

Social and Affective Responses to Political Information

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Abstract: In this paper we present two studies exploring social and affective responses to political information. We hypothesize that people treat messages from in-group sources differently than they do messages from out-group sources. Evidence from two experiments indicates not only a link between affective reactions and social sharing behavior, but also that subjects treat information from in-group sources differently than they do information from out-group sources.

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Introduction

It is hard to follow politics these days without hearing or reading how angry some group or other is at another—Tea Partiers (and progressives, for that matter) are angry at President Obama, Democrats are angry at Republicans, libertarians are angry at moderates, and so on and so forth. This anecdotal observation underscores the key working assumption of this paper; that for some portion of the population, politics is a rancorous business, one that engenders oftentimes strong emotions. In 2008, for example, 21% of NES respondents indicated that then-candidate Obama had made them angry at some point during the campaign season; 33% said that they felt anger towards Republican candidate John McCain. On the other side of the emotional spectrum, 55% said that they felt proud of Barack Obama at some time, while 43% recalled being proud of McCain. Other questions asking about incidents of fear and hope generated similar responses rates.¹ Simply put, people have emotional reactions to political issues and political figures.

Accordingly, a substantial body of research has accumulated over the last twenty-odd years looking at the role of emotion in political decision making, candidate evaluation, and behavior. This work has suggested an important role for emotion “broadly defined” (i.e., affect) in political behavior (Civettini & Redlawsk, 2009). Because it seems that in many cases it is difficult, if not impossible, to disentangle “pure” cognition from emotional factors, researchers have posited a connection between affective states and memory, judgment and decision-making (e.g., Civettini & Redlawsk 2009; Lodge & Taber 2005; Redlawsk 2002, Redlawsk, Civettini & Emmerson 2010; Marcus et al. 2000).

¹ Data are from the 2008 American National Election Study, variables D1a. Affect for Democratic Presidential Candidate: Anger and D1d. Affect for Dem Candidate: Proud and D2a and D2d for the Republican candidate.

The impact of emotions on an individual's political choices and evaluations is only one side of the story however. Researchers have made great strides in unmasking the “intra”-personal effects of emotion on political behaviors—how emotions impact the respondent's recall, evaluation, and choice—but to date, have not looked extensively at the “inter”-personal or social consequences of affective responses; that is, how one individual's emotional reactions to political information impacts other people and their political behaviors and attitudes. After all, the very fact that a stimulus arouses an emotional response makes it more probable that a person will desire to share that experience with family, friends, and acquaintances.

The emergence of social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter as well as the multitude of political sites on the Web that encourage reader reaction to political events has made interacting, communicating, and sharing with others easier than ever; consequently, the dynamics of these online relations is drawing significant scholarly attention. Currently, researchers in a variety of fields are interested in the activities of members of online social networks (e.g Sobkowitz and Sobkowitz 2010; Mitrovic & Tadic 2009), including the flow of emotional message through online social networks (Chmiel & Hoyst 2010). The growing field of sentiment analysis in computer science (Pang & Lee 2008) uses computer programs to analyze the large amount of text to determine the prevailing tone, a technique well-suited to analyzing the massive amounts of data generated by the online activity. Some of our co-authors use computer models to model both the generation of political blogs (Yano, Cohen & Smith 2009) and the readers' responses to the text (Yano, Cohen & Smith 2009; Balasubramanyan et al 2011).

While work on social networks is not new to political science (Putnam 1995; 2001; Mutz 2002; McClurg 2003) we feel we have a novel contribution to make by exploring the social nature of affective responses. Our work owes an intellectual debt to a recent movement in

psychology to acknowledge and understand the social functional role of emotions (Levenson 1999; Keltner & Haidt 1999; Van Kleef 2009, 2010). From this perspective, emotions are seen as signals that help to coordinate the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors of groups of people. Here, we argue that the political arena is one such venue where emotions play an important social function. By sharing our emotional responses to political information with other members of our network, we can coordinate evaluations and attitudes towards the political actors and policies that influence our lives.

Theoretical Background: Emotions and Politics

In the last thirty years, psychologists have made a concerted effort to develop a science of emotions (Keltner and Lerner 2010). While for many years, emotion was relegated to the “black box” of behaviorism, it now occupies a prominent place in social psychology (Tiedens and Leach, 2004; Zajonc 1998). Not surprisingly, political scientists have paid more attention to emotions in recent years (Marcus et al 2000; Redlawsk 2006). Increasingly, research has shown that emotion, or the related concept of affect, plays an important role in many processes that have traditionally been conceived as “rational,” such as decision making, bargaining, and evaluation (for citations see Keltner and Lerner 2010; Marcus 2000).

Early research on emotions in political science primarily centered on information processing, and the theory of affective intelligence put forth by Marcus and his colleagues (2000) has been one of the more influential paradigms in the literature. Marcus et al argue that positive affect (termed enthusiasm) triggers the “dispositional” system, which reinforces habit and standing decisions. Negative affect (anxiety), on the other hand, activates the surveillance system, which incentivizes the individual to seek out new information to alleviate anxiety. Other scholars have attempted to replicate and further refine Marcus et al’s findings, with mixed results

(e.g. Brader 2005; Civettini & Redlawsk 2009; Redlawsk, Civettini, and Emmerson, 2010). A possible explanation for the inconsistent empirical support for the theory of affective intelligence is that the theory needs to better account for social factors when examining the interplay of information and emotion. Emotional reactions do not occur in a vacuum, but partly in response to an exceedingly complex social world. For example, some scholars suggest a subject's evaluation of an out-group is moderated by the perceived power difference between the observer's group and the target's (Fischer and Roseman 2007). Cottrell and Neuberg (2005) argue that studies of prejudice have been compromised because the various emotions and responses that compose prejudice have been conflated. Depending on the status and actions of the target group, a prejudiced individual may experience anger (when perceiving obstacles to the success of the in-group from a higher status out-group), disgust (when perceiving that the lower status out-group may 'contaminate' the in-group), or fear (when perceiving that the higher status out-group threatens the physical security of the in-group).

Towards A Social Functional View of Emotions

In recognition of the inherently social dimension of emotions, more and more psychologists are adopting a social functionalism view of emotions (Levenson 1999; Keltner and Gross 1999; Tooby and Cosmides 1990) because, "emotion does not exist within the solitary individual...it depends on social configuration to not just trigger it, but also to actually form it," (Tiedens and Leach 2004). According to the social functionalist perspective, emotions are viewed as "solutions to problems and opportunities related to physical and social survival (Keltner and Gross 1999). Because people are often the objects of emotions (Clark and Brissette 2001; Murphy and Zajonc 1993) and also that people are essentially social creatures, some researchers have theorized that emotions serve to regulate intergroup relations (Mackie et

al 2000; Mackie et al 2004; Leach et al 2003; Cottrell and Neuberg 2005; Dasgupta et al 2009).

Mackie, Devos and Smith (2004) state the proposition thusly:

Intergroup emotions involve the impulse, desire, or tendency to take action aimed at bringing groups closer together, moving them further apart, changing or justifying a status hierarchy, eliminating a competitor, or nurturing an ally.

The idea of emotions as a social regulator is an intriguing one, and there are a number of studies that support the ability of individuals to use emotional responses to influence the attitudes and behaviors of other members of their groups or dyads. Not surprisingly, research has revealed that people have a well developed ability to recognize emotions in others, whether via facial expressions, vocalizations, or even through touch (reviewed in Keltner and Lerner 2010).

Hatfield, Cacioppo and Rupson's emotional contagion hypothesis (1993) argues that individuals have an *automatic* tendency to mimic and synchronize expressions, vocalizations, and actions.

These tendencies have been demonstrated to begin within milliseconds after two individuals encounter each other. The synchronization of these actions is further hypothesized to lead to emotional convergence. Anderson and Keltner (2003) hold that people in close relationships develop increasing similarities in their emotional responses over time. Individuals exhibiting higher degrees of emotional convergence have increased understanding and empathy and a greater degree of social solidarity (Anderson and Keltner 2003). The potential social advantages of such convergence are obvious; emotional synchronicity coordinates attention, thoughts, and behaviors across multiple members in a group.

Surveying the state of emotions research thus far, Van Kleef (2009) offers the "Emotions as Social Information Model (ESIM)" as a way of synthesizing the various projects being done on the social component of emotions. At the core of the ESI model is the idea that emotional responses represent a signal to other people. These responses "affect observer's behavior by

triggering inferential processes and/or affective response,” (Van Kleef 2009). The idea that subjects can draw inferences about an attitude objects based on an affective signal is not too far removed from work done in political science on the value of heuristics in information processing (Popkin 1991; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Lau and Redlawsk 2001); indeed, proposed heuristics based on likability, desert, and candidate appearance have obvious affective roots, and even endorsements and party identification can be seen as signs of in-group approval and support.

It stands to reason that members of a group or network are going to share similar outlooks, interests, and behaviors (McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook 2001) and there has been a growing theoretical literature on how participants in those networks transmit information (Acemoglu et al 2010; Golub and Jackson 2010; Wu et al 2003). In this project, we argue that affect plays an important role in the diffusion of information throughout a social network. Messages that cause emotional reactions are more likely to be shared among associates, while messages received from in-group sources are themselves likely to generate affective responses. The end result of this behavior is a degree of evaluative convergence among members of a social network towards an attitude object.

Hypotheses

Based on previous work in the fields of psychology and political science, we theorize that some types of political information engender strong, and perhaps primarily affective, responses in individuals, which are antecedent to and not dependent upon later rationalization (Zajonc, 1980; Haidt 2001). In line with the theory of emotions as social information, we believe that individuals are prone to sharing these responses with members of their networks in order to generate similar reactions via the emotional convergence mechanism. An individual’s desire to

share affectively charged information with members of his or her social group implies an increased receptivity to such signals from others. Thus, we further believe that people will show greater emotional reactivity to messages from an in-group member. We formalize these propositions into the following hypotheses:

H1 (*Affective Transmission*): Subjects are more likely to share with other members of their social networks information that engenders an emotional reaction

H2 (*Affective Contagion*): Subjects are more likely to have emotional responses to information that comes from in-group sources rather than out-group sources

H3 (*Social Transmission*): Subjects are more likely to desire to share information from an in-group source than an out-group source

Study One: Experimental Design

Our first study concerned the relationship between affective responses to information and social sharing behavior. For this experiment, we recruited subjects enrolled in political science courses at Rutgers University during the summer and fall of 2011. The sample is a convenience one, and no claim is made that it is representative of any particular population. Subjects were told that they would be taking part in an experiment on information and social media sharing during a Presidential campaign and were offered extra credit for their participation. The sample ($n = 163$) had an average age of 22 and males made up 52.8% of the subjects. 55.2% of the sample identified as white, 11% black, 17.2% Asian, 10.5% Hispanic and 13.5% mixed/other. A plurality of the sample was Catholic (37.4%), with no other religious group comprising more than 10% of the sample; 25.2% of the subjects indicated they were not part of any religion. The sample had an average household income of between 50 and \$75,000 per year.

While some researchers have questioned—rightly so—the types of inferences that can be drawn from these types of convenience samples (Sears 1986; Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan 2010), we believe that given the subject matter of our study, our subject pool is not a disadvantage. Our sample is young, politically engaged (68% said they were either “extremely interested” or “very interested” in politics; 47% say they discuss politics “almost every day” or “3-4 times a week”), and Internet-savvy. Members of our sample say they spend about 23 hours a week on the Internet, and fully 92% of the sample use social media sites like Facebook and Twitter; the median number of online friends/followers of our sample is 450. In short, this sample taps subjects who are not only interested in politics but comfortable using social media sites—the next generation, as it were, of politically engaged and socially connected citizens.

Our subjects took part in a simulated presidential campaign, set in the Dynamic Process Tracing Environment (DPTE) (Lau and Redlawsk 2006).² The DPTE software is a dynamic version of the static information boards used in earlier psychology research on decision making. The software presents subjects with an array of information about a particular object or individual and allows the researcher to track which items the subject accessed, how long they viewed the items, and the order in which they accessed the information. The information environment is dynamic, meaning that the available information is constantly changing during the experiment. The DPTE system is thus uniquely suited to studies of decision-making as it allows the subject to access whichever pieces of information he or she wishes. Our study took place against the backdrop of a simulated presidential campaign in which subjects learned about the policies and personal characteristics of two fictional candidates, Democrat Anthony Evans and Republican Kent Palmer.

² DPTE is available at <http://www.processtracing.org>. Any research may sign up for an account to run studies. Development of the DPTE system has been supported in part by National Science foundation grants to David Redlawsk and Richard Lau.

Subjects were randomly assigned to one of two groups based on the emotional content of some of the information available. Subjects in the treatment group were exposed to 20 items which, based on a pre-test, were judged to generate affective responses, while subjects in the control group saw 20 items that were evaluated as affectively neutral. We made no attempt to craft parallel messages that differed only in emotional content; it is our view that some topics are simply more likely to evoke emotional responses (Rozin et al. 1999) and our main concern is the link between these reactions and social sharing behavior. Both groups in the experiment encountered 66 unique pieces of information during the fifteen minute campaign. The items scroll down the computer screen, with one item appearing every 3 seconds. During the scroll, subjects see the headline of a simulated news story. Clicking on the headline opens the item and allows the subject to read it. During this time, the scroll of information continues in the background. Thirty of the items available are unrelated to the campaign—pop culture items, sports, and entertainment pieces. Each of these thirty items appeared four times during the experiment and was included as a form of “background noise.” Among the remaining 36 items are items relating to the campaigns of the two hypothetical candidates. We embedded our stimulus items within these campaign related pieces of information.

We delivered our stimulus items in two different ways. Because the DPTE software is designed to allow subjects to choose which information they see, we wanted to make sure that all of our subjects were exposed to some types of information. To accomplish this, we exposed each subject to six different campaign items at regular intervals during the treatment stage. These items appeared on the screen automatically; subjects did not have the ability to choose whether they saw this information or not, which simulates the fact that we are exposed to some types of information involuntarily. These items appeared every two and half minutes during the

experiment, and consisted of three articles about the Republican candidate and three articles about the Democratic contender.

The remainder of the stimulus items was included during the parade of information subjects encountered. Not all subjects were exposed to all of these items because each subject had the freedom to pick and choose which pieces of information piqued their interest. In the experimental group, fourteen (seven for the Democratic candidate and seven for the Republican) of these thirty items are news items that were pretested on a separate sample and selected because the sample indicated the story evoked an affective response³, whether positive or negative. If a subject accesses one of these fourteen stimulus items, he or she is asked after reading it to evaluate its emotional content and whether it is the type of information he or she would likely share with members of his or her network⁴. In the control group, the fourteen items are ones that from the pre-test that were judged not to arouse any strong emotional response, although of course the subjects are still given the option to evaluate and share the items.

Members of the experimental group also saw eight items (four for the Democratic candidate and four for the Republican candidate) marked as “shared.” During the pre-test, these items were rated as affectively neutral. The same exact items were included in the control group; however, they were not designated as “shared⁵.” The final eight items are the same for both groups and are not tagged and do not offer the opportunity to share or evaluate. Like the non-campaign information, these items are included as background noise. In sum, subjects are exposed to 306 pieces of information over the fifteen minute experiment (30 unique non-

³ For the pretest, subjects were asked to rate each item according to whether it made the subject feel angry, disgusted, or proud. Individual items that scored significantly above the mean for all items were selected for use in the treatment group.

⁴ For question wording and stimulus items, see Appendices 1 & 2. For a link to the full versions of the studies, see Appendix 3.

⁵ Results from this manipulation are not reported here.

campaign items, each displayed 4 times; 30 unique campaign items, each displayed 6 times; 6 timed items, each displayed once).

Our design departs from a true experiment in some important ways. First, the information is not constant across groups. As previously mentioned, we made no attempt to create “neutral” and “affective” versions of the same basic information, primarily because we are not arguing that emotional reactions to information are independent of the content. So although we sacrifice some degree of control, we still have groups that differ in the average *emotional* content of the information, which is our key variable of interest. Second, the DPTE program is designed to be dynamic. Each subject sees a random presentation of the information items and may choose to access however many pieces of information as he or she wishes. In effect, each information environment is unique, and we do not attempt to account for any effects that may result from the order in which subjects encounter or view information or the amount of information each subject decides to process. In our view, this trade-off in internal validity is more than compensated by more realistic simulation of information availability that DPTE offers.

Study One: Results

In order to verify that our randomization procedure was successful, we use the Hansen & Bowers omnibus test (Hansen & Bowers 2008). The Hansen & Bowers test checks for independence of treatment by taking the difference between the mean values of the covariates in the treatment group and subtracting the mean values of these same covariates in the control groups. The differences are divided by the standard deviation of each covariate and the test checks to see if the mean differences in covariates are associated with the treatment variable. The Hansen & Bowers test statistic is distributed as a chi-square, with the null hypothesis that the samples are balanced (i.e., the treatment variable is not associated with any of the observable

covariates). In our randomization check, we included a number of demographic, psychological, and political variables. The results of the Hansen & Bowers test indicate that our treatment and control groups are balanced across all 19 covariates ($\chi^2 = 9.776, p < .958$). The results of the Hansen & Bowers omnibus test are presented graphically in Figure 1:

{Insert Figure 1 Here}

Our first hypothesis, the affective transmission hypothesis, holds that subjects are more likely to share information items that evoke an affective response than they are affectively neutral ones. We first analyze the reported sharing behavior of the six pieces of information that all subjects were exposed to (recall that unlike the other stimulus items used the experiment, subjects had no choice as to whether they were exposed to this information). As we predicted, a difference of means test reveals subjects in the treatment group indicated they would be likely to share a higher number of the six stimuli items with members of their social networks (t value = 3.179, $p < .002$). These results are reported in Table 1 and Figure 2.

{Insert Table 1 and Figure 2 Here}

Next, we look at the sharing behavior of the fourteen embedded items⁶. The experimental group accessed 9.03 items on average while the control group choose to view 8.11 items; this difference is significant ($t = 1.739, p < .042$, one-tailed). However, the mean difference in shared items between the two groups was not significant, with the treatment group sharing 2.59 items to the control group's 2.17 ($t = .912$, ns). We suspect that this null finding may be due to the fact that not all of the subjects in the treatment group were in fact treated. Our treatment group consisted of items that evoked an emotional response among pre-testers, but it is not the case that all members of our treatment group found the items provocative; therefore, the reported results actually reflect the “intent to treat” rather than the average treatment effect on the treated

⁶ A computer programming error caused us to lose data on 46 cases. The results reported here are for $N = 117$.

(Morton & Williams 2010, ch. 5). Fortunately, we asked the subjects to rate the items they read for their emotional content⁷. Now, we can investigate the average treatment effect on the treated (ATT)—the differences in behavior among those in the treatment group who indicated that the item generated an affective response compared to the behavior of those in the control group who had no such responses. We measured affective response by dividing the total number of stimulus items the subject found evocative by the total number of stimulus items accessed. This variable ranged from 0 to 1, with a median of .45. Subject below the median were considered to have a low affective response, while those above a high affective response. This manipulation leaves us with 43 subjects in the control group and 40 in the treatment group and we see a striking difference in sharing behavior among these subjects.

Even when controlling for the fact that subjects in the treatment group accessed more stimulus items overall (9.35 vs. 8.04, $t = 1.803$, $p < .075$), the treatment group shared a greater number of the stimuli. When looking at the number of items shared as a percentage of all items accessed, the treatment group again shows a significant difference. These results are presented in Table 3 and Figure 3⁸.

{Insert Table 3 and Figure 3 Here}

What if we include those members of the control group who found the items they accessed emotionally charged? We created two groups, now based solely on the degree of emotional reactivity. The “high reaction” group contains people who, regardless of original intent to treat assignment, found the stimulus items emotionally engaging, while the “low

⁷ We asked the subjects first if they would like to share the item, then followed up by asking them about their reaction.

⁸ This pattern of results holds even when comparing the behavior of subjects within groups. Thus, when holding the information constant, we see that members of the control group who indicated a high emotional response shared 53% of the items accessed compared to 23% from those who had low affective responses ($t = 3.903$, $p < .000$). In the treatment group, these figures were 46% and 21% ($t = 2.706$, $p < .009$).

reaction” group contains the remaining subjects. The Hansen & Bowers omnibus test confirms that these two groups are balanced on all observable covariates, differing only in their emotional response to the items ($\chi^2 = 20.15, p < .385$). Again, those subjects who found the items emotionally stimulating shared a higher percentage of the items they encountered, as well as a higher absolute number⁹. Table 4 presents these results.

{Insert Table 4 Here}

Discussion: Study One

We believe that our results provide good support for the affective transmission hypothesis. Affective responses were associated with significantly higher sharing behavior under a variety of specifications. While we cannot conclusively rule out the alternative hypothesis that some other factor is driving sharing behavior and the subjects are merely rationalizing their decision to share an item by indicating that the item caused them to feel angry or proud or some other emotion, we feel confident that our manipulations worked. Our pre-tested items were relatively successful at provoking emotional responses in the subjects; 35 of the 54 subjects assigned to the treatment group had emotional reactions to more than half of the stimuli they accessed, while only 20 of the 63 members of the control group did so. A chi-square test shows these frequencies differ significantly from chance ($\chi^2 = 20.852, p < .000$). And even when we divided the sample up into groups based on emotional reactions to the stimuli, tests of covariate balance show that the groups differed only in their responses to the stimuli, providing further support for the notion that subjects’ emotional appraisal of the information is an important driver of sharing behavior. The fact that for the most part our pre-tested items did engender emotional reactions and the proportion of subjects indicating some affective response is consonant with

⁹ Controlling for the difference in total items accessed; again, the high emotion group accessed significantly more items than the low emotion group (10.53 vs. 6.72, $t = 7.48, p < .000$)

proportions from NES data support the notion that we are picking up a real phenomenon with our design¹⁰.

Study Two: Experimental Design

For our second study, we told subjects that we were interested in how people respond to political information on the Internet. We told the participants that although the candidates they would be learning about were fictional, we had hired actual political bloggers to provide us with feedback on the candidate's policy positions¹¹. Again using the DPTE software, we ran the subjects through a mock primary campaign in which they were given the opportunity to learn about the candidates and indicate a preference by "voting" for one or the other. After forming their preference, subjects saw nine simulated blog posts about that candidate's positions; five of these items praised the candidate, while four criticized him. Each subject also saw nine posts about the other candidate, with the same ratio of praise and criticism. We were able to refine the delivery of the stimulus items to record the subjects' sharing behavior and affective responses to the blogs in a less obtrusive manner. In our first experiment, we asked the subject a series of questions after they viewed each item. In this study, subjects could click on one or more of three buttons that appeared on the screen with the stimuli¹²: "Share," "Angry," and "Enthusiastic." We stated in the instructions that the participants were not required to select any of the buttons.

For this study, we used a more traditional design. We held the information constant and only manipulated the source (Druckman & Lupia 2000 provide a good overview of source effects). Subjects assigned to the "in-group" treatment saw items from a blogger who shared the same party identification of the participants; those in the "out-group" treatment were exposed to

¹⁰ In 2008, about 40% of respondents said that at some point, either the Democratic or Republican candidate made them experience a positive or negative emotion.

¹¹ Subjects were debriefed after the experiment.

¹² Sample stimuli are included in Appendix 2.

blog postings from a writer with opposite political predilections¹³. We also employed a non-student sample gathered from Amazon's Mechanical Turk service (Buhrmester, Kwang & Gosling 2011). We recruited 192 subjects; ages ranged from 18 to 68, with a mean of 32.6. The sample is 58% female, 76% white, with a median income of \$50 to \$75,000 per year. Forty-four percent of the sample have attended some college, and another 44% are married or with a committed partner. The sample tilts towards the Democratic party, with 70% identifying as Democrats. On a seven-point scale of conservatism (with higher numbers indicating more conservatism), the sample mean is 3.11. The Hansen and Bowers omnibus test confirms that random assignment was successful, with treatment and control groups balanced across thirteen different demographic variables ($\chi^2=10.199, p < .598$).

Study Two: Results

The social transmission hypothesis holds that there will be increased sharing of information among in-group members. Out of the 18 items each group was exposed to, we find more items shared when information comes from an in-party source than from an out-party source. On average, the in-party group shared 5.05 items while in the out-party condition, 3.99 items were shared (t value = 1.745, $p < .041$, one-tailed). Interestingly, we find a significant difference in the number of critical items shared by members the two groups, but no difference in the number of positive items shared. Subjects in the in-group condition shared an average of .814 critical items about their preferred candidate compared to .505 items shared in the out-group condition ($t = 2.096, p < .018$, one-tailed). For the non-preferred or "out" candidate, subjects in the in-group condition shared 1.00 items on average while those in the out-group condition shared .80 items, a marginally significant difference ($t = 1.451, p < .074$, one-tailed). No

¹³ Subjects were asked to register as Republicans or Democrats for purposes of the experiment.

significant differences were found when it came to sharing positive items. Previous research has indicated that negative information has an asymmetric impact on evaluations (Lau 1985; Klein 1991) which may explain this trend. The above results are summarized in Table 5:

{Insert Table 5 Here}

Our affective contagion hypothesis states that people will show a greater affective reaction to in-group messages. The data from our study bear out this prediction. Members of the in-group treatment indicated that 4.91 items made them angry; for participants in the out-group treatment, the number was 3.87 (t value = 2.609, $p < .005$, one-tailed). The number of items the subjects rated as making them feel enthusiastic also approaches significance (5.38 items for the in-group condition versus 4.80 items for the out-group condition; t value = 1.364, $p < .087$, one-tailed). Subjects also appeared to show a greater sensitivity to criticism of their preferred candidate; in the in-party condition, 1.41 items were rated as evoking anger compared to 1.07 items in the out-party condition (t value = 2.151, $p < .017$ one-tailed). For the out candidate, the number of items generating anger was smaller although the difference between treatments was again significant (.845 items compared to .463, t value = 3.197, $p < .001$, one-tailed). For the positive items, none of the differences between groups was significant. These results appear in Table 6.

{Insert Table 6 Here}

Discussion: Study Two

Our second study has several advantages over our first effort. We believe that our way of measuring sharing behavior and affective reactions is fairly similar to how many websites ask viewers to respond to news items and blog postings. And because we held information constant across the groups, we can be fairly certain that the difference in source attribution is causing the

different reactions to the items. The use of a non-student sample also strengthens the external validity of our results. Based on our findings, we are confident in asserting that people's social and affective responses to information vary based on whether they arrive from an in-group or out-group source. Importantly, our data indicate that people express a greater desire to share messages from an in-group source; furthermore, messages from a presumably trusted source engender more affective reactions than do messages from an out-party member. We note as well that the results from study two also support the affective transmission hypothesis. Subjects in the in-party condition had more affective responses to the information and also shared more, supporting the link between affect and social sharing behavior.

Conclusion

Taken together, the data from studies one and two presents suggestive evidence on the role of affect in regulating inter-group behavior. Understanding the relationship between affective responses and sharing behavior can illuminate a number of interesting political behaviors. For example, imagine the following hypothetical about three friends with varying levels of political interest. The first individual, who is very politically engaged, encounters some news about a political candidate that angers her. The voter, visibly upset, tells one of her friends, who has a passing interest in politics, about this news. The friend now gains some important information. He not only learns something about the candidate (which may or may not have changed in the re-telling, and which he may or may not remember), but he learns that that information has made his friend angry. He himself may become upset and later conveys this information to the third member of the triad, a woman who is for the most part politically apathetic. She cares little about the initial political stimuli, but does note the reaction it has caused in one of her confidantes. Perhaps she even calls the friend who initially encountered the

stimulus to commiserate. The sharing and reinforcement of the emotional response leads to an emotional convergence among the members of the triad, and consequently, each member's evaluation of the politician is downgraded. The individuals may not even recall the specific information that triggered the reaction (as hypothesized in the online information processing model (Lodge, McGraw, and Stroh, 1989; Lodge, Steenbergen, and Brau, 1995, Redlawsk, 2001), but importantly, they have managed, via emotional contagion and convergence, to create a coordinated appraisal of a political figure. A few moments of reflection on this idea suggests how studying the social component of emotion could potentially enrich our knowledge of a variety of topics, including decision making and voting (Lau and Redlawsk 1997; 2001), campaign effects (Brader 2005; Holbrook 1996), and media and framing (Iyengar et al. 1982; Chong & Druckman 2007).

Of course, the studies presented here also raise a number of questions. Are the subjects angry because their preferred candidate is being criticized, or are they angry at their preferred candidate's policy stances? How robust is our finding that subjects share more items generating negative affect than they do ones generating positive feelings? And perhaps most importantly, what is the impact of these shared items on a recipient's candidate evaluation? We are also intrigued by the possibility of moving beyond affect to a more precise understanding of how different emotions impact political behavior. While it is true that early psychological research on emotions focused on affect, researchers are now reliably distinguishing a number of distinct emotions. Current investigations into autonomic activity (involuntary movement of facial muscles, blushing, release of the stress hormone cortisol) suggest the possibility of at least five emotions¹⁴: anger, contempt, gratitude, disgust, and fear (see Keltner and Lerner 2010, 323-325

¹⁴ Researchers also claim to be able to reliably identify the physiological signature of surprise, but some scholars do not consider surprise an emotion.

for a review). More precise theorizing on the effects of unique emotional responses may have important implications for research in political science. For example, Fischer and Roseman (2007) demonstrate that anger and contempt are analytically separate, with anger consisting of a short term “attack” orientation but a possibility of reconciliation in the long term, while contempt is characterized by rejection and social exclusion, with little possibility of reconciliation over time. If this is the case, then we might hypothesize that anger and contempt have different implications for political behaviors, implications that are obscured by the focusing on the enthusiasm/anxiety division common to studies of affect.

It is no exaggeration to say we live in an age in which information is more readily available than it has been in any other time in history. And while some maintain that social capital has declined in the “real” world, the advent of social media sites makes membership in virtual communities a possibility for large parts of the population. A social functional theory of emotions may help us understand how members of social networks respond to, process, and share information about politics and political figures.

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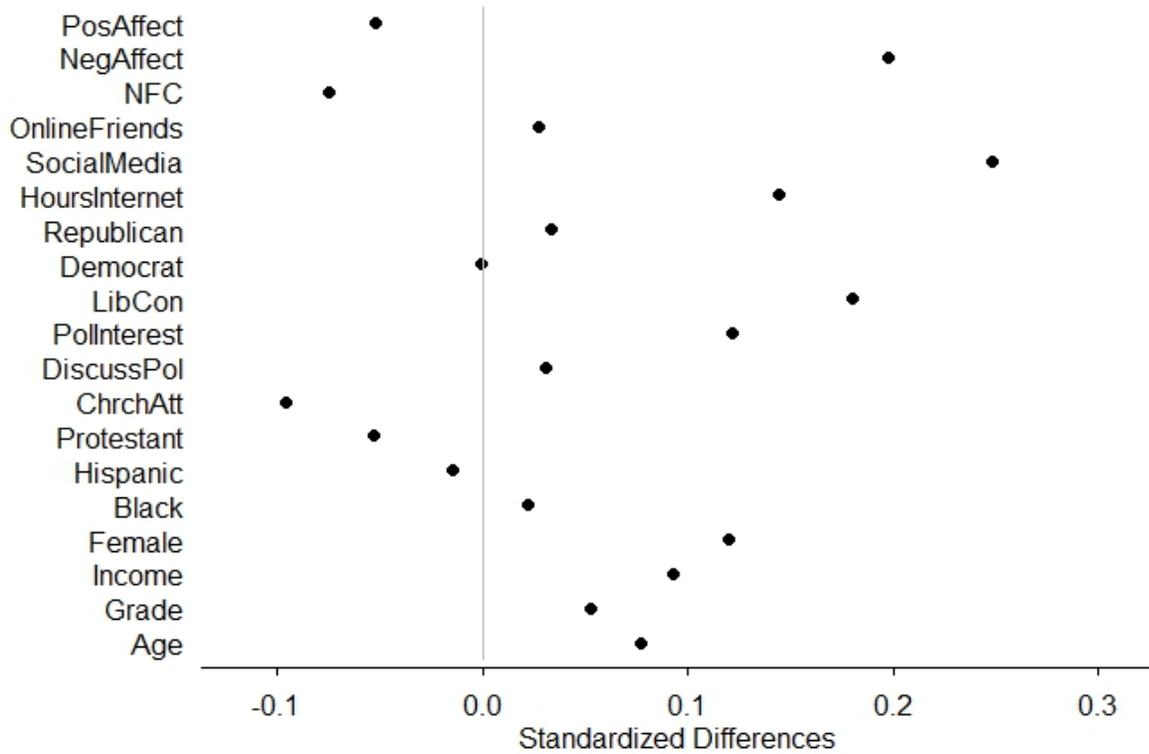
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Figure 1: Randomization Check, Treatment and Control Groups



Treatment and control groups were balanced on the following demographic characteristics: age, highest grade level completed (grade), income, race, gender, religion, and frequency of church attendance (ChrchAtt); political variables included are: frequency of political discussion (DiscussPol), interest in politics (PolInterest), liberalism (LibCon), and party identification; variables relating to Internet use are: hours spent on the Internet per week (HoursInternet), social media use, and number of online friends; finally, the psychological variables are: need for cognition (NFC), and positive and negative affect as measured by the PANAS (PosAffect, NegAffect).

Figure 2: Mean Items Shared

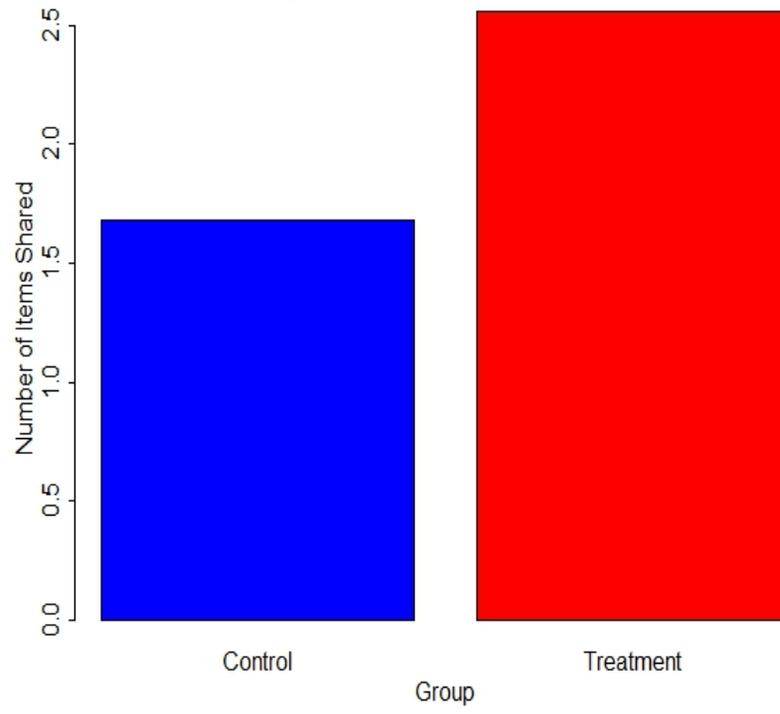


Figure 3: Mean Items Shared

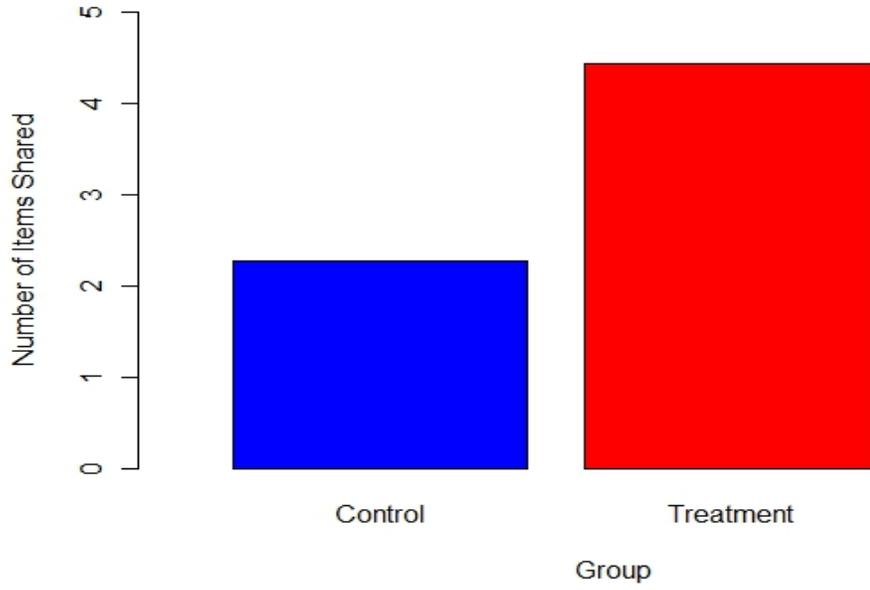


Figure 3a: Percent Stimulus Items Shared

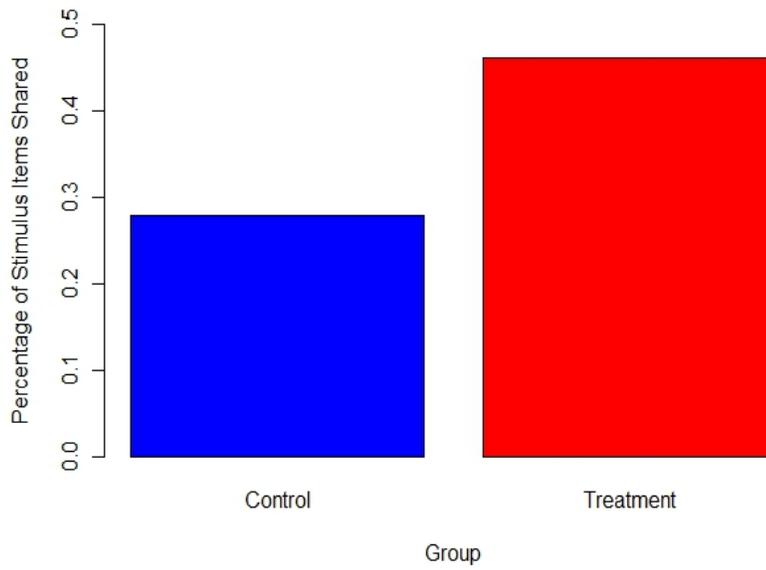


Table 1: Number of Stimulus Items Shared

Group	N	Mean	SD	Standard Error Mean	Mean Difference	t value	Sig.
Experimental	75	2.560	1.862	.215			
Control	88	1.682	1.665	.177			
					.878	3.179	.002

Table 2: Stimulus Items Accessed (as a Percentage of All Unique Items Accessed) And Shared

	Group		Results	
	Control (N = 62)	Treatment (N = 54)	T value of difference	Significance
Stimulus Items Accessed, Percentage	.342	.370	1.20	.234
Stimulus Items Shared	3.06	3.65	1.04	.302

Table 3: Average Treatment Effect on the Treated, Sharing Behavior

	Group		Results	
	Control (N = 43)	Treatment (N = 40)	T value of difference	Significance
Stimulus Items Shared	2.28	4.43	3.341	.001
Stimulus Items Shared As a Percent of Stimulus Items Accessed	.279	.461	2.985	.004
Total Stimulus Items Accessed	8.04	9.35	1.803	.075

Table 4: Sharing Behavior By Emotional Reaction Groups

	Group		Results
	Low Emotional Reaction (N = 57)	High Emotional Reaction (N = 60)	Significance
Stimulus Items Shared	2.188	4.538	.000 ^a
Stimulus Items Shared As a Percent of Stimulus Items Accessed	.285	.473	.000

^a Controlling for number of items accessed ($F_{1,114} = 17.581$)

Table 5: Stimulus Items Shared, In-party and Out-party Conditions

	Group		Results	
	In-party (N = 97)	Out-party (N = 95)	T value of difference	Significance (one-tailed)
Total Items Shared	5.05	3.99	1.745	.042
Negative Items Shared, Preferred Candidate	.814	.505	2.096	.019
Negative Items Shared, Out Candidate	1.00	.800	1.451	.074

Table 6: Number of Stimulus Items Generating Affective Response

	Group		Results	
	In-party (N = 97)	Out-party (N = 95)	T value of difference	Significance (one-tailed)
Total Items Angry	4.91	3.87	2.609	.005
Total Items Enthusiastic	5.38	4.80	1.364	.087
Negative Items Angry, Preferred Candidate	1.412	1.074	2.151	.017
Negative Items Angry, Out Candidate	.8454	.4632	3.197	.001

Appendix 1: Stimulus and Control Items, Study One

Experimental Group-Timed Items

Each of these six items was presented to subjects as pre-determined points during the experiment (every 2 minutes, 30 seconds). After closing the article, subjects were asked if they would be likely to share the article with their network. The emotion in parenthesis is based on the results of a pre-test, in which subjects were asked to rate each article and indicate whether it made them feel angry, proud, disgusted, hopeful, or nothing.

Democrat

1. Evans' Family Prominent Part of Campaign (Pride)

Political campaigns are grueling exercises, with candidates spending weeks away from home. But Anthony Evans has a solution: make his family part of the campaign. Evans' three children, Jackson (age 26), Mary Beth (age 22), and Christina (age 19), have been prominent members of the campaign, appearing with their father at rallies and making the rounds among supporters. "My family is important to me," said Evans. "Having them here kind of takes away some of the stress of campaigning."

2. Evans on Immigration (Pride)

According to Anthony Evans, it is time to fix our nation's broken immigration system. "The current debate about immigration in this country is inflamed by a lot of stereotypical thinking, in my opinion," Evans said at a recent campaign stop. "We need to stop make an issue about the skin color of people coming into this country and focus instead on how they contribute to our society. Immigrants help make America stronger."

3. Evans Launches New Campaign Website (Pride)

The Evans campaign today unveiled its new campaign website, www.fightforamerica.org. As Evans promised during an interview on "Meet The Press," the new website contains detailed policy proposals and campaign promises for taxes, spending, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, healthcare, and other issues. "This new website allows the American people to see exactly how Anthony Evans will for fight for them," said Timothy Lerner, an Evans spokesman.

Republican

1. Palmer Says States Should Be Able To Fly Confederate Flag (Anger)

The Confederate Flag symbolizes a "proud southern tradition," said Republican nominee Kent Palmer, and states have the right to display it if they choose. Palmer, who is from Georgia, said that "The Confederacy wasn't about slavery. It was about standing up for our rights. It's what I will do for you if I'm elected President."

2. Palmer: People on Welfare "Choose That Lifestyle"(Disgust)

Republican Presidential nominee Kent Palmer pulled no punches when asked his opinion of welfare. "For sure, there are some people who are down on their luck and need a helping hand. But those people are on (welfare) for only a short time, only until they get back on their feet. But for a lot of people, it's a lifestyle choice. They choose it because they say 'the government is going to give me money, so why should I work.'" Palmer said that as President he would cut welfare and put an absolute cap on the benefits an individual could receive.

3. Palmer Too Cozy With Wall Street? (Anger)

Today the Anthony Evans campaign released a scorching new attack ad aimed at Kent Palmer's connections to Wall Street. The advertisement includes quotes from Palmer defending Wall Street after the financial meltdown in 2008. "What they did wasn't criminal. It was business. There was no intent to defraud the American people," said Palmer. The quotes are juxtaposed with headlines dating from the investigation of Palmer's firm for insider trading.

Control Group—Timed Items

Democrat

1. Evans Campaign Rolls Into Final Weeks

The Presidential election is a mere four weeks away, and the Evans campaign looks to be in good shape heading into the final weeks. The campaign has not had any major shake-ups in recent weeks, and while the always combative Evans has been no stranger to the headlines, most pundits agree that the former Governor of Colorado has made no major gaffes. "They've run a tight ship," said Gary Cohen, a Republican strategist not affiliated with the campaign of Kent Palmer, Evans' rival. "You've got to give Evans credit for that."

2. Evans' Personality a Factor in Campaign

To the citizens of Colorado, Anthony Evans' affable nature is well-known. The Democratic nominee for President had a way with voters, connecting with them and making them feel at ease. It appears that Evans' personality has translated to the national stage. Many people find the stocky former amateur boxer easy to talk to. In the minds of many voters, he definitely passes the "would like to have a beer with him" test.

3. Evans Releases Trove of Email Messages From Time As Governor

Today the Evans campaign released over 50,000 emails from the former Governor's years in office. Some critics had called for the Governor to release the missives after noting that the Evans administration had catalogued the messages as "Restricted Information." "Anthony has nothing to hide," said Tricia Connors, a campaign aide. "These emails show that he has always been honest with the citizens of Colorado."

Republican

1. Palmer Campaign Shuffles Deck

Yesterday the campaign of Republican presidential hopeful Kent Palmer announced two minor personnel changes. Jacob Framming, the deputy chief of fundraising, is taking over community outreach planning for the campaign. Karl Vodkin, the current director of outreach, is leaving the campaign, citing the need to spend more time with his family.

2. Palmer Campaign Announces Southern Swing

Kent Palmer's "Real America" campaign tour announced its upcoming itinerary. The campaign will spend the next two weeks traveling west from Florida, with stops in Alabama, Louisiana, Texas, and New Mexico.

3. Palmer Heads to Israel

Republican Presidential nominee Kent Palmer flew to Israel to meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "It is important for our allies in Israel to know that the next President of the US stands with them," said Palmer. "The relationship between Israel and the United States is unique, and we will continue to be steadfast allies during my Presidency."

Experimental Group-Flow Items

These items appeared six times each during the experiment, flowing vertically across the screen in a randomly determined order. We recorded each time a subject chose to access one of these items. Although we also asked them about sharing behavior for each of these items, the data were lost due to a programming glitch.

Democrat

1. Evans: "Terrorism" Not A "Major Threat" (Anger)

Anthony Evans does not believe that terrorism is one of the major problems facing the United States. "I'm not saying that terrorism isn't something that we have to deal with. But you are more likely to have your house foreclosed, to lose your job, or to have a child drop out of school than to be a victim of a terrorist attack," said Evans. The Palmer campaign responded immediately. "It is unbelievable that a candidate for President would say such a thing. 9/11 proved that these people want to destroy us and our way of life."

2. "Evolution" is a "Settled Issue," says Evans (Pride)

During a nationally televised debate, Republican presidential nominee Kent Palmer refused to say whether he accepted the theory of evolution. Anthony Evans has no such compunctions. "Darwin's theory of evolution is one of the most elegant and well supported theories in science. It is ridiculous that a candidate for the President of the United States refuses to endorse it. The Republican party is becoming anti-science and anti-reason, and that is just terribly sad for America," said Evans.

3. Evans Angers Right With Statement on Gay Marriage (Anger)

Conservatives reacted angrily to a recent statement about gay marriage made by Anthony Evans at a campaign stop. Speaking at a rally in Dearborn, Michigan, Evans said, "These are the same people who, fifty years ago, were saying that African Americans couldn't sit at the same lunch counter with whites. Morally, it's the same with gay marriage. In America, everyone is supposed to be equal."

"It is disgusting that Evans would link the issue of gay marriage to segregation," fumed Steve Morrison, spokesman for the Conservative Society of America, an advocacy group. "This is provocation, pure and simple. Our opposition to gay marriage is based on our devotion to the traditional family, not hatred."

4. "Gays Ok in Military" Says Evans (Pride)

If elected President, Anthony Evans would not revisit the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, which forbade gays from serving openly in the military and was repealed in 2010. "Once again, Republicans are up to their old tricks. First, they try to scare us with terrorism, then they tell us we should remove patriotic Americans from service? They can't have it both ways," said Evans. "Republicans should focus on the real issues affecting this country. What people do behind closed doors or who they love is not an issue for politicians to decide."

5. Evans' Miraculous Rise (Pride)

Four years ago, Anthony Evans was the Governor of Colorado, popular in his own state but a stranger to the national stage. Now, the affable former amateur boxer is one election away from becoming President of the United States. "The story of Anthony Evans is an American story. His father worked in a box factory and his mother was a school teacher. Anthony has had to work for everything he's got, and he's done it the right way," said Ben Turner, a long time aide of Evans.

6. Evans Runs Tight Campaign Ship (Pride)

Prognosticators wondering how a potential Evans administration might run need look no further than Evans' tightly run Presidential campaign. Thus far, the Evans campaign has been a model of efficiency. There have been no high profile departures, no major scandals, and very few private--or public--squabbles. "Evans is a team-builder," said a member of the campaign on the condition of anonymity. "He makes sure everyone is on the same page, and it makes it easy to come to work every day."

7. Evans: Time To "Get To Work"

Go to any Anthony Evans campaign event and you'll see them; supporters in collared shirts with the sleeves rolled up, bearing signs with the legend "Time To Get To Work." The motto has become a sort of unofficial campaign

slogan for Evans, who first used the line at a rally in Scranton, PA. "The American people know Evans is going to work for them, not corporate lobbyists and special interests," said Ann Werth, a campaign spokesperson.

Republican

1. Did Palmer Use Racial Slurs At Duke? (Anger)

Kent Palmer was a well-regarded athlete at Duke University, excelling at tennis and playing fullback on the football team from 1972-1976. But according to some of his former classmates, Palmer was not shy about using racial slurs on the grid-iron. Although Duke University had a policy in place in 1961 to admit students without regard to "race, creed, or national origin," full integration was a slow process. "There were still very few black students at Duke when I was there," said Howard Washington, class of '75. Washington played linebacker at Duke and remembers Palmer. "He definitely did not like to lose, and he especially did not like losing to teams with African-American players. I heard him shout racial slurs at opposing players."

The Palmer campaign was quick to respond. "Kent Palmer doesn't have a racist bone in his body. Howard Washington was a great teammate of Kent's, but Kent respectfully disagrees with his recollection."

2. Palmer: Cut Taxes On Wealthiest Americans (Anger)

Kent Palmer is prepared to double down on the Bush era tax cuts. Despite sluggish economic numbers since the cuts, Palmer says that if elected president, he would make the Bush tax cuts permanent. "If we want to get this economy up and running, then we need to put money back into the hands of the American people." Although most economic analysis claim that the cuts have predominantly benefitted the wealthiest Americans, Palmer says that the cuts are in the interest of all Americans. "If the wealthiest have more money, they will invest more and create more jobs," said Palmer.

3. Palmer Decries 'Gotcha' Journalism (Anger)

After a speech at The Citadel military academy in South Carolina, Kent Palmer was asked his take on the leaders of China, Russia, and Pakistan. The problem was, he couldn't name the leaders of those countries. The controversy now enveloping Palmer is reminiscent of similar flaps that dogged President George W. Bush in 2000 and Vice Presidential nominee Sarah Palin in 2008. Palmer's Democratic opponent Anthony Evans seized on the flub. "This demonstrates that Kent Palmer is not ready to be President of the United States."

The Palmer campaign responded by criticizing the media. "This kind of 'gotcha' journalism is not helpful to the American people. Kent Palmer will be ready to lead on Day One when he is elected President."

4. Palmer Has Novel Take on First Amendment (Disgust)

According to Kent Palmer, the founders never intended a separation of church of state. "That phrase is not in the Constitution at all," said Palmer. "We are a Christian nation and people of faith should be able to demonstrate that in our public spaces." Palmer says that he supports prayer in public school, as well as the display of the Ten Commandments in courthouses and nativity scenes at town halls.

Steven Leavitt of the American Civil Liberties Union says Palmer needs a refresher on Constitutional law. "The 'establishment' clause of the First Amendment prohibits the kind of displays Palmer is talking about."

5. No Abortion Exception For Rape Or Incest, Says Palmer (Anger)

Kent Palmer is staunchly pro-life and believes abortion should be illegal in all circumstances, even if the woman is the victim of incest or rape. "A life is a life. There is no circumstance that should allow someone to take an innocent life," said Palmer. "The rape and incest thing is a ploy used by pro-abortion advocates. Very few cases of abortion involve these incidents," continued Palmer. Palmer said that if President he would end all federal funding to Planned Parenthood and deny aid to foreign countries that use the funds for abortion services.

6. Palmer Excels in Townhall Style Events (Pride)

Although the media is often enamored with the spectacle of a large political rally, with thousands of cheering supporters, many political strategists will say that votes are won during the more intimate campaign events. "At these events, the voters really get a chance to interact with the candidate and get a good read on him," said Holly Martins, a campaign strategist. In these settings--at a diner, a local business, or at the town VFW post--Kent Palmer excels. "He's got a real folksy personality and a quick smile. He always seems to know how to relate to the people that come to see him," said Martins.

7. Palmer On Defensive About Tax Records (Anger)

Anthony Evans today called on his Republican opponent to explain his failure to disclose income on his tax returns during the late nineties. Reports have surfaced that over a five period, from 1994 to 1999, Palmer did not report over \$600,000 in income he had received in speaking fees. "Palmer is always talking about his experience in the financial sector," said a high level member of the Evans campaign. "He knows better. This just shows that Palmer is not being straightforward with the American people." The Palmer campaign claims the blame lies with Palmer's former accountant.

Control Group—Flow Items

1. Evans to Skip New York Campaign Stop

Citing a family conflict, the Evans campaign announced that the Democratic Presidential candidate will cancel a planned rally in New York City. "Anthony Evans sends his regards to his supporters, and he will be back at a later date," said a campaign aide. According to the aide, Evans did not want to miss the rally, but a family emergency forced his hand.

2. Evans Campaign Replaces Key Member

David Sorkin, one of the head strategists for the Evans campaign, is resigning his post. Sorkin has worked as a Democratic consultant for over twenty years and had prominent roles in the campaigns of Sen. Bob Kerrey in 1992 and Gen. Wesley Clark in 2004. The break between Sorkin and Evans is "amicable," according to a campaign insider. "Anthony and David have had respectful differences of opinions on a couple of key issues, and both gentlemen agreed this was the best solution."

3. Evans Not Afraid to Take Unpopular Positions

On the campaign trail, Anthony Evans likes to reference his days as an amateur boxer. His message to voters: he's a fighter who can take a punch and keep on fighting. But sometimes, his campaign staff wishes the Colorado Governor wouldn't take on so many battles at once. The Governor's direct manner of speaking and willingness to take controversial positions has resulted in a steady onslaught of criticism from bloggers and pundits on the right. In recent weeks, Evans has stated that he believes reparations for descendants of former slaves "are the right thing to do, even if there's no political will for it," that Republicans need to stop worrying about "who sleeps with who," and that too many politicians are "in the back pockets of special interests."

4. Evans on Fairness

In an unusually candid interview, Anthony Evans blasted conservatives and Republicans for possessing a "distorted" sense of fairness and pushing policies that "reward" law breaking in the financial world but harshly punish low level crime, particularly drug offenses. "Tell me this...how is it that these Wall Street guys can disrupt the entire global economy and ruin thousands of people's lives without penalty. But some poor kid in Los Angeles gets busted for an ounce of marijuana and goes to jail for ten years? How is that fair?" Evans noted that the United States has more people in prison than any other country in the world, including China.

5. Evans Handshake Riles Right

Anthony Evans figured that making an appearance at the Summit of the Americas, the semi-regular meetings attended by heads of state from North, Central, and South America, would burnish his diplomatic credentials. Instead, Evans finds himself in a firestorm of his own making after a brief handshake with Venezuelan dictator Hugo Chavez. "Anthony Evans has tarnished our image abroad," says Rick Mirelin, a Palmer campaign spokesman. "Chavez is a brutal dictator and our leaders should be turning their backs on him, not engaging him in friendly chats."

The Evans campaign responded by stating, "Clearly, Palmer doesn't understand the nuances of international diplomacy."

6. Evans Releases Financial Information

As required by law, the Evans campaign released its financial records from the first quarter of the year. The records show that Evans took in over 150 million dollars in donations from supporters. Evans has declined federal matching funds for his campaign.

7. Evans' Poll Numbers On The Rise

Anthony Evans' campaign for President is gaining momentum heading into September. After an August in which it seemed the campaign could do no right, and Evans' poll numbers sank to a low of only 29% support, the former governor from Colorado seems to be recapturing some of his early charm. A new Gallup/USA Today poll shows Evans with the support of 35% of likely voters. Palmer, whose campaign has suffered through some missteps of its own lately, still leads with 39%, with the rest of the respondents undecided.

1. Palmer Polls Steady

For the second straight week, Republican presidential nominee Kent Palmer's poll numbers have held steady. According to the latest Gallup poll, 39% of registered voters said that if the election were today, they would vote for Palmer. Palmer is in a virtual dead heat with Democratic challenger Anthony Evans, whose poll numbers show the support of 37% of registered voters.

2. Palmer Picking Up Steam After Rocky Start

Like many fledging campaigns, Kent Palmer's presidential bid got off to a rocky start. Fundraising issues, personality conflicts, and an uncertain campaign strategy plagued the Palmer camp at the start. But now, with the election a little more than a month away, the Palmer campaign is looking lean, mean, and focused. "We've rallied around the support of the American people. The people want a Palmer presidency, and we want them to see what a Palmer administration will look like--committed, focused, and ready to get to business," said Kyle Turnis, a top Palmer campaign manager.

3. Palmer's Twisted View of Government

Kent Palmer found himself engaging in some verbal gymnastics at a town hall meeting in Franklin, New Hampshire. New Hampshire went for Bush in the 2000 election, but has voted Democratic in the last two elections. Now, Palmer is finding it difficult to charm the traditionally independent residents. Palmer got caught in an exchange with a voter who wanted to know how Palmer could simultaneously support smaller government and fewer social programs, but also want government regulation of marriages and family planning decisions. As the crowd grew increasingly disgruntled, Palmer tried to talk his way out of the contradiction, with limited success.

"Well, what we have is a difference of opinion as to the nature of government," Palmer began. "First, I believe that government should be smaller. We need to cut taxes. And we need to seriously look at the entitlement programs that are eating up our revenue. But at the same time, we need a government that reflects the values of America, and works to make sure we're the kind of country we want to be. Does that help?"

The questioner, Harry Tennebaum, said "No," at which the crowd erupted into laughter.

4. Palmer Supports "Enhanced Interrogation" Methods

Kent Palmer has been adamant in his commitment to defend America. And that includes the use of harsh "enhanced interrogation" methods, including stress positions, sleep deprivation, and even waterboarding. Opponents of these tactics claim they constitute torture. Palmer has a different view. "If a terrorist wants to harm America, he doesn't get our Constitutional protections. These people want to destroy us, and I will use these tactics, which have been approved by administration lawyers, to help protect America."

5. Palmer Stung By "Chickenhawk" Label

The Anthony Evans campaign learned a lesson from the 2004 campaign, in which the Bush campaign went after veteran John Kerry's war record, despite the fact that George W. Bush never served. Although neither candidate has any military experience, Kent Palmer has cast himself as the 'military' candidate, giving frequent speeches at military academies and promising an aggressive military policy if elected President. The Evans campaign has countered by suggesting that Palmer is only comfortable cheering from the sidelines.

"My opponent talks tough, but he hasn't served. None of his family members are in the military. Of course it is easy for my opponent to say he will send troops overseas to protect America; he doesn't have to go," said Evans. "I

promise as President that I will keep all Americans safe, even the members of our military. I will not send them into dangers unless America's safety is truly at stake."

6. National Conservative Coalition Endorses Palmer

Kent Palmer picked up a key endorsement yesterday when the National Conservative Coalition announced that it was supporting Palmer for President. Notably, the NCC backed Palmer's rival, Sen. James Johnston, during the Republican primary, but now says Palmer is the right choice. "We have every confidence that Kent Palmer is strongly committed to conservative values--fewer regulations, lower taxes, and smaller government," said a NCC spokesman.

7. Palmer Looks To Force Evans' Hand

Kent Palmer is looking to keep the pressure on his opponent Anthony Evans by campaigning in a number of states that went Democratic in 2008. "Kent Palmer has a message that resonates with all Americans. Kent's strong moral values and fiscal conservatism appeal to people of all political backgrounds," said Jane Harrington, a Palmer spokesperson. Palmer will make appearances in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine, states that were reliably Republican in the 70s and 80s but more recently have trended Democratic.

Appendix 2: Sample Stimuli, Study Two

Liberal Blogger

Reed Williams



- Created the blog “Progressive Posts”
- Studied journalism at Columbia University and worked for the American Civil Liberties Union
- His work has been featured on the Huffington Post, the Rachel Maddow Show, and The Daily Kos
- “Reed is the exactly the bright, forward-looking kind of political blogger we need today and I love his work.”
 - Bill Clinton, Former President of the United States

Progressive Posts

“A progressive take on government, politics, and policy”

Same Old Story From Nagy On Job Creation

Dennis Nagy doesn't seem to realize that we cannot simply cut taxes in order to create jobs. The economic downturn started during the Bush years, after Bush's tax cuts were enacted. The economy is a complex entity, with many interlocking parts. Certainly Nagy understands that. So we need to hear more of a plan from him than the simple sound bites he's been providing us. Americans want to know that their President has a comprehensive plan for fixing the economy and Nagy hasn't provided that yet.

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ABOUT ME



 RW

I have a degree in media studies and have worked as a union organizer and for the American Civil Liberties Union. Devoted to justice and fairness for all.

[View my complete profile](#)

William Reed



- Writes the blog “The Right Way”
- Worked in finance industry for over 20 years
- His work has been featured by Sean Hannity, Drudge Report, and Rush Limbaugh
- “William brings a businessperson’s mind to politics, and I really love his work,”
 - Mitt Romney, Republican Presidential Candidate

The Right Way

“Government, politics, and policy the right way”

ABOUT ME



 WR

I've worked in the private sector for over 20 years. Now the experience I've gained in business gives me a no-nonsense take on politics.

[View my complete profile](#)

Country Can't Afford Baron's Tax Policy

Although we've come to expect some pretty liberal positions from Scott Baron, is it possible that his tax policy is too liberal? The answer is yes. Perhaps if the economy wasn't in such bad shape, Baron's plan to increase taxes on job creators and corporations wouldn't be so reckless. But we're in the midst of one of the slowest periods of job growth in history. Raising taxes at this point—even if it is just on the top 1% and corporation—is a bad idea.

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Appendix 3: Experiment Links

A full demonstration version of study one is available at

<http://dpte.polisci.uiowa.edu/dpte/action/player/launch/239/12220?test=1>

Study two:

<http://dpte.polisci.uiowa.edu/dpte/action/player/launch/434/16303?test=1>