Emotion and Public Opinion

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter looks at the role of emotion in public opinion, first discussing how emotion has been understood and theorized by various scholars. Next, it views the present research on the consequences of emotion for political behaviour and public opinion, and ends with a review of the contribution of emotion to the study of certain substantive domains. The chapter notes that the study of public opinion and emotion is a new but fast-growing field, one which promises to make huge contributions to the understanding of politics.

Keywords: emotion, political behaviour, public opinion, understanding of politics

TWENTY years ago, a volume such as this would have been unlikely to include a chapter on emotion and public opinion. That is so for two reasons. First, although there were sporadic publications on emotion in that period (for example, see Abelson, Kinder, Peters, and Fiske 1982; Conover and Feldman 1986; Marcus 1988; Sullivan and Masters 1988), political science and psychology were largely under the sway of the "cognitive revolution" and this was reflected in research on opinion. Second, the social sciences were then, as now, guided by Enlightenment precepts that hypothesized an emergent world in which reason would increasingly hold sway and ancient practices of faith and emotionally entrenched tradition would retreat. Enlightenment formulations frequently cast emotion into an old, familiar role as normatively destructive and dysfunctional (Marcus 2008). But emotions have proved to be of enduring relevance to human life, even critical to reasoned action, and so, in the intervening years, the study of emotion has been resurgent throughout the academy (Damasio 1994; Ledoux 1996). Thus, scholarship on the role of emotion in politics, though recent, has appeared at an accelerating rate.

Much of this new work challenges older formulations, but a mature theoretical grounding has not yet been achieved. There is no settled definition of "affect," and as a consequence, the term "cognition" has become equally problematic. Though publications frequently invoke the phrase "affective and cognitive" or "affect and cognition" to convey this new-found interest in emotion, usage of these terms often reflects the vagaries of

everyday language, with the multiple meanings and imprecision that scientific terminology is meant to resolve. Although attempts have been made to review the multiplicity of meanings (Neuman, Marcus, Crigler, and MacKuen 2007), much remains to be resolved before the field has all the tools, theoretical and methodological, to reach a mature stage. (p. 385) Nonetheless, the field has seen progress in moving from the haphazard toward a more fully specified state wherein agreed theoretical definitions, criteria for measurement, and substantive theoretical propositions mutually reinforce and shape the work of all scholars.

Early research seems to fall into one of two perspectives. First, some undertook research on emotion with a dependent variable focus: that is to say, what can these new emotion variables add to our understanding of the topic of interest? Second, other scholars began with an independent variable focus. Here the interest has been on the emotion itself, with the hope that something systematic can be said about the impact a specific emotion, say anger, or a group of emotions, say positive emotions, or, more globally, all emotion, has across all manifestations of public opinion and political behavior.

We begin with discussions of how emotion has been variously understood and theorized by scholars. Then we take a broadly integrated view of current research on the consequences of emotion for public opinion and political behavior. Lastly, we review what emotions have contributed to the study of particular substantive domains.[1]

What is Emotion?

Research on emotion requires an agreed definition of “emotion.” The scientific concept of emotion ought to be based on two features: a coherent definition and clarity on processes that are affective as distinct from cognitive. The field of political science, drawing on psychology and neuroscience, has utilized three sometimes overlapping ideas of what “emotion” means. The existence of these different conceptions becomes especially problematic when authors are unclear as to which meaning they have in mind.

One tradition harkens back through William James (1884) to Aristotle (1954). In this view, different emotions are specific physical states each joined with a specific conscious understanding. Hence, to use a well-known example from James, one sees a bear charging and feels fear, thus linking the physiological state of sweating, heightened pulse rate, and so on with the perception of a chasing bear. That tradition has more recently broken into two distinct conceptions: (1) cognitive appraisal theories (emotion is generated as a consequence of how a situation is understood); or (2) theories asserting that “discrete” emotions are each defined by a distinct pattern of physiological changes (Ekman, Levenson, and Friesen 1983). This leaves a residual category of “mood,” a state of emotion without a clear understanding that resides alongside feelings that do have clear physical markers *and* conceptual attributes. The physiological approach has been slowed because there is no clear evidence that specific physiological markers are tied to discrete emotions (Cacioppo, Berntson, and Klein 1992; Fowles 1982). This has left the Jamesian approach with

cognitive appraisal as the principal explanation of the subjective experience of feeling states (Lazarus 1991).

(p. 386) A third conception turns away from bodily feelings and states of mind to neural processes, conceiving of affect as pre-conscious processes that provide ongoing appraisals essential to pre-conscious evaluations and to enacting behavioral routines (Damasio 1994; Gray 1987; Ledoux 1996).[2] It follows from this conception that affective states vary along functionally defined dimensions rather than occurring as differentiated discrete states. Pre-conscious processes and conscious reflective assessments can, and most likely do, coexist and interplay so that each may have separate and coordinated dynamic influences on the way the mind and behavior are enacted. At this stage of theoretical development there is no candidate theory that attempts to integrate all of these attributes of affect. Hence, the dynamic role of time in the unfolding of upstream and downstream affective processes has been largely ignored.

Beyond definitional concerns, measurement issues also need to be addressed more fully before the field of emotion and public opinion can be considered mature. Specifically, the field needs measures that meet psychometric standards of reliability and validity. In sum, a developed theory of emotion ought to be comprehensive, in that it identifies each aspect of emotion, the variants, and their relationships to one another. And it ought to account for the antecedents and consequences of emotion in its various guises. Although considerable progress has been made in the empirical study of emotions and politics, much less progress has been made in meeting these theoretical and methodological goals.

Theories of Emotion

Scholars studying emotion and public opinion in recent years have been guided by at least three fairly broad theories of emotion. First, a few studies have drawn on the cognitive appraisal approach already discussed. Appraisal theories predict that each emotion has both specific antecedents, rooted in how an individual (consciously or subconsciously) makes sense of her situation, and specific response tendencies adapted for dealing with that situation (Lazarus 1991). Appraisal tendency theory is a variant that emphasizes the ability of emotions to generate the same sorts of appraisals that gave rise to them. Recent studies have drawn on appraisal theories to test expectations about perceptions of risk and blame following terrorist attacks (Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, and Fischhoff 2003; Small, Lerner, and Fischhoff 2006), media-framing effects (Gross 2008), policy opinions (Brader, Groenendyk, and Valentino 2010; Nabi 2003; Small and Lerner 2008), candidate evaluations (Just, Crigler, and Belt 2007; Steenbergen and Ellis 2006), and political participation (Valentino, Brader, et al. 2011). Despite (p. 387) the expanding usage of this approach, there has been little effort to construct a broader appraisal theory of emotions and public opinion.

Another line of research in recent years is rooted in the concepts of “motivated reasoning” and “hot cognition.” The hot cognition hypothesis suggests that learned sociopolitical concepts are affectively charged and that this charge is automatically activated upon reexposure to the concept. The emphasis is on positive and negative affect, rather than distinctions between specific emotions. A number of studies find support for the “automaticity” and primacy of affect in cognitive judgments (Cassino and Lodge 2007; Lodge and Taber 2005; Morris, Squires, Taber, and Lodge 2003). Beyond demonstrating the ubiquitous involvement of affect, however, these studies do not offer more fine-grained analyses.

At this juncture, the theory of affective intelligence (AI) represents the broadest and best-known model of emotion and politics. Developed by Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen (2000), it suggests that there are two basic emotional systems that monitor an individual's environment and allocate neural resources in accordance with situational needs. The disposition system relies on learned routines to translate feedback about current endeavors, generating affective states that range from enthusiasm to depression for habits that obtain rewarding goals, and varying states of aversion (anger) when habits engage familiar punishing circumstances. The surveillance system redirects attention and thoughts based on the novelty of the environment, with the primary emotions ranging along a dimension from calm to anxiety. Studies testing and finding support for the predictions of AI theory include work on candidate evaluations and electoral behavior (Brader 2006; Hutchings, Valentino, Philpot, and White 2006; Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000), political learning (MacKuen, Wolak, Keele, and Marcus 2010; Redlawsk, Civettini, and Lau 2007; Valentino, Hutchings, Banks, and Davis 2008; Valentino, Banks, Hutchings, and Davis 2009), policy opinions (Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008), and framing effects (Druckman and McDermott 2008; Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse, and Stevens 2005).

Recently, studies attempting to compare broad models of emotion also have presented evidence conflicting with AI theory. One team of researchers examined which of three models of emotion—bipolar, two-dimensional, or discrete—predicted best the relationship between candidate emotions and candidate evaluations following a presidential debate (Hullet, Louden, and Mitra 2003). Their factor analyses suggested the valence of reactions is sufficient to explain attitudes, which would support the bipolar model. Another set of researchers claims strongest support for the contention, dubbed endogenous affect, that emotional reactions are simply rationalizations of candidate evaluations (Ladd and Lenz 2008).[3] Taken together, these conflicting results draw attention to the need for conceptual clarity and the development of a more fully theorized basis for future research, one in which there are testable propositions for competing theories and in which more scholars test those competing propositions head-to-head.

(p. 388) Overview of the Effects of Emotion

Opinion Formation

Most of the early research in this field focused on emotions as predictors of public opinion (Abelson, Kinder, Peters, and Fiske 1982; Conover and Feldman 1986; Kinder 1994; Marcus and MacKuen 1993; Sullivan and Masters 1988). Scholars tend to treat emotions as having either a direct or an indirect influence on opinion. We take up each approach in turn.

Many studies treat emotional reactions (to candidates, issues, etc.) as direct determinants of opinion. Models of opinion incorporate emotions as one more set of considerations that citizens weigh in their judgments. Regardless of whether researchers group measures into negative and positive affect (Lodge and Taber 2005) or into discrete emotions (Gross, Brewer, and Aday 2009), studies of direct effects often do not emphasize distinctions among emotions. The general expectation and finding is that emotions have a large, directionally consistent impact (i.e., negative emotions lead to more negative evaluations, positive emotions to positive evaluations). Research has generally uncovered large direct effects beyond what can be explained by other "key ingredients" such as values, identities, and interests. This suggests that emotions represent a significant part of opinion formation not otherwise captured in traditional models. However, one important question raised by survey studies in this domain is whether the observed relationships reflect the impact of episodic emotions on opinions or, alternatively, merely pick up the affective dimensions of the attitude under investigation (Isbell and Ottati 2002).

Some recent work, while largely focusing on direct effects, pushes further by demonstrating the distinctive impact of particular emotions on risk perceptions, causal attributions, and policy preferences. Shortly after the September 11 (9/11) attacks, Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, and Fischhoff (2003) found that fearful citizens perceived greater risks (of both future terrorism and unrelated dangers) and foresaw a greater need for precautionary actions, while angry citizens saw fewer risks and less need for precautions (cf., Huddy, Feldman, and Cassese 2007). Relative to either fear or sadness, anger also leads citizens to call to mind more causes or sources of blame (Small, Lerner, and Fischhoff 2006). Druckman and McDermott (2008) come to similar conclusions, finding that enthusiasm and anger generated greater confidence and support for risky policy options, but "distress" (conceived as analogous to anxiety, or fear[4]) diminished confidence and support for risky policies. Fear also causes citizens to prefer protective and conciliatory policies, while anger causes them to prefer punitive policies (Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, and Fischhoff 2003; Nabi 2003). Similarly, MacKuen, Wolak, Keele, and Marcus (2010) found that anxiety increases, but anger decreases, willingness to consider policy compromises.

Studies of indirect effects, in many respects, illustrate potentially powerful and more distinctive contributions of emotions to public opinion. For example, emotions can influence the *process* of opinion formation by altering the weight citizens give to various considerations. Research in this vein has applied AI theory to electoral judgments, suggesting that

anxiety serves as a trigger that switches a citizen between two classical modes of citizenship: the habitual partisan voter versus something closer to the progressive ideal of the rational citizen who weighs policies, current conditions, and leadership qualities in light of available information. Both survey analyses of reactions to presidential candidates and experiments on the impact of campaign ads find that anxiety awakens the rational citizen (Brader 2005; Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000). There is also evidence that enthusiasm and aversion (anger) amplify the partisan voter's reliance on habit (Brader 2006; MacKuen, Wolak, Keele, and Marcus 2010).

Scholars have also shown that emotions moderate the impact of message frames: anxiety attunes people to their environment, thus enhancing framing effects, while both enthusiasm and anger lessen attention to the environment, thereby tempering framing effects (Druckman and McDermott 2008; Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse, and Stevens 2005). Similar findings emerge for the effects of sadness and anger on policy judgments (Small and Lerner 2008): sadness and anger, even when incidental (i.e., unrelated to policy or politics), trigger systematic or heuristic processing of information, respectively, which in turn cause divergent judgments about welfare assistance. Finally, another study took a different tack, focusing on the *strength* of emotional responses (to the Hurricane Katrina disaster) rather than on distinctions among emotions, and found that stronger (negative) emotions were associated with heuristic processing and weaker emotions associated with systematic processing (Malhotra and Kuo 2009).

Attention and Learning

Public opinion research includes not just the study of opinions, but also the closely related domain of political knowledge. On what information do citizens base their preferences and choices? Are citizens passive or active learners? How well do they pay attention to sources of political information? Recent research suggests that emotions can profoundly influence processes of engagement (interest), attention, information seeking, and memory—in short, what citizens are exposed to and what they learn.[5]

(p. 390) Early work on AI theory suggested that enthusiasm and anxiety initiate attention to and interest in politics (Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000). Enthusiasm about candidates spurred interest in the campaign and caring about the election outcome, whereas anxiety increased attention to news sources and learning about the candidates. Rudolph, Gangl, and Stevens (2000) proposed that internal political efficacy modulates the relationship between anxiety and interest, such that anxiety causes only efficacious citizens to become more engaged. Experimental research found that fear-inducing campaign ads trigger a desire to learn more about issues, greater interest in the news, and enhanced recall of news stories (Brader 2005, 2006). Moreover, fear directed attention specifically toward issues and news relevant to the threat mentioned by the ads. In contrast, enthusiasm-eliciting ads had none of these effects, but instead simply stimulated broad interest in the campaign; fear also stimulated interest, but only among the politically sophisticated.

A recent spate of studies is pushing research on emotions and on political learning generally to new frontiers. First, many of them incorporate measures of actual information seeking by tracking behavior in a simulated campaign (Redlawsk, Civettini, and Lau 2007), offering respondents opportunities to request information (Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008), or monitoring searches in a controlled Web environment (MacKuen, Wolak, Keele, and Marcus 2010; Valentino, Hutchings, Banks, and Davis 2008; Valentino, Banks, Hutchings, and Davis 2009). Second, recent work draws finer distinctions among emotions in terms of the nature of searches they instigate and their consequences for learning. These studies have found evidence that any of the high arousal emotions—enthusiasm (Redlawsk, Civettini, and Lau 2007; Valentino, Hutchings, Banks, and Davis 2008; but cf. MacKuen, Wolak, Keele, and Marcus 2010), hope (Just, Crigler, and Belt 2007), anger (Huddy, Feldman, and Cassese 2007; Valentino, Hutchings, Banks, and Davis 2008), and anxiety or fear (Feldman and Huddy n.d.; Valentino, Hutchings, Banks, and Davis 2008)—initiated attention to sources of political information.

Much of the new focus, however, is on the distinctive impacts of anger and fear. Anger appears to reduce the amount of time actually spent visiting political websites (Valentino, Hutchings, Banks, and Davis 2008), shrink the number of webpages visited and narrow searches to opinion-confirming sources (MacKuen, Wolak, Keele, and Marcus 2010), produce less thoughtful opinions (Huddy, Feldman, and Cassese 2007), and inhibit accurate recall of information (Geva and Skorick 2006; Redlawsk, Civettini, and Lau 2007). In contrast, anxiety mediates the positive impact of threats on actual information seeking (Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008; MacKuen, Wolak, Keele, and Marcus 2010; Redlawsk, Civettini, and Lau 2007; Valentino, Hutchings, Banks, and Davis 2008). Anxious citizens are also more likely to conduct balanced searches for available information, including or especially disagreeable points of view (MacKuen, Wolak, Keele, and Marcus 2010; Valentino, Banks, Hutchings, and Davis 2009). According to most of the evidence to date, the end result is that anxious citizens learn more and thus demonstrate gains in political knowledge (Hutchings, Valentino, Philpot, and White 2006; Redlawsk, Civettini, and Lau 2007; Valentino, Hutchings, Banks, and Davis 2008; Valentino, Banks, Hutchings, and Davis 2009), but one new study suggests that anxiety—perhaps when particularly acute or personal—can diminish learning even while making citizens more attentive (Feldman and Huddy n.d.). Finally, a couple of studies suggest that the impact of anxiety is conditional on the relevance of the information, for example when people know it affects a view they must defend (Redlawsk, Civettini, and Lau 2007; Valentino, Banks, Hutchings, and Davis 2009).

Political Action

Of the myriad ways in which emotions may affect citizens, the least well explored is their impact on political participation. This is surprising given that a defining feature of emotions is that they are motivational impulses (Damasio 1994), impelling us to run, fight, hide, shout, embrace, look away, or extend a hand. In politics, of course, actions flow mostly through institutionalized channels. Thus, emotions—whether aggressive, defensive, or something else—will largely find a common outlet in voting, volunteering, donat-

ing, attending, contacting, and so forth.[6] Incorporating emotion into future research should help scholars address a critical and venerable weakness in the study of public opinion: the gap between opinions and behavior. Emotions likely play a central role in explaining when, and in what way, citizens act on their opinions and beliefs.

Early work on emotions and politics said little about participation, except to note that strong emotions may indeed distinguish those who claim an opinion from those who hold the opinion with conviction enough to act on it (Kinder 1994). More recent research has found effects for all of the high-arousal emotions commonly studied. Initial tests of AI theory found that both enthusiasm and anxiety increase political participation beyond voting, though the impact of anxiety appeared stronger (Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000). Similarly, advertisements eliciting fear or enthusiasm spurred an increased willingness to vote and volunteer (Brader 2006); these effects were broader, however, for enthusiasm, with the positive impact of fear evident primarily among sophisticated citizens and even a negative impact emerging among the less sophisticated. In one study that examines actual participation decisions during experiments, anxiety triggered by news stories caused citizens to contact their members of Congress to voice their opinion (Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008). Finally, other studies have found that, while enthusiasm and fear can boost participation, anger has a powerful mobilization effect, albeit one that may be more conditional on the internal efficacy, or more generally the level of material, social, and psychological resources (p. 392) available to the citizen (Valentino, Brader, et al. 2011; Valentino, Gregorowicz, and Groenendyk 2009).

Major Substantive Applications

We next turn to a set of substantive topics for which researchers have relied on emotion to explain some facet of public opinion or the media.

Terrorism and War

Not surprisingly, research on terrorism and war has grown rapidly in recent years. Work in this area addresses a wide range of emotions that are thought to shape public opinion on terror and war-related policy choices. A number of scholars have found evidence of distinct effects within the domain of negative emotions. For instance, anxiety has consistently been shown to lead to more risk-averse or isolationist policy preferences, whereas anger predicts support for more confrontational policies (Huddy, Feldman, Taber, and Lahav 2005; Skitka, Bauman, Aramovich, and Morgan 2006). These findings are echoed in work that addresses risk estimates: fear increased and anger decreased perceived risks from terrorism (Fischhoff, Gonzalez, Lerner, and Small 2005; Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, and Fischhoff 2003). Moreover, anger has been found to trigger more attributions of blame for terrorism (Small, Lerner, and Fischhoff 2006). Thus, across a range of behaviors, anger seems to promote a more confident, aggressive response during crises, while fear causes individuals to draw inward. The inclusion of a wide variety of other emotions, from hope and pride (Gross, Brewer, and Aday 2009) to sadness, empathy, and guilt (Small, Lerner,

and Fischhoff 2006; Pagano and Huo 2007; Zebel, Zimmermann, Viki, and Doosje 2008), suggests that scholars in this field have begun to evaluate the causes and effects of emotion on public opinion from a broader emotional foundation. For example, studies of post-conflict regions such as Bosnia and Iraq have demonstrated that guilt motivates support for reparative policies aimed at compensating for past harms (Pagano and Huo 2007; Zebel, Zimmermann, Viki, and Doosje 2008).

Terror management theory (TMT) suggests that terror arising from "mortality salience" intensifies efforts to maintain a cultural world view. For example, researchers have shown that reminders of death and the 9/11 attacks both increased support for President Bush (Landau et al. 2004). Evidence so far suggests that these findings are driven not by changes in emotional states, but rather by "death-related cognitions." That said, TMT claims that reactions are motivated by *terror* at the prospect of one's own death and induces this condition experimentally by asking subjects to write down what it will *feel like* when they die.

(p. 393) In general, content analyses have shown clear evidence of the "politics of fear," wherein politicians attempt to utilize emotion as a tool to stir public opinion (Burkitt 2005; De Castella, McGarty, and Musgrove 2009). Despite the common belief that the public can be manipulated by the use of emotion (cf. Brader 2006), there are few studies that attempt to test this presumption explicitly. That is, politicians have been shown to use fear as a tool, but researchers have not ascertained whether it has worked, or even exactly what it means to be "manipulated." Recent work exploring the effectiveness of politicians' scare tactics integrates game-theoretic modeling into the study of emotion and politics. The authors suggest that the strategic use of fear is constrained by a competitive information environment; politicians ought to be less likely to use fear as a manipulative tool when citizens are likely to receive feedback about the credibility of claims (Lupia and Menning 2009).

Election Campaigns and Mass Media

Researchers also have explored the role of emotions in election campaigns and mass-mediated communication. Several studies focus on the relationship between emotions and the framing of political issues in the news. In addition to work already discussed on how emotions moderate framing effects, new research explores how framing of news stories affects emotions, drawing on appraisal theory to predict the triggers of specific emotions. In one experiment, news emphasizing situational explanations for the 1992 Los Angeles riots was more likely to elicit anger at racism and sympathy for rioters, while dispositional accounts provoked greater anger at the violence and sympathy for innocent victims (Gross and D'Ambrosio 2004). Another study found that news on globalization and viral outbreaks caused anxiety when stories stressed uncontrollable, unintentional threats, but also triggered anger when stories stressed controllable, intentional, and thus blameworthy threats (Brader, Groenendyk, and Valentino 2010).

Other work explores how emotions influence which news stories capture public attention. For example, episodically framed news is more emotionally engaging than thematically framed news (Gross 2008). Moreover, a new line of research suggests that emotions mediate the agenda-setting power of news. Accessibility in memory is necessary but not sufficient for agenda-setting; instead, problems are assessed as important to the extent the news arouses negative emotions (Miller 2007).

Several studies on war and terrorism in the past decade reinforce notions of the emotional power of television and imagery. Television coverage of the 9/11 attacks used more emotional language than print sources and, in turn, had a larger impact on the negative emotions of viewers (Cho et al. 2003). In news about 9/11, the intensity of attack images and strength of emotional expressions displayed by President Bush combined to produce stronger feelings of either anxiety or reassurance (Bucy 2003). When newspaper articles about a British engineer kidnapped during the Iraq War were combined with photos of the victim, readers experienced increased fear (but not anger or sympathy) and this boosted support for negotiations (Iyer and Oldmeadow 2006).

(p. 394) Elections are high tides of political passion, so it is unsurprising that scholars have focused heavily on the role of emotions in campaigns. As noted earlier, emotions appear to play a critical role in determining which of two classic profiles a voter resembles at any moment. Enthusiasm, and sometimes anger, give rise to the loyal partisan, while anxiety awakens the “reasoning good citizen” (Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000). Defection from political loyalties occurs, therefore, when campaigns successfully induce anxiety in an opposing partisan base, thereby enabling the campaign to use issues or candidate attractiveness to recruit crossover voters (MacKuen, Marcus, Neuman, and Keele 2007). In contrast to work on voting behavior, however, there has been comparably little rigorous research on how campaign media elicit emotions. A few studies have begun to examine how campaign ads in selected elections attempt to elicit emotions (Brader 2006; Richardson 2008; Scammell and Langer 2006). Others, building on earlier research into the emotional displays of politicians (Sullivan and Masters 1988), have explored how the intensity and appropriateness of candidates' emotional expressions affect TV audiences (Bucy and Bradley 2004; Stroud, Glaser, and Salovey 2005–6).

Group-Based Emotions

Groups are central features of human existence, and as such they evoke powerful feelings. Group-based emotions are presumed to be affective responses uniformly evoked within a group, based on shared identities, and often evoked by and directed toward some out-group. These emotions are thought to arise from collective experience, real or imagined. Research tends to be highly situationally specific, with scholars studying particular regions or conflicts, such as Israel, Bosnia, and the US invasion of Iraq.

Many studies have focused on collective emotions defined by national groups. For example, research on Israeli attitudes toward Palestinians found hatred—as distinct from other emotions (i.e., anger, fear) and perceptions of threat—was the most important predictor

of political intolerance (Halperin, Canetti-Nisim, and Hirsch-Hoefler 2009). In another study, Americans were more forgiving of harm committed against Iraqis by fellow Americans to the extent that they felt anxious about the future of their in-group (Wohl and Branscombe 2009). Research in South Africa (Klandermans, Werner, and Van Doorn 2008) and the Netherlands (Zebel, Zimmermann, Viki, and Doosje 2008) has suggested that collective feelings of guilt about in-group behavior strongly mediate support for reparations or affirmative action policies.

Not all studies focus on national groups, however. A number of scholars have examined how emotions shape the internal and external politics of social movements (see Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001). For example, in an in-depth study of AIDS activism, Gould (2009) argues that activists in the late 1980s and early 1990s cultivated an “emotional common sense” that drew on grief and anger to redirect the gay rights movement toward more open and confrontational action.

(p. 395) Emotions may prove particularly important when examining in-group/out-group distinctions. Recently, scholars have argued for moving beyond the simple focus on in-group pride and out-group prejudice that has dominated past research and focusing instead on specific emotions arising from distinct situational appraisals (most of this work is grounded explicitly in appraisal theories of emotion). Cottrell and Neuberg (2005), for example, found that white Americans expressed a distinct “profile” of emotions—anger, fear, disgust, pity, and envy—toward groups in society (e.g., racial minorities, fundamentalist Christians, feminists, gays) that was not captured by general measures of prejudice. Although many such studies have been carried out in social psychology, often under the heading of intergroup emotions theory (MacKie and Smith 2003), few studies have extended this line of work to the political domain. Nonetheless, these yield promising results. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, Dutch and Belgian citizens felt greater fear when cued experimentally to think of Americans as part of a common group rather than as a distinct group (Dumont, Yzerbyt, Wigboldus, and Gordijn 2003). Comparable effects for sadness and anger did not emerge, because only fear-relevant appraisals (e.g., future risk of being harmed) were altered by the shift in whether participants saw themselves linked to Americans. Similarly, Democrats and Republicans were more likely to report feelings of pleasure at others' misfortunes (*schadenfreude*) when those others were from the opposing party (Combs, Powell, Schurtz, and Smith 2009). Finally, new research on whites' racial attitudes has found that priming anger, not fear, activates racial resentment, thereby increasing opposition to affirmative action (Banks and Valentino 2007), and that anti-Hispanic prejudice has stronger links to anger about immigration than to emotions like fear and enthusiasm (Brader and Valentino 2007).

Concluding Thoughts

In sum, the study of emotion and public opinion is a young but rapidly growing field. Recent years have witnessed a steady stream of publications and an expanding, increasingly diverse set of contributors from several disciplines. Already this fresh line of inquiry

promises to make major contributions to our understanding of politics. Three stand out to us. First, emotions help to reconcile competing theoretical accounts by explaining individual and situational heterogeneity in the process of opinion formation and political choice. Second, emotions, as motivational impulses, provide scholars with a way to make the often elusive connection between public opinion and political action. Third, cognizance of emotions and their functions allows us to make better sense of parts of the media and political environment that have been previously ignored or taken for granted.

All of that said, there remains much growing to do. The literature contains a mix of different approaches and few full theories. Empirical scholarship has focused on the effects of emotions, while saying comparably little about their situational and (p. 396) individual antecedents. Few scholars attempt to consider both the antecedents and consequences of emotion within the confines of a single study, thus leaving a patchwork of findings with little to connect them. More complicated theoretical issues also await, such as the need to integrate pre-conscious and post-awareness affective processes. Furthermore, this body of research has yet to integrate the role of personality, for one way of understanding personality is an array of baseline responsiveness of emotional systems. Finally, the field would greatly benefit from more work on measurement. Few publications address the reliability or validity of their measures, let alone consider whether their methodological approach is suited to the theoretical focus.

The “dependent variable” approach many studies adopt makes it a challenge to determine whether relationships are narrow (specific to the outcome under examination) or broad (applicable across a broad class of phenomena). The dependent variable focus also tends to balkanize the research as scholars contributing or consuming research with a given focus may not attend to parallel work focused on other outcomes. Thus, this pattern of research will retard a broader understanding of the central roles that emotion plays in politics and public opinion.

Despite these concerns, we have seen material progress in understanding what role emotions play in political life. We need but repeat here that the presumption of an executive and insulated cognition protected from the despoliations of passion has largely been set aside for a reformulation of mutually interactive and dependent affective and cognitive processes. Moreover, as work on emotion has proceeded from a simple valence, approach avoidance conception to one of multiple dimensions, this has import for the lay and academic interest in “negative” politics. The concept of negativity is likely confounded inasmuch as research on emotion has identified at least three distinct “negative” states, each with distinct antecedents and downstream effects: anxiety, depression, and anger.[7]

Finally, the findings of this field have clear normative import for our view of emotions and their “place” in politics. Much of the early research, echoing work in psychology, focused on rehabilitating emotions such that they are understood as essential, adaptive, functional elements of human reason and behavior. This is, in our view, a necessary and proper corrective to centuries-old misunderstandings about emotions that persist in popular culture and scholarship today. But the pendulum is wont to swing too far. Whatever their

adaptive evolutionary benefits, emotions can also, *at times*, live up to their reputation for being disruptive, destructive, and overwhelming. The lesson of contemporary research is that emotions are neither inherently inferior nor inherently superior, but rather essential to both carrying out and understanding human behavior.

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Notes:

(1) In this chapter we focus primarily on peer-reviewed research published since 2000. For a more complete review of the field prior to this period, see Marcus (2000).

(2) The term “pre-conscious” will strike most as curious as conscious awareness offers the subjective sense of immediacy. But neuroscience research has found that the brain requires 500 milliseconds to constitute conscious awareness, leaving ample time for pre-conscious neural processes to execute within the 500 milliseconds that begin with the arrival of sensory and somatosensory signals. These neural processes have robust “downstream” effects on affective and cognitive states.

(3) But see Marcus, MacKuen, and Neuman (forthcoming) and Brader (forthcoming).

(4) Researchers generally use “anxiety” or “fear” to refer to the same underlying emotion. Though some theories treat them as distinct, there is little evidence to date that citizens use the terms (and cognates) differently in the self-reported feelings that form the basis for most analyses in this field.

(5) Much of the work on emotions and politics, like the study of political knowledge in general, focuses on evidence of learning that may implicate memory but has not directly studied memory processes (e.g., encoding versus recall of information).

(6) Future research may wish to test for distinctive effects of particular emotions by examining types of activity that have a more focused directional goal (e.g., protests, relief work) or by measuring the self-conscious goals of participation (e.g., protect, punish, celebrate).

(7) According to AI theory, these emotions lead to deliberative citizenship, abandonment of citizen action, and steadfast reliance on extant convictions, respectively (MacKuen, Wolak, Keele, and Marcus 2010).

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