entertainment news (*The Daily Show*). The effects of this type of political orchestration are that it promotes a candidate-based focus, which translates into criteria for candidate evaluation.

Another element that manipulates the political environment is the strategy involved in political campaign advertisements. The campaign advertisement is a highly sophisticated tool used to manipulate a political campaign. Studies (Rudd 1986; Kaid et al. 1992; Brians and Wattenberg 1996; Johnson-Cartee 1997) show that political ads activate a multiplicity of cognitive functions simultaneously that demonstrates manipulation of voters' perceptions and the campaign environment alike.

The effects of campaign advertisements facilitate and enhance candidate-based judgments, which are influenced by how campaign ads and other information is packaged with music and imagery (Bader 2005). The advertisements stir emotions through the use of symbolic images and patriotic music. Emotions are central to how campaign ads work. According to Bader (2005), the electoral impacts of campaign ads are highly significant. The strategy that campaign ads use by combining symbolic images with music does manipulate voters emotions and, in doing so, impacts voting behavior. The effect is an indirect impact because while the ads are emotionally provocative, they do not simply lead a voter to a direct choice, but they manipulate the environment in which voters make choices (Johnston and Kaid 2002).

This is important to the overall political context of presidential campaigns; previous research demonstrates that campaigns strategically target segments of the electorate in ways to maximize margins of victory. In the general campaign cycle, advertising targets are bombarded by political information in a variety of forms. Regarding campaign ads, research also shows a rapid decay rate of advertising effects (Gerber et al. 2011). Voters tend to forget the details of information they receive after they have formed an opinion. It is suggested that the information which underscores the political judgment is discarded rather quickly (Lau and Redlawsk 2006; Redlawsk 2007). Given this reality, campaign strategies reflect a saturation tactic during the weeks before an election as means to sustain the effects of advertising. Furthermore, it punctuates the importance of emotion on the function of a voter's memory. Sustaining a positive memory about a candidate results in a higher evaluation and lower likelihood of defecting from that candidate in the vote decision (Redlawsk 2006). The positive and negative memories of a candidate maintained by voters are products of their information search. In the context of modern campaigns, the political environment is subject to varied manipulations that influence the information on which voters base their choices.

### PERSONALITIES AND CHARACTER TRAITS IN CAMPAIGNS

When it comes to candidate appeal, some personalities are more endearing than others. Classic research in political psychology has long suggested that in political contexts, certain personality types can yield specific political consequences (Greenstein 1967; Sniderman 1975). Presidential leadership theories and personality studies (Winter 1987; Lyons 1997; Bartels 2002) conclude that candidates' personalities largely influence political contexts, campaigns, voters' feelings about them, and political issues. According to Lyons (1997) and Bartels (2002), personality traits are particularly provocative in political settings because they elicit emotional reactions in the voters. Previous research has traditionally focused on specific personality traits that are most successful in the power of persuasion, but more recently, studies have reexamined the politics of personalities by examining the effects of certain character traits in candidates on voters (Caprara et al. 2006).

It is commonly accepted that a candidate's personality may significantly influence a voters' perception and translate into judgments and decisions. Schwartz's (1992) theory of basic personal values examines the role an individual's value system plays in assessing personal preferences and,

later, how those get translated into political preferences. Researchers have applied this theory to candidate likeability. As a part of voters' evaluation of candidates, they search for the candidate that they feel a personal connection with based on reflected values and beliefs expressed by a candidate. A voter tends to favor a candidate who reflects his or her own set of values and beliefs (including ideology) because he or she feels connected to that candidate on a level that does not involve impartial deliberation about issues; it is a personal preference that bonds them with that candidate (Caprara et al. 2006).

Voters seem motivated by the humanistic dimension of politics, looking for personal and social connections with candidates. Political psychology along with theories in ideological polarization indicates that personalities and identities matter in contemporary voting behavior. Voters prioritize their ability to connect with a candidate on a personal level over the importance of campaign issues (Ceasar and Busch 2005). Because of this, opinion surveys seem to suggest that voters express emotional responses to candidates based on certain personality traits showcased during the campaign (Jacobson 2005; Sabato 2006).

In 2004, a convincing case was made that George W. Bush's personality greatly influenced the electoral outcome. Gary Jacobson (2007) denoted some key factors that made him a polarizing personality. Opinion surveys revealed that on substantive policy issues, such as action regarding Iraq and Afghanistan and national security, the country seemed united. However, the surveys also suggested an emergent polarized electorate. If issues were not driving wedges between people, then what was it. Jacobson (2007) among others identifies aspects of Bush's personality that seemed to be driving political divisiveness.

General observations indicate that Bush's personality had two effects. First, he first galvanized the GOP conservative party base with his open profession of Evangelical Christian faith. Second, his open testimony of faith endeared the conservative base to him and at the same time it repulsed Democrats. Democrats criticized Bush, claiming it was a strategy to distract voters with wedge issues concerning reproductive policy and same-sex marriage (Ceasar and Busch 2005; Sabato 2006).

While voters seemed ideologically polarized in 2004, the electorate energetically divided its support in 2008 for the two Democratic front-runners Hillary Clinton and Barak Obama. Both were strongly supported by different yet consequential voting blocks. Hillary Clinton's candidacy had a polarizing effect on the Democratic Party base. Women supported Clinton, but the larger concern was the political behavior of the

African-American and minority voters who had long been Clinton supporters. Ultimately, we know the outcome. The 2008 presidential campaign activated assessments of identities in the electorate unlike any other time in presidential history. Race was forefront of the campaign and the energized mobilization of the electorate facilitated positive assessment of racial identities in that campaign. The excitement generated by Obama's candidacy played an important role in how voters conceptualized and judged race.

### CAMPAIGN NARRATIVES MATTER

Candidate's campaigns matter in that they yield some significant influence over electoral results because the campaign frames the choices for voters. Campbell et al. in the *American Voter* determined that voters are often ill informed about public policy and are less likely to make policy-based choices. They noted that there are three conditions in which voters make political choices. First, voters must hold an opinion on the issue. Second, they must know what government action has been taken on the issue. Third, voters must be able to distinguish policy differences between Democrats and Republicans.

These are the conditions in which campaign narratives matter. A candidate's campaign organization carefully crafts a holistic message that becomes a candidate's image. A candidate-driven message defines issue positions, strategy, presentation, image, and candidates, in turn, rely on mass media to disseminate that message, to teach, inform, and persuade the voting public. The strategic ways in which candidates frame the choices becomes the campaign narrative.

Then there are events and trends which unfold in American society and on the global stage that are beyond a campaign's control. These present challenges to a candidate and his or her campaign because external events can independently shape a candidate's image and message. Any external event or trend can influence, shape, or define a particular emotive undercurrent that informs the electorate's general mood in a given election cycle. Often, each presidential contest is defined by a handful of issues and it is these particular issues that frame electoral choices forcing candidates to shape their narratives around those specific issues or events.

A campaign's context is shaped by several factors that come together to make up a larger context, which is simply referred to as the campaign reality (Sides et al. 2015). This reality is made up of the electorate's opinions and mood, mass communications from entertainment and news media,

the candidate's personal traits, the posturing of the political parties, and success or failure of government policies. These factors interact to create a political environment saturated with information and political cues that may prove overwhelming to the voting public. Campaigns prove significant in their strategies to frame choices for voters. These messages often rely heavily on emotive cues for it is now understood that emotion is processed more quickly than information. Candidates seem to understand the cognitive connection between thinking and feeling in the electorate and strategize to maximize that result to their benefit.

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## Mission Accomplished: The Reelection of George W. Bush

**Abstract** The 2004 presidential campaign is analyzed. The first post-9/11 presidential election was heavily influenced by US foreign policy and Bush's War on Terror. The influence and effect of the campaign narratives of George W. Bush and John F. Kerry and voters' response are considered. The influence of four emotional dimensions on voter appraisal of campaign issues and Bush-era government policies are studied. The results suggest that voters' feelings toward George W. Bush and John F. Kerry were important to the evaluations made about campaign issues covering topics on domestic and international concerns. Voters' emotions seem to have a more profound effect on policy appraisals than on social issues.

The first presidential campaign after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on American targets was anchored in subjects involving the economy, security, and morality. The emotional texture of the 2004 campaign was intricate as a result of how the Republican Party skillfully merged war and morality into a singular platform. Bush's candidate image as the "security president" was the campaign narrative resulting from the echo of the 9/11 rally effect.

Bush's first term as president was characterized by an irregular combination of events. The contentious election of 2000 cast a shadow of incredulity on George W. Bush's first term in office. Voters who felt disenfranchised by the *Bush v. Gore* Supreme Court decision protested the inauguration. Bush's public approval ratings as he entered office hovered

around 50 percent, some of the lowest ratings for a new presidential term.<sup>1</sup> It was a troubled way to enter a new administration in terms of political legitimacy. The attacks of September 11, 2001, altered the course of Bush's presidency, arguably his legacy, and possibly ensured his reelection. The days following the attacks, Bush's public approval surged in the range of 90 percent.<sup>2</sup> The aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks immediately transformed Bush's image from a politically illegitimate and fledgling president to a wartime, terrorism-fighting commander in chief (Crotty 2005).

A reelection campaign for an incumbent president is typically a referendum on the incumbent's first-term performance. There are also noticeable advantages that accompany incumbent status. However, Bush's personality traits strained those advantages. As the singular image attached to the national government, Bush had the advantage of the public platform and of addressing a national constituency, thus driving the tenor of public discourse in the 2004 presidential contest.

### THE 2004 CAMPAIGN NARRATIVE

In the course of his first term, Bush became an increasingly contentious personality and then a presidential candidate. The conclusions in this chapter suggest that voters' attitudes about political issues followed the ideological-based divisions. It may be appropriate to also comment here that the findings discussed in this chapter support the conclusions that Bush was also emotionally divisive.

American voters were confronted with ambiguous choices in 2004. After the terrorist attacks, Bush's altered course furnished a series of decisions and events that strained the perception of the USA among its international partners. However, the Democratic Party struggled with nominating a candidate who could effectively capitalize on the Americans' restlessness and translate that into electoral success. Likely as a result of the rally effect, Bush's new-found political capital motivated a series of events that damaged America's international credibility and diplomatic relationships. In 2002 the White House announced its withdrawal from the Rome Treaty for an International Criminal Court, the 2003 Abu Ghraib prison torture revealed new practices in US policy toward torture, and landing on the USS Abraham Lincoln the same year heralded the end of military operations in Iraq. These were highly publicized decisions and events that defined Bush's first term and carried polarizing consequences for the political environment. Arguably, these events were justified as necessities

to demonstrate Bush's hardline position against terrorism, further demonstrated by Bush's political declaration of the War on Terror coupled with his divisive rhetoric implicating that there was no neutral ground in the war on terrorism.<sup>3</sup>

The language and political rhetoric Bush adopted in the months following the attacks introduced divisive language and political posturing into the American political landscape. Other elected officials responded to the cue by mimicking the style of "you're either with us or against us." The American public responded in kind, and public opinion started to reflect a bi-model trend in ideological preference.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the high-profile events, many political scientists attribute the political polarization observed in 2004 to George Bush's personality and character traits. Some observed that his personal demeanor was politically divisive. Others consider Bush as one of the most divisive candidates since George Wallace in 1968 (Abramowitz and Stone 2006; Jacobson 2007).

George W. Bush's reelection narrative is important because the Democrats framed the campaign as a referendum on Bush's first term and aimed to incite voter anger toward the two-front "War on Terror" (Crotty 2005; Mellow 2005; Nelson 2005). The campaign took on two issues, national security and morality topics. As the incumbent, Bush needed to maintain his support from the party base and to appeal to moderates on the security issue (Smith 2005). Bush's position framing the campaign was a wartime circumstance and it would have been too perilous to entrust another leader with the problems facing the country. The risk of changing leadership while the nation was committed to two war fronts was too high. Bush needed to also decide how he was going to target specific elements of the population because every candidate must make stances that alienate some part of the electorate (Smith, 134).

The foundational challenge for the Republican Party was to persuade a war-fatigued nation to stay the course and not switch the command in chief. Bush, in turn, embraced his wartime identity and in his plain-spoken style recycled Abraham Lincoln's 1864 wartime campaign slogan "don't swap horses when crossing streams." The alarm-raising rhetoric and the use of graphic images of 9/11 resonated with partisans and independents alike by heightening their sense of insecurity and powerlessness in view of world events (Smith 2005; Hetherington and Nelson 2003). With the campaign formulated on this narrative, the Republicans assured voters that the war was a winnable commitment and it was a rational choice of action to preserve the "American way of living" (Norpoth and Sidman 2007;

Jacobson 2009). All other campaign issues, particularly domestic security, the economy, and social issues, were linked to the War on Terror filtered through feelings of patriotism (Norpoth and Sidman 2007; Abramowitz and Stone 2006).

At the time, the perceived benefits derived from the Republican strategy of linking the War on Terror to American virtue demonstrated great success at intertwining national security with traditional values which later parlayed into “morality” topics to appeal to the more conservative base (Jacobson 2005, 2009b). Defining the issues narrowly made the debate and related public discourse easier to control and manipulate, which, in turn, assisted efforts to mobilize specific target groups in the electorate. In 2004, the Republican focus was on solidifying and mobilizing the conservative religious base with appeals to morality and reconstructing the ideal of “moral” war (Jacobson 2007).

When associating morality with this agenda, Langer and Cohen (2005) claim that, for voters, the traditional values and moral emphasis “served as an ill-defined grab bag, especially for Bush voters, who, compared with John Kerry’s voters, had fewer appealing options” (Langer and Cohen, 714). The deliberately vague morality agenda benefitted the Republican campaign because it enabled the party to establish ownership of certain social issues and to control the tone of the campaign, putting the Democrats on a defensive strategy.

### THE DEMOCRATS’ COUNTERNARRATIVE

The Democrats had two goals in 2004. First, to refocus the public debate on the weak economy and, second, to emphasize war fatigue to persuade the voting public to reverse direction on the Iraq war and restore peace by voting for John Kerry (Conley 2005; Quirk et al. 2005; Abramson et al. 2007b). Democrats relied on their traditional rallying points to mobilize the base. The Kerry campaign reflects stances in line with public sentiment on major domestic issues including education, abortion, gay marriage, health care, and social security (Conley 2005). However, Democrats could not ignore that the election was primarily determined by the Bush agenda: foreign policy and the War on Terror (Pomper 2005). The Kerry organization attempted to draw sharp distinctions between Kerry and Bush on the grounds of military service (Kerry being a decorated Vietnam veteran and Bush’s service in the national guard altogether questionable)

using the popular parody of Bush's middle initial "The W. stands for wrong" and then the slogan that indicted Bush's "go it alone" mentality, "make American stronger at home and respected by the world" (Conley 2005). It was clear that partisans disliked Bush so much that Democrats would vote for "anybody but Bush" (Conley 2005).

As much as the Democrats tried to focus on the domestic agenda, they knew that the campaign was going to be determined by the international considerations because the war in Iraq dominated both party's agendas. The Democrats did not position themselves in opposition to the war, but simply argued that Kerry was a more efficient choice to responsibly conduct the war, with emphasis on including the international community (Crotty 2005; Pomper 2005). The overall concern for the Democrats was that Bush's position on foreign policy had alienated many strong allies by his acting unilaterally in the military campaigns in Afghanistan and, especially, in Iraq. Furthermore, the test presented to Kerry's campaign was the hurdle of campaigning against a popular incumbent wartime president with an approval rating hovering around 62 percent.<sup>5</sup>

With this in mind, the Democrats launched a strategy that emphasized the growing discontent and unpopularity of the Iraq war. With polls indicating that support for the war in Iraq was weakening, the Democrats wanted to showcase the human and economic toll of war (Abramowitz and Stone 2006) with events and evidence that spurred public backlash such as the public news that a privately contracted military employee—Tami Scilio—was fired after publishing a photo of flag-draped caskets in a cargo plane headed back to the USA. There was also the controversy playing out publically regarding the Bush administration leading the USA to war based on false evidence that Saddam Hussein manufactured and harbored weapons of mass destruction and disseminated chemical weapons (Conley 2005; Pomper 2005).

Kerry's campaign strategy to showcase the human toll of war and the mounting public backlash was countered by a 527-member group that called itself the "Swift Boat Veterans against Kerry." The group ran several ads attacking the validity of Kerry's Vietnam (Freedman 2006; Jacobson 2007). The attack ads were irreversibly damaging to Kerry's credibility as a potential replacement for the commander in chief. In the end, the presidential election was decided by the answers to two questions, "How has President Bush done" and "and how likely is it that Kerry will do better" (Abramson et al. 2007b).

## KEY ISSUES FRAMING THE CHOICE

The issues that set the agenda for the 2004 presidential campaign emphasized the War on Terror and domestic safety, which the Republican Party merged with traditional social values. Bush successfully consolidated the party base on traditional values and the War on Terror alone (Mellow 2005; Fiorina 2006; Sabato 2006; Jacobson 2007). The Republican issue of ownership of security and traditional values minimized competing influences on independent voters from the Democrats on issues such as the economy, health care, and education (Mellow 2005; Abramowitz and Stone 2006), which had the potential to divide.

A key political frame exploited by Bush's campaign was the War on Terror involving two simultaneous military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Republican campaign was very successful in harnessing the benefits of the post-9/11 approval surge that, in turn, sustained the 2004 presidential campaign. The Republican Party cast Bush's image as the national security expert with decisive leadership for wartime, and as the only person Americans could trust to be tough on terrorism (Crotty 2005; Todd 2006; Claibourn 2011).

The Democrats attempted to cast a wide net to include issues that would expand the scope of debate, mobilize its base, and convert independent voters from the narrowly defined Republican agenda (Conley 2005). The Democrats tried to exploit the potentially divisive domestic issue such as endangered civil liberties, budget deficits (compared to Clinton's balanced budget policies), health care, tax reform, and social security benefits and other areas of traditional Democratic strength (Crotty 2005).

## POLARIZING EMOTIONS ON THE HOME FRONT

Voters' public policy concerns commonly focus on the status of the national economy. In 2004 the electorate's policy concerns emphasized the country's economic strength and social issues.<sup>6</sup> However, social issues were cited as one of the largest categories of concern (more on social issues later). Compared to social issues, economic concerns occupied 19 percent of the voting public, which worked in Bush's favor. Public policy affecting domestic concerns was couched in larger concerns over safety and security. The ANES pre-election survey asked respondents to evaluate domestic policy issues: among them were the economy and domestic security. Bush skillfully merged these topics with patriotic symbolism and



value-laden presidential rhetoric to convey that economic stability translated into safe and secure borders (see Table 3.1).

On the evening of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, George Bush, in an address to the nation, established a rhetorical link between the economy and security when he said, “our financial institutions are strong and our economy will be open for business.”<sup>7</sup> Bush’s political image was stronger on topics of security than on domestic policy and, therefore, it was a calculated strategy to merge domestic public policy, such as the economy, with national security (and, in voters’ minds, safety).

The two policy issues were addressed in the ANES survey and the particular question on the economy asked respondents about their views on Bush’s handling of economic policy in his first term. The positive emotion

**Table 3.1** Candidate evaluation and emotional attribution toward economic policy

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Bush</i>		<i>Kerry</i>	
	$\beta$	<i>Probability</i>	$\beta$	<i>Probability</i>
<i>Independent variables</i>				
<i>Emotional response toward candidate</i>				
Anger	-1.80	0.00*	0.65	0.07**
Fear	-1.38	0.00*	0.38	0.32
Hope	0.31	0.36	-1.75	0.00*
Pride	1.51	0.00*	-0.35	0.33
<i>Political variables</i>				
Party identification	0.80	0.00*	0.82	0.00*
Ideology	0.12	0.35	0.12	0.30
<i>Demographics</i>				
Age	-0.01	0.07**	-0.00	0.75
Gender	0.41	0.18	0.42	0.14
Race	-0.08	0.41	-0.01	0.87
Education	-0.02	0.67	-0.07	0.24
Marital status	-0.18	0.06**	-0.27	0.00*
Constant	-1.39			
Pseudo $R^2$	0.65			
Log likelihood	-145.96			
$N$	606			

*Source:* All variables are from the 2004 ANES pre-election survey (July–October 2004)

*Note:* Logistic regression analysis

Dependent variable based on survey responses to the question “Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the economy?” 0 = disapprove, 1 = approve

\* $P < .05$ , \*\* $P < .10$

that is statistically significant in the model for Bush is pride. Voters who remarked that Bush made him or her feel proud, in turn, seemed to have attributed those feelings of pride to their assessments of Bush's economic policy. They reported that they approved of the way he had handled the economy. Conversely, emotions of hope were not influential on positive attitudes about the economy. This is most likely because of the nature of the question asking voters to think retrospectively: "Did Bush do a good job or not?" If respondents are evaluating the previous performance of the president, the feeling of pride is consistent with retrospective judgments.

These results are to be expected in a campaign such as 2004, where an incumbent is running for a second term. In this case, respondents who were asked survey questions about Bush were naturally engaging in retrospective evaluations (thinking about his first-term performance), whereas respondents who were asked questions to evaluate Kerry engaged in prospective analysis (to think about the future performance of Kerry as president).

To elaborate on this point, voters who reported that Kerry made them feel hopeful reported that they did not approve of how Bush handled the economy in his first term. Here, voters engaged a prospective appraisal about whether "Kerry will do a better job than Bush." Voters who had a positive predisposition toward Kerry answered they were hopeful about what Kerry would do as president. It seems reasonable that feelings of pride reflect voters' retrospective evaluations of Bush whereas feelings of hope were reflective of prospective judgments toward Kerry.

The negative feelings expressed toward Bush are represented by both fear and anger. Both the negative emotions are statistically significant in this model. Respondents who reported that Bush made him or her feel angry or fearful also expressed negative opinions about Bush's economic policies. While anger and fear are both classified as negative emotions, they can have very different implications and meanings. Negative emotions are often reactionary; therefore, these findings help isolate and understand what particular issues voters are reacting to. Voters who reacted negatively to Bush by reporting that Bush made him or her feel either angry or fearful expressed negative opinions on (or reacted negatively to) the question regarding Bush's handling of the economy.

It appears that voters react more profoundly to incumbents than to prospective candidates. However, an important result is the emotion of anger toward John Kerry. Respondents' expression of anger at Kerry is interesting since anger is typically classified as a reactionary emotion. This may be

explained by some of the innate weaknesses Kerry displayed as a candidate. Kerry had difficulty in establishing a warm and personal connection to voters, which Bush managed to do successfully through disclosure of his personal faith and many appearances with his family (Pomper 2007). Perhaps it was that Kerry seemed to lack personal displays of warmth and friendliness in public appearances that angered respondents.

On the topic of domestic security, the dependent variable is based on the question about whether respondents felt more or less secure in 2004. The subtext of this question also touches upon feelings about two of the major issues of the 2004 campaign: the 9/11 attacks and the War on Terror. The impact of feelings expressed toward George W. Bush on opinions about domestic security was both highly ideological and emotional. Consistent with the results on the economy, emotions are an important component to the opinions on feeling secure in 2004. Respondents who reported feelings of hope and pride toward Bush also answered that he or she felt more secure in 2004 than in previous years.

Conversely, the emotions of anger and fear are also important to the opinions on feeling secure. Respondents who reported that Bush made him or her feel angry or fearful also reacted negatively on the question regarding their personal feelings of safety. They reported feeling not more but less secure in 2004.

For John Kerry, the emotion of hope is an influence on attitudes about security. Respondents who reported that John Kerry made them feel hopeful were likely to report that domestic security was worse before and that they did not feel more secure under Bush's presidency. It is interesting that the only emotion that is statistically significant is hope. This finding is consistent with the result for attitudes on the economy and further supports the hypothesis that the feeling of hope is associated with cognitive process of prospective voting evaluation of John Kerry. Voters that were displeased with Bush and the context of 2004 were hopeful that Kerry could do a better job of managing domestic security.

## THE POLITICS OF TERROR AND WAR HEROES

In this section, the impact of emotions on attitudes on foreign affairs includes topics on foreign relations in general, the War on Terror, the war in Afghanistan, and the war in Iraq. An important point of contention between the Democrats and Republicans in 2004 was on the perceptions of US unilateral action taken on military action in Iraq and Afghanistan

(Abramowitz and Stone 2006), which was primarily the source of one of Kerry's campaign slogans "Make America Stronger at home and respected in the world." This slogan addressed the growing concerns about how the USA was perceived by its international partners.

The first topic explored is how feelings for Bush and Kerry may have impacted opinions on foreign relations. The dependent variable is based on the ANES question that asked respondents to consider their attitudes on foreign policy—whether or not they approve of the handling of foreign relations during Bush's first term as president.

On the question of domestic security and defense (see Table 3.2) three emotions are important: pride, fear, and anger. Consistent with the models

**Table 3.2** Candidate evaluation and emotional attribution toward domestic security and defense

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Bush</i>		<i>Kerry</i>	
	<i>B</i>	<i>Probability</i>	$\beta$	<i>Probability</i>
<i>Emotional response toward candidate</i>				
Anger	-1.79	0.00*	0.09	0.79
Fear	-1.85	0.00*	0.47	0.28
Hope	0.75	0.05*	-1.08	0.00*
Pride	1.56	0.00*	-0.46	0.17
<i>Political variables</i>				
Party identification	0.31	0.01*	0.59	0.00*
Ideology	0.28	0.04*	0.34	0.00*
<i>Demographics</i>				
Age	-0.01	0.37	0.00	0.39
Gender	-0.02	0.93	0.23	0.42
Race	0.02	0.85	0.09	0.35
Education	0.01	0.76	-0.00	0.99
Marital status	-0.05	0.58	-0.14	0.13
Constant	0.04		-2.75	
Pseudo $R^2$	0.60		0.488	
Log likelihood	-121.57		-156.47	
<i>N</i>	485		479	

*Source:* All variables are from the 2004 ANES pre-election survey (July–October 2004)

*Note:* Logistic regression analysis

Dependent variable based on survey responses to the question "Would you say that, compared to 2000, the Bush administration has made the United States more secure from its foreign enemies, or less secure? 0=less secure, 1=more secure"

\* $P < .05$ , \*\* $P < .10$

of the previous section, the importance of pride endures. Respondents who reported feeling proud about George W. Bush also reported that they approved of how he handled foreign policy in his first term as president.

Next, the feelings of both of anger and fear are also important to the security question. Respondents who reported that Bush made him or her feel angry or fearful did not approve of his handling of foreign policy. Recall that anger and fear may mean very different things although they are both classified as negative emotions. In the case of angry respondents, they are reacting to their own assessments of Bush's first-term position on foreign relations. It is possible that they are reacting to several policies that characterized Bush's "go it alone" mentality and his seemingly blatant disregard of counsel from foreign allies (Crotty 2005). Here, anger may help explain that on this question and others related to the topic of foreign affairs, those who reacted to Bush as the source or cause of the decline of America's respected position in the global community are expressing the desire to punish Bush (vote him out) (Denton 2005; Drew 2006).

In contrast, fear renders a different narrative than anger. Even though fear seems just as important as anger on the domestic security issue, fear signals a different message to those who study elections in this context. Since fear is an emotion that is associated with discomfort, apprehension, and powerlessness (Steenbergen and Ellis 2006), while it is a reactionary emotion to a negative stimulus, respondents here are possibly explaining that they were apprehensive about the future of the US reputation in the international community, which was a valid concern (Jacobson 2005; Abramson et al. 2007a).

As is consistent with the findings of the previous section, as the challenger, Kerry invoked feelings of hope and anger. First, to contrast with Bush, the emotion of hope here is consistent with the thesis that voters were prospectively evaluating Kerry as the president. Therefore, respondents dissatisfied with Bush's performance in his first term were most likely hopeful that Kerry would do a better job and improve US relations with its international partners.

Also consistent with previous findings is the performance of anger. It is interesting that respondents are reacting to Kerry's candidacy with anger, meaning that Kerry represents a negative stimulus, which voters want to punish. In this context, what that particular stimulus was is rather difficult to isolate. The Bush campaign offered a range of attacks aimed to discredit Kerry as a viable commander in chief that served to be highly divisive among Vietnam war veterans (Abramowitz and Stone 2006).

The War on Terror (see Table 3.3) was a corner stone issue for the Bush campaign that also dominated Kerry's campaign message. Here, the results for Bush and Kerry suggest that voters were feeling more secure in 2004 than they did before and they also supported the War on Terror. For Bush, all four emotional measurements are statistically significant. On the positive emotional dimension, this is the first estimation where both hope and pride are statistically significant. The feelings of hope in this model signal a narrative different from what pride conveys. The function of pride in this case is consistent with previous explanations. However, hope offers another interpretation. In the context of the terrorism question that examines voter attitudes regarding the War on Terror, respondents who reported that Bush made him or her feel hopeful signaled two

**Table 3.3** Candidate evaluation and emotional attribution toward the War on Terror

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Bush</i>		<i>Kerry</i>	
<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Probability</i>	$\beta$	<i>Probability</i>
<i>Emotional response toward candidate</i>				
Anger	-1.51	0.00*	0.34	0.27
Fear	-1.22	0.00*	0.35	0.30
Hope	0.61	0.05*	-1.21	0.00*
Pride	1.50	0.00*	-0.20	0.52
<i>Political variables</i>				
Party identification	0.47	0.00*	0.34	0.27
Ideology	0.13	0.29	0.35	0.30
<i>Demographics</i>				
Age	0.01	0.41	0.01	0.11
Gender	-0.66	0.02*	-0.38	0.12
Race	0.11	0.22	0.10	0.20
Education	0.04	0.46	0.00	0.89
Marital status	-0.10	0.24	-0.20	0.00*
Constant	-2.14		-2.26	
Pseudo $R^2$	0.57		0.59	
Log likelihood	-177.16		-167.56	
<i>n</i>	608		598	

*Source:* All variables are from the 2004 ANES pre-election survey (July–October 2004)

*Note:* Logistic regression analysis

Dependent variable based on survey responses to the question "Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the war on terrorism?" 0 = disapprove, 1 = approve

\* $P < .05$ , \*\* $P < .10$

things. First, that the War on Terror was a long-term issue and, second, that Bush was likely the more viable option to continue defending the USA against terror. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that the combination of hope and pride appearing as equally important is based on a message of political trust. Bernard (1983) indicated that hope and pride are emotions that, together, yield trust; “trust involves expectation that the social order will continue to exist, that the people who claim expertise will perform competently” (Bernard, 175). So, in this case, voters’ feelings of pride and hope toward Bush conveyed the message of political trust to continue the War on Terror, which, in the minds of voters, was essential to sustaining security at home and abroad.

Alternately, fear and anger, just as much as positive emotions, had an important role in influencing negative opinions regarding the War on Terror. Respondents who reported that Bush made them feel anger or fear were not supportive of the War on Terror, most likely because they felt insecure and vulnerable to the threat of a terror attack on US soil. Some reasons for the negative reactions that voters felt toward Bush are consistent with the expectations of how negative emotions function. In contrast to the narrative that positive emotions offer, it is appropriate to suggest that the voter who felt negatively toward Bush would also likely report that they did not trust him or his policies regarding the War on Terror.

Kerry’s political status as challenger in 2004 seems to yield one consistent narrative—that political opponents invoke prospective feelings of hope among voters dissatisfied with the status quo. Those respondents who reported that their feelings toward Bush were negative are likely to be the voters who felt hopeful toward John Kerry on the issue regarding the War on Terror. This issue was a largely contentious one because of questions regarding the implications of a long-term “War on Terror” for US foreign policy (Abramson et al. 2007a) (see Table 3.4).

Two issues concerning the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were equally critical campaign narratives for both Bush and Kerry. Although the justifications for both wars were tied to the 9/11 terror attacks, voters’ feelings about each war varied widely.

Concerning the war in Afghanistan, negative emotions of both anger and fear were important in forming respondents’ opinions. This question asked respondents to consider whether or not the war in Afghanistan was worth the cost. However, the idea of “cost” and what it actually meant remained ambiguous in the ANES survey; so it is difficult to ascertain how voters conceptualized the abstract idea of “cost.” In the context of war,

the idea of cost translates into considering the human toll (Norpoth and Sidman 2007). Ultimately, it is left to speculation because it is difficult to ascertain whether respondents interpreted the cost of war to refer to the economic burden or the human sacrifice.

For George W. Bush (see Table 3.4), in the context of the emotional analysis on this question, only negative emotions are statistically significant. The Bush administration justified military action in Afghanistan by establishing a political connection between al Qaeda and the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The voting public was persuaded that the 9/11 architect, Osama Bin Laden, was harbored by the Taliban in Afghanistan and thus necessitated an American military response in Afghanistan (Rogers 2004; Kuyper

**Table 3.4** Candidate evaluation and emotional attribution toward the war in Afghanistan

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Bush</i>		<i>Kerry</i>	
	<i>B</i>	<i>Probability</i>	$\beta$	<i>Probability</i>
<i>Emotional response toward candidate</i>				
Anger	-0.70	0.03*	0.12	0.67
Fear	-0.56	0.04*	0.82	0.03*
Hope	0.14	0.63	-0.54	0.08**
Pride	0.37	0.19	0.02	0.93
<i>Political variables</i>				
Party identification	0.31	0.00*	0.36	0.00*
Ideology	-0.14	0.14	-0.12	0.20
<i>Demographics</i>				
Age	0.01	0.32	0.00	0.31
Gender	-1.12	0.00*	-1.09	0.00*
Race	0.20	0.00*	0.21	0.00*
Education	0.01	0.77	0.00	0.94
Marital status	-0.11	0.09**	-0.15	0.02*
Constant	0.93		0.27	
Pseudo $R^2$	0.23		0.22	
Log likelihood	-251.31		-254.09	
<i>n</i>	606		598	

*Source:* All variables are from the 2004 ANES pre-election survey (July–October 2004)

*Note:* Logistic regression analysis

Dependent variable based on survey responses to the question: “Taking everything into account, do you think the US war against the Taliban government in Afghanistan was worth the cost or not?” 0 = not worth it, 1 = worth it

\* $P < .05$ , \*\* $P < .10$



2006; Boydston 2008). In 2004, attitudes about the war in Afghanistan were largely supplanted by the Iraq war. Additionally, without the capture of Bin Laden, Americans grew fatigued with news on Afghanistan. For many the fatigue became dissatisfaction with the Bush administration.

For Kerry (see Table 3.4), there are two emotions important to attitudes appraising military action in Afghanistan. As expected, hope and fear were important feelings to opinions about the war in Afghanistan. Both emotional reactions on this topic convey that at some cognitive level prospective assessments led to these responses. Looking at each emotional response independently reveals different but important narratives. First, the emotion of hope supports the perspective advanced in this chapter that feelings of hope are associated with prospective evaluations, and, specifically here, evaluations of Kerry as a viable commander in chief. In Kerry's case, as the presidential challenger, he consistently invoked the feeling of hope. The respondents who reported that Kerry made him or her feel hopeful were also unlikely to believe that going to war in Afghanistan was worth the economic or human cost.

Alternately, the emotion of fear offered a contrasting explanation for reactions to Kerry as a presidential candidate. Respondents that reported Kerry made them feel fearful also supported the war in Afghanistan. It is likely that those who reported feelings of fear toward Kerry as a commander in chief were also apprehensive about changing leadership during a wartime election altogether. This may suggest that the message of "not changing horses in the middle of war" resonated among voters (Weisberg and Christenson 2007) (see Table 3.5).

Unlike the feelings expressed about the Afghanistan conflict, the feelings about the Iraq war were highly divisive. The results suggest that emotional responses to the candidates were important to opinions about Iraq because for both candidates all four emotional dimensions are statistically significant.

Two key pieces of evidence that the Bush administration offered the American public as justification to go to war were as follows. First, Bush posited that Saddam Hussein was manufacturing and proliferating weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), which posed a threat to the immediate region (namely, Iran) and directly to the USA and its allies (e.g. Israel) (Boydston 2008). Second, then Attorney General Colin Powell's persuasive testimony before the United Nations rallied short-lived international support based on erroneous claims that Iraq was also capable of producing, disseminating, and launching biochemical weapons (Kuyper 2006; Boydston 2008).

**Table 3.5** Candidate evaluation and emotional attribution toward the war in Iraq

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Bush</i>		<i>Kerry</i>	
	<i>B</i>	<i>Probability</i>	$\beta$	<i>Probability</i>
<i>Emotional response toward candidate</i>				
Anger	-1.18	0.00*	0.55	0.03*
Fear	-1.19	0.00*	0.52	0.06**
Hope	0.54	0.08**	-0.74	0.01*
Pride	1.43	0.00*	-0.52	0.09**
<i>Political variables</i>				
Party identification	0.44	0.00*	0.57	0.00*
Ideology	0.15	0.16	0.17	0.09**
<i>Demographics</i>				
Age	-0.02	0.03*	-0.01	0.16
Gender	0.24	0.33	0.25	0.27
Race	-0.10	0.31	-0.02	0.75
Education	-0.04	0.42	-0.05	0.25
Marital status	-0.01	0.92	-0.11	0.12
Constant	-2.08		-2.65	
Pseudo $R^2$	0.49		0.41	
Log likelihood	-210.61		-238.69	
$N$	609		601	

*Source:* All variables are from the 2004 ANES pre-election survey (July–October 2004)

*Note:* Logistic regression analysis

Dependent variable is based on survey responses to the question “Taking everything into account, do you think the war in Iraq has been worth the cost or not?” 0 = not worth the cost, 1 = worth the cost

\* $P < .05$ , \*\* $P < .10$

General Powell’s testimony coupled with the other evidence offered by the White House created a highly anxious political context that gave way to feelings of fear and foreboding about one’s own safety within the USA. The political result of this was public support for the war in Iraq. The justification to go to war in Iraq did not spur a rally effect because it was not a dramatic event that precipitated sudden and substantial public approval of Bush—rather, public support for the Bush doctrine (Abramson et al. 2007a)

In 2004, many of those positive feelings for Bush lingered because the emotions of both pride and hope are important to opinions on the war in Iraq. Respondents who reported that Bush made him or her feel proud or hopeful also reported they thought the war in Iraq was worth the cost.

Referring to previous analysis about the function of the emotions of hope and pride in cognitive processes, it is reasonable to suggest here that those expressions conveyed an important message of political trust regarding Bush's mandate on the war in Iraq.

While the positive feelings toward Bush may have lingered, by the 2004 presidential campaign, evidence had surfaced that the justification to go to war was based on false claims. Public sentiment against the war was a growing issue. Feelings of anger and fear were important to the matter. The feelings of fear and anger reported on the question about Iraq could be in reaction to the revelation of false evidence that was offered as justification to go to war. Voters that expressed feelings of anger or fear toward Bush also did not think the Iraq war was worth the cost. These sentiments may suggest that voters were apprehensive about Bush continuing as the commander in chief; they felt less secure and did not trust his leadership after it became public that Iraq did not, in fact, have weapons of mass destruction (Jacobson 2007; Weisburg and Christenson 2007; Boydston 2008).

For Kerry, respondents were just as emotionally expressive toward him on the topic of Iraq as they were toward Bush. The analysis punctuates the divisiveness of this political issue for the electorate. The respondents who reported that Kerry made him or her feel hopeful or proud did not support the Iraq war.

### DAMAGE INFLICTED BY SWIFT BOAT VETERANS

Conversely, respondents who remarked that Kerry made him or her feel angry or fearful supported military action in Iraq. These emotional reactions may be indicative of the success of the 527 swift boat veterans' attack ads. Independent groups like the 527 swift boat veterans specifically targeted Kerry's post-tour, anti-war rhetoric, portraying him as unpatriotic. It is necessary to note here the correlation between the voters who expressed negative feelings about Kerry and the prevalence of those negative ads during the campaign. Those messages angered many Vietnam veterans along with several supporters of the Iraq war.

### THE POLITICS OF MORALITY AND THE REPUBLICAN BASE

Morality politics has historically been an important agenda that mobilizes a loyal Republican base. The assumption that led to selecting same-sex marriage for analysis involved the expectation that the issue is innately

**Table 3.6** Candidate evaluation and emotional attribution toward same-sex marriage

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Bush</i>		<i>Kerry</i>	
<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Probability</i>	$\beta$	<i>Probability</i>
<i>Emotional response toward candidate</i>				
Anger	0.37	0.16	0.00	0.97
Fear	0.42	0.10	-0.36	0.21
Hope	-0.09	0.74	0.22	0.46
Pride	-0.23	0.42	0.11	0.68
<i>Political variables</i>				
Party identification	-0.10	0.21	-0.16	0.02*
Ideology	-0.73	0.00*	-0.74	0.00*
<i>Demographics</i>				
Age	-0.02	0.00*	-0.02	0.00*
Gender	-0.01	0.94	0.01	0.93
Race	0.34	0.00*	0.33	0.00*
Education	0.03	0.44	0.02	0.53
Marital status	0.14	0.03*	0.16	0.01*
Constant	2.06		2.51	
Pseudo $R^2$	0.32		0.31	
Log likelihood	-261.03		-261.57	
<i>N</i>	558		553	

*Source:* All variables are from the 2004 ANES pre-election survey (July–October 2004)

*Note:* Logistic regression analysis

Dependent variable based on survey responses to the question “Should same-sex couples be allowed to marry, or do you think they should not be allowed to marry?” 0=should not be allowed, 1=should be allowed

\* $P < .05$ , \*\* $P < .10$

emotive. Contrary to expectations, among all the political issues examined in this chapter, this was the least emotional.

The findings here do not overtly suggest that the issue concerning protected rights of same-sex marriage were unimportant in the 2004 election. The findings support previous observations about the role traditional values played in the 2004 political narrative; “for Americans in 2004, morality meant much more than opposition to gay marriage or abortion” (Pomper, 59). Moral issues had broader implications for voters in the 2004 election. Campaign scholars (Crotty 2005; Pomper 2005; Jacobson 2007; Campbell 2007) agree that in states where the election was close, morality issues gave the advantage to Bush. Morality took on clearer meaning

because it was also largely attached to the War on Terror. Bush would have fallen short in states crucial to the Electoral College without the gains he derived from other issues, particularly terrorism (Pomper 2005; Campbell and Monson 2007). The issues that aimed to invoke feelings attached to traditional values affected the election only through mobilization. Having these issues on the campaign agenda mobilized the Republican base as a political strategy and not as a new outlook on the topic.

As mentioned earlier, same-sex marriage was not an emotive topic in the context of the 2004 presidential campaign (See Table 3.6). The Republicans strategically employed the morality platform to mobilize the conservative political base that advantaged Bush. While emotions did not play a significant part in shaping attitudes on same-sex marriage, there was an important subset of variables including age, race, and ideology that were important determinants of attitudes toward same-sex marriage. Results suggest that same-sex marriage was ideologically divisive with conservatives reporting they did not support it. Analysis also revealed that Republican partisanship was a significant factor in opposition to the topic, which is consistent with previous observations.

## OTHER TOPICS OF INTEREST

Observations made about the polarized electorate in 2004 are supported by the findings discussed in the previous section. This chapter supports previous claims that voters' attitudes in 2004 were divided along partisan and issue-based divisions. Another conclusion supported by the findings here is that Bush was also very emotionally divisive.

Beyond the partisan divisions, there were other cleavages that appeared to be important among the secondary and tertiary variables in the analysis. Divisions between married and non-married persons, men and women, and black and white voters are all apparent on specific campaign issues in 2004.

## THE MARRIAGE GAP

A variable controlling for marital status in 2004 denotes an interesting dynamic in electoral politics. Campbell et al. (1960) found that marital status was a reliable predictor of voter mobilization and turnout. However, in this project, the findings denote an interesting split between married and non-married persons. Most models tested in this chapter do not test

the question of voter turnout; rather, they examine voter attitudes. The observed splits between married and unmarried voters seem to reinforce previous conclusions about the polarized electorate in 2004.

There is another interpretation of these divisions in voting behavior between married couples and non-married voters. Appearing consistent in all three categories of issue analysis, this so-called “marriage gap” may predict a difference in voter participation and voting behavior between married and non-married voters. More specifically, the Voter Participation Center predicts that the marriage gap may become a reliable predictor for voting behavior between married and unmarried women.<sup>8</sup>

### GENDER AND THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

During the first Gulf War in 1991, a noticeable gender gap in support for war revealed that women were less likely to support military campaigns involving the USA (Wilcox and Hewit 1996). This was no less true in 2004 on topics involving the “War on Terror” or the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan. However, the issue is more textured and the data revealed that women did not support the war in Afghanistan (where they were supportive of the Iraq war). Men were more likely to express support for Bush’s mandate on terrorism. This particular result reinforces gendered attitude gap that exists regarding war. However, in this particular context, women reported not supporting the war in Afghanistan, but then supported the war in Iraq. One possible explanation for this gendered divergence suggests that justifications for going to war mattered in the 2004 election. Unlike the Gulf War in 1991, there were two ongoing wars happening in 2004, and each came with a different justification for why it was necessary.

### THE ROLE RACE PLAYED

Traditionally, the political differences between black and white voters are among the sharpest of many social divides (Abramson et al. 2007). In 2004, polls indicated that 88 percent of the African-American vote supported John Kerry and only 41 percent of the white vote went to Kerry. That was not an unusual election in that the black vote has typically supported the Democratic Party. However, the interesting observation is where the sharp divisions between white and black voters were statistically significant.

On the issues regarding war and morality was where the race divides appeared. On the issues of gay marriage and abortion, black respondents were not likely to support either issue. This is not contrary to expectation.

The intersection of faith in the black community has long dictated that the stances in the black community on moral issues follow traditional lines (McDaniel 2007). However, at the end of the day, the black vote tends to honor partisan loyalties and mostly votes Democratic, which was the case in 2004.

There was a compelling divergence in attitudes on the war in Afghanistan. For both candidates, the models reflect that white voters were largely supportive of military action in Afghanistan, but not regarding Iraq. The possible explanation here may be reflective of the makeup of the military itself. The US armed forces employ a large African-American contingency (Armor 1996). Since this was the case in 2004, it is quite possible that the cost of the Afghanistan war was quite personal. With the war wearing into its third year by 2004 and Bin Laden evading capture, the justification for Afghanistan may have been interpreted as irrational to those personally involved given the US goals for the War on Terror.

## DISCUSSION

The conventional wisdom predating this research concerning the determinants of voting established by the *American Voter* found that party identification was the most reliable predictor of political choices. This finding supplied an unprecedented utility for explaining voting that it guides mostly all contemporary research on electoral behavior. This created a standard approach to studying political behavior that remains the optimal standard of measurement in recent research. The findings presented in this chapter add a new variable to this preferred approach to voting behavior.

There are two useful insights that expand our existing knowledge base of political behavior. First, regarding the role emotions have in electoral behavior, the findings suggest that there is an association between voters' feelings and their retrospective or prospective political evaluations. This offers a new interpretation of Huddy and Gunthorsdottir (2000) the "transfer of affect" thesis. The results in this chapter show that feelings of pride and anger are likely associated with retrospective evaluations of a candidate's political record whereas feelings of hope and fear are likely associated with prospective judgments of a candidate's campaign promises. This portends that voters may transfer emotional judgments of a candidate to their appraisal of the campaign issues. In the case of 2004, this conclusion suggests that voters may have projected their feelings toward Bush on to their evaluations of his campaign issues, which affirms the research

question that voters' feelings toward candidates may translate into support (or rejection) of campaigns issues.

Second, it seems that partisan and independent voters alike rely on their feelings when evaluating political issues. Partisans still rely primarily on their attachment to a party to guide decisions, but also demonstrated that they relied on their feelings toward candidates to evaluate political issues in 2004. In many cases, partisanship continued and in many cases on issues pertaining to security and terrorism partisans demonstrated significant ideological polarization. On the other hand, when factored out, the findings for the party identification variable reflected that independent voters and independent leaners tended to rely on their feelings toward either Bush or Kerry more so than their partisan counterpart to evaluate the political issues in 2004.

Political contexts are innately emotive and campaigns are the marketplace of emotions. Broadcast media specifically appeal to viewers' emotions and do most political advertising (Brader 2005, 2006; Gulati et al. 2004; Kaid 2004; Huddy and Gunthorsdottir 2000). During campaigns, voters are constantly inundated with political messages and emotive imagery designed to arouse voters' passionate reasoning, which means emotional responses are integrated with potential bias and reasoned thought about the accompanying message or image. This coupled with the emotive nature of opinion news shows and the broadcast recycled "noise" that competes for voters' attention makes it necessary to examine how voters' passionate reasoning influences their political choices. The way voters feel about candidates becomes more important in the voting booth.

## NOTES

1. Roper and Pew Research public opinion poll ratings taken from January 2001 to April 2001.
2. Roper and Pew public opinion polls from October/fall 2001. Political parallels were drawn between Bush and his father, George H.W. Bush, on the issue of war and the benefits of the rally effect on each presidency. Spring 1991, H.W. Bush's presidential approval was 90 percent as a result of the Gulf War.
3. November 6, 2001. CNN.com/US.
4. Pew Research Center. 2014. "Growing Ideological Consistency: Republicans shift right, Democrats shift left." And "Political Polarization in the American Public" Accessed at [www.pewresearch.org/U.S.Politics](http://www.pewresearch.org/U.S.Politics).



5. [www.gallup.com](http://www.gallup.com).
6. ANES survey 2004.
7. Address to the nation 9.11.01 accessed through C-SPAN.
8. The Voter Participation Center and Lake Research Partner analysis of the US Census Bureau's Population Survey, November supplements (2004, 2008, 2010). [www.voterparticipation.org](http://www.voterparticipation.org).

## APPENDIX: VARIABLE AND ANALYSIS DESCRIPTION

### *Campaign Issues*

Analysis was conducted using survey data from the 2004 American National Election Studies (ANES) time series pre-election sample. The dependent variables were issues that represented the political issues of each party's agenda in three categories: domestic issues, foreign affairs, and morality politics. Eight issues in total were regressed against three categories of independent variables.

The dependent variables for domestic topics were (1) the economy and (2) domestic security. With regard to foreign affairs, four issues were chosen. Two issues were selected to get at general attitudes of foreign affairs that included (1) evaluation of foreign relations and (2) the War on Terror. Then, more specifically, two variables on (3) the war in Iraq and (4) Afghanistan were selected to measure attitudes on specific military actions. Finally, on the topic of morality politics, two issues were examined: first, same-sex marriage and, second, government-funded abortion.

### *Emotional Dimensions*

The first set of control variables is the ANES measure for emotion: pride, hope, fear, and anger. The second set of control variables is political determinants such as party identification and ideology. The final set of independent variables is the controls for demographic information.

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## The New Politics of Hope and Change

**Abstract** The 2008 presidential campaign was a historic benchmark in American politics. The American electorate responded to the country's first African-American presidential candidate with enthusiasm and pride. Theories of race and gender in politics are examined and frame the analysis of the four emotional dynamics that exerted influence on voters' appraisals of candidates and issues. The analysis of the 2008 presidential campaign involves a multidimensional examination of the political context, campaign narratives, voter dynamics, and the politics of race and gender. This is the context against which the influence of voters' emotional responses is considered. The research suggests the success of Obama's singular narrative offering "hope" and "change" and offers a point of origin to examine the emergence of voter discontent with establishment politics.

The political context in 2008 was unique because it furnished three unique developments in American presidential politics. First, it was a pioneering American presidential campaign to feature a black man as a major front-runner nominee, women made inroads showcased by Hillary Clinton's competitive Democratic primaries, and the Republican Party nominated its first woman vice presidential candidate, Sarah Palin.

The 2008 presidential election understandably stands out as possibly the most historical American elections. Its unique context energized segments of the electorate that were typically excluded in previous elections.

In 2008, 131 million people voted, which was up from the 2004 turnout by a count of 5 million. Of those figures, blacks increased turnout by 2 million voters with the highest turnout among 18–24 year olds. The increased turnout was offset by decreased or stagnated activity among other groups, causing overall 2008 figures to remain constant at the 2004 level of 64 percent.<sup>1</sup> Women had a higher voting rate than men at 66 percent (compared with men at 64 percent). More analysis quickly revealed that women overwhelmingly supported Barack Obama at 56 percent compared to 49 percent of men as opposed to John McCain, despite his running mate Sarah Palin.<sup>2</sup>

### POLITICAL OVERVIEW OF THE 2008 CAMPAIGN

The political context of the 2008 presidential election was highlighted by voters' dissatisfaction with the incumbent president coupled with uncertainty about the country's future (Ceaser et al. 2009). Election scholars (Abramson et al. 2010; Abramowitz 2010; Cook 2010; Jacobson 2010; Ceaser et al. 2009) suggest that Bush's second term set the stage for the 2008 presidential campaign, essentially being another referendum on the Bush administration and the Republican Party. According to Jacobson (Jacobson 2009), a sitting president is the party's most prominent figure representing the party and Bush's performance in his second term impacted the party image and its attractiveness (Jacobsen 7).

Negative attitudes toward George W. Bush inevitably surfaced during the 2008 primary election cycle. Shortly after the Republican convention, the economy became a particularly problematic issue long before the financial crisis in September. Regarding foreign affairs, whatever benefits the Bush administration might have enjoyed during the second term was contradicted by the deterioration of the economy, which left Bush with the lowest approval rating of any president in the 70 years of polling history (Jacobson 2009). Bush's ratings were falling mostly among Republicans and independents; ratings among Democrats had been the lowest since the reelection campaign (Crotty 2009; Jacobson 2009; Abramson et al. 2010).

The 2008 candidates crafted tailored messages in large part to address this situation. Democrats were advantaged by the political mood in 2008, which made the campaign strategy almost effortless. First, Obama needed to remind the voting public of its dissatisfaction with Bush-era policies and link John McCain to George W. Bush through their shared party label. Second, Obama needed to endear himself to the public, but there were two areas where voters had reservations about Obama's candi-

dacy. First was his relatively short political career which signaled he was a relatively unseasoned politician and second was his racial identity (Ceaser et al. 2009; Abramowitz 2010). Before 2008 African-American candidates had not garnered serious financial support and did not have the realistic probability of winning a major party's nomination.

Given Bush's unpopularity, Republicans faced an uphill battle and McCain's campaign reflected the stress and awkwardness presented by that hurdle. McCain was in an uncomfortable position because he needed to separate himself from the Bush-colored Republican label and not risk alienating the party base by being too critical of Bush or his policies (Ceaser et al. 2009). The leading problem McCain's campaign struggled with was the lack of a focused and defined strategy. McCain never effectively solved this problem and was never able to take the upper hand from Obama (Ceaser et al. 2009; Abramson et al. 2010).

During the general election, the campaigns needed to address three serious issues. First, the economy slipped steadily during Bush's second term and finally confronted devastating shocks in September 2008. Second, Iraq and Afghanistan needed a more decisive focus and a plan for American troops' withdrawal. Third, the growth of executive power under Bush made several voters anxious about the protection of civil liberties (Crotty 2009; Jacobson 2009; Abramowitz 2010; Cook 2010; Finn and Glaser 2010; Kenski et al. 2010). Besides the gender and racial dynamics of the 2008 presidential campaign, another unique factor was that it was the first election since 1952 that did not have an incumbent on the ballot (Abramowitz 2008; Holbrook 2008; Crotty 2010; Jacobson 2010).

### THE 2008 CAMPAIGN NARRATIVE

If 2004 was the election influenced by international affairs and the threat of terrorism, the 2008 election was determined by domestic issues and most notably the economic crisis. As noted previously, the economy was already a major issue before the economic crisis in September 2008. However, when the collapse finally did occur, it appropriately consumed the attention of both candidates and their campaigns and provided an opportunity for Democrats to draw attention to the failures of Bush-era economic policies. In the wake of the economic collapse, analysts likened the impact to the effects of the Great Depression (Crotty 2009; Lewis-Beck and Tien 2009; Holbrook 2008). This language summoned the desperate images of bread lines in voters' minds and led to frenetic anxieties. Both candidates suspended their campaigns to return to Washington and

vote on bailout packages to rescue ailing financial firms (Abramson et al. 2010; Sabato 2010).

McCain's campaign responded to ongoing public insecurity by assuring voters that the economic foundations were stable by stating that he "still believes that the fundamentals of the economy are strong."<sup>3</sup> In order to shore up public confidence in the stability of the essential economic foundations, McCain's team denied comments about the economy and shifted the campaign's focus back to Obama and his, in McCain's view, politically inexperienced record (Armbruster 2008).

Obama's campaign approach seemed aggressive and proactive by proposing a major jobs initiative that was reminiscent of the 1930s Roosevelt-era (WPA) public works program (Crotty 2009; Holbrook 2008). Much of the media banter conjured up Depression-era images and emotions and the Democrats responded with campaign rhetoric that rallied the traditional base of political support, the New Deal agenda (Sabato 2010).

Although eclipsed by the economic crisis, other issues loomed on the agenda. There were several large issues that needed to be confronted in 2008, but the economy was in crisis and that dominated the rest of the campaign. For the most part, much of the agenda conformed to traditional and familiar party issues with the necessary modifications and redesigns to be relevant in the current context (Crotty 2009). There was agreement on only one point—that there were serious problems and changes were needed—but there was no consensus about the causes of the country's problems or the solutions (Abramowitz 2010). Social issues presented a relatively minor role in the contest.

Both campaigns focused on the same issues, but had different approaches to each issue. The war in Iraq and Afghanistan was a major concern in 2008. McCain's campaign offered interpretations of the key objectives about the war. The first was to achieve victory. Second, no timetable should be set for withdrawal. Third, the number of troops deployed to Afghanistan should be increased. In contrast, Obama's approach offered a timetable for troop withdrawal from Iraq and to redirect those troops to Afghanistan. What resonated with voters was Obama's timetable for troop withdrawal (Crotty 2009; Spitzer 2009).

Healthcare reform was an issue that received intensified attention on the campaign trail and demonstrated the Democratic primary conflict. Ideological divisions were apparent in the proposals for healthcare reform. Obama proposed a universal healthcare program, which extended coverage for preexisting conditions, children, and the elderly and included an



increase of tax on wealthier citizens. McCain's proposal had a free market orientation that emphasized privatized medicine. Health insurance coverage was to be optional and tax credits were proposed for individual and family premiums (Maioni 2009).

Energy policy was the other high-profile issue during the campaign. Global fuel prices were rising and candidates were pressed about domestic oil exploration and energy dependence. Again, along the traditional ideological lines, McCain supported privatized industry's oil production and exploration coupled with financial incentives and rewards (Crotty 2009; Spitzer 2009). Obama proposed regulation on oil and fuel companies and subsidies for alternative energy exploration and he wanted to impose greener fuel efficiency standards for vehicles (Spitzer 2009).

These were the major issues the candidates debated about during the 2008 presidential campaign; however, they were largely supplanted by the economic exigency for the remainder of the campaign from September until November. The strategies each campaign employed then worked to frame the issues along typical party lines and rhetoric. The Obama campaign exploited every opportunity to link McCain to Bush on every issue, and most strongly on the economy.

### CANDIDATE STRATEGIES

The political context in 2008 demanded different campaign strategies than what had worked in 2004. First, in 2004, Bush was running for reelection and his campaign was largely a referendum on his first term (Abramson et al. 2007). In 2008, both the Republican and Democrat strategies were campaigning against the Bush legacy (Ceaser et al. 2009); the challenge presented to the Republican Party was a rather problematic one. Bush's second term damaged a great deal of the public's trust in the Republican agenda. This proved advantageous for the Democrats' campaign to exploit the Republican failures. John McCain was better positioned than any other Republican contender to campaign in a fashion that reinvented the Republican image in the wake of Bush (Sabato 2010). To McCain's advantage, his political rivalry and friction with Bush (demonstrated by McCain's legislative voting record against some key Bush initiatives) enabled him to draw 31 percent of votes from individuals who disliked Bush<sup>4</sup> along with the mention of McCain's military credentials and service (Abramson, Aldrich and Rohde 2010).

The Republican approach was two-fold; first, to separate McCain from the Bush era and, second (a focus that backfired), to cast Obama

as the naive opponent with little political experience (Kenski et al. 2010). The Republican strategy tried to juxtapose McCain's credentials against Obama's lack of them; experience versus little.

McCain emphasized his own record and experience, with the intention to draw distinctions between himself and his opponent's relative inexperience and vulnerabilities (Cook 2010). That, of course, was made difficult in July 2008, when Obama went on a ten-day international "goodwill" tour (Kenski et al. 2010).

During the general election, the Obama campaign enjoyed several advantages that, arguably, any Democratic presidential nominee in 2008 would have relished. Even though growing political polarization has appeared since 2000, it has advantaged the Democratic Party with an increase in party identifiers (Abramowitz 2010). The US Census Bureau reported that the number of identifiers grew in Bush's second term.<sup>5</sup> The economic conditions were such that it facilitated a mood of pessimism, making it relatively easy for the Democratic platform to indict the Bush era for the current economic failures that were playing out in 2008.

Much of the Obama campaign strategy relied on well-functioning grassroots networks (Abramson et al. 2010; Campbell 2010). The success experienced by the Obama campaign was linked to its clever harnessing of the despondent mood of the electorate, aided by grassroots donors posting editorials on the campaign's website (Campbell 2010). The campaign messages of "Hope," "Change," "Fired up, ready to go," and "Yes we can" successfully defined the Democratic issue platform and was altogether different from the status quo.

The notable and transformative power of the message and emotion of "hope" is denoted in how the message itself was constructed. The root of this strategic frame did not solely reside in the impetus of donor website comments. Obama's message of hope also appealed to the sense of urgency—that he was the candidate with the plan to mitigate the impending harms of failed Bush-era policies (Kenski, Hardy and Jamieson 2009; Jacobson 2010; Sabato 2010). The sense of urgency coupled with the dismal news about the financial fallout spurred Obama's campaign to evoke symbolic imagery and feelings referring to the New Deal era (Sabato 2010). Obama strategists cleverly drew on themes outlined by the notable historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s book titled *The Politics of Hope* (1963). Obama's message recast the idea of American nostalgia rooted in, as Schlesinger termed it, *American Liberalism*. Obama's campaign message captured Schlesinger's assessment of the American experience; "here at last, [men] were free to

inscribe their own aspirations in society without the clog of corruptions of the accumulated evils of history” (Schlesinger 63, 1963). Obama’s campaign ads were underscored by this message, channeling such ideas using phrases such as “let’s bring America back to a time” and “change has come to America.”<sup>6</sup> These messages highlighted the general public attitude that policy in America was on the “wrong track” and that America had been abandoned by eight years of Republican policy. Obama’s campaign messages framed an idea that there was an uncorrupted, “authentic” version of America to “get back to” (Abramson et al. 2010).

### THEORIES OF RACE AND RELEVANCE IN 2008

That Obama’s nomination was innately emotive rests on the fact that he represented a historical moment in American political history. This project examines the impact of the feelings expressed toward political candidates, but there is a lot of context not captured in the ANES variables used to measure emotion. The legacy of racial relationships in American society and politics points to systemic injustices. Identities involving race and gender (and the intersection of both) have historically been justified as reasons to lock participants out of the electoral process. To consolidate the impact of Obama’s racial identity into a single variable that expresses either “hope” or “pride” limits interpretations about what those positive feelings may mean and their electoral effects.

Previous research has asked the question about the electoral effects of racial politics and, more specifically, “racializing” elections (Philpot 2004). In previous elections, the racialization of an election simply meant drawing attention to racial and gendered diversity represented in a campaign or a president’s cabinet. For example, in 2000, the Republican Party’s convention was careful to showcase the appearances of both Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice (as well as George W. Bush’s nephew who has Hispanic heritage), even though the party’s platform continued its traditional political positions on race relations and affirmative action (Philpot 2004). Before 2008, the only representations of racial diversity were descriptive and not substantive.

Up to this point, copious literature has addressed the subject of racial identities in politics because “the current political system is still defined by a racial hierarchy and white domination in the electoral arena” (Liu 9, 2009). The role of race in American political contexts has spurred count-

less theories to understand its influence in politics. Here, I want to review three of them that are relevant to the 2008 campaign.

First, consider the theory of *American Majoritarianism*, which views minorities as continuing to be secondary in American politics because of whites' majority status in the electorate (Liu 9, 2009). According to the US Census data, however, this interpretation is no longer accurate since Asian and Latino populations are the fastest growing in the USA and were mobilized in large numbers in 2008.<sup>7</sup> Second, Swim and Miller's (1999) *white guilt* thesis potentially applies. When applied to the 2008 political context, it suggests that open racist attitudes have largely lost their moral appeal to white voters (Liu 2009; Sniderman 1993; Kinder and Sears 1981). Third, possibly the most applicable to the 2008 presidential campaign is the *white enthusiasm* thesis. This thesis may offer an effective interpretation about the behavior of white voters in the 2008 election. This theory suggests that a majority of white voters broadly accepted Barack Obama as a serious contender for the presidency. By accepting Obama as a serious candidate and as a black man in American politics, the white enthusiasm thesis explains that white voters acknowledged the legacy of racial inequality and viewed the 2008 election as an opportunity to personally condemn racism by voting for Obama. Finally, the thesis suggests that white voters who supported Obama hoped that their vote communicated political goodwill with the hope of alleviating racial tensions (Liu 5, 2009).

The theories offered here on race and politics do not suggest that the social and political cleavage between white and black voters has faded, but they propose structures for analysis of these dynamics in the 2008 election. While Obama's racial identity was a cornerstone of the political campaign that inevitably drew attention to the state of race relations in the USA, the traditional treatment of racial stereotypes in the political arena seemed muted in 2008. Given that race was a dominant political cue in the campaign, it was also one of the first campaigns where media frames did not consistently portray negative messages or images of a black candidate (Sinclair-Chapman and Price 2008).

Obama's campaign strategy demonstrated sensitivity to voters' traditional perceptions of black candidates. His campaign strategy demonstrated Obama had a delicate path to traverse. He was the first black man to become a central and high-profile political figure, and with that the campaign implemented a highly effective "race-neutral" strategy (Harris 2009; Kenski et al. 2010). Obama's priority on neutralizing his racial

identity served two functions. First, the goal was to attract independents and Republican defectors. Second, the deracialized strategy included a focus on getting Americans beyond racial, ethnic, and religious divisions (Harris 2009). From a pragmatic standpoint, instead of campaigning as a black man, Obama wanted to campaign as a human being first and a black man second, relying on philosophical foundations evoking phrases such as “shared humanity” and “transcending the hierarchical idea of whiteness and blackness” (Campbell 2010). This approach challenged traditional views of black politics that usually focused on improving the status of blacks as a group. In 2008, the symbolic achievement represented by Obama’s candidacy may have signaled a shift in black Americans’ attitudes on whether blacks should think of themselves as individuals or as a part of a group (Harris 2009).

McCain’s campaign strategy made efforts to demonstrate racial sensitivity. Instead of attacking Obama’s racial identity as a political weakness, the Republicans satirized his celebrity status in political ads (Obama’s celebrity status and the “chosen one” themed ads referenced the classic Hollywood scene from the *Ten Commandments*). These ads were rebuffed by the Democrats as inane and juvenile; however, they may have been personally beneficial for McCain as a means to address his anger at Obama’s domination of media (and the outpouring of racial enthusiasm) without personally attacking Obama and his identity (Ceaser et al. 2009; Abramson et al. 2010; Kenski et al. 2010). Especially since the demographic profiles of the Republican Party show that it is a racially homogenous organization with only 2 percent of the party’s convention delegates being black (Crotty 2009). To wage an overt attack on Obama’s racial identity would have likely produced damaging media attention for McCain connecting him to images associated with Jim Crow-styled politics (Reed 2010).

While the Republicans did not overtly address Obama’s identity, Obama did it himself. He initially deemphasized his black identity by showcasing his mother’s white heritage. The goal in showcasing his parents was to achieve a foundation to the claim of a multiethnic heritage, to neutralize his “blackness” in the media (Clayton 2010; Jones 2010).

However, it was clear that Obama’s nomination generated unprecedented political fervor and emotional enthusiasm. This alarmed McCain’s team because the candidate publicly expressed concern that the sweep of emotional energy toward Obama was putting the election in danger of being overtaken by irrationality (Liu 3, 2010). McCain was savvy enough to understand the liability of negatively racializing the campaign—the

media already emphasized it enough that the Republican campaign wisely put distance between the candidate and references to Obama's identity.

### EMOTION AND THE 2008 CAMPAIGN

Almost every presidential campaign is unique and idiosyncratic. The analysis of the impact of feelings toward John McCain and Barack Obama reveal trends that are both unique and uniform, but ultimately reinforce the conclusion that emotions are context dependent. Also at work in the 2008 presidential campaign was the referendum on the incumbent party (Jacobson 2009). The findings offer support to previous observations about the political referendum on George W. Bush and his party. The 2008 ANES survey questions were similar if not replicated from the 2004 version of the pre-election survey. The questions ask respondents to consider their attitudes about Bush's handling of political issues and policies. In all areas of consideration, the dependent variable is based on questions that required respondents to engage retrospective political assessments of George W. Bush. Therefore, the results here suggest not only that the 2008 presidential election was a referendum of Bush, but how the context and a highly effective campaign message centering on the feelings of hope delivered a decisive victory to Barack Obama.

### FEAR AND HOPE IN THE HOMELAND

The presidential campaign in 2008 heavily emphasized the domestic agenda especially after the rather unexpected financial crisis perpetrated by the subprime mortgage lending industry debacle (Crotty 2009). The economic crisis hit home for many voters more than any other crisis since the Great Depression. It is reported that nearly 90 percent of registered voters expressed worry over the country's economic direction and nearly 70 percent were worried about their own financial forecast (Crotty 33). Scores of voters were directly impacted by the financial collapse, which made the question of the economy central to the general campaign.

In this case, the dependent variable—attitudes on the economy—did not directly capture attitudes about the economic crisis in September 2008. The ANES pre-election survey was conducted from mid-September to October 2008, and asked respondents whether they approved of the way Bush handled economic policy in his second term in office. This question may get at some

implicit reactions to the economic failure or latent blame attributed to the Republicans for the late September crisis, but it is not a direct measurement.

Recall that the ANES questions for both 2004 and 2008 activate retrospective assessments. In this case, both sets of questions require respondents to retroactively evaluate George W. Bush (and indirectly the Republicans). First, for the candidate John McCain (Table 4.1), positive feelings of hope are correlated with positive assessments of the Republican economic policy under Bush. In this specific case, the positive emotional dimension of hope was important to McCain's campaign narrative. Within the context of 2008, the feeling of hope can also be correlated with indirect feelings of trust conveyed for John McCain. Across the political spec-

**Table 4.1** Candidate evaluation and emotional attribution toward economic policy

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>McCain</i>		<i>Obama</i>	
	<i>B</i>	<i>Probability</i>	$\beta$	<i>Probability</i>
<i>Emotional response toward candidate</i>				
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Anger	-0.287	0.25	0.130	0.53
Fear	-0.449	0.05*	0.093	0.67
Hope	0.495	0.03*	-0.576	0.01*
Pride	0.406	0.16	-0.283	0.23
<i>Political variables</i>				
Party identification	0.419	0.00*	0.481	0.00*
Ideology	0.225	0.00*	0.198	0.03*
<i>Demographics</i>				
Age	-0.002	0.662	-0.002	0.70
Gender	0.231	0.235	0.271	0.16
Race	0.136	0.395	0.123	0.43
Education	-0.023	0.504	0.016	0.64
Marital status	0.060	0.329	0.060	0.33
Constant	-5.12		-4.42	
Pseudo $R^2$	0.26		0.26	
Log likelihood	-340.47		-339.81	
<i>n</i>	902		905	

*Source:* All variables are from the 2008 ANES pre-election survey (July–October)

*Note:* Logit regression analysis

Dependent variable based on survey responses to the question: "Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the economy? 0 = disapprove, 1 = approve

\* $P < .05$ , \*\* $P < .10$

trum, the public at large expressed anxieties associated with the financial crisis; respondents, particularly the Republican base, expressed their hope in McCain and trust in his capabilities.

Second, this expression of support may also suggest that McCain's strategy to divorce himself from the Bush-era Republican agenda was successful among the party base (Ceaser et al. 2009). On the flip side, as expected, respondents who reported the negative feelings of fear toward McCain also expressed negative assessments of Bush's handling of the economy.

For Barack Obama (see table 4.1), on the question of the economy, the data show that only one emotion was important during that campaign. The feelings of hope were very compelling in the Obama campaign. Voters who expressed they had feelings of hope inspired by Obama also negatively evaluated Bush and his handling of the economy. This is not entirely unexpected. It is, however, interesting that the emotion of hope is the only emotion that registers for Obama. This may have resulted for a couple of reasons. First, this most likely indicates the success of the focused campaign message that proliferated from Obama's campaign—"A change we can believe in," which was crafted to inspire the specified emotion among the positive feelings surveyed (as is recurrent in the results throughout). Second, coupled with the effective campaign narrative of "Hope and Change," the feeling of hope is, according to Meisenhelder (1982), the basis of trust and that which makes social order possible (195). Couched in terms of the financial crisis, the feelings of hope clearly convey the desire to establish a more solid, stable social and financial order in 2008.

The next issue treated on the domestic agenda was health care (see table 4.2). This issue was an important component of the campaign before the economic crisis became divisive. The year 2008 was not the first election that politicized the topic of health care. The issue has been highly divisive ever since the 1992 presidential election with the then President Clinton proposing comprehensive healthcare reform (Maioni 2009). Both parties jockeyed for political ownership of this issue. The Democrats claimed the system reform angle and Republicans supported the privatized status quo. With this being the case, the polarized nature of the healthcare debate has endured several electoral cycles with little regard to who the candidates have been. The data here show that 2008 was no different.

Unlike the two previous issues, the feelings that impact attitudes on this issue are more dynamic. For John McCain, three emotions are important influences on attitudes. Pride, hope, and fear are statistically signifi-



**Table 4.2** Candidate evaluation and emotional attribution toward healthcare policy

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>McCain</i>		<i>Obama</i>	
	$\beta$	<i>Probability</i>	$\beta$	<i>Probability</i>
<i>Emotional response toward candidate</i>				
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Anger	-0.080	0.73	-0.031	0.88
Fear	-0.703	0.00*	-0.670	0.67
Hope	0.478	0.06**	-0.990	0.00*
Pride	0.583	0.03*	-0.541	0.07**
<i>Political variables</i>				
Party identification	0.345	0.00*	0.328	0.00*
Ideology	0.399	0.00*	0.345	0.00*
<i>Demographics</i>				
Age	-0.021	0.00*	-0.020	0.00*
Gender	0.028	0.88	-0.795	-0.68
Race	0.002	0.95	0.173	0.45
Education	0.026	0.44	-0.001	0.97
Marital status	-0.040	0.50	-0.046	0.44
Constant	-3.547		-2.22	
Pseudo $R^2$	0.29		0.29	
Log likelihood	-344.799		-341.25	
$N$	852		852	

*Source:* All variables are from the 2008 ANES pre-election survey (July–October)

*Note:* Logit regression analysis

Dependent variable based on survey responses to the question “Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling health care?” 0 = disapprove, 1 = approve

\* $P < .05$ , \*\* $P < .10$

cant in this model. The emotions of fear, hope, and pride are significant in this model. First, the feelings of pride and hope are correlated with positive assessments of Bush’s previous positions on health care, which was the status quo position of private health insurance, prescriptions, and overall optional participation (Abramson et al. 2010). Specifically, the emotional dimension of pride explains something different than hope in this context.

Recall that in the previous chapter, it was explained that the feeling of pride conveys the meaning of satisfaction (Barber 1983). This involves a retrospective evaluation of Bush’s second term on this issue and respondents arrived at the conclusion of their satisfaction based on feel-

ings of pride toward McCain. Barber's observation continues along this line and notes that trust is involved in prideful and hopeful assessments—"trust involves expectations that the social order will continue to exist, that people who claim expertise will perform competently" (Barber, 79). Based on this observation, it can be said that voters who said that McCain makes them feel prideful or hopeful conveyed that they approved of the status quo on the topic of health care and trusted McCain to continue operations as they existed.

Conversely, the feelings of fear toward McCain correlated with negative evaluations of Bush's healthcare policies and positions. This reaction to McCain conveyed that voters who felt fearful likely conveyed their apprehension about the direction of the American healthcare system (Spitzer 2009). This attitude was likely held among Obama supporters of the lower socioeconomic statuses (presented in later tables) because of what the Obama healthcare proposal offered. One main component of his proposal included an extension of coverage for preexisting conditions for children and for the elderly (Crotty 2009), all of which include key demographics of the electorate that supported Obama.

Assessments of the healthcare policy based on feelings expressed about Obama (see Table 4.2) indicate that both positive emotional dimensions were important to the attitudes about health care. Both pride and hope are statistically significant. Given the context of the Obama campaign, its message, and its policy position on health care, the meanings of the feelings of hope and pride on these attitudes are interesting to unpack. To begin, the positive feelings, as expected, conveyed negative assessments of Bush-era policy positions on health care. Next, the coupling of hope and pride conveyed both satisfaction and trust. In this context, pride does not convey the retrospective assessment of satisfaction, as in "job well done." Finally, pride conveyed a statement more about Obama's candidacy and trust in his competence to govern better than Bush did. In sum, this message conveyed that voters believed "Obama will do a better job than Bush."

## THE REFERENDUM ON WAR

The impending transfer of power to a new commander in chief, the topic of foreign relations, and the war in Iraq were a part of political rhetoric calling for a referendum on Bush-era foreign policy. The data reported here seems to be the most direct reflection of a referendum on the Bush administration and, in general, the Republican Party.

Both emotional dimensions had an impact on perceptions of foreign relations. The fact that all four emotional responses to the candidates—anger, fear, hope, and pride—were significant suggests that the electorate was polarized on this particular topic. To get at this point, reviewing the impact that negative feelings toward McCain had on this topic, the data suggest that voters who reported that McCain made him or her feel angry or fearful also indicated that they did not approve of how Bush handled foreign relations during his second term in office.

As with positive emotions, meanings implied by the impact of negative emotions are important. In this context, anger and fear conveyed two different messages. These attitudes probably have more to do with retrospective evaluations of Bush's second term than direct reactions to John McCain's candidacy (Jacobson 2009; Spitzer 2009). However, McCain, sharing the Republican label, experienced a campaign backlash that signaled the electorate's fatigue with the Republican agenda. Here, anger represented a backlash to the status quo and thus suggested voter attitudes were motivated to punish the Republicans for a violation of public trust. Fear represented feelings of apprehension and powerlessness, reflective of voter fatigue with the Republican issue agenda in 2008; voters who expressed that McCain made him or her feel fearful conveyed their feelings of powerlessness over the direction of the country if McCain won the election.

For Obama, the impact of feelings toward him was based on the attitudes about foreign relations. This is the first time that feelings of fear are important as they relate to Obama. This may also suggest a divisive character within the electorate as the divisions are along predictable lines. Looking at the emotion of fear, the data indicates that voters who said that Obama made him or her feel fearful also indicated that they positively evaluated Bush's handling of foreign relations in his second term. This particular lack of confidence in Obama may represent a couple of things. First, the emotion of fear may represent a backlash against Obama's proposed 16-month exit strategy from Iraq (Ceaser et al. 2009). Second, feelings of fear toward Obama as a potential commander in chief may reflect a racial backlash.

When respondents were asked to evaluate the Iraq war and determine whether or not it was worth the cost, their positive and negative feelings were important determinants on their attitudes. This question is consistent with the 2004 survey in that it asks respondents to consider whether they think the war was worth the cost. For McCain (see Table 4.3) data indicate that this topic was still emotionally divisive. In 2008, McCain's position on Iraq was to, first, achieve a military victory in the region. Second, set no timetable for withdrawal and, third, increase troops in Afghanistan

**Table 4.3** Candidate evaluation and emotional attribution toward the war in Iraq

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>McCain</i>		<i>Obama</i>	
	$\beta$	<i>Probability</i>	$\beta$	<i>Probability</i>
<i>Emotional response toward candidate</i>				
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Anger	-0.173	0.45	0.115	0.582
Fear	-0.711	0.00*	0.745	0.000
Hope	0.987	0.00*	-0.656	0.004*
Pride	0.616	0.02*	-0.155	0.494
<i>Political variables</i>				
Party identification	0.249	0.00*	0.362	0.000*
Ideology	0.463	0.00*	0.390	0.000*
<i>Demographics</i>				
Age	-0.007	0.25	-0.006	0.281
Gender	-0.179	0.34	-0.307	0.104
Race	0.152	0.32	0.170	0.248
Education	0.031	0.37	0.029	0.388
Marital status	0.005	0.92	-0.029	0.628
Constant	-4.86		-3.98	
Pseudo $R^2$	0.32		0.31	
Log likelihood	-351.81		-355.27	
<i>n</i>	909		911	

*Source:* All variables are from the 2008 ANES pre-election survey (July–October)

*Note:* Logit regression analysis

Dependent variable is based on survey responses to the question “Taking everything into account, do you think the war in Iraq has been worth the cost or not?” 0 = not worth the cost, 1 = worth the cost

\* $P < .05$ , \*\* $P < .10$

(Crotty 2009; Abramson et al. 2010). Voters who expressed that McCain made him or her feel proud or hopeful had also believed that the war was worth the investment of American resources. This most likely also reflects the Republican base of support coupled with pride in McCain’s own veteran and Vietnam POW status (Abramson et al. 2010).

On the other hand, fatigue resulting from the country’s longest military action contributed toward negative feelings. Respondents who said that McCain made them feel fearful also reported that they did not think the war in Iraq was worth the cost. Here, the term “cost” could mean anything from “financial” to “human” cost. Nevertheless, it added up and many voters grew tired of Iraq and Afghanistan. Feelings of fear reflected both fatigue and hopelessness in McCain’s plan that committed the USA to military action without an end in sight.

Emotional responses to Obama translated into only one dimension for the beliefs toward the Iraq war; as with domestic issues, the only feeling that registered was hope. Consistent with expectations, feelings of hope reported for this issue signal two things. First, voters who Obama made feel hopeful were energized by their prospective assessments of Obama as commander in chief. Obama had established a timeline for troop withdrawal from Iraq (that was endorsed internationally during his diplomatic tour). Second, Obama established a clearly defined plan of action that focused on anti-terrorist efforts in Afghanistan (Crotty 2009).

Consistent with the findings from the previous chapter, the data here suggest that on the issue of the war in Iraq, the feelings associated with prospective and retrospective assessments are consistent. Retrospective assessments for McCain and his position on Iraq yielded feelings of fear about him and his plans, while prospective assessments of Obama and his proposal for troop withdrawal yielded feelings of hope about a plan to end US involvement in Iraq.

## THE EMOTIONAL POLITICS OF MORALITY AND SOCIAL POLICY

This issue was an interesting topic in the 2008 presidential campaign. It was largely supplanted by the focus on the economic crisis. However, it consistently surfaces as a mechanism used to mobilize certain partisan loyalists during elections. This topic is emotionally divisive, but only for Barack Obama. No emotional responses registered for John McCain on this issue. The results present a different narrative than has been told in the past. Traditionally, morality controversies are divisive along predictable party lines. Here, there is another type of division that occurred among racial lines. Related to the issue of same-sex marriage, in 2008, the Democratic Party advocated the repeal of the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) policy and during that summer Obama announced that, if elected, he would repeal DADT (Reinke et al. 2010).

Obama (see Table 4.4) did not perform as well among white, conservative, religious men (Crotty 2009) and it is due to this that the Republican agenda included morality issues as a means to mobilize them to vote (Pomper 2007). However, the issue of same-sex marriage is not particularly supported by black religious voters; as Hull (2006) observed, "most people opposing same sex marriage in Massachusetts and San Francisco are black" (Hull, 109) and the data may reflect this attitude among black voters. There are some other contextual issues to consider in these results.

**Table 4.4** Candidate evaluation and emotional attribution toward same-sex marriage

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>McCain</i>		<i>Obama</i>	
	<i>β</i>	<i>Probability</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>Probability</i>
<i>Emotional response toward candidate</i>				
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Anger	0.070	0.75	0.136	0.56
Fear	0.185	0.42	0.038	0.08**
Hope	0.002	0.99	1.024	0.00*
Pride	0.060	0.80	-0.490	0.05**
<i>Political variables</i>				
Party identification	-0.100	0.11	-0.069	0.27
Ideology	-0.701	0.00*	-0.682	0.00*
<i>Demographics</i>				
Age	-0.026	0.00*	-0.027	0.00*
Gender	0.213	0.27	0.260	0.19
Race	-0.510	0.00*	-0.617	0.00*
Education	0.002	0.87	0.011	0.80
Marital status	0.108	0.06**	0.101	0.08**
Constant	4.93		4.78	
Pseudo <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.26		0.28	
Log likelihood	-322.58		-313.71	
<i>N</i>	638		638	

*Source:* All variables are from the 2008 ANES pre-election survey (July–October)

*Note:* Logit regression analysis

Dependent variable based on survey responses to the question “Should same-sex couples be allowed to marry, or do you think they should not be allowed to marry?” 0 = should not be allowed, 1 = should be allowed

\**P* < .05, \*\**P* < .10

While the political landscape in 2008 favored the Democratic agenda, the issue of gay marriage coupled with Obama’s pledge to repeal DADT is a wedge issue for the Democratic base (Smith et al. 2006; Herring 2010) Looking at the results for the emotion of pride, the respondents who said that Obama made him or her feel proud indicated that they did not support same-sex marriage. This may seem counterintuitive for a segment of the electorate who support Obama but differ from his position on this issue. Upon closer inspection, there may be other contributing factors to the attitudes expressed here. When factored out, the control for race in this model suggests what the literature has stated: black voters did not support the issue of same-sex marriage even though they intended to vote for Obama. One interpretation implies that black voters felt racial solidar-

ity about Obama's candidacy, but, based on religious foundations that oppose same-sex marriage, they did not support the issue of same-sex marriage in 2008 (Hull 2006; Smith et al. 2006; Herring 2010).

As expected, voters who indicated that Obama made him or her feel hopeful also reported that they supported gay marriage. The negative feelings of fear reported here also performed in the model as expected, especially as the backdrop of Obama's public support for repealing DADT. Given the military environment that the 2008 campaign was still engendering, respondents who said that Obama makes them feel fearful also indicated that they did not support gay marriage. This could quite possibly be the backlash to the DADT announcement.

## DISCUSSION

Reviewing the dynamics of the 2008 presidential race, it is not a surprise that Barack Obama was elected president. Voters were clear in 2008 that they were poised for something different, which, given the context, made the Democratic strategy very effective. The conditions that favored a Democrat victory are multidimensional. The results support the analysis that the 2008 presidential election was a referendum of the Bush administration. The election forecast models indicated a correlation between presidential approval, retrospective evaluations, economic conditions, and vote choice (Abramowitz 2008; Cuzan and Bundrick 2008; Holbrook 2008). Since there was no incumbent running for president, linking McCain to Bush proved to be an advantageous strategy for the Democrats because it enabled voters to evaluate the previous president's performance and project those evaluations on to McCain. Retrospective voting and blaming the incumbent party were aided by other strategic advantages for the Democratic Party.

The role emotion had in an election that witnessed unprecedented enthusiasm and energy from multiple voting blocks of the electorate is important to note. On this point, there are three observations that provide insights on the political behavior of 2008. First, the results in this chapter support the 2008 referendum thesis. Second, the intensity of emotion expressed toward candidates during campaigns may indicate the severity of political polarization. The election of 2008 was not as ideologically or emotionally polarized as in 2004. Third, the level of racial and gendered enthusiasm may have been interpreted as emotional expression, but enthusiasm and the impact of feelings on political attitudes are not the same thing. However, it is reasonable to conclude that expressions of

enthusiasm about Obama's candidacy were funneled or transformed into emotional expressions of hope toward Obama.

Regarding voting behavior in 2008 and the referendum, the premise that certain feelings are associated with retrospective evaluations is consistent, especially in an election like 2008. There is a positive correlation between voters' feelings and their retrospective and prospective political evaluations on Bush in 2008. Especially on the issues of health care, foreign relations, and the war in Iraq, the emotions expressed toward McCain likely channeled negative evaluations of Bush. This case is also made stronger by the fact that the ANES survey questions directly ask voters to consider their thoughts about Bush's performance in his second term. Considering survey question phrasing, retrospective judgments, and the Obama strategy, the emotions expressed toward McCain support the conclusion that 2008 was also a referendum election.

The electorate was not as severely polarized in 2008 as it was in 2004. In 2004 feelings expressed toward George W. Bush were consistently significant on all four ANES emotional dimensions, on most issues. During 2008, this was not the case, respondents' feelings toward McCain registering consistently on two of the four ANES emotional dimensions. For Obama, respondents' feelings consistently registered on only one dimension—the feeling of hope. While voters were still polarized in 2008 as supported by the evidence from the results for McCain (respondents were mostly divided between the feelings of hope and fear), these divisions were less severe than the ones for 2004.

McCain's political misfortune was precipitated by an ineffective campaign strategy and exacerbated by the rather wide "enthusiasm gap." Public affinity effects for Obama are reflected by 50 percent of the electorate that reported feeling "enthusiastic" about Obama compared to the 16 percent for McCain (Ceaser et al. 2009, 137). The enthusiasm expressed for Obama (and Clinton during the primary) was unprecedented because it represented groups of voters who in previous elections seemed invisible. It is difficult to measure any direct effect of enthusiasm about Obama on voters' support of political issues (partly due to limitations of testable emotions provided by ANES).

A compelling observation to note is the minimal backlash affect response to Obama. The Obama campaign strategists gave special attention to manage the message to curtail or neutralize possible racial backlash. Although scholars on race (Reeves 1997; Campbell 2010) agree that there will always be an undercurrent of racism and recurrent sexism in American politics,



if there was racial backlash in 2008, it was countered by the magnitude of enthusiasm expressed by most race groups. The palpable enthusiasm detected among several voting groups was also reflected in the tone of media coverage of Obama. Scholars observed that Obama's overwhelmingly positive media exposure may have muted any negative effects of racial backlash (Ceaser et al. 2009). Obama's campaign strategy successfully harnessed the electorate's enthusiasm and channeled their energies into his winning coalition. They genuinely believed he was the change they hoped for.

## APPENDIX: DATA AND ANALYSIS

### *Campaign Issues*

Analysis was conducted using survey data from the 2008 American National Election Studies (ANES) time series pre-election sample. The findings in this chapter reflect the standard view in the political science literature—that presidential elections are referendums on the performance of the present administrations during election years (Abramson et al. 2010). Election survey data from the ANES 2008 time series pre-election survey were explored. The dependent variables represent issues that were included in each candidate's campaign platform in 2008.

For the purposes of comparability, this chapter examines the same three issue categories that were included in the 2004 and 2008 ANES surveys: domestic issues, foreign affairs issues, and morality. The domestic topics include two issues that were selected for analysis: (1) the economy and (2) health care. On foreign affairs, two issues were analyzed: the attitudes on foreign relations and the war in Iraq. Morality policy is measured by the questions in the 2004 and 2008 ANES survey on attitudes toward same-sex marriage. The morality category was restricted to a single question in 2008 because the ANES survey omitted the 2004 abortion question.

### *Emotional Measures*

Three sets of independent variables were measured against four policy topics using the statistical technique logit regression analysis. The first set is the ANES measure for four emotional dimensions: pride, hope, fear, and anger. The second set of control variables is the political determinants such as party identification and ideology. The final set of independent variables is the standard controls for demographic information.

To be consistent with 2004 and achieve valid comparisons across two presidential elections, the dependent variables are derived from similar questions in the ANES surveys in 2004 and 2008. The dependent variables are based on questions concerning Bush-era policies. Since the ANES question asked respondents to consider policies of the Bush administration, the questions may activate two cognitive phenomena. These questions were likely to engage not just partisan cues and perception judgments of the Republican Party, but also retrospective policy assessments.

## NOTES

1. US Census Bureau at [www.uscensus.gov](http://www.uscensus.gov).
2. The Center for American Women in Politics at [www.CAWP.rutgers/womens](http://www.CAWP.rutgers/womens) vote watch. November 2008.
3. Quoted in Armbruster, Ben “Top McCain Aide: ‘If we keep Talking about the Economic Crisis, We’re Going to Lose” October 2008.
4. Statistic reported at The Roper Center: Public Opinion Archives. [www.ropercenter.uconn.edu](http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu).
5. US Census Bureau.
6. From archived 2008 campaign ad footage; Democratic National Committee (DNC).
7. Figures reported at U.S. Census Bureau in “United States Population Projections: 2000 to 2050” accessed at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).

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## Renewed Awareness: Perspectives on Gender and Race

**Abstract** The dynamics of gender and race are examined more closely in this chapter. It renders specific attention to the voter response to the candidacies of Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin, and Barack Obama in 2008. The analysis here examines voting behavior and the treatment of the candidates in the news media during the campaign. While the voters and media espoused excitement during the 2008 campaign, there were also common themes of intensified scrutiny of the candidates as research suggests is common for women and black candidates. On the other hand, the analysis also denotes that women and racial voters expressed more enthusiasm toward political candidates in 2008 and were noticeably more mobilized than in 2004. The research employs the analysis of feeling thermometers to evaluate the influence of identity politics of candidate likeability. The findings suggest that racial identity and partisanship demonstrated influence on candidate likeability, while gender had a singular influence on voters liking Hillary Clinton.

The primary and general election cycles marked a renewed awareness on the complexities of gender and race in 2008 for voters and candidates alike. The election gave racial minorities and women a pivotal and visible role in the campaign. It was a unique political cycle in that it was the first to feature a white female competing with a black male for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination. Equally consequential was the Republican

Party's first female nominated for vice president. The contexts of the 2008 presidential primary and general campaigns created an indelible historical setting that confronted voters with questions regarding the intersections of race, gender, and identity politics.

The campaign quickly departed from conventional expectations and drew attention to the political complexities involved when identity politics, voter preferences, and campaign issues intersect. Voter interest in the campaign intensified around aspects of race and gender. There was a generally enthusiastic tone that reverberated in political discourse about the newly altered campaign landscape. There was a great deal of interest generated in not only the candidates, but how voters responded to Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and Sarah Palin.

The analysis here examines voting behavior and the treatment of the candidates in the news media during the campaign. While the voters and media espoused excitement during the 2008 campaign, there were also common themes of intensified scrutiny of the candidates as research suggests is common for women and black candidates. On the other hand, the analysis also denotes that women and racial voters expressed more enthusiasm toward political candidates in 2008 and were noticeably more mobilized than in 2004.

### NOT A SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

With heightened awareness about race and gender and news, media framed that year as women's and minorities' "breakout" year in politics. Commonly, policymakers had interpreted women and minority voters as members of special interest groups, representing specific preferences that made them different from the electorate. When women are political candidates, every personal action and decision is evaluated for its implications on the campaign or office and interpreted as a policy she will support (Lawrence and Rose 2010; Beal and Longworth 2013). The benefit of increased attention from news media in the 2008 campaign is that it demonstrated something about the substantive importance of two influential voting groups.

The analysis has particular interest in the voting behavior of women and minority groups in the American electorate. This research is interested in whether and how political partisans (and partisan leaners) express their feelings toward a presidential candidate as well as how electoral subgroups such as women and African-American voters make political decisions.

## THE AFFINITY AFFECT THESIS

The research guiding expectations about political behavior of women and black voters is drawn from Dolan's (1997) affinity affect thesis, which states that women voters will be the most likely source of support for female candidates (Dolan 1997, 2005, 2008). While this thesis has commonly been applied to research about women's political behavior and political representation, given the context of the 2008 presidential election, the affinity affect thesis may also be especially helpful with interpretations of political preferences among African-American voters.

The unique political environment of the 2008 presidential election provided an unparalleled research opportunity to study the electoral effects associated with affinity affect (both perceived and real) on the grounds of gender and race. While previous studies on the affinity affect (Thomas and Wilcox 2005) had studied voters' perceptions and reactions toward women candidates, this project offers a slightly revised incarnation. The affinity affect thesis helps formulate a theory that support for racial candidates may likely be sourced from the affinity affect thesis. The gendered premise of the thesis was challenged in the general election when the Republican Party's nomination of Sarah Palin failed to embody the benefits of the affinity affect thesis.

## GENDERED DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Women do not participate in politics in the same manner as men. Perhaps it is the legacy of being prevented from participating in the political system by any substantive means (even after the 19th amendment women did not achieve social or political parity). Previous research does not seem to be sensitive to this aspect of political behavior in general terms. The first set of theories address women's socialization. Chodorow (1978) and Ruddick (1996) suggest that women's social behavior is a product of gendered socialization, which shapes women's worldviews and self-conceptualization, which then informs choices about ways to engage society, and, specifically, in this research, politics.

Another theory that shapes behavioral expectations is the electoral gender gap. In politics, the gender gap has been interpreted in several ways. At first, the gender gap referred to splits in party preference between men and women with women voting for Democratic candidates to a significantly greater extent than men (Verba et al. 1997; Norris 1997; Mueller 1988).

It also referred to women's political involvement as being outpaced by men's (Norrander 1999; Manza and Brooks 1998; Conover 1988; Wirls 1986). Recently, the gender gap as it has been traditionally understood closed in the early 2000s (Bimber 2000). As recent as in the presidential election of 2008, women's political involvement and participation steadily increased to the point that it now outpaces men's political involvement (Whitaker 2008; Thomas and Wilcox 2005). This trend is particularly important when studying its electoral effects. There are theoretical reasons to expect that men's and women's attitudes on campaign issues will be different. This expectation relates to applications of the gender gap and the affinity affect. Are there issues women voters are the only likely source of support?

This research is focused on voters' responses to all candidates in 2008 (not just women candidates). This particular approach examines gendered behavior in the electorate that has, historically, contributed to the gender gap, which visibly emerged in the 1976 Carter campaign (Abramson et al. 2007). Previous research was mostly concerned with the behavior of women candidates and this treatment of campaigns (Carroll 2001). This was no less true in 2008, because both Clinton's and Palin's campaigns received a great deal of journalistic and academic attention. Previous research has also discussed the "gender gap" in both the electorate (in voting behavior) and representative institutions (a gender gap in elected officials).

In terms of voter turnout, women vote at higher rates now than do men (Junn 2009). In 2008, women outpaced men in voter turnout with white women more than 7 percent more likely than white men to vote. The gender gap among black voters was non-existent, with black men being as likely to vote as black women (Abramson et al. 2010). In terms of women candidates, a lingering assumption is that women voters will vote more often for women candidates (Rozell 2000; Carroll 2001; Elder 2004; Dolan 2008). This proved to be more accurate in previous election cycles than in 2008. Most of the data that supports this observation is at the state level and not in national elections (Dolan 2008).

The affinity affect thesis alone does not predict differences between women's and men's political behavior. There is one other important variable to consider when studying women's voting behavior: political party identification. This is why this research is a good opportunity to study women's political involvement and attitudes on campaign issues. Whitaker (2008) suggests that the intersection of gender and party identification produces gendered political attitudes on specific political issues (later



becoming campaign issues). These expectations are already visible in the political landscape under the somewhat contrived labels referring to specific women's voting blocks such as "soccer moms" and "security moms."

### BLACK VOTER PARTICIPATION

With regard to the political involvement of African-Americans, there are some points of shared history with women. Both groups of people had systemically been denied access to the political system until the twentieth century. Full access to participate in politics for African-Americans was not realized until the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Since the Voting Rights Act of 1965, voting trends among blacks have favored the Democratic Party. This block of voters is usually highly mobilized, consistently reporting between 60 percent and 80 percent turnout. In terms of the electorate overall, the African-American community had been persistently outpaced by white voters (Miller and Shanks 1996). Racial relations in America have long been a contentious and divisive issue and the commensurate legacy manifests in politics. Before 2008, a common race-related electoral strategy was to de-emphasize racial identity and redirect attention toward social issues with veiled racial overtones (Reeves 1997). These trends typically benefitted the Democratic Party because black voters feel more favorable than most groups toward civil rights and socially funded programs, which are associated with the Democratic Party, and research has demonstrated that they express negative attitudes toward issues that are promoted by the Republican Party (Wallace et al. 2009).

Even when they may not prefer the Party's nominee, black voters tend to categorically support the Democratic Party's agenda (Wallace et al. 2009). In cases such as the 2004 election, for black voters, the Democratic Party agenda was more consequential to African-Americans than John Kerry as a candidate. No party enjoys total support from any voting demographic, but in the case of black voter participation, policy differences are not enough to change voter preference (Sigelman et al. 1995; Wallace et al. 2009). The 2008 presidential campaign changed the electoral landscape. Before Barak Obama's candidacy, the previous observations predicted voting behavior of the African-American voting bloc. Now, with the first African-American presidential candidate, it was expected that the affinity affect would make an electoral difference among this important and highly mobilized group of voters. The affinity affect was originally defined to explain that women were most likely the largest support base

for women candidates; is the same applicable for African-American candidates? Will African-American voters support Obama because of an affinity affect? Yes, the African-American and racial minority communities supported Obama on the grounds of the Democratic Party's policy agenda and a bond forged through shared identity.

### THE POLITICS AND COMPLEXITIES INVOLVING RACE AND GENDER

The competitive Democratic primary between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, coupled with the Republican Party's first nomination of a woman, Sarah Palin, for vice president, created an indelible historical political setting that confronted the public with questions concerning the intersections of group identities and individual politics. The campaign mobilized populations that have traditionally been viewed as ancillary to mainstream American politics.

The intensified news media focus on racial minorities and women as critical voting groups increased general interest in their pivotal and visible roles in the campaign. The question examined here is *did women and racial groups respond to the 2008 candidates differently than the mainstream electorate?* The analysis this question considered is the dynamics of political identities and the effects of the affinity affect thesis on candidate preference. Due to the highly visible dynamics involving gender and race, their electoral impacts needed to be analyzed separately in order to evaluate the unique effects of political identities in presidential campaigns. As Junn (2009) characterized the tone of the campaign, "Clinton stood in for gender, representing all women while Obama took his place in the category of race, standing in for all people of color" (Junn, 105). The prominent representation of race by Obama's candidates was a source of pride for many voters while the intensified scrutiny of Clinton and Palin was a source of both pride and conflict for many women voters.

### GENDER AND CANDIDATE IMAGE IN 2008

Social expectations of gendered behavior (including sex-role stereotypes) make it increasingly difficult for a female candidate to embrace one gendered identity to the detriment of another because both options carry penalties (Lawrence and Rose 2010). Women running for office must navigate the social expectations of female candidates coupled with achieving a balanced candidate image synthesizing gendered traits and leadership

capacities. Research continues to suggest that one of the top barriers to women gaining access to high political office is that they are held to higher standards (Dittmar 2015).

In 2008, the Pew Research Center published a report on public attitudes toward women's leadership traits, performance skills, and policy strengths. A majority of respondents rated women's leadership performance skills higher than men's while also associating women with stereotypical policy platforms emphasizing social issues. Public perceptions indicated that when confined to the social policy domains, voters evaluated women's leadership skills higher than men's. This further suggests that common perceptions of women's policy interests and expertise do not reach beyond the social domain (Thomas 1999; Carroll 2001).

Respondents in the Pew Study rated women's character traits higher in comparison to men's. Women were judged to be stronger in areas involving compassion, honesty, the perception of being outgoing, and intelligence. Kelly Dittmar (2015) found that voters perceived female candidates as being emotional (95.2 percent) and liberal (48.75 percent); among the lowest-ranked traits were assertiveness, experience, and tough and strong leadership (Dittmar 2015, pg. 26). This further supports conclusions that as candidates competing for political office, women are persistently regarded as political outsiders, novices, and political novelties (Dolan 1997; Fox and Oxley 2003; Elder 2004; Palmer and Simon 2012). Public opinion data suggests that voters seem to welcome the idea of a woman president and report favorable attitudes toward women's leadership competencies that are perceived as necessary for the presidency (Streb et al. 2008).

While social desirability rankings for women leaders increase, women candidates still encounter the "double-bind" problem. Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1995) defines the double-bind problem as dilemmas where two opposing choices yield equally negative consequences (Jamieson 1995, p.4). Jamieson outlined five common dilemmas that demonstrate a gendered double-bind: (1) womb/brain, (2) silence/shame, (3) sameness/difference, (4) femininity/competence, and (5) aging/invisibility.

Research conducted by Diana Carlin and Kelly Winfrey (2009) on news media coverage of Clinton and Palin in 2008 illustrated that despite the increase in women's political representation in state legislatures and in the US Congress, the press still frames female candidates in sexist ways. They explained that gendered frames drew on traditional trait-based stereotypes, which then translated into amplified trait-based scrutiny of Clinton and Palin during their campaigns. The research identified four gendered frames that emerged in the media coverage of Clinton and Palin in 2008:

(1) the mother; (2) the seductress/sex object; (3) the pet; and (4) the iron maiden (327). These classifications of news media coverage are particularly useful in demonstrating how Jameison's double-bind dilemma manifested in narratives framing Clinton and Palin.

Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin were very distinct candidates and both Clinton and Palin performed gendered political identities while campaigning to appeal to a variety of niche voters. They each performed femininity, albeit by different methods, and they also performed as political leaders. Gender and partisan frames intersected with the pioneer narrative more for Palin than for Clinton. With Clinton's record, the partisan frames interplayed with campaign issues more than gender, but both campaigns were equally subjected to gender-based scrutiny in media coverage.

One of the enduring challenges that women candidates experience is intensified scrutiny as a candidate, and women's identities as aspiring political leaders continue to be problematic (Kropf et al. 2001; Niven and Zilber 2001; Carlin et al. 2009; Lawless 2009). If female candidates are perceived as feminine, they are judged to be incompetent. If they are perceived as masculine, they are not likeable (McGinley 2009). Both Clinton and Palin performed gendered identities while campaigning. In particular, they each performed different interpretations of femininity while demonstrating leadership traits necessary for political office. Clinton was scrutinized for not being feminine "enough." Her expression of tearful emotion on the eve of the New Hampshire primary softened her perception to voters, her victory being attributed to voters' perception of her. To voters, her emotional display had made her more "human" and thus more likeable. Palin on the other hand tried to achieve stability between the perceptions of her as an assertive political leader, while maintaining her femininity through primarily the image of wife and mother and was even self-referential of her beauty pageant history (Carlin et al. 2009; McGinley 2009). In the end, her image on the campaign trail devolved into perceived political incompetence and voters, especially women, judged her harshly. The question is, "did voters' respond favorability or harshly to these gendered performances in the political arena?"

Clinton came to the primary with a well-defined history and an established record of service. She was a familiar figure who was attached to a popular former president. This familiarity coupled with previous service record including former New York senator carried a liability of being labeled a political insider (Lawrence and Rose 2010). It was more difficult

to apply the pioneer narrative in the traditional sense except for the fact that Clinton had never before sought the presidential nomination.

Palin on the other hand was a political unknown with no record of national service to scrutinize and therefore could not be associated with beltway politics. However, just as Clinton's established record came with liabilities, so did being a virtually unknown political competitor. As a candidate, Palin attempted to craft a balanced perception between assertive leadership traits and her gendered roles of wife and mother. In an effort to capitalize on her femininity, Palin self-referenced and embraced her beauty pageant history (Carlin et al. 2009; McGinley 2009).

The challenge for Palin was the need to reconcile conservative principles with gendered stereotypes that existed within the Republican Party. This was necessary in order to avoid backlash from the conservative base and dispel concerns that the party was moving toward the left (Beail and Longworth 2013). Since women are still perceived as liberal-leaning candidates and advocates of socially liberal policies, Palin's behavior and rhetoric seemed to deliberately counter the gendered stereotypes of female candidates and embraced many narratives that enhanced masculine traits along with sex-based identity roles to demonstrate her conservative values to the party base. Among the narratives, Palin exuded the "Frontier Woman," the "Hockey Mom," and the "Beauty Queen" (Beail and Longworth 2013). Palin seemed to internalize these frames as a means to try to redefine the expectations of female leadership and frame trait-based identity roles as assets to vice presidency. While this strategy seemed to energize the party base and its targeted voting blocks, it induced the dreaded double-bind problem when trying to appeal to the general electorate.

The 2008 campaign is a unique case study for the reason that Clinton and Palin adopted different strategies on the gender question. Previous research tended to focus on whether women candidates were advantaged or disadvantaged on the basis of sex (McDermott 1998). Now women candidates encounter the double-bind problem more than before because campaigning for elite offices such as the presidency requires a unique synthesis and display of both feminine and masculine traits. Women must display they are tender yet tough, nurturing yet stoic, and the combinations are myriad.

Gendered frames that reinforce the double-bind problem seem to affirm Sheeler and Anderson's proposal that framing women as political pioneers is debilitating because it keeps them in novice status and thus difficult to overcome the gender bias in the competition of presidential politics.

## VOTER RESPONSE TO CANDIDATE IMAGE

Hilary Clinton was popular among Democrat and politically moderate women voters. Voter support for Sarah Palin was drawn from the Republican Party base more than other demographic groups. Analysis (see Table 5.1) revealed that Palin enjoyed a great deal of support among the Republican base and gender does not appear to have an effect on this type of support. This is not unexpected since Palin had been an active participant in right-wing religious circles before she was named McCain's running mate, which appealed to the conservative base (Eisenstein 2009).

The heavily anticipated "Palin Effect," a term describing the anticipated voter defection from the Democratic Party, was not discernible. After Clinton suspended her campaign, Republicans hoped to enjoy an influx of support from Clinton defectors crossing over to support Palin. The Republican campaign strategy framed Palin as a political alternative to and a suitable candidate for women who wanted to see a female on the ticket, even if it meant the Republican ticket (Eisenstein 136, 2009).

**Table 5.1** Feelings expressed toward Hilary Clinton and Sarah Palin based on race and gender

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Clinton</i>		<i>Palin</i>	
	$\beta$	<i>Probability</i>	$\beta$	<i>Probability</i>
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Party identification	0.24	0.80	-2.44	0.02*
Gender	4.84	0.00*	1.70	0.38
Race				
Black	16.59	0.00*	-16.87	0.00*
White	5.36	0.08**	-5.48	0.12
Latino	6.92	0.00*	-2.59	0.37
<i>Demographics</i>				
Age	0.03	0.59	0.19	0.00*
Income	-0.54	0.00*	0.67	0.00*
Education	-0.04	0.90	-0.86	0.06**
Marital status	-4.84	0.01*	0.57	0.80
Adj $R^2$	0.11		0.08	
Root MSE	25.91		27.20	
<i>n</i>	936		798	

*Source:* 2008 ANES pre-election survey

*Note:* Logistic regression analysis

Dependent variable based on survey feeling thermometer

\* $P < .05$ , \*\* $P < .10$

The anticipated gendered defection from the Democratic Party did not manifest; Clinton supporters remained loyal to the Democratic Party and supported Barack Obama in the general election.

Although Palin was an important nomination for the Republican Party, she did not display the requisite experience or the political literacy necessary for the executive branch. Palin also alienated many women voters with some of her policy positions concerning the women's rights platform (Aarons-Mele 2008). For Republicans, Palin represented a new example of a conservative Republican woman and made an indelible impression on the Party. In comparison, Clinton was an accomplished lawyer and politician with experience in the US Senate; she also had a better record on women's issues (Eisenstein 2009; McGinley 2009).

Cultivating electoral backing from women voters in 2008 was critical to electoral success. Women voters appeared to scrutinize the nuances of pro-woman rhetoric and pro-woman legislative records. Once Clinton suspended her race, Biden was arguably the only candidate with a legislative record that validated the Democrats' pro-woman agenda. After Clinton withdrew from the primary campaign, Palin demonstrated the struggle in reconciling her conservative ideology and her appeal to women voters (see Table 5.2).

Support for Joseph Biden sourced from female voters was likely policy-based support. Biden campaigned as a self-identified, pro-choice Catholic who openly pledged support for same-sex marriage, a policy platform which many Democrat women voters support. Biden also sponsored the Violence Against Women Act (1994), which was the first federal legislation that acknowledged and criminalized violence against women (Schneider 1996). Next, Biden is on record for supporting the Civil Rights Bill for Women that protected women from hate crimes and defamation, a mechanism used to combat sex trafficking in the USA (Thomas 1995). Additionally, women seemed sympathetic to Biden's personal narrative concerning the loss of his first wife and daughter in a fatal car accident, and remaining a single father for several years (Aarons-Mele 2008). Many women related to the challenges of single parenting and were presumably sympathetic toward his personal experiences.

## THE COMPLEXITIES OF RACIAL POLITICS

The election of Barack Obama is more complex than a symbolic achievement of racial solidarity. While the data supports an interpretation of racial solidarity, it is noteworthy to acknowledge the racial complexities of the

**Table 5.2** Feelings expressed toward the Democratic presidential ticket based on race and gender

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Obama</i>		<i>Biden</i>	
	<i>β</i>	<i>Probability</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>Probability</i>
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Party identification	0.56	0.55	0.89	0.35
Gender	2.58	0.12	4.02	0.01*
Race				
Black	30.05	0.00*	21.45	0.00*
White	4.90	0.10**	3.55	0.27
Latino	8.22	0.00*	4.04	0.11
<i>Demographics</i>				
Age	8.22	0.00*	-0.05	0.31
Income	8.22	0.00*	-0.49	0.01*
Education	8.22	0.00*	0.80	0.05*
Marital status	8.22	0.00*	-0.47	0.81
Adj $R^2$	0.23		0.17	
Root MSE	25.24		22.22	
<i>n</i>	929		697	

Source: 2008 ANES pre-election survey

Note: Logistic regression analysis

Dependent variable based on survey feeling thermometer

\* $P < .05$ , \*\* $P < .10$

2008 presidential campaign. The analyses suggest the saliency for studying the political power of racial groups in the 2008 campaign (Huddy and Carey 2009). While Obama received nearly universal support from several ethnic groups, there were still divisions among ethnic communities about the implications of Obama's policy strategies that would improve the status of social, racial, and political minority groups (Harris 2009) (see Table 5.3).

Across all models estimated for attitudes toward candidates, racial identities were very important determinants on liking or disliking particular candidates. The results also indicate that feelings toward candidates were divided along traditional and familiar groups. The Democrats tended to do well among racial minorities and women. Republicans performed well among whites, men, wealthy, and married persons. These models capture a heightened excitement among the racial groups that traditionally support the Democrats and also reflect the growing influence of the Latino population.

The primary elections of the 2008 campaign were highly gendered and racialized. During the primary campaign, Clinton enjoyed support from



**Table 5.3** Support expressed toward John McCain based on race and gender

<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>McCain</i>	
	$\beta$	<i>Probability</i>
Party identification	-1.49	0.09**
Gender	-1.72	0.28
Race		
Black	-15.64	0.00*
White	-6.36	0.02*
Latino	1.49	0.53
<i>Demographics</i>		
Age	0.16	0.00*
Income	0.29	0.09**
Education	0.57	0.12
Marital status	0.92	0.61
Adj $R^2$	0.09	
Root MSE	23.93	
<i>n</i>	929	

*Source:* 2008 ANES pre-election survey

*Note:* Logistic regression analysis

\* $P < .05$ , \*\* $P < .10$

the racial electoral groups that had traditionally supported her husband, Bill Clinton (Barreto et al. 2008). Among the African-American community, Bill Clinton was considered the first black president for several reasons. Clinton's personal speaking style appealed to African-American voters because it mimicked a "black style" of preaching, which appealed to African-American nostalgia (Reed 2010). In addition to personal charisma, several of Clinton's political policies benefitted the African-American communities (Reed 2010). These reasons are why Bill Clinton secured a loyal support base among black voters since his initial presidential campaign in 1992.

In 2008, the voting groups that expressed support for Bill Clinton were larger. For example, Latinos made up 15 percent of the population, Blacks 13 percent, and Asian Americans 5 percent (Tolbert 2010). This research shows that blacks, whites, and Latinos all supported Hilary Clinton: all three controls for racial identity were significant, particularly among blacks and Latinos.

Women responded very positively to Hilary Clinton's candidacy, while there was no response to Obama; this was not for negative reasons. It is for reasons mentioned earlier about the shrinking gender gap that was

documented in 2008. Taking that into account, the presence of gender as a factor in liking Hilary Clinton was significant. The importance of racial groups in politics is demonstrated as factors for liking Clinton and Obama and factors of dislike toward the Republican ticket.

The year 2008 signaled the growing influence of Latino voters with data for these populations indicating movement toward stronger female voting involvement and turnout (Junn 2009). Clinton also drew support from low-income voters, a socioeconomic group where Latinos and, to a lesser degree, African-Americans (Barreto et al. 2008; Tolbert 2010) When Clinton announced the suspension of her political campaign in June 2008, anxiety about the loyalties of her coalition were inevitably discussed in the media and in closed-door conversations among Obama's team. Like Clinton's supporters, Latinos ended up supporting Obama in the general election.

Interestingly, gender does not appear to be a significant determinant for liking Obama (see Table 5.4). Knowing that more women than men voted for Obama, this was not a result to be interpreted negatively toward Obama. Other categories there were important and also reflect the familiar

**Table 5.4** Support expressed toward Barack Obama based on Clinton's supporters

<i>Independent variables</i>	$\beta$	<i>Probability</i>
Hilary Clinton feeling thermometer	0.48	0.00*
Party identification	0.46	0.57
Gender	0.33	0.82
Race		
Black	21.97	0.00*
White	2.44	0.35
Latino	4.63	0.04*
<i>Demographics</i>		
Age	-0.22	0.00*
Income	-0.42	0.00*
Education	0.85	0.01*
Marital status	0.71	0.67
Adj $R^2$	0.42	
Root MSE	21.87	
<i>n</i>	928	

Source: 2008 ANES pre-election survey

Note: Logistic regression analysis

\* $P < .05$ , \*\* $P < .10$

party profile; Obama did well among young, unmarried, low-income, and educated voters.

Racial groups responded in a familiar fashion to Obama and the results indicate that racial identity produced very enthusiastic expressions toward Obama. All racial categories except two were statistically significant on likability and, among black and Latino populations, he had universal support. White voters liked Obama for any one of three reasons. First, the *white enthusiasm* thesis may have had a role in voters liking Obama. Second, white Democrats (men more than women) were expected to support whoever won the party's nomination. Third, the selection of Biden as vice president was helpful in attracting restless Democrats and independents.

Biden was a politically responsible choice on the ticket and was politically experienced, which was a reassuring presence on the ticket (Ceaser et al. 2009; Crotty 2009; Sabato 2010). Some analysis hypothesized that Biden was selected for racial balance. Biden was selected more for his political tenure and experience particularly on foreign policy. The number of voters who were reassured by his "whiteness" was probably small when compared to the number of voters that were reassured by the balance of political experience. If Biden was selected for his "whiteness" to offset doubters about Obama's racial identity, then white racial identity should have been a significant factor contributing to Biden's likability (see Table 5.2). This is not the case; just the opposite in fact—black racial identity was a significant factor in liking Biden. This may have been more important to the context of the 2008 campaign because while Biden to some extent helped offset Obama's political inexperience, the results suggest that the black community universally supported the Democratic ticket and voters who liked and trusted Obama also liked and trusted Biden (Crotty 2009).

On the Republican ticket, there is little difference among voters in terms of likeability between McCain and Palin. The factors that determined liking the candidates rested primarily on party identification and not gender. Gender did not matter in voters liking either McCain or Palin. What was significant in terms of racial identities were the racial groups that did not like the Republican ticket. Black, Latino, and other classifications were significant factors disliking McCain and Palin. For McCain, an interesting finding was that he did not perform as well among white voters. This result offers additional support for the *white enthusiasm* thesis explaining why so many white voters supported Obama. It can also be said that the Republican candidates mobilized the party base, but did not successfully persuade the independents, independent leaners, and potential Democrat

defectors. In this research, there is no data to suggest that there were Republican defectors who crossed party lines to support Obama. Both Republican candidates, however, did well among older, wealthy, married voters, which fits the expected outcome for the party profile.

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## Hope Is a Renewable Resource

**Abstract** The 2012 presidential campaign was a referendum on hope and change. The emotional landscape in 2012 appeared similar to that of 2004. While the level of enthusiasm for Barack Obama was noticeably muted, his campaign narrative “forward” was an effective counternarrative to Governor Mitt Romney’s strategy to invoke voter anger toward Obama concerning slow economic recovery. The 2012 Obama campaign strategy is closely inspected and provides the context in which voters’ responses toward Obama and Romney were measured. While economic concerns dominated the tone of the campaign, which are commonly associated with negative retrospective appraisals of incumbents, research suggests that positive feelings influence retrospective candidate appraisals of Obama.

The referendum on hope and change appeared to be a toss-up. There were no confident victories forecast for either candidate. The previous two presidential elections had been decided on narrow issue platforms and in 2012 the platform was even more concentrated on one issue: the economy. The campaign was dominated by mostly the economy and various consequences resulting from the “Great Recession” of 2008. Given the lackluster economic reality that dependably spelled out incumbent defeat in presidential elections since Franklin D. Roosevelt, Obama’s reelection victory hinged on his ability to turn hope into a renewable resource.

Economic anxieties coupled with an unusual patina of cautious optimism determined the overall tone of the campaign narrative. The political landscape reflected conditions that did not favor an incumbent reelection. Electoral history instructed that no president since FDR, with unemployment figures above 7.4 percent, had won a presidential election. The employment rate in 2012 had climbed to nearly 8 percent (Lewis-Beck and Tien 2012; Sabato and Larry 2013). Fiscal prediction models reported that the economic conditions favored Romney in terms of the sluggish economy and the retrospective voting models that are prevalent when an incumbent president runs for reelection (Holbrook 2012). Given the conditions that traditionally favored political challengers, Obama's campaign strategy brought the economic conditions front and center. The choice was framed as a policy experiment to turn the economy around was still under construction and abandonment was futile.

Obama sustained his popularity, but lost approximately 2 percent of the voter turnout figures he won in 2008. Obama secured only 51 percent of the popular vote compared to his 2008 victory of 53 percent. Obama ultimately won the reelection and his victory suggests that he sustained the coalition of support that was critical to his 2008 campaign. Electoral subgroups involving women, African-Americans, Asian, Latino, and young adult voters were again mobilized in Obama's favor.

### THE ANEMIC ECONOMY AND REPUBLICAN STRUGGLE

The state of the US economy was the dominant issue; Barack Obama's campaign advocated the president's first term of decisive action and necessary course corrections to rescue the economy. On the other hand, Mitt Romney's campaign argued that fiscal recovery was not happening quickly enough and suggested the failure of Obama's economic policies in an effort to activate voters' retrospective voting calculus.

By the summer of 2012, reports of economic recovery (and the lack thereof) dictated the political landscape and tenor of the campaign altogether. The Romney campaign tried to define the Obama presidency as a failure, citing high unemployment and rising deficits. The economic collapse of 2008 resulted in soaring unemployment rates that have been as high as 10 percent, and remained at more than 8 percent through most of 2012; this was the highest unemployment rate since the 1982 recession.<sup>1</sup> Romney's narrative attempted to portray the incumbent as privileging "big" government over private enterprise (framed as the premiere solution to spur economic growth).



The Republican strategy framed the campaign narrative emphasizing retrospective evaluations of Obama in an effort to capitalize on voter disappointment, as demonstrated in Ryan's address to the Republican Party convention delegates. The conventional premise of running a campaign aimed at promoting retrospective evaluations is to offer a suitable challenger as an alternative. The candidate-driven message of the Republicans concentrated on why Obama was a failure instead of why Republicans offered preferable solutions.

Other themes in the Republican campaign message seemed to emphasize less substantive issues, while concentrating on facilitating negative feelings toward Obama through the inferences of unrealized policy mandates and broken campaign promises. The campaign ads represent a unifying theme of retrospective negative assessment of Obama's first term. Romney struggled with the liability of his professional credentials involving his tenure at Bain Capital, a firm that specialized in cutting corporate and industrial overheads by outsourcing those jobs to overseas labor markets. This was a difficult obstacle for the Romney campaign to reconcile with his political message to "fire" Obama coupled with the backlash over his Florida private fundraiser comment characterizing Obama's base of support as the "47 percent of Americans reliant on government aid and social programs." This comment was exploited by Democrats to paint Romney as elitist and his campaign was further complicated by poorly phrased comments during his debate appearances such as "binders full of women" that reverberated in social media memes for the duration of the campaign. Emotionally, Romney was publically defensive and, strategically, he appeared cornered. The GOP strategy experienced an increasingly difficult time with presenting a persuasive case to the American electorate that Romney was a suitable alternative with the best economic policies to aid economic recovery.

### THE SHIFTING VOTER DEMOGRAPHIC

The mood of the 2012 campaign highlighted the changing demographics of the American electorate, which was observed in the parties' base coalitions. The electoral subgroup made up of Asian voters played a particularly important role in Obama's victory in 2012. Voting participation among non-Whites was up from 26 percent in 2008 to 28 percent and Obama received 80 percent of the non-White voter support. While Obama still attracted support, the enthusiasm that reverberated from young adults in 2008 was muted, but not omitted; Obama still attracted voters between the ages of

18 and 24. Down about 6 percent from 2008, the young voters supported Obama with 60 percent compared to Romney with 37 percent. The following paragraphs examine the political behavior of two key electoral subgroups, women and black voters, that are important to this research project.

### COMPETING FOR WOMEN'S VOTES

The women's voting block was arguably a more significant determinant of the electoral results in 2012 than in the previous four years. Both parties recognized the importance of the electorally inversed "gender gap" where women outpace men in voter registration and voter turnout. Not only do women outpace men in voting, but in recent election cycles, men and women have split their support along gendered lines.<sup>2</sup> Both parties recognized the consequences of marginalizing women, racial, and ethnic minority voters. Election results suggest that the Democrats were successful in appealing to women voters. The data show that women favored Obama at 55 percent compared to Romney at 44 percent.<sup>3</sup> Obama benefitted from the support of women and single mothers even when the margins of candidate backing grew tight and even tied in the final weeks before the election. There is not much difference in the voting behavior of white women in 2008; the majority of white women voters favored Romney.<sup>4</sup>

The Great Recession disproportionately affected men and women. Single head-of-household mothers were a critical voting demographic in 2012. During the summer campaign, for many women, social issues like reproductive health policy, framed as the Republican "war on women," were supplanted by more immediate needs presented by economic uncertainties and the Great Recession.<sup>5</sup> Women absorbed the burden of unemployment at higher rates than men. Economic data indicated that more women than men lost their jobs between 2009 and 2011 and the recovery trends favored men, meaning men were able to recover lost income more quickly than women.<sup>6</sup> This trend coupled with the fact that women also undertake a disproportionate share of family care work (Bittman et al. 2003) ultimately meant slower economic recovery for women, which translated into electoral support for Obama.

The referendum on Obama's first term has some significant implications about racial attitudes and voters' feelings about racial minorities in politics. Obama's weak support among white voters was offset by his electoral advantage among racial and ethnic minority subgroups. While public

opinion surveys tried to tap attitudes indicating racial backlash in 2008, data suggested that such attitudes were either neutralized or absent in that election (Rowe 2010). After the 2012 election, public opinion researchers returned to those same questions to examine the racial resentment thesis.

### RACE AND POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The racial resentment thesis may be situated in effects of internalized ideology according to Feldman and Huddy (2005) who found that it was difficult to disentangle concepts of racial resentment from ideology. They observed that the challenge stemmed from the internalization of individualistic social philosophies (self-reliance, hard work, etc.) that are infused into the conservative ideology as evidenced by the political messages advanced by vice presidential candidate Paul Ryan's conservative stumping. When surveyed, conservatives are expected to agree with ideas that implicate racial resentment on the grounds of conservative ideology (Feldman and Huddy 2005).

If this is the case, the reelection campaign may reveal a concept of "new racism," which falls under the rubric of racial resentment, a subtle racial prejudice that is conveyed through white opposition to black policy positions (Feldman and Huddy 169). While the current social and political environment appears to be a more racially tolerant climate, racial subtleties may be revealed in voter attitudes expressed about Obama's economic policies of his first term. It is expected that conservative Republican voters expressed negative feelings toward Obama's economic policies. During 2012, surveys may have tapped.

Romney supporters' feelings that show an association with anger that was transferred to their retrospective evaluations of Obama. If Republican voters and other Romney supporters demonstrate this correlation, it is likely that feelings of anger will also be transferred to their evaluations of the issues on the economy and health care.

Despite the perceived policy successes of Obama's first term, the economy dominated the political agenda. Campaigns generate their own chemistry and voters are either attracted to or repulsed by a campaign's chemistry. A great deal of that chemistry is generated by the candidate him- or herself. As in previous presidential campaigns, the candidates' personalities, campaign issues, and ideological appeals are important factors in facilitating positive electoral chemistry with voters. As mentioned earlier, the political environment coupled with the campaign chemistry matters to how voters perceive and feel about the candidates.

Regarding candidates' personalities and emotional characteristics, Romney struggled with criticism of his personal image on the campaign, which was framed more negatively than Obama's.<sup>7</sup> Romney was perceived as cold and disconnected; this was reinforced by several verbal missteps and political gaffes, which alienated many important voting groups including women and middle class voters. According to public opinion data available the week of the election, even though Obama's energy and enthusiasm was noticeably muted, he held a steady lead among women and non-white voters.<sup>8</sup>

### CAMPAIGN ADVERTISEMENTS AND EMOTIVE REINFORCEMENT

Based on an elementary content analysis of the 2012 campaign advertisements, the tone of campaign messages from both teams was considerably more negative than in 2008. It is compelling to review the influence of the negative campaign mood on voters' attitudes overall in the 2012 presidential campaign. In an election year marked by the critical issue of economic recovery and low public approval of governing institutions in general, it was not unexpected that the tone reflected in televised campaign ads was profoundly negative. More than 75 percent of all presidential campaign ads in 2012 were negative attack ads.<sup>9</sup>

The Obama campaign committed most of its energy and resources to framing Republican challenger Mitt Romney as a callous multi-millionaire whose policies favored the wealthy elite at the expense of a struggling middle class. While the campaign produced enhancement ads promoting the president's record, this was clearly not a "Morning in America"<sup>10</sup> reelection campaign; the focus was primarily on attacking the challenger.

Conversely, Romney's candidate-driven message centered on three central themes: jobs, taxes, and swelling national debt that culminated in one central message: "Obama Isn't Working." The Romney campaign ads were designed to cue emotional responses involving uncertainty, anger, and anxiety—all are effectively attached to retrospective appraisals. Romney's campaign ad titled "Failing America's Workers" offered viewers visuals of America's job numbers juxtaposed to China's industrial jobs growth, inferring that America's job loss is China's gain. The use of this message cued viewers' anxieties about the country's economic health. What scholars understand about the role of anxiety in political contexts is that it is a highly motivated emotion, which activates information-seeking behaviors and has been successfully tied to negative retrospective evaluations of incumbents (Marcus 2000, 2002).

Another ad titled “Political Payoffs and Middle Class Layoffs” conveyed the premise that Obama’s first-term economic policies punished the middle class, suggesting that Obama had neglected his coalition.

Framing the referendum campaign as one that needed to continue its trajectory and move “forward” combatted the Republican strategy intended to invoke assessments of failure and feelings of disappointment among previously enthusiastic voters. Instead, the Obama ads countered with the message of success, positive retrospective policy evaluations, and the prospect of successful completion (upon the renewal of another term); while the campaign theme “Forward” invoked prospect analysis, the actionable strategies observed in Obama’s campaign ads countered Romney’s ads in similar style.

Obama’s televised ad titled “Challenges” narrated by Morgan Freeman offered a conciliatory tone accessible to voters, reinforcing Obama’s popularity. Describing the president’s inherited policy challenges (this ad indirectly reminds voters of Bush-era policy) while outlining Obama’s successes in his first term that included the elimination of Osama Bin Laden, the withdrawal of troops in Iraq, and the success of the auto industry’s bailouts, it also acknowledged the economic strain on the middle class and the labor statistics on unemployment. That particular ad demonstrated a strategy that was aimed to invoke empathy for the president’s partisan struggles with Congress while simultaneously cueing viewers’ feelings of “hope” for good things in the future with the concluding line “The last thing we should do is turn back now.”<sup>11</sup>

The ads in which Obama’s strategy indulged retrospective partisan nostalgia are titled “The Choice is Clear” and “He’s Got it Right” featuring the endorsement of former president Bill Clinton. The former president casually delivered a narrative that reinforced Obama’s “pragmatic” economic strategies and intimated that Bush-era economic policies were to blame for the slow economic recovery. The final campaign advertisement aired by Obama’s campaign was possibly the most successful strategy in framing the referendum on prospective voting appraisals, cueing voters to remember their feelings of hope and change. The ad titled “What We’re Fighting For” used sentimental images of the 2008 victory and the symbolism was aimed at resurrecting enthusiasm that translated into electoral victory. This was possibly the most successful strategy implemented by the Obama team.

Democrats produced a variety of ads that ranged from negative rebuttals to the Romney strategy, parodies, exploits, and sentimentality. Romney’s campaign organization produced more advertisements that transmitted concentrated themes such as dismal economic prospects under Democrat

policies and Republican entrepreneurship while appealing to a homogenous demographic: the white middle class.<sup>12</sup> The Democrats appealed to more diverse voting groups, with varied images, tones, and messages that ultimately reflected the pro-Obama groups.

### EMOTION AND THE 2012 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

The emotional landscape in 2012 appeared similar to that of 2004. While the level of enthusiasm for Barack Obama was noticeably muted, the four emotional dimensions that pre-election surveys measured (pride, hope, fear, and anger) were relevant in ways that confirmed the intentions of the campaign strategies. Specifically, the expression of voter emotion in the 2012 election suggested a more polarized electorate than four years earlier.

Obama garnered success from framing his first four years as a beneficial, history-making administration. Capturing some 2008 nostalgia, coupled with Obama's response in the wake of hurricane Sandy, he generated confidence among the partisan base and reinforced his executive credentials among undecided voters. Given that political narrative, the electoral results suggest that Obama was effective in sustaining voters' positive feelings toward him, and the general mood of hope, which was then transferred to evaluations of pride (retrospective voting assessment).

Candidates and campaign strategists understand that voters' negative feelings are associated with retrospective appraisals. Obama's campaign team demonstrated that they understood this when they crafted the campaign message "Forward" presumably with the aim to frame the campaign similar to the 2008 message to encourage voters to transfer their feelings of hope and fear (of economic uncertainty) to their approval of Obama. Overall, as Marcus et al. (2002) reminds us, emotional responses toward candidates are stronger for the incumbent than for the challengers. However, the results indicate that context also matters when making a determination about what emotions are important and to which judgments.

Emotional responses toward Obama and Romney were examined in three policy domains: domestic (economy), security, and social issues. The analysis suggests there were two particular issues around which voters clustered: economic conditions and healthcare reform. The other topics analyzed in that presidential campaign included other aspects of domestic policy including immigration and social policy and national security.

Similar to the mood in 2004, the emotions associated with morality politics narratives seemed to be a fringe script that got amplified in the news media's echo chamber, which mobilized the party's base, but, in reality, had little effect on policy appraisals.

Positive emotional dimensions of hope and pride were relatively consistent in the influence on positive assessments of Obama's job at handling the Oval Office. The negative emotional dimensions of anger and fear indicated that respondents who reported feeling angry at or afraid of Obama reported negative assessments of his job performance. Conversely, reviewing the analysis, emotional responses toward Romney are in the opposite direction of the emotions attributed toward Obama's job performance. This suggests voter consistency, meaning the expectation that the respondents with negative feelings toward Obama expressed positive feelings toward Mitt Romney and thus retrospectively evaluated presidential performance negatively.

Before moving beyond the discussion on emotional influences on policy appraisals, comments must be offered on the performance of the traditional determinants of political judgment. On the subject of presidential approval, it was also expected that traditional determinants such as partisanship and ideology will remain stable influences on retrospective evaluations of candidates and in this particular case the incumbent. However, a compelling observation in the data analysis of the 2012 campaign that differed from observations in previous elections is that social characteristics such as race, sex, education, and marital status demonstrated that they had a more pronounced influence over the previously "moderate" impacts than earlier research concluded (Campbell et al. 1960; Flanigan and Zingale 2009). The divisive public mood in the 2012 campaign was apparent in the data analyzed and was largely due in part to the newly energized voting blocks whose effects had been muted in election cycles previous to 2008.

### POCKETBOOK POLITICS

It is clear that the economy was a critical policy context that framed Obama's 2008 presidential victory and was therefore an inevitable point of scrutiny in 2012. The model estimated for Barack Obama reflects that all four emotional dimensions influenced assessments of the US economy. The emotional responses to Barack Obama are suggested to be more influential in 2012 than traditional determinants such as partisanship and political ideology.

Since both positive and negative emotional responses influenced evaluations of the economy (see Table 6.1), this is also suggestive of the strong political divisions over this key campaign issue. Voters expressed feeling both angry/afraid and proud/hopeful toward Obama, and judgments of the state of the economy reflected his or her emotional condition. Respondents who were angry or fearful of Obama also reported that they believed the economy had gotten worse than in the previous year, making attributions of their judgments of the economy's poor performance to Obama's administration.

In the attitudes estimated for Romney, three emotional responses were important to respondents' assessment of the economy. The negative emo-

**Table 6.1** Candidate evaluation and emotional attribution toward Obama's economic policy

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Obama</i>		<i>Romney</i>	
	$\beta$	<i>Probability</i>	$\beta$	<i>Probability</i>
<i>Emotional response toward candidate</i>				
Anger	-1.382	0.00*	0.828	0.00*
Fear	-1.380	0.00*	0.568	0.00*
Hope	1.694	0.00*	-2.110	0.00*
Pride	1.455	0.00*	-0.648	0.00*
<i>Political variables</i>				
Party identification	-0.288	0.00*	-0.499	0.00*
Ideology	0.055	0.53	-0.169	0.04*
<i>Demographics</i>				
Age	0.029	0.21	0.030	0.15
Gender	0.345	0.01*	0.132	0.29
Race	0.454	0.00*	0.472	0.00*
Latino	-0.908	0.00*	-0.599	0.04*
Education	0.025	0.69	0.113	0.05*
Marital status	0.084	0.01*	0.108	0.00*
Constant	-1.66		0.927	
Pseudo $R^2$	0.44		0.32	
Log likelihood	-670.13		-808.58	
<i>n</i>	1793		1780	

*Source:* 2012 ANES pre-election survey

*Note:* Logistic regression analysis

Dependent variable based on survey responses to the question "Do you Approve or Disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling the economy?" Coded: 1 = Approve, 0 = Disapprove

\* $P < .05$ , \*\* $P < .10$



tional dimension of anger and fear appeared to be more influential than expressions of hope toward Romney. If a voter expressed feelings of fear and anger toward Romney, they were likely to have assessed previous economic performance positively and Romney's candidacy presented uncertainty to their economic conditions. Conversely, respondents who expressed feeling hope toward Romney as a candidate evaluated the economy as having gotten worse in the years leading up to the 2012 campaign. This is reassuring evidence that supports the fact that voters may rely on their feelings toward a candidate to make political judgments about key campaign issues.

### INTENSE POLITICAL DIVISIONS OVER HEALTHCARE REFORM

Obama took on healthcare reform in his first term when Congress yielded the most suitable political conditions to pursue the most comprehensive healthcare bill since Congress passed Medicare and Medicaid in 1965. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) or what opponents referred to as "Obamacare" was signed into law in March 2010. Obama considered this one of the most significant accomplishments of his first term. It is possibly one of the most controversial reforms in contemporary history. There was strong opposition organized by the Republican caucus against the legislation. The Republican opposition was more intense and unrelenting than ever anticipated. When partisan opposition in Congress failed to block the passage of the PPACA, then efforts to challenge the law in the courts drew support from conservative advocacy groups to include the Tea Party Movement.<sup>13</sup>

The constitutionality of the PPACA was challenged in the US Supreme Court in the case *National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius*. The case challenged the constitutionality of the federal mandate for all citizens to carry health insurance. The Supreme Court ruled on the case in a 5–4 decision that the individual mandate was constitutional and the opinion was released on June 28, 2012.<sup>14</sup>

The intense partisan narratives that framed Obama's healthcare reform resulted in sharp divisions and political polarization on this particular issue. Common partisan narratives facilitated mischaracterizations and misconceptions of the legislation that revealed less about the substantive content and more about partisan motives in characterizing the president. In 2009, former vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin publicized one of the most widely circulated misconceptions of the PPACA when she

claimed that the law would create “death panels” of personnel deciding who receives treatment. The distortion was politically motivated and the Pew Research Center indicated that while 85 percent of Americans were familiar with the claim, only 30 percent had confidence it was true.<sup>15</sup> While the intensely partisan narratives were largely anchored in distortions, in 2012, opinion polls revealed that 39 percent of the public thought the “death panel” claims were credible.

The analysis of public opinion in 2012 reveals the intense polarization on the issue of healthcare reform. Analysis indicates (see Table 6.2) that divisions were deeply political and emotive. As expected, partisanship and political ideology influenced appraisals on healthcare reform. Both positive and negative emotional dimensions influenced

**Table 6.2** Candidate evaluation and emotional attribution toward healthcare reform

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Obama</i>		<i>Romney</i>	
	<i>β</i>	<i>Probability</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>Probability</i>
<i>Emotional response toward candidate</i>				
Anger	-1.32	0.00*	0.998	0.00*
Fear	-1.43	0.00*	0.507	0.00*
Hope	1.20	0.00*	-1.635	0.00*
Pride	1.56	0.00*	-0.689	0.00*
<i>Political variables</i>				
Party identification	-0.14	0.03*	-0.424	0.00*
Ideology	-0.01	0.87	-0.222	0.01*
<i>Demographics</i>				
Age	0.047	0.04*	0.042	0.04*
Gender	0.166	0.23	0.030	0.80
Race	0.304	0.00*	0.320	0.00*
Education	-0.108	0.62	0.078	0.69
Marital status	0.095	0.13	0.149	0.01*
Constant	-0.984		1.093	
Pseudo <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.41		0.29	
Log likelihood	-696.279		-832.465	
<i>n</i>	1793		1778	

Source: 2012 ANES pre-election survey

Note: Logistic regression analysis

Dependent variable based on survey responses to the question: “Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling health care?” Coded: Approve = 1, Disapprove = 0

\**P* < .05, \*\**P* < .10

perceptions of the PPACA as well. There is a possible interaction effect between partisanship and candidate affect response on evaluations of health care in America. Respondents who reported having positive feelings toward Mitt Romney also expressed they did not approve of the incumbent's healthcare policy. The inverse is true for respondents that reported having positive feelings toward Obama and also favorably evaluated his efforts on healthcare reform. The inverted effects suggest both voter consistency and political polarization. Positive and negative feelings were significant factors contributing to appraisals of the PPACA in 2012.

### THE POLITICS OF AMERICAN XENOPHOBIA

The topic of immigration policy and reform became even more controversial when Arizona passed SB1070 making it legal for police to check a person's immigration status while enforcing other laws if suspicion of status emerged.<sup>16</sup> In the summer of 2012, the legislation passed a legal test when the Supreme Court upheld the controversial measure. Immigration policy and reform were made into a key campaign issue following the Supreme Court ruling.

On the topic of immigration, and specifically the policy question of providing a pathway to citizenship for undocumented persons residing inside the USA, the analysis (see Table 6.3) reveals stronger emotional effects for the incumbent than for Romney. However, both models indicate some emotional consistency for the issue. Concerning emotional responses to Obama, the positive emotional dimensions (hope and pride) consistently show up for both questions of pathways to citizenship and disallowing status checks on suspects. With regard to Romney, the two consistent dimensions are pride and anger, indicating a polarized emotional response to Romney that may have influenced polarized attitudes concerning immigration in the campaign.

The positive emotional dimensions of hope and pride register for Obama on the question of pathways to citizen immigration policy. Respondents that reported positive feelings toward Obama were favorably positioned on the pathways to citizenship debate. However, models estimated for Romney revealed the polarized nature of the issue. The findings reveal a distinction between respondents who reported feeling pride toward Romney versus those feeling anger. Participants who expressed positive feelings (pride) did not report favoring the pathways to citizenship option on immigration reform. Meanwhile, respondents that expressed feeling

**Table 6.3** Candidate evaluation and emotional attribution toward pathways to citizenship policies

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Obama</i>		<i>Romney</i>	
	$\beta$	<i>Probability</i>	$\beta$	<i>Probability</i>
<i>Emotional Response toward candidate</i>				
Anger	-0.271	0.12	0.416	0.01*
Fear	-0.258	0.18	-0.049	0.77
Hope	0.833	0.00*	-0.267	0.16
Pride	0.622	0.00*	-0.445	0.04*
<i>Political variables</i>				
Party identification	0.079	0.32	-0.068	0.35
Ideology	-0.011	0.91	-0.109	0.23
<i>Demographics</i>				
Age	0.054	0.02*	0.049	0.04*
Gender	-0.309	0.04*	-0.354	0.01*
Race	-0.086	0.32	-0.037	0.66
Latino	1.246	0.00*	1.209	0.00*
Education	0.132	0.05*	0.180	0.01*
Marital status	-0.029	0.42	-0.001	0.96
Constant	0.016		0.531	
Pseudo $R^2$	0.11		0.06	
Log likelihood	-596.225		-630.662	
<i>n</i>	1276		1266	

Source: 2012 ANES pre-election survey

Note: Logistic regression analysis

Dependent variable based on survey responses to the question "Opinion on proposal to allow children of illegal immigrants to stay in the USA as long as they attend college or serve in the military." Coded: Favor = 1, oppose = 0

\* $P < .05$ , \*\* $P < .10$

anger toward Romney favored the immigration reform measure proposed by pathways to citizenship.

## NATIONAL SECURITY

A decade had passed since the 9/11 terrorists attacks. The perception of external terrorist threats to the USA was examined. The political mood of fear and anxiety surrounding the perception of imminent terrorist attack diminished significantly in May 2011 when the American public learned that Osama Bin Laden, one of the primary terror targets, was eliminated.

President Obama announced that he authorized the Special Forces operation code named Operation Neptune Spear to carry out the raid on Bin Laden's compound that result in his confirmed death.<sup>17</sup>

The general public's response to the news was supportive and was expressed by spontaneous gatherings at the ground zero sites of the 9/11 attacks. Similar to the overwhelming majority of Americans that supported the initial military action in Afghanistan in October 2001 (nearly 90 percent), 93 percent of Americans approved of the executive action that concluded with Bin Laden's death.<sup>18</sup>

The Democrats capitalized on this success in the 2012 campaign, framing Bin Laden's death as the success resulting from Obama's decisive action on security; he succeeded where predecessors failed. This was also particularly important since Republicans were highly critical of Obama's national security credentials in 2008. In 2012, to their detriment, the Republicans attempted similar tactics to remain critical of Obama's foreign policy credentials. These dynamics were captured in the analysis on this issue (see Table 6.4).

In 2012, security and perceptions of the terror threat where not as polarized as they had been previously (see Table 6.4). The analysis revealed an interesting perspective on the issue of terrorism. The American public seemed to be split between two emotions as they were measured in their response to Obama. Respondents who reported Obama made them feel proud perceived a diminished terror threat. Those who reported that Obama made them angry perceived a heightened terror threat. These appraisals based on feelings toward Obama are highly correlated with public opinion and backlash associated with the revelation that Bid Laden had been eliminated as a terror threat to the USA.

The emotion of fear was present in response to Mitt Romney as a candidate (see Table 6.4). Respondents who reported feeling fearful toward Mitt Romney also interpreted a low threat of terrorism against the USA. This relationship between fear toward Romney and perceptions of increased security possibly stem from Romney's comments concerning war with Iran. In June 2012, Romney was on record as claiming that as president he could circumvent Congress to wage war on Iran.<sup>19</sup> The public's anxieties on security and toward Romney's intentions on foreign policy registered in the aftermath of his comments on the campaign trail.

**Table 6.4** Candidate evaluation and emotional attribution toward the threat of terrorism

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Obama</i>		<i>Romney</i>	
	$\beta$	<i>Probability</i>	$\beta$	<i>Probability</i>
<i>Emotional response toward candidate</i>				
Anger	0.440	0.00*	0.031	0.85
Fear	0.281	0.16	-0.375	0.02*
Hope	-0.214	0.31	0.004	0.99
Pride	-0.608	0.00*	0.257	0.28
<i>Political variables</i>				
Party identification	0.081	0.28	0.220	0.00*
Ideology	-0.175	0.05*	-0.106	0.23
<i>Demographics</i>				
Age	0.073	0.00*	0.087	0.00*
Gender	-0.427	0.00*	-0.387	0.01*
Race	0.129	0.18	0.073	0.44
Latino	0.033	0.88	0.056	0.79
Education	-0.082	0.20	-0.069	0.28
Marital status	0.043	0.22	0.022	0.52
Constant			-1.112	
Pseudo $R^2$	0.07		0.04	
Log likelihood	-580.58		-593.439	
<i>n</i>	905		895	

Source: 2012 ANES pre-election survey

Note: Logistic regression analysis

Dependent variable based on survey responses to the question "As a result on the US war in Afghanistan, do you think the threat of terrorism against the USA has increased or decreased?" Coded: Increased=1, Decreased=0

\* $P < .05$ , \*\* $P < .10$

## THE POLITICS OF SAME-SEX FAMILY VALUES

LGBT rights have regularly made appearances on the campaign agenda since 2004. In 2012, same-sex marriage and adoption were central on the social agenda. For this project same-sex adoption was chosen for parsimony of the dependent variable. When estimating models for both Obama and Romney, both negative and positive emotional dimensions emerged as important to attitudes on the subject. Both emotional dimensions appeared in a consistent manner. The emotional divides on the subject of same-sex adoption are suggestive of the larger polarized context on other social issues (see Table 6.5).

**Table 6.5** Candidate evaluation and emotional attribution toward same-sex adoption

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Obama</i>		<i>Romney</i>	
	<i>β</i>	<i>Probability</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>Probability</i>
<i>Emotional response toward candidate</i>				
Anger	0.021	0.87	0.286	0.02*
Fear	-0.254	0.09**	0.093	0.46
Hope	0.399	0.01*	-0.395	0.01*
Pride	0.201	0.17	-0.004	0.98
<i>Political variables</i>				
Party identification	0.252	0.00*	0.198	0.00*
Ideology	-0.077	0.25	-0.093	0.17
<i>Demographics</i>				
Age	-0.069	0.00*	-0.066	0.00*
Gender	-0.493	0.00*	-0.516	0.00*
Race	-0.426	0.00*	-0.431	0.00*
Latino	0.405	0.01*	0.456	0.01*
Education	0.233	0.00*	0.259	0.00*
Marital status	0.062	0.02*	0.064	0.02*
Constant	0.518		0.899	
Pseudo $R^2$	0.67		0.64	
Log likelihood	-1075		-1072.79	
<i>n</i>	1777		1764	

Source: 2012 ANES pre-election survey

Note: Logistic regression analysis

Dependent variable based on survey responses to the question "Do you think gay or lesbian couples should be legally permitted to adopt children?" Coded: Yes=1, No=0

\* $P < .05$ , \*\* $P < .10$

Models estimated for both Obama and Romney reveal positive and negative emotional responses influencing attitudes toward the policy of same-sex adoption. For Obama, the emotional dimensions that had a significant impact were hope and fear. Two specific emotions, hope and anger, as expressed in response to Romney, had an important function in determining attitudes on same-sex adoption.

## DISCUSSION

Scholars studying the role and function of emotions in political contexts have determined that emotions matter in politics. We are moving closer to a better understanding of how emotions matter. This research

project points to specific contexts where particular emotional dimensions have more than a moderate impact. The results in this project provide additional support for the proposition that emotions be included as an additional variable to studying determinants of vote choice.

Returning to a consideration of the traditional determinants of vote choice and political judgment, the data in this project lends support to the long-term stability of partisanship and political ideology as a determinant of presidential approval and, as in most cases examined in this project, policy judgments. The social characteristics of age, race, gender, education, and marital status, which were previously judged to have only moderate impact on political attitudes, were now taken into consideration. However, more recent research on American campaigns and elections state that the prominence of identity politics is growing with the increased mobilization of gendered and ethnic voting blocks (Hutheson et al. 2004). In addition to partisanship and ideology shaping many attitudes on the topics included in this project, social identities are influencing political interpretations as can be observed in several of the models estimated for this project. In specific contexts, particularly involving key issues on immigration and social policy, race, age, and education are consistent factors in influencing political judgment. With regard to short-term factors (candidate personality, party image, campaign issues, and media cycles) and their influence on political judgment, this project proposes the addition of emotions to the category of short-term influences. Flannigan and Zingale (2010) remind us that when political information is low or absent, the short-term factors are more effective determinants of vote choice and political judgment. When political information is low, this project is purporting that voters rely on their emotional states in conjunction with additional factors and social characteristics. Emotions help provide a sense of meaning to life and when applied to political contexts emotions help voters interpret political events and personalities (Snyder 1994).

The Democratic campaign strategy intended to reinvigorate the electorate's nostalgia for Obama's brand of hope. Conversely, the emotional dimension of hope did not emerge as a significant factor in many of the models estimated for Obama, but the consistent dimensions of pride and anger (with the exception of immigration and same-sex adoption), which are emotions closely associated with retrospective evaluations, did. The function of pride as an emotion helps communicate positive attitudes toward both past and present activities. Furthermore, pride is the antithesis emotion of anger. They are correlated emotions on the dual-structured measure (Kirstjansson 2002). In the political context of 2012, voters



relied on their feelings of pride to evaluate something as positive and to consider oneself as connected to that positive thing.

Ultimately, reviewing the dynamics of the 2012 presidential election, Obama's popularity was marginally sustainable, but the enthusiasm associated with the 2008 campaign did not translate into the electoral results. The pattern of nostalgic strategies forged by the Democrats was with the intent to transpose sentimentality on to the retrospective evaluations of Obama's presidency. When trying to disentangle the causality of emotive judgments, it needs to be contextualized. The "transfer of affect" thesis provides some utility to understanding causality. When considering the models estimated for presidential approval, the "transfer of affect" thesis is effective and accurate in explaining how voters transition their emotional responses toward a candidate on to appraisals of a candidate and issues. The thesis offers some explanatory power because it has effectively detailed how political partisans (who are presumably informed voters) are also highly emotive individuals, thus providing a strong appeal to include emotions as a set of short-term determinants of political judgment.

The question of causality introduces the consideration of an alternative hypothesis and future exploration. In the context of highly polarized elections a divided electorate presents a reason for caution when labeling the direction of causality. While Marcus (2002, 2006) has successfully determined that emotions are precognitive appraisals, in political scenarios, researchers need to be clear about what or whom voters are expressing emotional responses toward. For instance, there are several key political issues that endure several election cycles and in the case of these issues parties compete for dominance or "ownership." For example, women's issues, social issues, and some policy niches are determined by descriptive survey data to be highly emotive without the consideration of a candidate. In cases such as these the alternative hypothesis to be examined involves testing issues that have been captured by either major party as causality and in which voters transfer their feelings of approval/disapproval on to the candidate carrying the party's mantle.

## NOTES

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2. 1996, 2000, and 2004.
3. Pew Research Center for the People and the press public opinion favorability poll; Washington Post favorability ratings, May 23–27, 2012.

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5. Presidential forecast analysis for 2012 found at the Roper Center for Public Opinion at [www.ropercenter.uconn.edu](http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu).
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10. 1984 Reagan-Bush reelection campaign ad.
11. Based on author's content analysis of campaign ads available through the digital archive housed at the Museum of the Moving Image [www.movingimage.us](http://www.movingimage.us) and [www.livingroomcandidate.org](http://www.livingroomcandidate.org).
12. Based on author's content analysis of campaign ads available through the digital archive housed at the Museum of the Moving Image [www.movingimage.us](http://www.movingimage.us) and [www.livingroomcandidate.org](http://www.livingroomcandidate.org).
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## APPENDIX: DESCRIPTION OF DATA AND ANALYSIS

### *Campaign Issues*

Data for analysis utilizes the 2012 ANES pre-election surveys. All dependent variables are coded dichotomously. The dependent variables reflect the politically salient issues of the 2012 presidential campaign. The topics

were selected by reviewing descriptive survey data presented by the Pew Research Center. There are two different categories of dependent variables. First, presidential approval of Barack Obama and, second, policy judgments. There were four topics the ANES utilized to assess Obama's job performance. They were (1) the economy, (2) foreign relations, (3) health care, and (4) the war in Afghanistan. Each question was phrased generically: "Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling \_\_\_\_\_." Respondent answers were coded dichotomously as 1 = approve and 0 = disapprove. Concerning policy judgments, the five key issues selected for calculation were (1) economic performance, (2) gun control, (3) war (Afghanistan and the War on Terror), (4) immigration (pathway to citizenship and profiling), and finally (5) same-sex adoption. The answers reported were coded 1 to represent approval and 0 for disapproval.

### *Emotional Measures*

The independent variables examined include the ANES indicators for emotional responses (hope, pride, anger, fear), traditional long-term factors such as party identification and ideology, and the social characteristics relied upon as standard predictors for turnout which include age, gender, race, education, and marital status.

### *Variables Controlling for Political Factors*

Party identification is an ordinal variable, which allows me to control for independents and weaker partisans. It categorically ranges from 0 to 4, with 0 representing "no preference/non-partisan" and 4 representing "other." The independent variable controlling for ideology is coded categorically with representations of "liberal," "conservative," and "moderate." The measurements for the ANES emotional responses are discussed in greater detail later.

To help convey the social and political significance of the role emotions play in formulating political judgments, a series of logit models are used to relate a set of dichotomous dependent variables to a set of independent variables. The dependent variables in this project display key issues in 2012 determined to be important to the presidential campaign; this accounts for the dynamic nature of electoral contexts and presidential campaigns.

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## Conclusion: The Politics of Emotions, Campaigns, and Looking Ahead

**Abstract** The concluding chapter examines and reviews the importance of studying emotions in political contexts and the important contributions made by the research on emotions across three presidential election cycles. The research suggests there are discernible contexts in which negative emotions are associated with retrospective voting appraisals and, by the same measure, specific political environments in which positive emotions are associated with prospective voting appraisals. On the eve of the 2016 presidential election, this chapter looks ahead and provides a brief survey of the elements that will shape the political context and campaign narratives framing the choices for voters.

Campaigns are accustomed to the constraints imposed on them by the demand to advertise and the continually shrinking media slots, coupled with increased costs of the media purchase, which ultimately generates limited occasions to imprint on voters (Adatto 1990; Bucy 2007). Candidates compete for voters' attention in an era of highly accessible digital and social media and popular entertainment. In order to be viable competitors, candidates make themselves memorable by first establishing an emotional imprint on voters. The reach for voters' emotions rather than their minds has become the routine campaign strategy.<sup>1</sup> The digital era constrains the time available to convey a memorable impression, so candidates advertise to "win the hearts" of voters with the hope that "their

minds will follow.”<sup>2</sup> Even if the mind does not follow, data persistently suggest that hearts guide the mind in electoral decisions.

The utility of an emotional appeal compensates for several obstacles presented to the contemporary political campaign. The leading obstacle is a financial one—how to maximize effect with minimal cost (Hallin 1992). Research suggests that emotional responses are intertwined with memory cognition and that there is a larger impact made in a shorter timeframe in the digital information age. Second, along the same lines of maximizing the investment, emotional appeals are a strategic response to a well-funded opponent (Trent 2008; Hallin 1992).

Research related to this topic has established that emotions are important in political decision making. Building on that foundation, the chief focus of this book was on the conditions in which emotional attributions are made during presidential campaigns. Special attention was given to examining how a voter’s feeling toward a presidential candidate mediated his or her attitude on a campaign issue. Using the ANES data collected for three presidential elections, the analysis investigated the transfer of emotion to policy appraisals. Additionally, the unprecedented context of the presidential campaign in 2008 required closer examination of the electoral conditions that mobilized women and racial minorities in response to Obama’s candidacy. Utilizing the measurements of the feeling thermometers and controlling for gender and race, candidate preferences favoring Obama were distinguishable along racial and gender categories. These trends suggest that voter turnout among electoral subgroups like women and racial minorities mattered to Obama’s 2008 victory. The findings affirm the central question of the project—voters’ feelings toward a presidential candidate likely inform their attitudes on the political issues involved in the campaign. This also suggests a firmly connected relationship between voters’ emotional response to a candidate and issue evaluation, meaning that the cognitive processes that guide emotions and issue evaluations in political contexts are not mutually exclusive as previously understood.

Research in this area endeavors to understand voting in terms of vote choice as a consequence or a reflection of ideology, partisan affiliation, issues, and candidates’ personalities (Campbell et al. 1960). The traditional indicators, established by the *American Voter*, continue to be reliable devices in measuring voting behavior and studying elections. This project takes the application of those indicators further by adding the new variable of emotion to the utility of traditional variables to explain voter

behavior and political decision making. This project expands the traditional perspective for understanding patterns of voter evaluations by establishing that voters' feelings are important factors in political judgment.

### IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS

The analysis in this book offers four significant contributions to the existing knowledge base about voting behavior and how important emotions are to making political evaluations. First, the findings affirm the central research question and suggest that feelings are sources of information in voters' decision making. The feelings that voters have toward a particular candidate influence candidate appraisals. Those appraisals and feelings are then transferred to their evaluations of campaign issues. Second, the findings suggest that specific feelings are correlated with retrospective and prospective voting. Third, contrary to expectation, the results suggest that little difference exists between partisan and independent voters when expressing feelings about candidates and support for campaign issues. The findings suggested that partisan voters may feel more intensely about political candidates and campaign issues than non-affiliated voters. Fourth, this project expands the scope of traditional variables used to study voting behavior by adding the measurement of emotion as an indicator to enhance our continued research on voting behavior. In addition to these four contributions, there are two other noteworthy observations that warrant attention; first, the traditional conceptualization of the gender gap was redefined to include nuances that emerge in certain political conditions and, second, the marriage gap and what it explains about voting behavior has shifted in recent election cycles.

### POLITICS OF GENDER AND THE EMOTION GAP

There were few differences observed between men and women regarding attitudes about campaign issues and feelings expressed toward a candidate. Traditional definitions of the gender gap in politics simply referred to the persistent preference among women for the Democratic Party. The gender gap also referred to the different rates at which men and women participated in politics. The trend was first observed in 1980, when women's political participation for the first time outpaced men's (Abramson et al. 2010). Currently, the "gender gap" refers to the opposite trend; men's participation lags behind that of women. Women participate in politics in

larger numbers than men, a trend evident in all presidential elections since 1976 and particularly notable in the elections studied here.<sup>3</sup>

However, this analysis was able to demonstrate that a gender gap emerged on specific campaign issues and candidate preference, suggesting that men and women respond differently in specified political conditions. With regard to political behavior, women actively participate more than men. To support this conclusion, the data in the 2008 presidential campaign showed that women were not only more active, but they were mobilized in larger numbers than men. In terms of political issues, few overall differences were observed, but on specific campaign issues, gendered differences emerged. For example, on the issue of war, a split between men and women on support for war that emerged after the 1991 Persian Gulf War. In the 1992 election, more men than women supported the Gulf War. In 2004, a comparable trend was detected when more men than women, in general, supported war. Gender-specific differences were measured on the issue of Afghanistan—women were less supportive than men of the war in Afghanistan. However, this gender-specific difference was only observed on the issue of Afghanistan and not Iraq.

The other noticeable difference between men and women was on candidate preference. This was particularly evident in the 2008 campaign. More women than men expressed preference for Obama than McCain. The data show that 56 percent of women supported Barak Obama compared to 49 percent for McCain, which offers a compelling narrative about McCain's strategy in selecting Sarah Palin as the GOP's first woman candidate for vice president. The nomination of Sarah Palin became a contentious issue itself during the campaign, one that proved unsuccessful in attracting the much sought after voting block of undecided women voters and Democrat women who may have felt abandoned by Hillary Clinton's decision to suspend her presidential bid.

### THE MARRIAGE GAP

The second important observation provides insights to the emergent marriage gap. The *American Voter* confirmed that marital status is an important predictor for voting behavior, because according to its findings, married couples were more likely to vote than their non-married counterparts (Campbell et al. 1960). In the decades since the publication of the *American Voter*, differences between married and non-married persons emerged, which hold implications for voting behavior. The



increased trends of men and women not being married itself reflects the social changes of the past three decades and these changes have had inevitable political effects (Edlund and Pande 2002). According to Edlund and Pande (2002), factors that contributed to the rise of unmarried status may include the availability of accessible contraception (especially for women), female participation in the labor force, progressive divorce laws, and the increase in social services that made single motherhood more sustainable. The research also indicated that the decline in marriage affected the political preferences mostly of working women, along with middle-income women, who were more likely to favor Democrats than poor or wealthy women (Edlund and Pande 2002, 921). Evidence from the campaign cycles of 2004 and 2008 demonstrated perceptible differences between married and non-married persons in their attitudes toward particular campaign issues. In 2004, divergences emerged on the topics of the economy and the war in Afghanistan. On both issues non-married voters did not support Bush's handling of either the economy or the war. In 2008, the difference in attitudes was especially noticeable on the topic of same-sex marriage. Support for same-sex marriage came mostly from moderate and liberal married women.

### THE VARIABLE OF EMOTION

On balance, this project contributes an important variable to the list of indicators used to guide research on American voting behavior. Previous research has recognized that voters' feelings are important in political contexts. The findings in this project demonstrate that each of the emotion indicators as measured in the ANES data provides insights to voters' cognitive processes involved in evaluating political issues as guided by their feelings expressed toward a political candidate. Specifically, the findings suggest a correlation between the negative feelings of anger or fear as and attitudes of disapproval. The same connection is observed between the positive feelings of pride or hope and attitudes of approval. This research establishes a foundation to support future research on the specific emotional contexts of retrospective and prospective voting.

There are valuable acumens gained from the examination of three presidential contests. By comparing significantly different campaign periods and controlling for the political environment, deeper insights to voter responses in those contexts are enriched. It is well understood and acknowledged that political environments of campaign periods

vary between cycles. Varied political contexts affect electoral behavior. Previous studies have limited the research focus by examining a single presidential cycle (Marcus 1988; Finn and Glaser 2010). By analyzing and comparing both presidential elections, variations in patterns of voters' emotional responses toward different presidential candidates over time are practical in rendering useful data that enhances our knowledge of the specific emotional conditions important in the process of voter decision making.

Conventional expectations during campaign cycles dictate that social issues like same-sex marriage or abortion evoke intense emotional responses because they activate moral judgments based on non-cognitive devices produced by concern-based motivations (Swan 2004). In contrast, assessments of substantive issues such as the economy or foreign relations are typically expected to engage a voter's cognitive devices. Contrary to these expectations, the findings here suggest that substantive issues involving judgments about topics like the economy and foreign relations are just as, if not more, emotive than the social agendas that are routinely exploited during political campaigns.

The research on the function of voters' feelings in political contexts helps illuminate the issues and contexts voters are responsive to during campaign periods. Previous research has found that voters are perceptive of the mood and tone of the political environment, the campaign, critical events, candidate traits, and personalities (Claibourn 2011). Studying the affective feelings expressed toward a candidate in specific political contexts reveals a great deal about the dynamics of a particular campaign as well as the traits of a candidate. The observations made in this project sustain that explanation and demonstrate that political campaigns and related strategies matter in terms of voters' feelings about politics and the personalities involved (Lodge and Steenbergen 1995).

## THE POLITICS OF EMOTIONS IN 2016 AND BEYOND

In looking toward the next presidential election, there are three factors affecting the political environment in which candidates will compete for the Oval Office. The presidential election of 2016 will feature the incumbent's party attempting to win a third consecutive term, possible electoral effects of the Tea Party Movement, and voter animosity expressed toward establishment politics.

## NOTES

1. Analysis found at *The Living Room Candidate*.
2. Not originally said of the context of American political elections, but first introduced into the political lexicon in the late 1960s about America's international military strategy in Indochina in the 1960s. See Robert D. Schulzinger's *In A Time for War*.
3. Pew Research Institute demographic reports for 2004–2012.

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