I, Jason A. Wood, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.

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More Than a Feeling: Measuring the Impact of Affect and Socio-Cultural Differences on Vote Choice

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More Than a Feeling: Measuring the Impact of Affect and Socio-Cultural Differences on Vote Choice

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ABSTRACT

A long-running debate in political science centers on whether election results are predetermined by long-term, individual factors, such as partisanship, or whether some combination of short-term forces, such as the media, campaigns, or issues impact voting behavior. It is this debate that has dominated academic attempts to explain individual voting behavior. But, most of this prior research rests on a faulty assumption about the relative ordering of cognition and affect, and in doing so, misses the critical importance of the interaction of short-term and long-term factors. By examining the interaction of these two forces, a more comprehensive and well-rounded picture of individual decision-making can be developed.

Due to a reconceptualization of how the brain processes information, the efficacy of primarily cognitively-based, contextual models of voting needs reconsideration. In a political sense, some of this work has already begun. Based on the advances made in cognitive neuroscience, affective evaluations of short-term objects are enjoying an enhanced position among those who study the political decision-making process. As a result, there has been a proliferation of academic explanations that offer short-term emotional reactions as a primary determinant of voting behavior.

These models, however, have largely been evaluated only under experimental conditions, raising questions about their efficacy in explanations of real-world voter behavior. This dissertation, using real-world survey data from the American National Election Studies, seeks to empirically determine if affective evaluations of the most important contextual component of any presidential election, the candidates, are independent of the cognitive processing of information, and whether these affective evaluations matter when people cast their ballots. If so, what is the relationship between these seemingly campaign-specific evaluations and longer held social identity-based pre-dispositions?

The evidence presented in this dissertation indicates that affective orientations toward each candidate in the 2008 Presidential election are highly durable, and that these orientations matter as people decide how to cast their ballots. This suggests that affectively based models that begin from the assumptions outlined by the dual-process model are appropriate and provide another manner for considering the importance of electoral context beyond the traditional issue/cognitive framework. Conclusions about the importance of candidate evaluations as short-term determinants of individual voting behavior, however, are tempered by findings which suggest that these evaluations are structured largely by pre-existing dispositions toward various social and political groups. While context can raise the salience of certain group memberships, how individuals feel about each candidate depends primarily on a set of attitudes which exist long before a given election cycle.
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Within the sub-field of American politics, and perhaps the entire discipline of political science, no topic has spawned as much interest, among both the academic community and the broader public, as have questions about why individuals make the choices they do on Election Day. From academic journals, to media dissection, to discussions with friends and family, nearly everyone who follows politics, even at the most cursory levels, has been exposed to some discussion of why certain candidates win, or perhaps more importantly, why certain candidates lose. Almost invariably, these discussions usually center on some critical issue that has received considerable attention during the course of the campaign, or in the immediate aftermath. As a result, there is a general trend for the media to consistently offer the general public explanations of individual voting behavior which begin from the assumption that voting behavior is a function of some level of cognitive consideration of policy positions or outcomes, largely at the expense of more emotionally plausible causes (Redlawsk 2006).

Sorting out what matters, and why, as people decide how to cast their ballots is of crucial importance to understanding American elections. To do so, it is important to understand why people are drawn to, and so ready to accept, explanations that are based in large part, or entirely, on a single issue. While it would be easy to argue that issue-based explanations end up as the conventional wisdom because they are readily identifiable in the exit poll results, and rather simple for the mass public to understand, simply accepting this argument misses an important point. Issue-based explanations are also commonly accepted because they are consistent with long-held, normative views about the role of considered judgment in the political process. From the beginning of Western thought, philosophers have attempted to come up with controlling
mechanisms to explain the regulation of human desires. Anaxagoras of Clazomenae, often credited as bringing philosophical thought to Athens (Bakalis 2005), is credited with the creation of the concept of Nous (loosely translated as Mind), which describes some unseen presence, which governs all things in the universe (Kirk, Raven and Schofield 1983).

While not overtly related to human behavior, this line of thought had a profound effect on nearly all thinkers who followed, including those who were interested in explaining democracy and democratic participation. As a result, since the earliest attempts at democracy, political theorists have given ample consideration to the importance of considered judgment and emotional response. As early as the ancient Greek philosophers, rationality, as derived from careful deliberation, was deemed the most essential characteristic for the adequate exercise of civic duties (Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000). Perhaps most clearly articulated in Plato’s Republic, it was thought the ideal society, and by extension the ideal citizen, is one that is characterized by temperance, which occurs when emotions are ruled over by intellect (Plato 1992).

While it would be easy to dismiss this view as the remnants of a long past line of intellectual discourse, to do so would miss its importance to American democracy. The line of thought outlined by ancient philosophers such as Plato profoundly shaped how we think about politics to this very day. Much of what was thought about political decision-making in antiquity has been translated into modern political science, and passed along to the public through various socializing mechanisms. Particularly important to the development of American democracy, this belief in the utility of considered political judgment became a key principle for many of the social contract theorists (Marcus 2003). For example, both Locke (1980) and Hobbes (1994) argued that rationality provides individuals the capacity to break free of their personal desires,
which can impede on the ability to establish democratic political regimes. This concern, along
with quite a bit else offered by the social contract theorists, had a decided impact on the
Founding Fathers, and, by extension, on the structure and form of American democracy. As
summarized by Westen (2007), the Founding Fathers were firm believers that deliberation and
rationality were critical to the successful development and maintenance of a fully functioning
democracy:

In The Federalist Papers, the framers of American democracy made
clear, like both Plato and the social contract philosophers, that only
through reason can people set aside their self-interested and parochial
desires to make decisions in the common interest. Passions can lead to
rapid, poorly thought-out self-interested acts, or to the psychology of the
mob, inflamed by the emotion of the moment and capable of turning on
anyone in its path (Westen 2007, p. 26).

This awareness resulted in a government structure designed to minimize the dangers of emotion,
and created a political system in which we are socialized to believe that political decision-
making, including voting behavior, should occur after careful deliberation (Marcus, Neuman and
MacKuen 2000). As a result, explanations that depend upon the careful consideration of policy
alternatives fit nicely into established perceptions held by the public, and are reinforced by a long
and enduring political socialization process.

Issues in the 2008 Presidential Election

We do not have to drift too far into the past to find an election in which an example of
this issue driven explanation became the dominant lens. In the aftermath of the 2008 presidential
election, pundits and strategists from all sides of the political spectrum were eager to dissect the
outcome of the election, and attempt to attach great significance to a variety of factors they
believed “responsible” for the Obama victory or for the McCain defeat. While the range of
alternatives available to the cacophony of commentators ran from the mundane, such as rising
affective dissatisfaction with President Bush and the Republican Party (Langer 2008a) to more
salacious claims centered on emotional reactions to race and religion (Newport 2008a; Newport 2008b; Pasek et al. 2009; Pew 2008; Pew 2010), one explanation gained more traction than any other, and quickly became the dominant theme of the post-election breakdown. Many in the media, borrowing a popular refrain from the 1992 presidential contest simply argued, “It’s the economy, stupid.” These experts were eager to claim that the Obama victory, or at minimum the relatively large magnitude of the margin, was attributable to the economic collapse, spurred by the failure of Lehman Brothers, which occurred in mid-September. These claims were prevalent across all mediums of information distribution, from television news, to news magazines, to daily newspapers, and many were supported by a familiar source of election night prognostication and explanation, the national exit polls conducted by Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International.¹

Within a week, the economic explanation of the 2008 presidential contest had become the dominant theme in news coverage. In perhaps the clearest and most succinct manner, Pulitzer Prize winning columnist and former physician Charles Krauthammer described the McCain defeat thusly:

In my previous life, I witnessed far more difficult postmortems. This one is easy. The patient was fatally stricken on Sept. 15 -- caught in the rubble when the roof fell in (at Lehman Brothers, according to the police report) -- although he did linger until his final, rather quiet demise on Nov. 4 (Krauthammer, 2008).

Even more overtly partisan dissections interpreted the political consequences in light of the failing economy. Some Democrats, and Democratic leaning groups, were quick to claim the failures of the Bush economic policies led to a fundamental shift in the nature of the electorate; that the deteriorating economy had attracted a new crop of voters who

¹While the total number of stories making this claim are too numerous to mention individually, a simple Lexis Nexis news search of the terms “exit poll” and “economy” reveals nearly 500 newspaper and magazine articles or references in television news transcripts between Wednesday, November 5, 2008 and Monday, November 10, 2008.
had previously been uninterested and unengaged in the political process, resulting in the strong Obama victory (Rock the Vote 2008). Many Republicans, on the other hand, did not dispute the importance of the economic collapse and the resultant influx of these new voters, but instead framed the Obama victory as resting largely on the votes of individuals who were uninformed and misguided about what Republicans had done, or more simply about how the economy works (ABC News 2008).

In this sense, the 2008 presidential election provides an excellent opportunity to examine the importance of issues to political judgment because the dominant issue theme is readily identifiable. In the larger picture, however, 2008 should not be viewed as an atypical election. While it would be easy to dismiss 2008 as a once in a generation election, where the catastrophic failure of a major financial institution spurred the media, and the general public, to rush to a single-issue explanation of the election outcome, coverage of past elections shows this to be untrue. In 2004, for example, again based almost exclusively on exit poll results, the media latched onto data which suggested the most pressing issue facing voters was the ever ambiguous “moral values” (Abramson, Aldrich and Rohde 2007). While many astute observers later pointed out the speciousness of these claims (Langer 2004; Meyer 2004), the damage had already been done, and “moral values” was given a prime spot among the many potential explanations for President Bush’s 2004 re-election (Rutenberg 2004).

**Short-term Vs. Long-Term Explanations of Voting Behavior**

To a certain extent, however, the debate over the importance of the economy in 2008, and moral values in 2004, serves as a “straw man” argument for a larger divide that exists within the academic community. This debate centers not simply on the importance
of issues, but rather on whether election results are pre-determined by ever present long-
term, individual factors, such as party identification, or whether some combination of 
short-term forces, such as the media, campaigns, or issues impact voting behavior. It is 
this broader debate that has dominated academic attempts to explain individual voting 
behavior. While specific issues certainly play a part, they are but only one potential short-
term force that could reduce or supplant the importance of long held pre-dispositions as 
the primary determinant of individual behavior. As a result, there is a long history of 
competing claims, each of which offers one of these two broad groups, long-term or 
short-term factors, as most important.

Early empirical attempts to examine the relative balance of short-term and long-term 
 determinants were heavily influenced by the normative expectations cultivated by the 
philosophical debates of history. These empirical attempts borrowed heavily from economics, 
were primarily normative in nature, (Lau 2003) and depended on rational choice theory, which 
explains potential voter behavior by calculating the expected individual benefit from voting as a 
function of the incremental benefit associated with the success of an individual’s favored 
candidate, the probability that an individual’s vote will affect the outcome, and the costs 
associated with voting (Downs 1957). As a result, and consistent with normative expectations, 
these models gave little, if any, consideration to long-term predispositions, such as party 
identification and emotional identifications with social and political groups, instead focusing on 
the short-term importance of individual policy preferences and desired outcomes.

Voting behavior, however, proves to be a particularly difficult activity for rational choice 
theory to explain. For example, according to rational choice theory, in a multi-attribute decision, 
an individual will compare each potential option based on its expected utility, weighting each by
the probability of occurrence and importance (Edwards and Newman 1986). The resulting system of decision-making utilizes a series of complex, cognitive calculations for which much of the research on information processing suggests the average citizen is incapable, unwilling or unlikely to engage (Converse 1964; Zaller 1992; Lodge, McGraw and Stroh 1989 among others).

At approximately the same time, a greater academic interest was directed at examining the importance of other factors, which by extension reduced the relative importance of short-term factors, such as issues, in the voting process. Using new techniques, most notably the mass survey, these new efforts resulted in a reduced emphasis on cognitive considerations, and represent the early introduction of pre-existing, long-term dispositions as potential determinants. Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee (1954), for example, introduced sociological forces, such as familial connections as the main determinant of vote choice, and argued that these sociological pressures rarely produce or allow much deviation from pre-socialized existing views. It was with *The American Voter*, however, that the clearest early articulation of the importance of long-term psychological/sociological determinants can be found. In this seminal work, Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes (1960) found that an individual’s vote choice was determined primarily by long-standing partisan attachments, which are formed early in political life and are characterized by stability and resistance to contrary influence. Using the funnel of causality, Campbell et al. (1960) argue partisanship can be thought of as a psychological identification, or affective orientation, which has critical consequences for other political attitudes. Because partisan identification appears near the beginning of the funnel of causality, and is stable, enduring and critical for defining the relationship between the individual and various political objects, it shapes much of what an individual thinks about politics including how they evaluate
candidates, their policy preferences, and how they process campaign information, implying that contextual factors are of limited utility (Campbell et al. 1960).

These seminal works, and the countless others that followed, however, did not end attempts to establish empirical models that align with normative expectations relative to the cognitive consideration of a series of short-term, election specific factors. Instead, they sparked an on-going debate that has persisted for nearly 50 years as to the importance of rationality in politics. For example, works by V.O. Key (1966) and Nie, Verba and Petrocik (1976) most famously argued that, the American voter was becoming increasingly aware of, able to understand and rely upon policy preferences to determine who they would vote for. Others, perhaps most notably Fiorina (1981), continued attempting to use rational choice theory to explain voting behavior. By arguing that citizens ascertain whether the incumbents have performed poorly or well to calculate changes in their own personal welfare, Fiorina created a model of voting decisions based on retrospective evaluations, creating an empirical account of voting where individuals can be rational, because they are voting based on personal welfare concerns, but is also consistent with findings that individuals possess limited political knowledge or lack the complex cognitive processing schemes required of more intensive rational choice theories.

Other approaches that seek to re-assert the importance of short-term factors have identified campaigns and the media as critical to the interplay of contextual factors and an individual’s voting process, arguing that these entities play an integral role in determining which considerations will be activated and remain salient during any given election. Building on work by Iyengar and Kinder (1987), which outlined the agenda setting and priming function of the media and campaign, Petrocik (1996) postulates the idea of issue ownership, where parties, and
by extension candidates, hold an advantage on certain issues. Each side tries to make the issues on which they hold an advantage the dominant issue in a campaign because these issues shift voter loyalties in an electoral contest (Petrocik 1996).

**Faulty Assumptions**

Regardless of which perspective these various attempts at explaining individual behavior are using, each typically looks at the problem of individual voting behavior as a function of long-term or short-term forces independently. Even those that examine the importance of both generally offer that one set is, far and away, more important (Campbell et al. 1960; Nie, Verba and Petrocik 1976; Key 1966; Fiorina 1981; Miller and Shanks 1996; among others). In doing so, these attempts have missed, to a large extent, the critical importance of the interaction of short-term and long-term factors, more specifically on the ability of short-term factors, such as candidate and issues, to activate long-held predispositions toward various social and political groups. By examining the interaction of these two forces, a more comprehensive and well-rounded picture of individual political judgment and decision-making can be developed.

This starts by incorporating concepts, both long-term and more contextual factors, which have already been identified as important. Without a doubt party identification matters and is likely to be the most important predictor. Any model that does not include it as a predictor is sure to be lacking in explanatory power. But, consideration of party identification, or any other long-term factor, alone is insufficient. Not everyone identifies with a political party\(^2\), and not every election is simply a function of party orientation. This suggests that something else must be at work to cause the deviations from one election to the next. In the era of candidate-centered politics (Niemi and Weisberg 2001), it is likely that this contextual dynamic is the result of

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\(^2\)Although substantial research suggests the number of political partisans is far higher than those who report formal membership, or even self-identify in mass surveys.
which candidates appear on the ballot, suggesting that elections are largely determined by short-term factors. But, this conclusion is less than sufficient because it rests on a faulty assumption about the relative ordering of cognition and affect.

Under this assumption, the importance of candidates, or any short-term factor, is driven by individual evaluations, which have typically, in most political science models, been thought of as a cognitively driven/rational approach. Essentially, an individual has to be exposed to a stimulus, made aware of this exposure, and then form a cognitively based evaluation. Substantial research from the field of cognitive neuroscience, however, has begun to raise doubts as to the veracity of this claim (Zajonc 1980). Largely due to a reconceptualization of how the human mind processes information and reacts to stimuli (Zajonc 1980, Fazio 1986; Damasio 1994, Bargh 1997; Westen et al. 2006 among others), the efficacy of cognitively driven, contextual models of individual voting decisions needs reconsideration. This is not to say that short-term factors do not matter, but rather that how contextual events matter needs to be cast in a new light.

In a political sense, some of this work has already begun. Based on the advances made in cognitive neuroscience, affective evaluations of political objects and outcomes are enjoying an enhanced position among those who study the political decision-making process. As a result, there has been a proliferation of academic explanations that offer short-term affective and emotional reactions as a central, if not primary, determinant of voting behavior. This proliferation has resulted in an expansion of explanations and theories, which often overlap (Marcus et al. 2007). This apparent overlap, and accompanying variations in terminology may seem somewhat daunting, however Redlawsk (2006) argues that approaches toward incorporating emotion into the decision-making process can be grouped, broadly, into two schools of thought: the “Theory of Affective Intelligence” outlined by Marcus, Neuman and
MacKuen (2000) and the “Dual Process Model” offered by Milton Lodge and his varied co-authors (Lodge and Taber 2005; Cassino and Lodge 2007; Lodge, Taber and Weber 2007). While the resultant decision-making models offered by these two schools of thought vary wildly from one another, both share a common foundation in that each is based on the assumption that affect is primary (Redlawsk 2006).

Where these two theories diverge is on the question of affective durability. While Marcus, Neumann and MacKuen argue the end result of contextual affective activation is political learning, resulting in a rationalistic, cognitively based model, Lodge and his coauthors argue that little learning is possible because once activated, affective tags become unitized with more deliberative processes. That is, once we feel something about a political object, whether positive or negative, automatic processes color the reception, interpretation and acceptance of all additional information received. As a result, the theory of affective intelligence can be thought of as an attempt to balance more normatively-based considerations with the importance of short-term factors, while the dual-process model represents a more emotionally charged model of decision-making which leaves little room for the cognitive evaluation of short-term factors. Instead, it offers that the interpretation of short-term, contextual events is far from independent, and is actually colored by individual pre-dispositions towards political objects.

The dual-process model, however, has largely been evaluated only under experimental conditions, raising questions about its efficacy in explanations of real-world voter behavior. Technological and methodological concerns relative to data collection have left examinations of more affectively driven models of voter decision-making largely to the purview of the hypothetical laboratory setting. The research presented in the following chapters represents an attempt to move these models of decision-making from the laboratory into the realm of post-hoc
analyses of real election data in order to determine the utility of affective evaluations in mitigating the importance of contextual events. Building from the voluminous work done by previous researchers, this research, using real-world survey data, seeks to empirically determine if affective evaluations of the most important contextual component of any presidential election, the candidates, are independent of the cognitive processing of information, and whether or not these evaluations matter when people cast their ballot. If so, it is important to determine what, if any factors, these evaluations are based on, and more specifically what the relationship is between these seemingly campaign specific evaluations and longer held, pre-dispositions.

**Outline of Project**

This project, using survey data from the 2008 American National Election Study (ANES), represents an attempt to evaluate the efficacy of the dual-process model for explaining individual voting behavior in a real-world context, and if appropriate, to move beyond the question of whether candidate-centric evaluations matter in a real-world accounting to the more important question of what these evaluations are based upon. The 2008 presidential election is an excellent case study for this research question for two reasons. In addition to the unique circumstances involved in the 2008 presidential election outlined above, the manner in which data were collected in the 2008 election cycle also makes it a good year to analyze. In 2008, the American National Election Study (ANES) collected its traditional Time Series data, which included multiple measures designed to gauge potential cognitive and affective predictors of vote choice, as well as orientations toward numerous social and political groups. Additionally, the 2008 ANES also included a multi-wave panel study which allows for the all-important ability
to examine the temporal dynamics of affective development and vote choice which are central to the dual-process model.

In order to further develop these ideas, Chapters 2 sets the foundation for the examination by outlining existing theories and models from the worlds of political science and cognitive neuro-science. It begins with a brief review of existing political science based models used in explaining individual vote choice, focusing most heavily on the fundamental debate within the political science literature over whether issues and campaigns matter or whether election results are largely pre-determined by existing attachments to political parties (Niemi, Weisberg and Kimball 2011). Chapter 2 then turns attention to recent advances in the scientific understanding of how the human mind works, and generally how these revelations are being applied to a broader set of research questions, paying more specific attention to their application within political science to examine individual voting behavior, most notably through the theory of affective intelligence and the dual-process model.

Chapters 3 through 5 build upon this existing literature by providing an empirical testing of the dual-process model in a real-world context. Chapter 3 explores the important, but understudied, concept of affective durability which has critical implications for the applicability of the dual-process model. Using 2008 ANES Panel Study data, this chapter tests the hypothesis that affective orientations toward candidates, both positive and negative, are activated early in the campaign process, and once activated are relatively impervious to acquisition of additional information that likely occurs naturally throughout the course of a political campaign. The extent to which affect is durable serves as the primary differentiation between the theory of affective
intelligence and the dual-process model. As a result, it serves as the key assumption on which the dual-process model is built. Without durability, affective orientations are subject to constant updating, rendering the unitization component of the dual-process model impossible.

Building on the findings which support the notion of affective durability, Chapter 4 uses the same data to evaluate how well these consistent affective orientations explain actual voter behavior. Using structural equation models to simultaneously estimate the impact of cognitive and affective predictors on individual vote choice, Chapter 4 examines the independent impact of emotional identifications with each candidate by testing the hypothesis that affective orientations toward each candidate are more effective predictors of vote choice, independent of the traditional party dynamic, than more cognitively based factors. The resultant models suggest that while party identification is vitally important to understanding how people make their electoral choices, affective orientations towards each candidate have a significant impact, both substantively and statistically, on the decision-making process. Issues, on the other hand, had little to no impact on the 2008 models, suggesting that cognitively based accounts of issue importance in the 2008 presidential election are less than adequate for explanatory purposes. Instead, any contextual deviation in voting behavior is driven largely by individual evaluations of candidates.

Simply identifying the impact of these affective orientations towards each major party candidate in the 2008 presidential election, however, leaves perhaps the most important question unanswered. Since affective orientations towards the candidates are durable, and they impact how people make the choices they do on election day, it is
important to understand what, if anything, these evaluations are based on. Using social identity theory, and the ground-breaking political application utilized by Leege, Wald, Krueger and Mueller (2002), as a beginning point, Chapter 5 seeks to identify what pre-existing perceptions and attitudes matter in voters’ affective evaluations of candidates. Using multiple statistical analyses of the 2008 ANES Time-Series data set, this research tests the hypothesis that the seemingly contextual candidate-centric evaluations are actually important because of their ability to activate, and raise the salience of, pre-existing, long-term identifications with, and attitudes toward, social and political groups. Evidence from these models, presented in Chapter 5, points to many of the same factors that impact party identification, as identified by Leege and his co-authors (2002), matter as people form their evaluations of the candidates. In 2008, this involved the expected mixture of attitudes on race and religion, but also some unexpected interactions including an early indication that the as of 2008 un-named Tea Party movement might have had an impact in the presidential contest. These effects, however, were not felt equally across candidates or even across dimensions, positive and negative, for each candidate, suggesting that different long-term group and attitudinal factors impacted various short-term evaluations of candidates differently based on context. Finally, Chapter 6 offers a summation of findings, a discussion of what it all means, and some concluding thoughts on directions for future research.
CHAPTER 2: FAULTY ASSUMPTIONS – THE ORDERING OF COGNITION AND AFFECT IN TRADITIONAL POLITICAL APPROACHES TO VOTE CHOICE

Attempts to study electoral decision-making have been a staple of the academic study of politics and government for over half a century. While the discipline of political science is much older than this, early research efforts within the field were largely focused on institutions, government structure and historical analysis (Isaak 1985). However, methodological and statistical advancements made in the mid-20th Century, primarily the development of scientific survey research and a growing emphasis on multivariate statistical models in graduate programs, led to a new focus on logical empiricism, spurring the behavioral revolution (Sanders 2010). Owing in large part to the emerging ability to collect information on a large set of observations, this new, behavioral paradigm shifted attention from the analysis of institutions and historical occurrences to individual actors operating within the political and governmental system (Isaak 1985). This new-found ability to study individual attitudes and behavior opened up a multitude of new lines of research opportunities, and perhaps none of these emerging lines of inquiry has received as much attention as has voting behavior.

Voting behavior provided a fertile new ground for researchers for two primary reasons. First, voting is the most common way citizens engage the political system in the United States. Participation in protests, rallies, town meetings, and unsolicited interactions with government officials, both elected and unelected, pale in comparison to the rates at which people vote, particularly in presidential elections (Niemi and Weisberg 2001). As a result, there is immense value to both the academic community and the larger general public in studying how people make the choices they do on election day. Second, but related, voting has been demonstrated to have a measurable impact on policy outcomes (Campbell et al. 1960; Ginsberg and Stone 1996),
and as a result the indirect effect of voting behavior on governmental outcomes, operating through election results, merits evaluation.

Like much of the research in other areas of political science, the academic community has failed to arrive at a simple, single explanation of how individuals make the decisions they do on election day. The main method for evaluating individual attitudes, the scientific survey, was adapted from other disciplines, so it should not come as a surprise that the resultant explanations of political judgment were shaped largely by concepts and theories borrowed from other academic fields of inquiry, such as sociology, psychology and economics. As a result, much of the political science literature on voting behavior has highlighted, and followed, an on-going debate about whether election results are largely pre-determined by long-term factors, such as an individual’s pre-existing attitudes, or whether short-term, contextual events which occur during the course of the campaign matter. The relative balance of these two positions has ebbed and flowed over the last half century, with each side having periods of dominance.

While approaching the all-important question of how people arrive at their electoral decisions from different points of view, each perspective is built on the fundamental assumption that, neurologically speaking, cognition precedes affect. This has important consequences for how early political science perspectives treated the importance of emotional responses to political stimuli. Even perspectives which argued that election results were determined in advance by long-term factors, some of which are affectively driven, offered that these factors were shaped largely by the cognition of an individual’s historical experiences and contemporary exposure to various political, social and cultural stimuli. Similarly, short-term approaches to explaining voting behavior focus most heavily on the exposure to and cognitive awareness of contextual events and stimuli that arise during the course of the political campaign process. As a
result, many of the traditional political science approaches leave emotional factors largely unconsidered, a view that even the most casual observers of modern applied politics would be quick to question.

The fundamental assumption of these approaches, however, has recently been challenged in multiple studies of the physiological operation of the human mind and decision-making. In large part a result of a re-conceptualization of how the mind works, a growing body of literature suggests cognition and affect are separate, partially independent functions which can in some instances impact one another (Zajonc 1980), and that, in many instances, affect precedes and shapes cognition (Zajonc 1980; Fazio 2001; Forgas 1995; Bargh 1994; Bargh et al. 1996). As a result, the decision-making process can be thought of not simply as a cognitive process, but as a process shaped by an individual’s emotional reaction to various stimuli. Political decision-making is not immune from this re-conceptualization, and a recent spate of research on voting behavior has co-opted this new perspective, albeit largely in experimental settings, in an attempt to understand the importance of emotional identifications to the electoral decision-making process.

**Defining the Voting Behavior Paradigm**

Before attention can be given to the emergence of affect and emotion as determinants of electoral behavior, it is important to understand how contemporary perspectives on political decision-making have evolved over time. With the development of the scientific survey, and its introduction to political questions, a new set of research methodologies, theoretical orientations, concepts and variables were introduced into political science. As scientific survey research techniques were developed initially to study agricultural variables, psychological attitudes and consumer behavior (Weisberg 2005), it should not be surprising that early efforts to explain
voting behavior using scientific survey research identified a series of social and psychological factors as being critically important as determinants of an individual’s vote choice.

**The Columbia Model**

The earliest of these models came from a team of researchers led by Columbia University Sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld and Behavioral Scientist Bernard Berelson. Using repeated panel studies to study the 1940 and 1948 presidential elections, the Columbia team developed the earliest empirical explanation of individual voting behavior in American presidential elections. Their efforts began with the application of a consumer preference model in the 1940 presidential election. This approach was based on Lazarsfeld’s early work on the “psychology of choice” (Rossi 1959), which offered the idea of political decision-making as equivalent to how people select between different offerings of any household good. Niemi, Weisberg and Kimball (2011) summarize the original perspective of Lazarsfeld and his co-authors thusly:

> Each party is seen as presenting a product to the public, the campaign was seen as an advertising campaign during which competing products were weighed by the public, and the voters were seen as recording their final choices when they stepped into the booth on election day (Niemi, Weisberg and Kimball 2011, p. 13).

If true, this perspective would offer an empirical model consistent with normative expectations of individual decision-making based on the rational deliberation of political information.

The findings of both panel studies conducted by Lazarsfeld, Berelson and their co-authors, however, were far from supportive of the consumer behavior model of electoral participation. Instead of finding that individual voters would carefully weigh and consider information presented over the course of the campaign, evidence from the panel data indicated most voters knew how they intended to vote well before election day, suggesting that little persuasion or conversion actually occurred (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet 1948; Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954). Their examination of the 1940 election, for example, suggested
that most political information is filtered to the mass public through opinion leaders as a part of the two-step flow of communication model (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet 1948) which was more fully developed in later work by Lazarsfeld and Katz (1955). As a result, the media/advertising component of their hypothesized consumer preference model had little impact.

*Voting*, the Columbia examination of the 1948 presidential election, however, was a more overtly political work, and moved further beyond the media dimension (Bartels 2010). In this work, the authors begin to move away from the party/opinion leadership model outlined in *The People’s Choice*, and instead offer that communications occurring within a close-knit social network of family and acquaintances are what really drive political decision-making (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954). These social networks dictate the context through which individuals view the political world. While changes in this context can impact people’s behavior, political contexts for an individual rarely vary because the people that represent an individual’s sociological influences tend to have similar views. As a result of the homogeneity of those with whom people interact, media and campaigns have little impact on individual vote choice because people selectively use information, both deliberatively and unintentionally, to be consonant with existing attitudes and network pressures. Relatedly, the demographic consistency of an individual’s social circle leads to the emergence of readily identifiable patterns in what factors impact electoral behavior. These patterns according to the Columbia model are dependent on the social groups individuals belong to and interact with as a part of their social connections. For example, Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee (1954, p. 310) point to racial, religious, regional, economic and familial influences on individual behavior that supersede any potential influence of campaigning. This implies that all campaigns do is re-enforce existing views. Thus, the vote decision is based on little more than results of long-term factors, mainly pre-existing
socialization, and not, as normative expectations would predict, the active, rational consideration of short-term factors such as contextual occurrences or candidate issue positions (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954). As a result, as summarized by Bartels, “a team led by one of the greatest sociologists of his era succeeded, almost despite themselves, in producing a classic study of electoral sociology” (Bartels 2010, p. 241)

**The Michigan Model**

By the late 1950’s, however, the Columbia Model had fallen out of favor, largely due to the advancement of other theories and because it failed to identify why differences in social group attitudes exist (Niemi, Weisberg and Kimball 2011). At about the same time, a second group of scholars were also utilizing survey research to examine individual voter behavior. Evolving out of research designed to measure and analyze individual attitudes toward foreign policy issues, a group of researchers from the University of Michigan began to point at a new determinant of electoral decision-making: party identification (Bartels 2010). Beginning with *The Voter Decides*, the Michigan scholars began developing their definition of party identification and stressing its importance in the vote choice process (Campbell, Gurin and Miller 1954).

It was with *The American Voter*, however, that the Michigan model gets its clearest and most famous articulation. In *The American Voter*, the conclusion about the relative importance of long-term factors was the same as it was for the Columbia scholars, but Campbell et al. (1960) offered a different culprit. Instead of sociological forces, *The American Voter* offered that an individual’s vote choice was determined primarily by long-standing psychological attachments to political parties, which are formed early in political life and are characterized by stability and resistance to contrary influence (Campbell et al. 1960). According to the authors, the strength of
partisan identification as a predictor of vote choice is unparalleled by other potential short-term factors such as evaluations of candidate characteristics and the cognition of issue positions. This finding has been supported by a recent methodological replication on the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). Using multiple dimensions to measure party identification, Campbell and his co-authors found that partisan feelings alone could accurately predict 85% of votes in 1952 and 1956, a conclusion supported in other elections by repeated empirical confirmation (Goldberg 1966; Stokes 1966; Miller and Stokes 1996; Lewis-Beck et al 2008, among others). This finding is made more impressive by the fact that the 85% prediction rate is higher than proportion of respondents who could correctly predict their own behavior prior to the election (Campbell et al. 1960).

Party identification’s strength as a predictor, according to the Michigan model, stems to a certain extent from its root cause. According to early research conducted by scholars from Michigan, party identification, like other social group identities, is passed down from parent to child largely because of the inter-generational consistency of social/economic class, racial and ethnic categorization and/or religious affiliation (Campbell, Gurin and Miller 1954). As a result, partisanship can be thought of as:

…a psychological identification, which can persist without legal recognition or evidence of formal membership and even without a consistent record of party support. Most Americans have this sense of attachment with one party or the other. And for the individual who does, the strength and direction of party identification are facts of central importance in accounting for attitude and behavior. In characterizing the relation of individual to party as a psychological identification we invoke a concept that has played an important if somewhat varied role in psychological theories of relation of individual to individual or of individual to group. We use the concept here to characterize the individual’s affective orientation⁢ to an important group-object in his environment (Campbell et al. 1960, p.121).

⁢Emphasis added by the author.
Several important components of this definition need to be more fully parsed out. First, party identification is psychological, or affective, orientation that exists without the requirement of formal membership. This view of partisanship allows most Americans, even those who claim political independence, to be classified along the partisan spectrum based upon either emotional identifications or habitual behavior. Second, knowing the location of individuals on this spectrum, a default measure of the strength and direction of an individual’s partisan attachment, allows for the classification and explanation of political attitudes and behavior.

This re-formulated partisanship is characterized, under the Michigan model, as demonstrating incredible stability and resistance to “contrary influence” (Campbell et al. 1960, p. 146). Once partisan identification is adopted, largely based on parental influence, it is incredibly difficult to disrupt, with nearly two-thirds of respondents in the samples analyzed in *The American Voter* still identifying with the same party for which they cast their first presidential ballot (Campbell et al. 1960). While not easily changed, party identification is not permanent. Changes in partisanship can be caused by personal and/or social forces. Personal forces, such as marriage, job change or moving, are rarely a cause, and because the average citizen is largely unaware of political and social events, social forces must be of extraordinary intensity to matter. This stability has been repeatedly confirmed in later studies as well (Converse and Markus 1979; Jennings and Niemi 1981; Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002).

As a result of this stability, partisanship has critical consequences for other political attitudes. Because of the enduring nature of an individual’s partisan identification, it can be placed near the beginning of the “funnel of causality,” and is critical for defining the relationship between the individual and various political objects. It shapes much of what an individual thinks about politics including how they evaluate candidates, their policy preferences, and how they
process campaign information (Campbell et al. 1960). While not able to explain all of the variation in attitudes toward national politics, Campbell and his co-authors were able to use a single partisan factor to explain about 50% of the variance in other political attitudes. This suggests, according to the Michigan model, that party identification acts as a perceptual screen that respondents use to filter information. When presented with information contradictory to a person’s partisanship, the respondent’s party identification works to undoe the cognitive dissonance. As a result, party identification has a significant impact on other political attitudes and an enhanced indirect impact on political behavior (Campbell et al. 1960). This combined, and strong, impact of partisanship as a determinant of vote choice lays the foundation for the concept of the “normal vote” (Campbell et al. 1966), and suggests that in most election cycles, short-term contextual forces, such as campaign events and the discussion of policies and issues play only a small part in most voters' decisions.

Evolution of Political Science Approaches to Voting Behavior

Without a doubt, the Michigan model outlined most famously in The American Voter has been one of the most important works on American electoral behavior, and has had a dramatic impact on nearly all research that has followed. In summarizing the impact of the Michigan model, Bartels (2010) says:

> In my view, at least, none of the scores and hundreds of resulting scholarly books and articles has succeeded in making a significant dent in the central precepts and findings of what has come to be called the “Michigan model” of electoral studies. While elaborations and modifications in detail have been plentiful and productive, more ambitious revisionists have invariably turned out either to be attacking a caricature of the original argument (which often proves upon rereading to be a good deal richer and more nuanced than its critics give it credit for), or to be even more time-bound in their perspectives than the original authors acknowledged themselves to be, or simply wrong about the facts (Bartels 2010, p. 244).
While the evolution of the Michigan Model established the paradigm that has dominated much of
the discussion of how people arrive at their voting decisions, it did not, as noted by Bartels
(2010) end the discussion. Instead, it serves as the base of knowledge from which much of the
later occurring work, either by supporting, modifying or attempting to refute, has evolved. These
attempts to refute the focus on the impact of long-term factors, such as partisanship, outlined in
the Michigan model have been of varying success at different points in time, and can largely be
grouped into three categories; rational choice approaches, issue/ideology-based approaches and
economic models of voting (Niemi, Weisberg and Kimball 2011).

The differences between these classifications are, to a certain extent, a semantic
distinction, as all three are quite similar to one another. Each is essentially just another manner to
describe possible mechanisms through which the cognitive consideration of varying short-term
factors, either contextual campaign occurrences, economic conditions, or the consideration of
other temporally specific issues, can overcome the strength of long-term, partisan and pre-
dispositional factors as determinants of electoral outcomes. Over time, each of these models has
been of varying success in affecting the overall tenor of research on voting behavior. In the
immediate aftermath of the Michigan studies, short-term factors, particularly issues, were largely
dismissed as irrelevant in the vote decision-making process. By the 1970’s, however, researchers
were again utilizing new models which examined whether or not issues and the accompanying
ideological orientations were important determinants of voting behavior. Due to the success of
some of these research efforts, the 1980’s witnessed the re-acceptance of the importance of
short-term factors, with attention directed at questions of which issues matter. The importance of
short-term factors continued to be a central component of voting research in the 1990’s, but
short-term factors expanded beyond traditional issue based approaches to include questions of
whether or not candidates mattered (Niemi, Weisberg and Kimball 2011). The 2000’s, however, saw a renewal of the long running debate over whether elections are pre-determined or whether short-term factors such as issues, the media or campaigns matter (Niemi and Weisberg 2001).

**Rational Choice and Heuristics**

The earliest and most basic expression of the importance of short-term, contextual factors borrowed heavily from economics in an attempt to balance normative assumptions about democratic competence with individual behavior (Lau 2003). Using the framework of rational choice theory, these examinations rooted their explanation of voting behavior in the balancing of the expected benefits derived from an individual’s preferred candidate winning as opposed to losing (Downs 1957). As a result, these models give little, if any, consideration to emotion, instead focusing on policy preferences and rationality. Although rational choice is more commonly associated with explanations of voter turnout, it can also be used to decipher an individual’s rational ballot choice. But, this transition from turnout to vote choice introduces several issues which make pure rationalistic approaches problematic.4

While the calculations involved in the calculus of voting outlined by Downs (1957) and solidified by Riker and Ordeshook (1970) are relatively straight-forward, the calculations required by purely rational choice approaches to vote choice are much more complicated. For example, according to rational choice theory, in a multi-attribute decision, an individual must engage in a multi-step process. First, they must determine which issues are important to them personally. Then, they must figure out how they feel, as well as what each alternative, in a political sense each candidate, favors. They then compare the relative distance of their own position to each candidate’s, calculating which is closer to their own. Finally each of these

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4For a thorough description of the criticisms associated with rational choice explanations of voter turnout, see Caplan 2007.
distance values is weighted by the probability of occurrence and importance, and these values are summed. It is this summated value that is used to make a final decision (Edwards and Newman 1986).

This model of decision-making places a large demand on individuals in terms knowledge, interest, and cognitive capacity, which creates two problems. First, substantial evidence suggests individuals lack sufficient political information to behave in a purely rational manner. For example, Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) demonstrated that most citizens cannot recall basic political facts, while others are unable to even recognize the names of the elected officials that represent them (Jacobson 2004; Neuman 1986). Perhaps more damaging, the system of decision-making outlined by pure rationalists utilizes a series of complex, cognitive calculations for which much of the literature on information processing suggests the average citizen is incapable, unwilling or unlikely to engage (Converse 1964; Zaller 1992; Lodge, McGraw and Stroh 1989 among others).

These deficiencies, however, did not end attempts to apply rational choice models to political decision-making. Additional research attempted to account for individual competency deficiencies by looking for ways people could be rational with limited information (Downs 1957; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Popkin 1994, Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1991; Calvert 1985; Fiorina 1981; Simon 1955). These attempts at “bounded rationality” usually involved the usage of heuristics, or information short-cuts, to reduce the costs associated with information gathering and processing, and the number of alternatives from which to choose. There is considerable debate about which heuristics individuals use, but several groupings are of particular interest, including: political parties (Downs 1957), social groups (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954; Popkin et al. 1976; Krehbiel 1991; Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1991); retrospective economic
evaluations (Fiorina 1981; Key 1966) campaign events (Popkin 1991; Lodge, Steenbergen and Brau 1995; Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1997), and the media (Iyengar and Kinder 1987). Lupia and McCubbins (1998) were the first to come up with a covering law as to when heuristics are valuable from a rational standpoint, but their focus on the importance of knowledge and trust misses an important point. Many of these heuristics, particularly those based on partisan identifications and social groups, do not imply rationality, or its accompanying need to weigh new, contextual information. Additionally, people who make use of heuristics may do better in behaving rationally5 than those who use nothing, but do not do as well as those who are fully informed (Bartels 1996). One reason for this is that heuristics are likely skewed by personal biases and the misattribution of responsibility (Achen and Bartels 2006).

**Issues, Ideology and the Economy**

The deficiencies and inconsistencies of rational choice approaches limit the ability of these models to effectively introduce the consideration of short-term factors as determinants of vote choice. These deficiencies, however, did not end attempts to assert the importance of the cognitive consideration of contextually specific occurrences and objects. The remaining attempts to introduce short-term contextual factors outside of the heuristic-driven models evolved into two camps; those who offered that individuals had enough information to be rational, and those which relied on other, more contextually based heuristics. Almost immediately after the publication of *The American Voter*, researchers began to challenge its principal finding regarding the importance of partisanship at the expense of more considered evaluation of policy and issues. Perhaps most famously, this critique was manifested in Nie, Verba and Petrocik’s (1976) *The Changing American Voter*. In *The Changing American Voter*, Nie and his co-authors argued that

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5Rational political activity uses the definition outlined by Downs (1957), whereas people are deemed to be rational so long as they are utilizing means that pursue utility maximization, end goals have no bearing on whether an individual is deemed to be rational.
Americans in the 1950’s, the years examined by *The American Voter* (Campbell et al. 1960), were highly satisfied with government and the political parties. They identified an electorate that thought about politics in simpler terms, and was only mildly involved in politics, resulting in habitual ties to one of the two major American political parties. According to Nie, Verba and Petrocik (1976), however, the 1960’s introduced new issues to the public, mainly Vietnam and race, which upset the traditional partisan dynamic. This did not manifest as the switching of party allegiances, but rather as a general dealignment with lower levels of strong partisan identifiers and a rising proportion of independents. As a result, they observed a measurable drop in partisanship as the nation transitioned from the 1950’s to the 1960’s.

According to Nie and his co-authors, these new issues were particularly well-suited to reducing the influence of partisanship because they were highly salient for nearly the entire population, and penetrated into the personal lives of the American public (Nie, Verba and Petrocik 1976). When this is combined with the increasing education levels among the general population, the result is an electorate that is not only more tuned into the important issues of the time, but also more capable of using those issues in the decision-making process. This begins to manifest itself in 1956 as more people began to use issue/ideological references to make political evaluations (Nie, Verba and Petrocik 1976). According to *The Changing American Voter*, this should not be unexpected as issue voting is actually a more parsimonious model than partisan voting. In order for partisan voting to work, an individual must have a party identification, the candidates must be from different parties, and individuals must use party affiliation as the criterion for choice. This implies that, under a party vote choice model, a voter without a party identification cannot reach a vote choice, and candidates not affiliated with either major party
cannot receive votes (Nie, Verba and Petrocik 1976). Issue voting, on the other hand, simply requires an individual to have an issue preference and the candidates must offer a choice.

Much like the results of *The American Voter*, critics of the issue/ideological model outlined by Nie, Verba and Petrocik (1976) quickly sought to refute its findings. These critiques were grouped into two camps: methodological and substantive. Methodologically, several works identified a precipitous increase in issue correlations between 1960 and 1964. If Nie and his co-authors were correct, then the pattern of change should have been more gradual and evolutionary as people slowly became more politically interested and aware. Instead, the drastic increase correlated with a change in the question wording of items designed to measure policy awareness and ideological consistency. When experimental surveys replicated both question formats, evidence suggested that much of the increased ideological constraint found by *The Changing American Voter* was in fact an artifact of changes in question wording (Bishop 2005; Bishop, Oldendick and Tuchfarber 1978a; Bishop, Oldendick and Tuchfarder 1978b; Sullivan, Piereson and Marcus 1978). The critiques, however, were more than methodological. A group of researchers from the University of Michigan, as a part of the American National Election Study, conducted a panel study in 1972, 1974 and 1976. Using this study, several comparisons could be drawn, and several conclusions could be reached. First, despite the contextual changes that occurred during this four year period, partisan attachments were just as stable as they were in the 1950’s (Converse and Markus 1979). Second, issue preferences were no more stable in the 1970’s than in the 1950’s, raising doubts as to the viability of the findings outlined in *The Changing American Voter*, and the overall importance of the consideration of short-term events in the decision-making process (Converse and Markus 1979; Popkin et al. 1976).
These criticisms, however, did not end attempts to establish the importance of issues and other short-term contextual factors as important determinants of individual voting behavior. Echoing the findings of *The Changing American Voter*, Pomper (1972) demonstrated that between 1956 and 1968 issues became more important largely because of increasing ideological differences between party positions and the attitudes of partisans. Even this growth, however, did not supplant party identification as the most important predictor (Hartwig, Jenkins and Temchin 1980). Which issues mattered, however, was dependent on which specific issues have been demonstrated to be important in a particular election context (Aldrich, Sullivan and Borgida 1989; Miller and Shanks 1996; Leege et al. 2002; Weisberg and Christenson 2007; Abramson, Aldrich and Rohde 2007). The support for issue voting offered by these findings, however, needs to be tempered. While issue voting increased in the 1960’s and 1970’s, partisan-based explanations made a comeback beginning in the 1980’s (Bartels 2000). Additionally, the apparent increase in the importance of issue voting could be due to projection and persuasion biases among individual respondents (Brody and Page 1972).

Outside of the traditional issue/ideology based framework outlined by *The Changing American Voter*, one key short-term factor that has received considerable attention in the post-*American Voter* literature has been the importance of the economy. While Nie, Verba and Petrocik (1976) found the economy to have little impact except only in the most extreme of circumstances, other research (Kramer 1971; Key 1966; Fiorina 1981; Kinder and Kiewiet 1981; Tufte 1975; Abramowitz 1995; Lewis-Beck 1988) has found a persistent importance. The earliest articulations of the importance of the economy centered on social class differences, which were largely tied to occupational differences (Alford 1963). While recent research has shown the importance of occupational differences are on the decline (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008;
Knutsen 2007; Abramson, Aldrich and Rohde 2007; Stanley and Niemi 2006) this is not the only way the importance of the economy has been examined.

Those who have offered the importance of the economy have had to address two different dimensions. The first deals with whether or not individuals use prospective or retrospective evaluations. Prospective analyses argue that individuals look to the future when making their vote decision based on the economy (Downs 1957, MacKuen, Erikson and Stimson 1992) while retrospective evaluations represent a reward/punishment system for incumbent performance (Key 1966; Fiorina 1981). Substantial research, however, finds that neither is universally dominant, but rather point to linkages between the two (Ladner and Wlezien 2007; Bartels 2002; Conover, Feldman and Knight 1986), while others claim the retrospective/prospective dimension is dependent on the presence and strategies of incumbents (Vavreck 2009; Nadeau and Lewis-Beck 2001). The second dimension addresses the difference between personal and socio-tropic evaluations. Again, research on this dimension is less than definitive with some suggesting personal dimensions are important (Fiorina 1981; Kramer 1983), others suggesting collective economic conditions are most important (Kinder and Kiewiet 1983), while other suggest that both matter (Marcus 1988). Regardless of whether an analysis uses prospective versus retrospective, or personal versus socio-tropic measures, proponents argue that economic approaches are valid because aggregation gives a valid measure (Page and Shapiro 1992; Erikson, MacKuen and Stimson 2002), income provides both an economic and cultural variable (Gillman 2008), campaign appeals are still overwhelmingly focused on economics (Hillygus and Shields 2008), economic models of voting behavior provide a better predictor than moral attitudes (Bartels 2010; Brewer 2009), and even when other issues are put into multivariate statistical models, the economy still remains more important (Weisberg and Mockabee 1999).
But, issues and the economy are far from the only short-term contextual factors that have received substantial positive attention within the voting behavior literature. As noted above, economic class differences have become less important as a short-term predictor of voting behavior. As a result, cultural issues have become increasingly prominent in explanations of vote choice (Schofield and Miller 2007). This new dimension of cultural issues has created cross-pressures that can serve as wedge issues, which can be used to divide the electorate (Hillygus and Shields 2008). These divisions are largely centered on issues of religion and morality (Layman and Green 2006; Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2006), although others have demonstrated the cultural divide is larger than just religion (Leege et al. 2002; Hetherington and Weiler 2009). This suggests that campaign strategies or political objects that tap into cultural differences among the general population can have a short-term impact on how people think and behave politically.

This potential importance of campaigns cannot be accepted or dismissed out of hand as important determinants of individual vote choice. While some claim campaigns are relatively unimportant (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet 1948; Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954; Campbell et al. 1960; Finkel 1993, Bartels 1996, Markus 1988; among others), others offer campaigns have a dramatic impact on individual vote choice. Another way campaigns are thought to matter is through the activation of attitudes about specific candidate traits (Miller and Shanks 1996; Converse and Markus 1979). Candidates are election-specific, and therefore, provide a contextual factor that impacts vote choice. Popkin (Popkin et al. 1976) and Markus (1982), for example, showed high levels of voting based on candidate integrity and competence. Similarly, multiple analyses of the 1996 presidential election found that Clinton lost votes on the
trust dimension (Smith, Radcliffe and Kessel 1999), but he used empathy to overcome his trust deficiency (Weisberg and Mockabee 1999).

Another approach to examining the interplay between short-term factors and vote choice looks at the influence of the media on the presidential campaigns. Building on work by Iyengar and Kinder (1987), which outlined the agenda setting and priming function of the media and campaign, Petrocik (1996) postulates the idea of issue ownership, where parties, and by extension candidates, hold an advantage on certain issues. Each side tries to make the issues on which they hold an advantage the dominant issue in a campaign because these issues can activate specific affective responses in individuals (Petrocik 1996). Additional research offers that the media makes campaigns meaningful through the coverage of primary outcomes (Bartels 1988), debates (Johnston et al. 1992), news coverage (Iyengar and Kinder 1985) advertising (Johnston, Hagan and Jamieson 2004; Hill et al. 2008; Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995) and campaign GOTV efforts (Green and Gerber 2004).

What then are we to make of these seemingly contradictory, and often confusing, findings relative to the importance long-term pre-dispositions and short-term, contextual factors? One set of models offers that election outcomes are largely a function of pre-existing attitudes, mainly party identification, which would suggest that campaigns do not matter. A second set, however, makes a seemingly compelling case for the importance of rational interactions with an electoral context as people decide how to cast their ballots. Without a doubt, partisanship matters, but deviations from cycle to cycle do not signal wholesale changes in the partisan composition of the electorate. Instead, these deviations suggest some other set, or sets, of factors are at work as individuals go to the ballot box. Sorting out whether these factors are long-term pre-dispositions or rationally based considerations of contextually specific events and issues is
critically important to developing an enhanced understanding of voting behavior. Part of the confusion found in the models described above arises from methodological choices and assumptions made by each set of researchers, but the lack of clarity also arises because a big piece of the decision-making puzzle is missing: the importance of emotional responses. Emotional responses to political objects, mainly candidates, provide an alternative predictor of individual voting behavior which can help us determine whether or not election outcomes are pre-determined, or whether context matters. Doing so involves first determining whether or not affective evaluations of the candidates matter, and then seeking to identify what factors, long-term or short-term, these emotional identifications are built upon. This provides us with a valuable new way to think about the impact of both long-term and short-term factors. Understanding how these two sets of factors interact is of critical importance in improving how we think about individual voting behavior.

**Balancing Affect and Cognition**

Before attention can be directed at gauging the impact of individual affective orientations on vote choice, it is important to examine the changing neuro-scientific framework relative to how people process information and evaluate stimuli. As mentioned above, improving our understanding of the voting process involves a re-consideration of the interaction of long-term and contextual factors. The overwhelming majority of the efforts outlined in the preceding section have approached the relative importance of each set of factors using recursive methods, which assume that each factor is independent of the other factors (Tabachnik and Fidell 2007). While some models have examined the question of whether elections are pre-determined or not using non-recursive models (Jackson 1975; Page and Brody 1972; Marcus and Converse 1979; Page and Jones 1979; Green 2005; among others), these models have reached wildly different
conclusions because of the statistical techniques and assumptions employed. As a result, non-recursive models have fallen out of favor (Bartels 2010) leaving most of the existing models to assume long-term factors and short-term contextual factors are independent of one another.

This, however, is not the only flawed assumption upon which much of this research rests. In addition, and related, to the independence assumption, each of these attempts to examine the relative importance of long-term and short-term factors is built on the belief that cognition proceeds affect. This assumption has critical consequences for the overall understanding of the importance of short-term, contextual factors in explaining individual voting behavior. While consistent with normative expectations about the rationality of the American voter, this assumption, at best, minimizes the importance of emotional reactions beyond party identification. Research from the field of cognitive neuroscience, however, has begun to raise doubts as to the validity of this assumption. Owing in large part to a re-conceptualization of how the “emotional” brain works, emotion and affect are recognized as becoming increasingly important to understanding decision-making.

This re-conceptualization revolves largely around the structure of emotion. Theories of emotional structure are valuable because they provide a framework for reducing the multiple emotional categories people can report feeling into something much more manageable (Averill 1990). Structurally, emotions have traditionally been reduced using two broad theoretical approaches, valence and discrete. Valence theories offer the greatest amount of emotional reduction by categorizing all emotional states along a single positive/negative dimension (Tooby and Cosmides 1990). This single dimension allows for the classification of individual emotional reactions as either good or bad, has its roots in evolutionary biology and lays the foundation for emotional fight or flight responses (Neuman et al. 2007). Discrete theories, on the other hand,
offer a more complex reduction strategy. Instead of relying simply on a classification of events as positive or negative, discrete theories of emotion introduce multiple levels of cognitive consideration into the determination of which emotional reactions, and the intensity of said reactions, will be activated. These considerations include not only whether or not a stimulus is positive or negative, but also considerations such as the presence of punishment or reward in a situation, is the resultant situation fair, are the consequences definite, and is the stimulus impacting one’s self or someone else (Roseman 1984). The relative importance of each of these considerations results in multiple discrete structural theories that reduce the multitude of emotional states down to a more manageable number of mutual exclusive categories, usually between four and sixteen (Ortony, Clore and Collins 1988; Lazarus 1991; Forgas 1995; Ekman and Rosenberg 2005). Perhaps most recognized among political scientists was the discrete theory work done by Robert Abelson and his colleagues (Kinder, Abelson and Fiske 1979; Abelson et al. 1982) which identified seven categories of emotional reactions to presidential candidates, including the now well-known survey items asking about hope, pride, anger and fear which consistently appear in the ANES.

From a political perspective, both valence and discrete approaches prove to be somewhat problematic because they rest on the usage of mutually exclusive emotional continuums, such as feeling good versus feeling bad, which are built on the assumption that experience followed by cognition dictates the creation of emotional responses (Marcus 2003). More recent research, however, has identified a third approach that requires multiple orthogonal, continuous dimensions, which allow for people to experience various emotional states, both positive and negative⁶, simultaneously (Bradley et al. 1992). To best conceptualize a dimensional approach

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⁶As noted by Marcus (2003), the selection of positive and negative as the labels for these orthogonal dimensions is less than ideal because of the potential confusion it creates with valence theories.
to emotion, various emotions should be thought of as existing in a “circumplex” (Plutchik and Kellerman 1989). This circumplex consists of at least two axes, one positive running north to south and one negative dimension running east to west. The extreme ends of these dimensions reflect not only the valence component, but also the arousal component. In other words, dimensional theories now provide a method to categorize positive and negative emotions not just in terms of direction, but also in terms of intensity. By placing these dimensions at orthogonal angles, the relative position of an individual on both dimensions provides an indication of the general emotional orientation of an individual to a stimulus, accounting for both positive and negative feelings. While high levels of positive emotions and low levels of negative emotions towards the same stimulus is often the norm, dimensional theories open up the possibility that positive and negative emotions, which now reside on separate, orthogonal dimensions, can be experienced simultaneously (Russell 1980; Clark and Watson 1988; Plutchik and Kellerman 1989; Feldman 1995). This simultaneity has critical implications for discrete and valence theories because it offers a picture of emotions that is more in-line with the growing perceived complexity of the human mind (Zajonc 1998).

Perhaps more important for the study of emotion and politics, dimensional theories suggest that emotions arise prior to, and independent of, cognition (Adolphs et al. 1995). In perhaps the seminal work on the ordering of cognition and affect, Zajonc (1980) presents empirical evidence which advances the idea that affect and cognition are in fact governed by separate, partially independent systems which can in some instances influence one another. As a result, he offers:

It is therefore not without merit to suppose that in many decisions affect plays a more important role than we are willing to admit. We sometimes delude ourselves that we proceed in a rational manner and weigh all the pros and cons of the various alternatives. But this probably is seldom the case. Quite often ‘I decided in favor of X’ is no more than ‘I liked X.’
Most of the time, information collected about alternatives serves us less for making a decision than for justifying it afterward (Zajonc 1980, p.155).

Essentially, because affect is primary, basic, inescapable, and irrevocable it need not be dependent on cognition (Zajonc 1980). This has critical consequences for how we think about decision-making generally, and more specifically about how people make their electoral choices. Essentially, the re-ordering of affect and cognition lays the foundation for the development of a neurological model based on two separate sets of processes, one automatic and the other requiring more conscious deliberation (Fazio 1986). Here, however, it is important to recall that Zajonc (1980) states these two processes, which he considers affective and cognitive processes, are governed by partially independent systems, which can sometimes influence one another. As shown by additional research from cognitive neuroscience (Fazio 1986; Fazio et al. 1986; Bargh 1994; Forgas 1995; Bargh et al. 1986), the arrow of influence generally flows from affective reactions to cognitive evaluations, and not the other way as normative expectations would predict. The resulting model of decision-making is one in which affective evaluations arise automatically, and remain relatively immune to change. As a result, affective reactions can have a strong impact as heuristic devices, which can be used in place of more considered, rational evaluations of political information (Forgas 1994).

We are already seeing this re-conceptualization impact the specifically political literature relative to judgment and decision-making. Westen (Westen et al. 2006; Westen 2007) provided a specifically political application of Zajone’s theory. During the 2004 presidential election, he led a team of researchers in mapping the neural pathways of negative information about an individual’s preferred candidate. When presented with information contradictory to their preference, political partisans registered negative emotional reactions, causing the portion of the brain that regulates emotion to activate in a manner to rationalize the stimuli to a more
emotionally satisfying conclusion (Westen et al. 2006). But, rationalizing away cognitive dissonance was insufficient. As described by Westen:

But the political brain also did something we didn’t predict. Once partisans found a way to reason to false conclusions, not only did neural circuits involved in negative emotions turn off, but circuits involved in positive emotions turned on. The partisan brain didn’t seem satisfied in just feeling better. It worked overtime to feel good, activating reward circuits that give partisans a jolt of positive reinforcement for their biased reasoning. These reward circuits overlap substantially with those activated when drug addicts get their “fix,” giving new meaning to the term political junkie (Westen 2007, p. xiv).

This paints a picture of individual political behavior as an emotional reaction that occurs largely, if not completely, absent of careful deliberation of any information, let alone complicated policy considerations. Since the brain attempts to handle cognitive dissonance by processing information along neural pathways more closely associated with emotion, it raises doubts as to the validity of claims that individual voting behavior occurs at the intersection of cognition and policy preferences. In fact, the high level of biased, justification-based reasoning found by Westen and his colleagues (2006) suggests post-election claims regarding the influence of issues are little more than after the fact rationalizations in which individuals offer little more than plausible justifications of their behavior (Bishop 2005). Essentially, rationality is replaced by rationalization, as behavior drives the selection of determinants without the individual being fully cognizant of why they made the decision (Lau 2003; Lau 1982; Rahn, Krosnick and Breuning 1994).

The Theory of Affective Intelligence and the Dual Process Model

Westen, however, is not the only researcher using these findings from cognitive neuroscience to re-examine political judgment and decision-making. As a result of the advances in the physiological understanding of the human mind, a wealth of new theories and approaches have been developed to examine the importance of affect and emotion in the decision-making process.
In perhaps the most thorough summary of the current literature on the importance of affect to political judgment, Neuman, Marcus, Crigler and MacKuen (2007), identify twenty-three named theories, models or central concepts used to explain the balancing of affect and cognition in political decision-making. These theories build from traditional approaches, which argue that cognition is primary including appraisal theory (Lazarus 1991) and selective use/social construction theories (Sears 1967; Harre 1987). But, it is from the theories that assume affect is primary where most of the new growth comes. These new approaches include multiple theories that center on the immediate activation of affective evaluations (Fazio 2001; Cassino and Lodge 2007), the relative ability of these affective tags to color the reception and interpretation of other political information (Abelson 1963; Bargh 1994; Forgas 1995; Bargh et al. 1996; Lodge, Taber and Weber 2006; Cassino and Lodge 2007), and the ultimate impact of these affective tags on political behavior (Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000; Marcus 2003; Lodge, Taber and Weber 2006; Cassino and Lodge 2007; MacKuen et al. 2007).

While this abundance of emerging theories about the relative roles of affect and cognition in the decision-making process, on the surface, seems overwhelming, the majority of affectively based approaches can be grouped broadly into two schools of thought under the banners of the theory of affective intelligence and the dual process model (Redlawsk 2006). Perhaps the most overt application of emotion-based decision-making in the voting process can be found in Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen’s (2000) theory of affective intelligence, but even this theory represents an attempt to re-introduce deliberation into the equation. Accepting Zajonc’s (1980) position that affect occurs independent of, and prior to, cognition, the authors argue the long held normative presumption that emotion impedes upon reason is incorrect. Instead they offer that emotion, in a political context, can spur political learning. Based on advances in neuroscience
that posit the brain’s emotional system actually consists of multiple affective subsystems, Marcus and his colleagues assert that two affective subsystems are particularly important. The first is the disposition system, which allows for the performance of previously learned routine activities (Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000). It essentially regulates the creation of habitual behavior, which is necessary to reduce the cognitive burden individuals must bear as they go about their daily lives. The disposition system, and the corresponding habitual behavior, continues to function so long as nothing novel or threatening is detected within the surrounding environment. It is the responsibility of the second affective subsystem, the surveillance system, to detect these threats. When threats are detected, the surveillance system suspends habitual behavior to evaluate the level of threat posed by the novel circumstance (Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000).

In a political context, two emotions from the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) are particularly important: enthusiasm and anxiety. When faced with novelty or threat -- in the political case enthusiasm and anxiety, respectively -- an individual will depart from habitual voting behavior, and will instead turn to reasoned political learning for the purposes of determining how to cast their ballot Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000). In this respect, the theory of affective intelligence represents another effort to rectify normative assumptions about rationality with empirical observation.

While this recognition of the independence of emotion in the theory of affective intelligence is a step in the right direction, its continued focus on secondary level rationality needs further evaluation. We have already seen the development of specifically political applications that raise doubts as to the efficacy of the theory of affective intelligence as an explanation of voting behavior. Perhaps most persuasive among these efforts are those offered by
Milton Lodge and his various co-authors which can be grouped collectively, albeit broadly, under the banners of motivated reasoning and the dual process model (Lodge and Taber 2005; Lodge, Taber and Weber 2006; Cassino and Lodge 2007). Motivated reasoning combines three sub-theories, hot cognition, on-line processing and the “how do I feel” heuristic, into a model of how people think about political objects (Lodge and Taber 2005). Building from the premise that all social information is affectively charged (Abelson 1963; Bargh 1994; Forgas 1995; Bargh et al. 1996; Lodge and Stroh 1993), motivated reasoning offers that individuals carry around a series of affective tags for all political objects and labels they encounter in long-term memory.

These affective orientations, according to the dual process model, are activated automatically and immediately upon exposure (Lodge, Taber and Weber 2006; Cassino and Lodge 2007). Consistent with Zajonc’s (1980) argument that affect is primary, affective orientations arise independent of and prior to the conscious awareness of an individual. This untethers affect from cognition, allowing it to have a meaningful impact on behavior independent of the conscious awareness of political issues. Automaticity alone, however, does not provide evidence that affect matters. Instead, it is the durability of affect and the notion of unitization that suggests affect may be as important, if not more so, than rationally based evaluations.

Durability is important because it demonstrates that affective orientations toward political objects in general, and candidates more specifically, are relatively immune from external influence. This durability allows for the more crucial unitization outlined in the dual process model. Under unitization, automatically activated affective orientations become fused with later occurring deliberative processes, and, as a result, shape much, if not all, of what people think about, and more importantly how they think about it, during the course of a political campaign (Lodge, Taber and Weber 2006). It is this unitized model of decision-making that, theoretically,
has a potentially dramatic impact on how we think about electoral choice. If all later developing political attitudes and evaluations are a function of the automatically activated affective orientations that occur at the beginning of the campaign, then there is little reason to believe in explanations of electoral choice which incorporate, as primary predictors, the cognitive deliberation of policy positions and preferences. As such, rationally based explanations such as the economic account of the 2008 presidential election, or moral values in 2004, are likely less than adequate.

**Need for More Research**

While offering a valuable new manner in which to examine what factors matter as people decide how to cast their ballots, the evidence outlined in applications of the dual process model is somewhat limited because, to date, it has largely been tested only in experimental settings. Automaticity suggests that short-term objects, notably candidates, are likely to have an impact on individual decision-making, because they are the most prominent contextual objects in any given election. But, unlike other short-term contextual factors, research from cognitive neuro-science suggests that these evaluations are not constrained by the rational consideration of campaign specific occurrences and stimuli. Instead, these affective reactions are based on some set of pre-existing factors, and instead of being influenced by contextual events, actually shape how individuals think about later evolving political attitudes.

This has critical implications for how both the academic community and the general public think about election outcomes. If these candidate affective evaluations are immune from influence by rational, cognitive considerations, and have an impact independent of partisan preferences, this would suggest that short-term variations in election results are a function of durable emotional identifications with candidates, and not as suggested by previous research...
careful deliberation over political information. As a result, it is imperative to examine this question in a non-experimental research setting to determine whether the findings of the dual process model hold in a real-world context.
CHAPTER 3: ASSESSING THE MISSING LINK – AFFECTIVE DURABILITY

As a result of the re-conceptualization of how the human mind processes information (Zajonc 1980, Fazio 1986; Damasio 1994, Bargh 1994; Bargh 1997; Westen et al. 2006 among others), and the already identified impact this has had on the study of individual political behavior, those interested in understanding elections are left with a considerable quandary. Recent research, building from the sociological and psychological perspectives originally outlined in the middle part of the 20th century, has begun to pay greater attention to the importance of emotion and affect in the decision-making process (Neuman et al. 2007; Redlawsk 2006), resulting in a proliferation of academic explanations that offer affect and emotion as a central, if not primary, determinant of voting behavior. As noted by Redlawsk (2006), much of this research can be grouped largely into two schools of thought: the theory of affective intelligence and Lodge’s articulation of the dual process model. While the resultant decision-making models outlined by these two perspectives reach very different conclusions about the role of considered judgment in the voting process, each begins from the assumption that affect is primary (Redlawsk 2006), suggesting that a more thorough examination of affective primacy using real-world data is critical to a better understanding of political decision-making.

Before turning to questions more directly related to individual voting behavior, the assumption of the primacy of affect requires further evaluation and consideration. The primacy of affect can be thought of as generally having two components: automaticity and unitization (Fazio 1986; Fazio 2001; Lodge, Taber and Weber 2006; Cassino and Lodge 2007). When combined, these two components produce a neurological process in which affective tags are raised simply and immediately through exposure to a stimulus (automaticity) and once raised
shape all subsequent political attitudes and evaluations (unitization). While both automaticity and unitization in political decision-making have been examined rather thoroughly (Lodge and Taber 2005; Lodge, Taber and Weber 2006; Cassino and Lodge 2007 among others), the underlying assumption on which each is based, that affective orientations are durable, has been largely ignored. By examining the durability of affect using survey data, we can test the hypothesis offered by many proponents of the primacy of affect that affective orientations are initiated early in the electoral process, and once activated are relatively impervious to external influence, such as the acquisition of additional information over time. By looking at durability, we can at least take a first step towards confirming the unitization process because without durability, there is little reason to believe affect has any influence over other attitudes.

**Why Should We Expect Affect to be Durable?**

Expectations about emotional durability begin with empirically supported conclusions about the primacy of affect. Traditionally, beliefs about emotion and political behavior were constrained because of the perceived interaction, and dependency, of cognition and affect (Sears 1961; Harre 1987; Lazarus 1991; Redlawsk 2006). Under this assumption, before individuals can determine how they feel about something, they must be exposed to it, cognitively process this exposure, and then finally form an evaluation. As a result, it is impossible to separate emotional frames from their dependency on cognitive consideration, making it impossible to allow for an affectively driven model of voting behavior. Research from cognitive neuroscience, however, has demonstrated that this process, which Laikoff (2009) deems to be an 18th Century picture of the human mind, is less than an adequate representation of how the brain processes and engages political stimuli. Under this new line of research, because affect is primary, basic, inescapable, and irrevocable it need not be dependent on cognition (Zajonc 1980).
This reconsideration of the ordering of affect and cognition has already assumed a critical place in academic explanations of political decision-making. In their edited volume *The Affect Effect*, Neuman, Marcus, Crigler and MacKuen spend a substantial portion of the opening chapter identifying “23 named theories, models, or central concepts used to explicate the interaction of affect and cognition” within their own book (Neuman et al. 2007 p.6). If taken individually this often overlapping cornucopia of concepts and theories would prove largely overwhelming, but as noted by Redlawsk (2006) much of what is known about the political interaction of affect and cognition can be placed broadly into two schools of thought. The first of these is the *theory of affective intelligence* developed by Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen (2000), which argues that when faced with novelty or threat -- in the political case enthusiasm and anxiety, respectively -- an individual will depart from habitual voting behavior, and will instead turn to reasoned political learning for the purposes of determining how to cast his or her ballot. The second school of thought can be grouped under the banner of Lodge and his various co-authors’ *dual-process model*. While Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen argue the end result of affective activation is political learning, Lodge and his coauthors argue that little learning is possible because once activated, affective tags become unitized with more deliberative processes. That is, once we feel something about a political object, whether positive or negative, that automatic process shapes all later evolving political attitudes and evaluations.

As a result, these two competing perspectives reach different conclusions about the role of rationality and considered judgment in the individual vote choice process even though both are based on the assumption that affect arises prior to and independent of the more conscious consideration of the political object (Redlawsk 2006). Where they diverge is largely an issue of durability. Affective intelligence theory would argue that affective orientations, as indicated by
habitual behavior, can be overcome by conscious political learning when anxiety levels reach a high enough level to cause a departure from the dispositional system. This suggests that the durability of affective orientations is not inviolate, and that in certain circumstances affective evaluations can be altered and/or overcome when determining how to vote.

In light of the claims of Marcus and his co-authors, those who are interested in voting behavior are left with the fundamental question of whether affective orientations of presidential candidates are, in fact, durable? The answer to this question has critical implications in determining which model, affective intelligence or the dual process model, serves as a better starting point in the later analysis regarding the importance of emotional identifications to vote choice. If individual affective evaluations of the 2008 presidential candidates are not durable, this would suggest that affective evaluations are updated during the course of the campaign, raising immediate concerns over the unitization claim made by those who promote the dual process model as the appropriate perspective. Conversely, if these orientations are durable, it opens the door for a significant impact, both statistically and substantively, on later occurring individual behavior.

While we know that durability is important, we are still left to wonder why we should expect affective orientations to be relatively impervious to change. The answer to this question, again, requires a quick detour into the cognitive neuroscience literature. As mentioned earlier, Zajonc (1980) offers that affect is primary and not necessarily dependent on cognition. This lays the foundation for the development of a neurological model based on two separate sets of processes, one automatic and the other requiring more conscious deliberation (Zajonc 1980; Fazio 1986; Fazio 2001). These two processes, which are largely separated as affective and cognitive processes, are governed by partially independent systems, which in some instances
impact one another (Zajonc 1980; Abelson 1963; Forgas 1995; Bargh 1994; Bargh et al. 1996).

Substantial research from cognitive neuroscience (Fazio 1986; Fazio et al. 1986; Bargh 1994; Bargh et al. 1996), suggests that this influence is usually affectively driven, as opposed to the more normatively palatable model which has cognitive process influencing the development of affective tags. As a result, the re-conceptualized perspective of decision-making paints a picture of vote choice as one in which affective evaluations of most stimuli are formed/activated immediately upon exposure and are relatively impervious to change.

These conclusions serve as the basis for Lodge and his co-authors’ more explicitly political application of the dual process model. Using the differentiation between automatic (affective) processes and deliberative (cognitive) processes, Lodge, Taber and Weber (2006) offer the notion of automaticity of political attitudes. Under automaticity, affective evaluations are spontaneous, unconscious, uncontrollable, and require no cognitive resources. Once activated, these automatic processes become unitized with deliberative processes in long-term memory, suggesting that they have a durable impact on later political information processing. As summarized by Lodge, Taber and Weber (2006):

“Our take home point is that all deliberation is underwritten by automatic memory processes so that there is in fact no such thing as a purely explicit or conscious response.” (p.15)

As a result, affective orientations end up driving the political ship, while more conscious deliberation over later evolving attitudes toward issues and other short-term contextual events and occurrences serve as little more than post hoc justifications of emotional identification.

Assessing Affective Durability

Underlying the findings of Lodge and his co-authors is the notion of affective durability. Assessing the accuracy of the assumption of affective durability is critically important, because without durability, the unitization process would not be possible. Without durability, the
affective tags activated by automatic processes would be subject to change as new evidence is received and interpreted, and the dual process model would seemingly fall apart. Most of what we know about automaticity and unitization has been learned through experimentation, which suffers from two shortcomings. First, experimental studies often struggle to deal with issues associated with the adequate replication of the information processing mechanisms utilized in real-world political situations (Nachmias and Nachmias 2000). Second, and perhaps more germane to assessing durability, the generally short time frame within which experimentation occurs makes examining individual attitude change, or conversely attitude stability, problematic. As such, we are left with experiments which assume affective orientations are durable, while little real-world evidence can be offered to support this assertion.

But, recent data collection efforts undertaken as a part of the American National Election Study (ANES) have provided researchers with enough data to more thoroughly assess the implied affective durability that underlies automaticity and unitization. Using the ANES Panel Study conducted during the 2008 presidential election, and its accompanying multiple measures of affective orientation toward the candidates, we can construct a model that attempts to explain affective evaluations at the end of the campaign process using only the affective evaluations offered by the respondents at the beginning of the campaign. In doing so, we are able to test the specific hypothesis that, consistent with the dual process model, affective orientations are activated early in the campaign process, and once activated, are relatively impervious to influence from the acquisition of additional information that occurs through the course of a presidential campaign.
Affective Dimensionality

Before directly examining the durability of affect, however, consideration of the dimensionality of candidate-centric affect is required. Using a dimensional-based approach to the structure of emotion (Russell 1980; Clark and Watson 1988; Plutchik and Kellerman 1989; Feldman 1995), two affective dimensions have consistently been demonstrated as important, anxiety and enthusiasm (Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000; Marcus 2003).

Before undertaken any evaluation that utilizes these variables as either an independent or dependent variable, it is important to determine whether or not the candidate-centric affective dimensions contained in the 2008 ANES are in fact consistent with the structural approach outlined by dimensional theories. In order to do so, each of the four Positive Affect Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) items for each of major party candidate included in the ANES Panel Study were analyzed using principal components factor analysis with a varimax rotation. These rotated loadings are contained in Table 3-1. A varimax rotation strategy was utilized because of the theoretical arguments which offer that positive and negative emotions actual exist on separate, orthogonal dimensions, which allows individuals to feel both positively and negatively about an object at the same time (Marcus 2003).

Table 3-1: Structure Matrix for PANAS Items in 2008 ANES Panel Study Waves 2 and 9

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<th>Wave 2</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obama Enthusiasm</td>
<td>Obama Anxiety</td>
<td>McCaın Enthusiasm</td>
<td>McCaın Anxiety</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. Obama Angry</td>
<td>-.427</td>
<td>.946</td>
<td>.235</td>
<td>.088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Obama Hopeful</td>
<td>.965</td>
<td>-.477</td>
<td>-.126</td>
<td>.220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Obama Afraid</td>
<td>-.473</td>
<td>.925</td>
<td>.345</td>
<td>.116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Obama Proud</td>
<td>.966</td>
<td>-.438</td>
<td>-.078</td>
<td>.227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. McCaın Angry</td>
<td>.209</td>
<td>.107</td>
<td>-.221</td>
<td>.935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. McCaın Hopeful</td>
<td>-.132</td>
<td>.288</td>
<td>.947</td>
<td>-.270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. McCaın Afraid</td>
<td>.231</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>-.237</td>
<td>.937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. McCaın Proud</td>
<td>-.066</td>
<td>.278</td>
<td>.949</td>
<td>-.192</td>
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Consistent with expectations, when a four factor solution is employed for the February (Wave 2) items, distinct positive and negative dimensions emerge for each candidate. The items measuring positive affect towards Obama, as measured by hope and pride, load quite strongly onto the same factor that appears to be distinct from the negative affect items, anger and fear. A similar pattern emerges for the McCain items as well, with all factor loading values exceeding .900. When the same analysis is repeated on the September (Wave 9) measures, the exact same pattern emerges, and the overall factor loadings are relatively consistent when compared the February loadings. In terms of consistency, the only item loading to show even a modest change is the loading the “Obama Afraid” item, which displayed a loading of .925 in February on the Obama Anxiety construct, and loading of .895 on the same factor seven months later.

Consistent with earlier research (Abelson et al. 1982; Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000; Marcus et al. 2006), however, factor correlations suggest that the resulting multi-dimensional structure is not purely orthogonal. While both McCain items display relatively small correlations with each other and the Obama dimensions among the February affective dimensions (angles of roughly 104, 97, 77, 72 and 84 degrees respectively), the positive and negative affect factors for Obama display a moderately high correlation of -.474, indicating that the two dimensions sit at an angle of 118 degrees. The four factor solution becomes less orthogonal when attention is shifted from the February measures to those constructed using the

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obama Enthusiasm</td>
<td>Obama Anxiety</td>
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<tr>
<td>Obama Enthusiasm</td>
<td>-.474</td>
<td>-.559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama Anxiety</td>
<td>-.110</td>
<td>-.413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCain Enthusiasm</td>
<td>.305</td>
<td>.510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCain Anxiety</td>
<td>-.238</td>
<td>-.478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCain Enthusiasm</td>
<td>-.238</td>
<td>.495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCain Anxiety</td>
<td>.495</td>
<td>-.137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
September PANAS items. In September, the factor correlation between the positive and negative Obama dimension remains high increasing to -.559 (or 124 degrees). Similarly, the positive Obama dimension and both McCain dimensions displays diminishing orthogonality, 115 degrees for the positive to negative relationship and 60 degrees for the positive to positive relationship. Also, the negative Obama dimension displays decreasing independence from the positive McCain dimension. The only correlation that is not appreciably different from February to September is the relationship between Obama Anxiety and McCain Anxiety, which increases modestly in magnitude from .110 to -.137, and becomes directionally consistent with expectations.

While this relatively high degree of correlation between the factors in September is of general interest, it does not impact the substantive ability to utilize the factors derived from the PANAS items as latent indicators in a multivariate analysis (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). What it does point to, however, is a growing interdependence of affective dimensions that is not evidenced in the early portion of the campaign. This growing inter-relation is likely a function of the temporal dynamic of the campaign and when these data were collected. Because of when these measurements were taken, individuals had to deal with changing counter referents as the campaign moved from the primary elections, which were still in full swing in February, to the general election contest. In February, for supporters of Senator Obama, the primary opposition was not Senator McCain, but rather Democratic rival Hilary Clinton. Similarly, supporters of Senator McCain were likely more focused on Governors Huckabee or Romney. Once these challengers were removed, however, the focus of each group of supporters was likely shifted to the nominee from the opposite party. This suggests that as campaign progressed, pre-existing
evaluations of the general election candidates became increasingly linked together, but this does not indicate that any actual updating of affective evaluations is on-going.

Assessing Affective Durability

Building on this factor analysis, we can now turn our attention to the primary question at hand: are affective orientations relatively impervious to change during the course of the campaign process, or are they subject to near constant adjustment as new information is encountered and accepted? In order to test this hypothesis, this research utilizes a structural equation model (SEM). A key first step in creating the SEM is to determine the best method to control for survey context effects of affective measures. Using the PANAS items as the constructs of central concern, a structural model was constructed to control for potential question order effects on the PANAS items. Figure 3-1 contains the full SEM for the hypothesized relationship.

As noted first by Campbell and his co-authors (1960), party identification serves as a critically important attitude not just for its direct impact on individual behavior, but also because of the influence it has over other attitudes. It is the first attitude activated in nearly every election campaign and as a result impacts how we feel about candidates, policies and issues (Campbell et al 1960). As a result, party identification is included as a predictor of all other attitudinal measures included in the SEM. In both the January and February waves, the like/dislike question was asked about each candidate near the beginning of each questionnaire. Because of the potential impact of sub-conscious priming, it is also included as a potential explanation of the initial PANAS measurements in February. Using these four items as predictors of affective orientations in September, the measurement model is completed.
To test the primary hypothesis in the most thorough manner, multiple iterations of the SEM described above were constructed. The first looks at the entire sample collected during both wave 2 (February) and wave 9 (September) of the 2008 ANES Panel Study. This full sample examination has two models, one designed to gauge the durability of affective orientation toward Obama, the second towards McCain. If affect is truly durable, that is impervious to change during the course of the campaign context, we would expect to see high multiple squared correlation values in the purely affect-driven model constructed in the SEM. On the other hand, if failing to include more cognitively based contextual predictors limits the overall explanatory power of the model, as indicated by the multiple squared correlation, then this would indicate
that affective orientations are likely subject to regular updating, raising doubts as to the efficacy of the unitization argument offered by Lodge and his various co-authors.

Table 3-3 provides the model summary for the full sample evaluations of both candidates. As evidenced by the multiple squared correlations, the model built simply on four affective predictors, party identification, the latent construct utilizing anxiety and enthusiasm, and the simple like/dislike questions from January and February\(^7\) proves to be quite effective in explaining affective orientations in September. With a multiple squared correlation of .925, the model explains an overwhelming portion of the variance in September affective evaluations of Obama, leaving only 7.5% of the variance for other predictors, either affective or cognitive. A similar pattern emerges when the model gauging affective durability towards McCain for the full sample is examined. While the overall explanatory power is not as strong as the model for Obama, it still explains nearly 78% of the variance in September affective orientations, indicating that there is not much variance left for other predictors to explain.

\(^7\)These items are included because they represent some of the first questions asked about each candidate, raising concerns over priming. If for example, I just told the interviewer that I like or dislike Obama, it is reasonable to assume that in the interest of consistency I may allow this answer to impact by evaluations of the anxiety and enthusiasm I feel toward him. Additionally, it has not been fully developed as to whether these oft-asked questions tap into a different type of emotional identification with each candidate. As a result they have been included in the model for both clarity and future probative value.
In both instances, the latent construct measuring affective orientations in February and party identification are the two strongest predictors. For attitudes toward McCain, party identification is the largest predictor of affective orientations in September, by nearly 25%, providing support for the landmark finding of Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes (1960) that party identification drives most other political attitudes. But, the larger importance of partisanship in explaining September affective evaluations of McCain should not be over-interpreted. Because of the number of viable alternatives in the early stage of the Republican nomination process, more variability in February affective orientations of Republican candidates is somewhat expected, allowing for more explainable change between February and September evaluations. This is greater change is exhibited in the lower multiple squared correlation measuring the ability of February affective evaluations of McCain to explain evaluations in September. However, the relative strength of the McCain PANAS items, operating through a latent construct, in explaining variance in the later evaluations of affect, combined with the primary significance of the February affective evaluations of Obama, suggest that one’s individual feelings about each candidate are to a certain extent independent of one’s partisan attachments.

Table 3-4: High Interest/High Knowledge Respondent Durability Structural Equation Model for 2008 ANES Panel Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Obama</th>
<th>McCain</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affect (September)</td>
<td>Affect (February)</td>
<td>Like/Dislike (February)</td>
<td>Like/Dislike (January)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>-0.640</td>
<td>-0.535</td>
<td>0.448</td>
<td>0.483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.777)</td>
<td>(-0.680)</td>
<td>(0.518)</td>
<td>(0.558)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like/Dislike (January)</td>
<td>-0.438</td>
<td>-0.49</td>
<td>0.695</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.459)</td>
<td>(-0.538)</td>
<td>(0.693)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like/Dislike (February)</td>
<td>-0.630</td>
<td>-0.705</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.662)</td>
<td>(-0.776)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect (February)</td>
<td>0.894</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.853)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Squared Correlation</td>
<td>0.995</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>619</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Standardized Estimates in parantheses, all estimates significant at p<.001

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It would be easy to stop the analysis here and claim success, but substantial research in political science suggests that different sub-sets of the population may behave differently in terms of information processing. One group that has received substantial attention is the highly interested and knowledgeable voter\(^8\), but claims as to what impact increasing levels of sophistication has resulted in varied conclusions. Stimson (2004), for example, argues that the electorate can be divided into three groups, the passionate, the uninterested, and scorekeepers. It is with the scorekeepers that this analysis is most interested. According to Stimson, the scorekeepers pay enough attention to political knowledge to actively engage in attitude alteration, but are not so passionate as to allow partisan blinders to preclude movement. Others, notably Lodge, Taber and Weber (2006), argue that increasing levels of political sophistication results in increasing levels of automaticity, which in turn leads to greater unitization. As a result, it is important to examine the durability of attitudes for high interest/high knowledge respondents to determine whether sophistication mitigates or enhances durability.

With regard to affective orientations toward Obama, a remarkably similar pattern emerges for high interest/high knowledge respondents. In fact, the overall predictive power of the exclusively affective model rises to 99%, indicating that affective orientations toward the candidates in September are almost entirely a function of affective orientations activated early in the campaign process, and are nearly impervious to change as the political season progresses. While the standardized coefficient for party identification increases from the full sample model to the high interest/high knowledge model, as would be expected due to the high correlation between political sophistication and party identification, the coefficient for PANAS affective

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\(^8\)For this analysis, high interest/high knowledge respondents were identified by creating an additive index of nine participation items asked in wave 6 (June) and the six general political/governmental knowledge items asked in wave 2 (February). High Interest/High Knowledge respondents were those who fell above the mean value of 8 on the normally distributed variable.
orientations also increases, indicating that, even controlling for strength and direction of partisanship, the highly sophisticated display as durable, if not more so, affective orientations toward Obama as the full population.

While the multiple squared correlation for the SEM measuring affect toward McCain among the high interest/high knowledge respondents does show an increase in explanatory power, from 77.8% to 85.0%, it does not display the same pattern of increasing strength among affective predictors. The approximately 7% increase in the explanatory power observed by limiting the model to high interest/high knowledge individuals is nearly identical to the increase observed in the Obama high sophisticates model. Instead, the consistency of the PANAS coefficient, combined with the slight declines in coefficients for the like/dislike items and the increase in the party identification standardized coefficient, suggests the increased predictive power of McCain affect is driven by partisanship among the high sophisticates. Again, however,
this should not be over-interpreted as refuting the durability hypothesis. First, the impact of partisanship in this model displays a similar effect as it does in the full sample model owing in large part to the variability in the options available during the Republican nomination process. Additionally, higher rates of partisan identification and partisan strength among high sophisticates, when combined with the variability in alternative candidates described above, are likely spurring much of the growth in magnitude of the partisan predictor when moving from the full sample to only the high sophisticates.

Another sub-set of the population that has received considerable attention includes those individuals not aligned with a political party. As already demonstrated in previous research, and in the models above, party identification has a significant impact on evaluations of candidate affect both early and late in the campaign process. By examining the self-reported attitudes of independents, we can see whether or not affective orientations are durable for those individuals who do not bring pre-existing partisan attachments to the political process. Figure 3-2 displays the re-constructed SEM. In this new SEM, the party identification variable has been removed as it is now being held constant through the sub-selection of a smaller group from the original

| Table 3-5: Independent Voters' Durability Structural Equation Model for 2008 ANES Panel Study* |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Obama                                       | McCain                                      |
| Affect                                       | Affect                                       |
| (September)                                 | (February)                                  |
| Affect                                       | Like/Dislike                                 |
| (February)                                  | (January)                                   |
| Like/Dislike (January)                       | -0.497                                       |
| (0.642)                                      | -0.549                                       |
| Like/Dislike (February)                      | -0.715                                       |
| (0.851)                                      | -0.780                                       |
| Affect (February)                            | 0.906                                        |
| (0.928)                                      | -0.592                                       |
| Like/Dislike (January)                       | (0.695)                                      |
| Like/Dislike (February)                      | (0.693)                                      |
| Affect (February)                            | --                                           |
| (0.917)                                      | --                                           |
| Like/Dislike (January)                       | --                                           |
| Like/Dislike (February)                      | --                                           |
| Affect (February)                            | (0.693)                                      |
| (0.905)                                      | --                                           |
| Multiple Squared Correlation                 | 0.861                                        |
| N                                            | 370                                          |

Standardized Estimates in parantheses, all estimates significant at p < .001
sample. Looking at independent voters’ evaluations of Obama, we again see a high level of explanatory power. While lower than the earlier two models of affective durability towards Obama, the model for independent voters still explains over 86% of the variance in September evaluations using nothing more than how each individual feels about Obama in January and February. As evidenced in table 3-5, the affective predictors all increase in value with the PANAS item coefficients becoming, by far, the largest predictor.

The model designed to measure affective durability towards McCain among independents, however, is less than supportive. The explanatory power of the purely affective model drops precipitously to 37.9%. The relative magnitude of each of the standardized coefficients remains virtually unchanged, indicating that very little of the variance in affective durability toward McCain that is explained by party identification is absorbed by the other affectively based predictors included in this model. This raises the question of what else might be at work. While it is conceivable that other affective predictors not included in the model are at work, those who argue in favor of more cognitively based approaches to understanding voting behavior would argue that policy/rational interests influenced evaluations of McCain. In order to test this claim, an additional, expanded SEM was constructed using two policy-based measures. These measures, non-economic policy dispositions\(^9\) and views about economy in the next year, were added to the existing SEM designed to measure affective durability towards McCain. The resulting model displays substantially increased explanatory power, increasing from 37.9% to

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\(^9\)This index was created in a manner to most closely approximating the decision-making process outlined by rational choice theory (Edwards and Newman 1986). Responses to questions where individuals were asked to place themselves on a scale of preference were compared to perceived position of each candidate. The smaller absolute difference between an individual’s preference and each candidate’s position indicated a closer policy stance. This alignment of preference was then weighted by each respondent’s self-reported hierarchical importance weight. The summation of these calculations across policy topics is captured by the variable designed to measure non-economic policy dispositions. Substantial research points to a projection bias, where individuals project their personal policy positions on their preferred candidate; as a result predictive paths have been drawn from the affective predictors to the policy-based predictors.
82.3%. This on the surface suggests that the policy-based, more cognitive predictors are in this case important. However, in a comparison of the magnitudes of the standardized total effects coefficients, economic outlook has very little impact, likely because of the low variance contained in the distribution of values. Additionally, in a direct comparison of the PANAS item coefficient and the non-economic policy coefficient, the two values appear to be nearly identical, 0.654 and 0.645 respectively, showing that in the special case of independent voter evaluations of McCain, affect and policy consideration were on near equal footing.

Conclusions

Based on the seven models described above, the evidence supports the notion of affective durability. Of the original six models, five displayed strong multiple squared correlations, indicating that simple structural models, including purely affective concepts, were quite adequate for explaining affective orientations measured later in the campaign process. Overall, each of the three models designed to gauge the durability of affective orientations toward Obama indicated a high level of attitudinal consistency from January and February, when the initial measurements
were collected, to September. The multiple squared correlations, .925 for the full sample, .995
the highly sophisticated, and .861 for independent voters, indicate that despite the proliferation of
political advertisements, discussions with acquaintances, televised debates, conventions, and
other sources of information, very little change occurred in how people affectively viewed
Obama.

The three original models designed to gauge affective durability towards McCain, while
less powerful than the models relative to Obama, also suggest that durability exists. While the
model for independent voters was less than supportive, the models for the full sample (multiple
squared correlation=.778) and for higher sophistication voters (multiple squared
correlation=.850) provide additional support, albeit slightly weaker than the Obama models, for
the notion of affective durability. This consistently lower explanatory power between the Obama
and McCain models point to additional research questions that, while beyond the scope of this
work, require future examination. Primarily, these center on why the overall explanatory power
of the McCain models was consistently weaker than the Obama models. Proponents of more
cognitively based theories would argue that opinions of McCain were changed as individuals
encountered additional information during the course of the campaign, and that these changes
ultimately drove behavior by pushing voters toward Obama. While this argument fits nicely with
the normative assumptions discussed earlier, it suffers from two problems. First, even though the
McCain models were weaker than the Obama models, two models, the full sample and the high
interest/high knowledge, still explain over 75% of the variance in late campaign affective
evaluations. Additionally, this conclusion is at odds with much of what is known from the
cognitive neuroscience literature. So what then might be at work? While fully developing this
idea is beyond the scope of this work, one potential alternative that merits special consideration
is the possibility of spreading activation to and from other affective objects, such as a highly unpopular sitting President. To the extent that individuals held strong associations between President Bush and McCain, negative evaluations of President Bush could have bled into evaluations of McCain. This affectively based situation should be investigated in future research.

Additionally, as we move from the full sample models to the high interest/high knowledge models, we observe a general strengthening of the overall explanatory power for affective orientations toward both Obama and McCain. In both cases, the overall explanatory power increases approximately 7%. While it would be easy to assume that similar processes are at work in both instances, this may not in fact be the case. By looking at the standardized total effects of each predictor on their direct relationships, we get a better sense of the inter-relationship between our affective concepts. Of greatest interest are the direct impact of PANAS evaluations in February on PANAS evaluations in September, and party identification on PANAS evaluations in September. For affect toward Obama, we see than in both instances the largest predictor is the PANAS evaluations in February, and that as we move from the full sample to the high sophisticates the magnitude of both coefficients, PANAS in February and party identification, increase. This indicates that when we control for political sophistication and the accompanying increase in strength of partisan identification, affective evaluations in February become even more important predictors of affective orientations in September. This raises some doubts as to Stimson’s (2004) scorekeepers argument. The McCain models, on the other hand, are less supportive of this finding. In both models, party identification is the strongest predictor, and as we move from the full sample to the high sophisticates only the coefficient for party identification increases. This on the surface appears to contradict the conclusions of the Obama models, raising additional questions for future research to explore.
Finally, the independent voter’s model for affective orientations toward Obama is highly encouraging for supporters of affective durability and, by extension, the primacy of affect. The high explanatory power, 86.1%, indicates that the purely affective model leaves only 14% of the variance unexplained, suggesting that there is little remaining change for cognitively based predictors to explain. The McCain independent voter model, however, is not supportive. The low explanatory power indicates that some factor is missing. The inclusion of the cognitive predictors in the model boosts the explanatory power, suggesting that, on the surface, in this one instance affect and cognition might be on equal footing in explaining late campaign affective evaluations. This finding, however, must be tempered somewhat by the potential projection biases (Brody and Page 1972) associated with individual perceptions of candidate preferences, and the possibility of changing affective linkages with other emotionally charged objects, such as President Bush, as the campaign progresses. Both of these potential explanations merit future consideration.
The confirmation of the durability of candidate-centric affect is a valuable first step in understanding the impact of affective orientations on later evolving political attitudes and behavior. By confirming that affective orientations activated early in the campaign process are relatively impervious to external influence, attention can be returned to the more important research question of what, if any, impact these affective evaluations of presidential candidates have on how people make the choices they do on election day. As mentioned earlier, durability is critical for the unitization process that so many proponents of emotional explanations of political behavior point to as key to understanding decision-making. Without stability of emotional identifications unitization is not be possible because the affective tags activated by the automatic processes would be regularly updated as new information is encountered and processed.

It is not, however, sufficient to say that simply because affective orientations towards the 2008 presidential candidates remain largely unchanged between the early activation in February and later measurement in the campaign process that emotional identifications impact voting behavior. All durability, on its own, demonstrates is that affective orientations are formed early in the campaign process, and are largely independent of additional information and persuasion attempts encountered during the campaign. Alone, it says little about the utility of these affective orientations as determinants of later behavior. While it is believed the unitization process dictates that these affective tags are important, it is still necessary to look at the ability of these orientations to explain and predict individual voting behavior which occurs later in the temporal dynamic of the campaign process.
Individual voting behavior provides an excellent candidate for the evaluation of affective impact for several reasons. First, voting is, for most individuals, the only manner in which they express a political attitude to any measurable extent. Most individuals do not have the opportunity to participate in a public opinion poll, and most do not engage in any form of political participation beyond showing up on election day (Niemi, Weisberg and Kimball 2011). As a result, election outcomes receive an inordinate amount of attention and interest when compared to other political attitudes. For nearly 60 years, researchers have built a foundation of knowledge that spans multiple perspectives within political science, and draws upon a set of interdisciplinary influences that ranges from the study of antiquity to modern medical diagnostics. Shaped in large part by normative assumptions relative to democratic participation, these discussions have typically centered on a long-running debate over whether election results are pre-determined, or whether short-term contextual factors matter. This focus comes largely at the expense of more emotionally plausible causes (Redlawsk 2006). These multiple approaches to analyzing voting behavior not only provide a broad base of knowledge, but also a series of alternatives that can be compared to one another and to more affective explanations.

The 2008 presidential election, in particular, is well suited to this type of analysis for a series of methodological and contextual reasons. Methodologically, the 2008 ANES panel study provides a wide assortment of attitudinal measures that employ many, if not all, of the potential explanations of individual voter decision-making outlined by existing research. Additionally, the multiple data collection moments allow for an enhanced understanding based on the element of temporal control. It is the contextual dimension, however, that really elevates the value of the 2008 presidential election as a test case of the importance of affective orientations as

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10 For a more detailed description of this debate, see Niemi, Weisberg and Kimball (2011) or Bartels (2010).
determinants of individual voter behavior. The failure of Lehman Brothers, and the corresponding economic collapse, provided perhaps the most clearly defined and readily accessible issue-based event that anyone who purports the importance of the cognitive consideration of political issues and events, from the most strident rationalists to those who argue in favor of secondary-level rationality, would claim should alter the patterns of voting behavior. It was these claims, which were quickly adopted by many in the media that became the dominant explanation for the Obama victory, or at minimum the relatively large margin by which he won.

It is in evaluating these claims that the potential value of affective dimensions as determinants of voting behavior can be more fully considered and compared to other short-term cognitively based factors. To more fully parse out this issue, and attempt to find support for Lodge’s notion of unitization and the importance of affective orientations in the vote decision-making process, it is imperative to apply a more rigorous testing of the conventional wisdom that the Obama victory was largely attributable to the failing U.S. economy. By comparing the importance of a series of cognitive predictors, such as evaluations of the economic health of the United States and other issue based measures, to the durable affective measures outlined earlier, we can begin to evaluate what impact, if any, emotional identifications have in the electoral process. Additionally, by looking at the impact of the supposed catalyzing event, the collapse of Lehman Brothers, it is possible to determine whether the unitization process can be short-circuited by a high anxiety event as proponents of the theory of affective intelligence would claim.

This process begins by building upon the findings in chapter 3 that affective orientations towards both Obama and McCain were quite durable throughout the course of the 2008 presidential election. This durability allows for the more crucial unitization outlined in the dual
process model. Under unitization, automatically activated affective orientations become fused with later occurring deliberative processes, and, as a result, shape much, if not all, of what people think about, and more importantly how they think about it, during the course of a political campaign (Fazio 1986; Bargh 1994; Bargh et al. 1996; Fazio 2001; Lodge, Taber and Weber 2006; Cassino and Lodge 2007). It is this unitized model of decision-making that, theoretically, has a potentially dramatic impact on how we think about electoral choice. If all of our later developing political attitudes and evaluations are a function of the automatically activated affective orientations that occur at the beginning of the campaign, then there is little reason to believe in explanations of electoral choice which incorporate, as primary predictors, the cognitive deliberation of policy positions and preferences. As such, rationally based explanations such as the economic account of the 2008 presidential election are likely less than adequate.

**Data and Methodology**

In order to better understand how effectively this unitized process works, and by extension, how impactful affective orientations are on individual voting behavior, it is important to attempt to sort out how much of the apparent importance of issue positions is independent of affect, and how much can be explained away as post-hoc justification. To do this involves bridging the gap between disparate models of voting behavior and the accompanying assumptions and literatures that underlie them. In constructing the Neuro-Affective Model from the 2008 ANES Panel Study, Marcus, Neumann and MacKuen’s (2000) theory of affective intelligence serves as an excellent starting point because it incorporates both affective and policy oriented variables. Figure 4-1 contains the full structural equation model for the neuro-affective hypothesis.
In addition to their measures of candidate affect, which the previous chapter demonstrates exist on multiple, orthogonal dimensions and display high levels of durability, Marcus, Neumann and MacKuen’s (2000) measure of policy preferences can be incorporated as a possible determinant of the 2008 presidential election. This measure is calculated by summing the weighted distances between each respondent’s position and their perception of each candidate’s position, and represents the closest approximation of the multi-attribute rational choice model outlined by Edwards and Newman (1986).  

Conspicuously absent from this measure of policy preferences are variables measuring concern about the economy, the principle media explanation of the 2008 presidential election. To identify the effects of the economy on the election, this analysis makes use of the ANES measures of the national economic condition. This measure fits well not only with the

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11For the question wording of the items included in the non-economic policy preference variable, see Appendix A.
expectations of the theory of affective intelligence, but also with retrospectively based rational accounts of voting behavior (Key 1966; Fiorina 1981). Finally, partisanship was included in the model. Because partisanship is a stable affective pre-disposition that individuals bring to the political process, it is, consistent with *The American Voter* (Campbell et al. 1960), placed at the leading edge of the funnel of causality in this model. As a result, it is expected that this enduring psychological connection will serve as an important predictor of not only candidate preference, but also of other predictors.

Because of the inter-relationship between many of the concepts included in the Neuro-Affective model, and the need to simultaneously estimate the effects of each variable on vote choice, the general hypothesis, that affective orientations are stronger predictors of vote choice in the 2008 presidential election than more cognitively based predictors, will be tested using structural equation modeling (SEM). Structural equation modeling is the appropriate statistical technique because it combines an exploratory factor analysis (the measurement model), which is necessary for data reduction and handling covariance among predictors, and a regression model (the structural model), which is necessary to identify relationships between the predictors and the dependent variables (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). As described above, partisanship appears at the leading edge of this revised funnel of causality. The primary candidate affective constructs, measured by anxiety and enthusiasm towards each candidate, are located at the top of the path diagram. Additionally, because of the shaping influence of partisanship on the shaping of other political attitudes (Campbell et al. 1960), predictive paths have been included from partisanship to the candidate affective construct.

Non-affective measures, including non-economic policy preferences and measures of an individual’s evaluation of economic conditions, appear at the bottom of the path diagram.
Predictive paths are included from the partisan and candidate affective predictors to the cognitive predictors based on the ordering of emotion and cognition (Zajonc 1980; Forgas 1994; Forgas 1995; Bargh et al. 1996; Abelson 1963; Fazio 2001) and evidence suggesting that emotions drive behavior and then the apparent selection of plausible justifications for this behavior (Westen et al. 2006; Westen 2007; Bishop 2005; Lau 2003; Lau 1982; Rahn, Krosnick and Breuning 1994).

**Testing the Neuro-Affective Model of Voting Behavior**

One of the principal benefits of SEM as a statistical technique is that it allows for the simultaneous estimation of multiple relationships. While the overall value in examining the impact of the independent predictors on the candidate preference is quite clear, there is also

| Table 4-1: Regression Coefficients for Neuro-Affective Measurement Model, 2008 ANES Panel Study |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|-----|
| Estimate           | Stand. Est. | P           |
| Obama Anxiety <--- Party Identification            | -0.553      | -0.522 ***  |
| Obama Enthusiasm <--- Party Identification           | 0.758       | 0.624 ***   |
| McCain Anxiety <--- Party Identification            | 0.493       | 0.501 ***   |
| McCain Enthusiasm <--- Party Identification          | -0.678      | -0.624 ***  |
| Economic Conditions <--- Party Identification       | -0.004      | -0.016 0.786 |
| Economic Conditions <--- Obama Affect               | -0.036      | -0.138 ***  |
| Economic Conditions <--- McCain Affect              | -0.067      | -0.161 ***  |
| McCain Affect <--- Party Identification             | 0.493       | 0.769 ***   |
| McCain Anxiety <--- McCain Affect                   | 1.000       | 0.652 ***   |
| McCain Enthusiasm <--- McCain Affect                | -1.375      | -0.812 ***  |
| Non-Economic Policy Dispositions <--- Party Identification | -0.908      | -0.114 0.066 |
| Non-Economic Policy Dispositions <--- Obama Affect   | 4.616       | 0.591 ***   |
| Non-Economic Policy Dispositions <--- McCain Affect  | 6.256       | 0.502 ***   |
| Obama Affect <--- Party Identification              | 0.758       | 0.740 ***   |
| Obama Anxiety <--- Obama Affect                     | -0.729      | -0.705 ***  |
| Obama Enthusiasm <--- Obama Affect                  | 1.000       | 0.843 ***   |

*** Indicates relationship is statistically significant at p<.001
considerable information contained in the hypothesized interaction among the independent predictors as well. Table 4-1 contains the regression coefficients for each of the predictive paths contained in the measurement component of the Neuro-Affective structural equation model. The previous chapter demonstrated the ability of the latent constructs measuring affective orientations toward each candidate to explain the variance in each respondent’s levels of anxiety and enthusiasm towards each candidate. As noted above, partisanship has been demonstrated to have a dramatic impact on other political attitudes, both affective and cognitive. Accordingly, its impact on affective orientations toward each candidate can be estimated by examining the coefficients contained in Table 4-1. In this model, partisanship displays a standardized coefficient of .769 and .740 for McCain and Obama affective orientations respectively. As a result, based on the modeled relationship, partisanship explains 59.1% of the variance in affective evaluations of McCain, and 54.7% of the variance in affective orientations of Obama. This explanatory power is relatively consistent with the impact identified by Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes (1960) in *The American Voter*, which offered that partisanship alone could account for only about 50% of the variance in other political attitudes.¹² This is important because it demonstrates that there is in fact a relationship between partisanship and how individuals feel about each major party candidate in the 2008 presidential election. However, a significant portion of the variance in the measures of candidate-centric affect remains unexplained by the relationship with party identification, suggesting that even though partisanship is important, candidate affect arises, to a certain extent, independent of partisan feelings. This allows for the possibility of candidate-centric affective measures having an

---

independent effect, outside of its relationship with the traditional party framework, on how people make the choices they do on election day.

Similarly, we can evaluate the impact of partisanship and affective orientations on attitudes toward policy preferences and economic condition. This is important because it provides an initial, if blunt, evaluation of the unitization process. The durability identified in the previous chapter suggests that emotional attachments are raised early in the campaign process, and are resistant to pressures from the accumulation of additional cognitive processing of information. This suggests that the dual process notion of unitization (Fazio 1986; Fazio 2001; Lodge, Taber and Weber 2006; Cassino and Lodge 2007), and its implied projection issues, may hold under empirical scrutiny.

When looking at the individual respondent’s perceptions of economic conditions, there appears to be little support for the notion of unitization. When holding candidate-centric affective evaluations constant, the relationship between partisanship and economic condition fails to reach statistical significance. While reaching statistical significance, the relationship between the multiple measures of candidate based affective orientations and economic condition are relatively weak, with McCain affect explaining only slightly more than 2.5% of the variance in economic condition, while Obama Affect explains less than 2%. While this accounts only for the direct impact of each of these predictors on respondents’ views of economic condition, looking at the total effect of the affective predictors contained in Table 4-2 paints a similar picture. By incorporating the indirect effects of partisanship operating through the candidate specific measures of emotional identification, we get a better sense of the true impact of these predictors on an individual’s economic condition. Even adding this indirect effect, the overall explanatory power is quite low. Overall, the total effect of the three affective predictors, long-term
partisanship and short-term candidate-centric evaluations, explains less than 10% of the variance in respondent’s views of economic condition. This should not, however, be taken as a repudiation of unitization as there was very little variance in individual perceptions of economic conditions to be explained away. In essence, no one felt good about the economy in September 2008, implying that no factor was likely to account for variation in individual attitudes on this issue.

A better case study would be to examine the impact of these three affective orientations on non-economic policy dispositions as these attitudes are unlikely to have been impacted universally by the unique political context of 2008. In doing so, we get a look at what impact long-term emotional identifications, such as party identification, and more contextually based identifications, such as affective orientations toward each specific candidate, have on each individual respondent’s non-economic policy dispositions. Starting with party identification, the expectation is that partisanship should play a large role as a determinant of non-economic policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Conditions</th>
<th>Non-Economic Policy Preferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>-0.0650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCain Affect</td>
<td>-0.0670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama Affect</td>
<td>-0.0360</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Standardized Coefficients in parantheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Conditions</th>
<th>Non-Economic Policy Preferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>5.6760 (0.710)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCain Affect</td>
<td>6.2560 (0.502)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama Affect</td>
<td>4.6160 (0.591)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multiple Squared Correlation 0.077 0.765
Sample Size 2702 2702
dispositions (Campbell et al. 1960). If we simply look at the regression coefficient, we see that it fails to reach statistical significance, but this only accounts for the direct effect of partisanship on a respondent’s non-economic policy positions. However, when the total effect of partisanship, operating through and in conjunction with the candidate affective orientations, is considered, we see a dramatic increase in the strength of its relationship with non-economic policy dispositions. When all three affective predictors are considered simultaneously, they explain over 75% of the variance in non-economic policy dispositions. When looked at through the empirical neuroscientific perspective which argues the causal arrow in the relationship between affect and cognition flows from affect, this suggests that unitization has occurred, and raises doubts as to the independence of policy preferences from earlier evolving affective orientations.

While demonstrating the interaction between partisanship, affective orientations of the candidates, and the more “cognitively” based predictors is important, it does not answer the fundamental question of what, if any, impact affective evaluations have on individual vote choice. In order to answer this question, our attention needs to be directed away from the measurement model outlined in Figure 4-1, and focused on the structural model designed to gauge the impact of our series of affectively and cognitively based predictors on candidate preference. In this instance, our measure of candidate preference is a ten-point scale ranging from “Extremely Sure Obama” voters to “Extremely Sure McCain” voters. Based on the results obtained from the structural model, contained in Table 4-3, it is evident that the overall model explains a relatively large amount of the variance, 86%, in candidate preferences. While interesting, this value tells us little about our specific hypothesis, that affective orientations toward the parties and candidates explain larger amounts of the variance than the more cognitively based consideration of the economy and other policy preferences.
The standardized estimates generated by the Neuro-Affective Model provide some initial insight into this question. The two predictors largely considered to be cognitively based, respondent views on economic condition and non-economic policy preferences, fail to reach statistical significance. With significance levels of .176 and .224 respectively, economic condition and non-economic policy dispositions have little impact on candidate preference. In fact, when all other variables are controlled for, each explains less than one percent of the variance in candidate preference.

13 Although estimated coefficients in the measurement model suggest a high level of predictive power relative to the relationship between affective components and these cognitive predictors, I still treat these predictors as theoretically independent in order to, in essence, bias the model against my hypothesis.
preference. While this finding relative to respondent views of economic condition is not unexpected, because of the low amount of variance contained in this measure, the non-significance and small explanatory power of non-economic policy dispositions raises a red flag relative to contextual, issue-based explanations.

The plausibility of explanations which highlight the importance of the short-term cognitive consideration of issues is further reduced when attention is directed at the affectively based predictors included in the Neuro-Affective model. As expected, partisanship has a strong impact on candidate preference, due in large part to its relationship with all other subsequent political attitudes. For example, the direct impact, as measured by the unstandardized regression coefficient, of partisanship on candidate preference fails to reach statistical significance ($p=.075$). But, when the strong impact of partisanship on candidate-centric affective measures and the more cognitively based predictors, as evidenced in Table 4-2, is controlled for, partisanship becomes the strongest predictor of candidate preference. By itself, when other predictors are controlled for, party identification accounts for nearly 58% of the variance in candidate preference, a finding that supports much of the existing literature on voting behavior and candidate evaluation.

However, we should not forget the partial independence of the candidate-centric affective measures identified in the discussion of the measurement model component of the Neuro-Affective Model. Recall that when partisanship is controlled for, between 40 and 45% of the variance in the latent constructs measuring candidate affect remain unexplained, which opens the door for a meaningful affective reaction to each candidate that is independent of partisan identification. In other words, partisanship is not all that explains individuals’ orientations toward candidates. Instead, there is something else beyond partisanship at work, as voters form
opinions about each party’s presidential candidate. As a result, the independent impacts of these affective reactions are, potentially, of great consequence to a thorough understanding of voter decision-making.

In the 2008 presidential election, for example, we observe a moderately strong impact for affective orientations towards both candidates on the vote decision. Overall the impact of affective orientations towards Obama is stronger than orientations toward McCain. Holding all other variables in the model constant, emotional identification with Obama can be used to explain over 43% of the variance in candidate preference. While not as strong as the impact of attachments to Obama, emotional identifications with McCain are still able to significantly explain nearly 21% of individual candidate preferences. When contrasted with the non-significance of the more cognitively based predictors, this affective importance raises further doubts as to the viability of issue-based explanations, suggesting that affective orientations toward both parties and candidates are vitally important in how people make their decisions about how to vote.

One potential criticism of this argument, however, is that it fails to account for differences between types of voters. Similar to the arguments offered in the previous chapter relative to the potential importance of differentiations between all voters and high interest/knowledge and independent voters, critics of affectively based models of voting behavior are likely to raise concerns about the impact of varying levels of political sophistication, and about the consequences of removing the anchoring cue of partisanship. In terms of political sophistication, proponents of rationality would argue that individuals with greater levels of political awareness, as evidenced by higher levels of interest and knowledge, are more likely to make use of issue information. The high interest/high knowledge sub-sample structural model
outlined in Table 4-3, however, challenges this supposition. Overall, the explanatory power of this model is quite similar to the full sample model, rising slightly from 86% to 89.3%. Those who argue that high interest/high knowledge voters should behave more rationally would expect the affective predictors to decline in importance, allowing the slight increase to be accounted for by growth in the relative magnitude of the coefficients for the more cognitive predictors. We do, in fact see a slight decrease in the strength of the affective predictors, from -0.455 and -0.656 in the full sample to -0.403 and -0.641 in the high interest/high knowledge sub-sample. However, the more cognitively based predictors, views relative to economic conditions and non-economic policy dispositions, remain unchanged. In fact, the only predictor that shows any appreciable growth is party identification, which is not unexpected given the increasing durability highlighted in the previous chapter and the general relationship between strength of partisanship and political sophistication.

Similarly, some critics of affectively based models of voter decision-making point to independent voters as those who can, and do, behave in a more traditional, rationalistic manner. By removing the anchoring cue of partisanship, these independent voters, in theory, rely more on careful deliberation and evaluation. If this were the case, we would expect to see essentially no decrease in the explanatory power of the structural model, and a general strengthening of the cognitive concepts as predictors. The independent voters’ structural model in Table 4-3 indicates that there is only a modest decline in the overall explanatory power of the model. While there is a slight increase in the magnitude of the two cognitive predictors, the ability of these two concepts to explain decision-making remains quite small, with economic condition explaining less than 1% of the variance in candidate preference and non-economic policy preferences explaining slightly more than 2%. More importantly, however, there is a general strengthening in
magnitude of the candidate affective measure. From the full sample to the sub-sample measuring the attitudes of independent voters, emotional identification with McCain increases in importance from -0.455 to -0.499 while orientations toward Obama increase in importance from -0.656 to -0.759. This indicates that even when partisanship is removed from the equation, the additional explanatory power is absorbed by the candidate-centric affective measures and not by the issue-based determinants.

Although the measurement model indicates a high level of interaction between the affective measures and the cognitive measures, some critics of the Neuro-Affective Model would argue that the inclusion of predictive paths from the affective constructs to the cognitive constructs overstates the impact of emotional orientations on candidate preference. However,
simply examining the resultant models when these paths are removed compared to the original models indicates that this is not the case. Figure 4-2 contains the structural model for the reduced models which have the paths removed between the affective predictors and the cognitive predictors. Table 4-4 contains the structural model summaries for the full, or original, models compared to the reduced models identified in Figure 4-2. When revisiting each of the three models considered above, the removal of the predictive paths between the candidate-centric affective measures has no substantive impact on the importance of economic condition as a predictor of candidate preference. In fact, in two of the three instances, the full sample model and the independent voters’ model, the importance of economic condition as a predictor of candidate preference actually declines when the predictive paths are removed. In the other case, high interest/high knowledge respondents, the coefficient for economic condition remains not statistically significant.

The importance of non-economic policy dispositions, however, is a little more complicated. In the full models across all three groups, non-economic policy dispositions failed to reach statistical significance. However, when predictive paths from the candidate affective measures to non-economic policy dispositions are removed, the rationalistic measure reaches statistical significance across all three groups examined. While seeming to suggest a new found importance for cognitive consideration of policy preferences, interpretations of these newly significant coefficients should be tempered by looking at the relative magnitude of each compared to other predictors in the model. Although non-economic policy dispositions become significant in each model, in all three instances they remain the weakest of all significant predictors. The largest impact observed is in the full sample model, where, holding all other factors constant, non-economic policy dispositions explain approximately 6% of the variance in candidate preference.
Table 4-4: Total Effects in Full Structural Model v. Reduced Structural Model, 2008 ANES Panel Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full Sample</th>
<th></th>
<th>High Interest/High Knowledge</th>
<th></th>
<th>Independent Voters</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Full Model</td>
<td>Reduced Model</td>
<td>Full Model</td>
<td>Reduced Model</td>
<td>Full Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Preference</td>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate Preference</td>
<td>Candidate Preference</td>
<td>Candidate Preference</td>
<td>Candidate Preference</td>
<td>Candidate Preference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>-1.310**</td>
<td>-1.310**</td>
<td>-1.411**</td>
<td>-1.411**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.761)</td>
<td>(-0.778)</td>
<td>(-0.811)</td>
<td>(-0.824)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCain Affect</td>
<td>-1.220**</td>
<td>-1.100**</td>
<td>-0.982**</td>
<td>-0.846**</td>
<td>-1.663**</td>
<td>-1.484**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.455)</td>
<td>(-0.414)</td>
<td>(-0.403)</td>
<td>(-0.353)</td>
<td>(-.499)</td>
<td>(-0.454)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama Affect</td>
<td>-1.101**</td>
<td>-1.001**</td>
<td>-1.040**</td>
<td>-0.896**</td>
<td>-1.352**</td>
<td>-1.238**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.656)</td>
<td>(-0.606)</td>
<td>(-0.641)</td>
<td>(-0.568)</td>
<td>(-.759)</td>
<td>(-0.735)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Conditions</td>
<td>-0.108</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>-0.126</td>
<td>0.176</td>
<td>-0.359</td>
<td>0.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.017)</td>
<td>(-0.009)</td>
<td>(-0.017)</td>
<td>(-0.025)</td>
<td>(-.060)</td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Economic Policy Preferences</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>-0.050**</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>-0.043**</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>-0.044**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.075)</td>
<td>(-0.240)</td>
<td>(0.074)</td>
<td>(-0.226)</td>
<td>(0.153)</td>
<td>(-0.231)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Squared Correlation</td>
<td>0.860</td>
<td>0.858</td>
<td>0.893</td>
<td>0.886</td>
<td>0.835</td>
<td>0.800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>2,702</td>
<td>2,702</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>735</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Standardized Coefficients in parantheses
** Statistically Significant at p < .001
Similar impacts, 5.3% and 5.1% respectively, are observed in the independent voters and the high interest/high knowledge voters’ models. While, as expected, there is a slight weakening in importance for the candidate-centric affective dimensions across all three models, the relationship between party identification and candidate preference actually strengthens in the two models incorporating party identification. All of this suggests that even in the reduced model, candidate preference is largely a function of emotional identifications with parties and to a lesser but still independently important extent, individual candidates.

**Affective Intelligence: A Special Case**

While these findings seem convincing on the surface, proponents of the theory of affective intelligence would argue that to truly gauge the impact of cognition to the vote decision-making process, we would need to account for any potential catalyzing event that could fundamentally alter individuals’ affective dimensions (Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000). In many elections, this is either unnecessary, because no such event occurs, or impractical, because data collection does not provide the requisite measurement. The 2008 presidential election, however, offers a unique opportunity to examine the efficacy of explanations built upon the foundation of affective intelligence for multiple reasons.

First, the 2008 election has, perhaps, one of the best examples of a catalyzing event of any recent presidential election. On September 15, Lehman Brothers filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, the largest ever in the United States. Those who argue in favor of affective intelligence will claim that failing to control for the true impact of the Lehman Brothers failure, and more importantly the corresponding financial panic which set in shortly afterwards, will cause us to underestimate the impact of the economy, or other cognitive deliberation of policy preferences, on candidate evaluations. Those making the argument that the economy
shifted the election in favor of Obama would argue that to see the true impact of the economy, we would need to examine preferences before and after the economic collapse.

Because of the methodology used in the ANES, we are in fact able to separate these time periods. Using September 15, 2008 as a break point, we can create a quasi-experimental design with two sub-samples, one pre-Lehman Brothers collapse, the other post-collapse, to attempt to isolate the effects of the cognition more specifically.\textsuperscript{14} If we are to successfully isolate the effects

\textit{Table 4-5: Total Effects in Structural Model, 2008 ANES Panel Study*}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full Sample</th>
<th>Pre-Lehman Collapse</th>
<th>Post-Lehman Collapse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Candidate Preference</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>-1.310**</td>
<td>-1.310**</td>
<td>-1.319**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.761)</td>
<td>(-0.766)</td>
<td>(-0.761)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCain Affect</td>
<td>-1.220**</td>
<td>-1.230**</td>
<td>-1.210**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.455)</td>
<td>(-0.451)</td>
<td>(-0.487)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama Affect</td>
<td>-1.101**</td>
<td>-1.090**</td>
<td>-1.115**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.656)</td>
<td>(-0.649)</td>
<td>(-0.667)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Conditions</td>
<td>-0.108</td>
<td>-0.150</td>
<td>0.236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.017)</td>
<td>(-0.023)</td>
<td>(0.036)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Economic Policy Preferences</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.075)</td>
<td>(0.098)</td>
<td>(0.070)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Multiple Squared Correlation}</td>
<td>0.860</td>
<td>0.862</td>
<td>0.868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Sample Size}</td>
<td>2,702</td>
<td>2,201</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Standardized Coefficients in parantheses

** Statistically Significant at p<.001

\textsuperscript{14} September 15, 2008 represents the generally accepted day the news of the Lehman Brothers failure became mainstream, however, awareness of the issue was likely not instantaneous. As such interviews conducted on September 15\textsuperscript{th} were included in the pre-collapse sub-sample.
of the economy, then models for data collected on or before September 15\textsuperscript{th} should look different than models constructed on data collected after the collapse.

A first step in comparing our temporally dependent models is to examine the overall explanatory power of each. Table 4-5 contains the structural model summaries for three different models, the original full sample, the model with only respondents interviewed before Lehman Brothers collapsed and finally all respondents interviewed after. In terms of explanatory power, neither sub-sample shows any substantive deviation from the original model. The full sample model explains 86\% of the variance in candidate preference, while the two temporally based models explain between 86\% and 87\%.

If the economic failure had as dramatic an impact as claimed by many in the media, the post-Lehman Brothers collapse model should look radically different. As evidenced by the model summary for the post-collapse sub-sample contained in Table 4-5, this is not the case. As expected, the economic condition predictor does increase in magnitude from the Pre-collapse model to the Post-collapse; however, it still does not reach statistical significance for those respondents interviewed after Lehman Brothers brought the financial crisis to the forefront of attention. Because of the low variance in the economic condition variable, some proponents of rationality would argue that instead of turning toward economic policy, respondents might become more dependent on other policy dispositions. This argument, however, also proves to be unsupported. In fact, non-economic policy dispositions fail to reach statistical significance in either of the temporally based models and when the standardized coefficients are compared, the magnitude actually decreases, from -0.023 to -0.036, when moving from the Pre-Lehman model to the Post-Lehman model.
What does change, however, are the coefficients measuring affective orientations. While the partisanship coefficient declines slightly from the Pre-Lehman period (-0.766) to the Post-Lehman period (-0.761), both coefficients measuring emotional identifications with the presidential candidates increase. In terms of affective orientations toward Obama, prior to the collapse of Lehman Brothers, how people felt about Obama explained 42.1% of the variance in candidate preferences when all other predictors were held constant. After the crash, this value increased slightly to 44.4%. A similar pattern emerges for affective orientations toward McCain with the explanatory power rising from 20.3% before the crash to 23.7% after the crash. This, combined with the inconsequential, or non-existent, increases for the cognitively-based predictors raises doubts as to the efficacy of the affective intelligence explanations of voting behavior.

Similarly, comparison of the inter-relationship between predictors in the measurement model before and after the Lehman Brothers collapse raises additional concerns relative to the efficacy of cognitive explanations of the 2008 presidential election. According to the theory of affective intelligence, the inter-relationship between affective orientations and our measure of economic condition and non-economic policy preferences should weaken (Marcus, Neumann and MacKuen 2000). That is, as people become more aware and anxious about the economic deterioration, economic evaluations should become more independent of the traditional measures of party and candidate affect. As evidenced by Table 4-6, there is a general weakening of the relationships represented in the measurement model. Overall, the explanatory power of the measurement model decreases approximately 4 percentage points (from 9% to 5% of variance explained) for economic conditions and over 8 percentage points (from 79% to 71% of variance explained) for non-economic policy preferences. In terms of the inter-relationship between
predictors, only two strengthen from the measurement prior to the Lehman Brothers collapse to measurement afterwards, while the remaining relationships all weaken. This on the surface would seem to support the theory of affective intelligence, the decreased explanatory power of the measurement model, signaling a potentially increasing level of independence for the cognitively-based predictors after the collapse of Lehman Brothers is not translated to the structural model. But, in the predictive model outlined in Table 4-5, neither of these more cognitively based predictors reaches statistical significance, suggesting that even though the collapse of Lehman may have caused some untethering of these attitudes from partisanship, individuals still made greater use of affective orientations when deciding how to cast their ballots.

**Conclusion**

We are left, then, with a model of candidate preference built almost entirely on affective orientations toward political parties and both major party candidates in the 2008 presidential election. The relatively parsimonious structural equation model employed in this analysis indicates that simply including party identification, feelings about each 2008 presidential election, and

Table 4-6: Total Effects in Measurement Model, 2008 ANES Panel Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full Sample</th>
<th>Pre-Lehman Collapse</th>
<th>Post-Lehman Collapse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic Conditions</td>
<td>Non-Economic Policy Preferences</td>
<td>Economic Conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>-0.0650</td>
<td>5.6760</td>
<td>-0.067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.241)</td>
<td>(0.710)</td>
<td>(-0.258)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCain Affect</td>
<td>-0.0670</td>
<td>6.2560</td>
<td>-0.071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.161)</td>
<td>(0.502)</td>
<td>(-0.172)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama Affect</td>
<td>-0.0360</td>
<td>4.6160</td>
<td>-0.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.138)</td>
<td>(0.591)</td>
<td>(-0.166)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Squared Correlation</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.765</td>
<td>0.091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>2,702</td>
<td>2,702</td>
<td>2,201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Standardized Coefficients in parentheses
candidate, views of socio-tropic economic conditions and a measure of an individual’s non-economic policy dispositions can explain over 80% of the variance in candidate preference. The strength of this relationship holds even when levels of political sophistication and partisan independence are controlled.

The relative importance of each predictor included in the model sheds additional light on the primary question asked earlier of whether elections are pre-determined by long-standing pre-dispositions or whether short-term, contextual factors, mainly candidates and issues, matter. The large importance of partisanship in each of the models considered above would suggest that, to a certain extent, candidate preference, and by extension electoral choice, are pre-determined by partisan affiliations. In each of the models where party identification was included as a predictor, it explains slightly over half of the variance in candidate preference in the 2008 election.

This does not, however, preclude the importance of short-term, contextual factors. The inclusion of both candidate-centric and policy based predictors in each model provides an opportunity to identify the impact of theoretically important contextual predictors on candidate preference. Evidence from the models, however, is mixed as to the importance of short-term factors. Each of the structural equation models above identifies a small, and in most instances insignificant, impact for the cognitive consideration of economic conditions and non-economic policy dispositions. Even models restricting the sample to only high political sophisticates, who conceivably have higher cognitive abilities to make use of political information, and political independents, who do not have the anchoring cue of partisanship, failed to find strong support that individuals made use of the cognitive consideration of policy and issue positions in the 2008 election. In a more direct examination of the theory of affective intelligence, splitting the sample in order to more clearly examine the impact of the Lehman Brothers failure on candidate
preference revealed a slight decrease in the importance of the cognitive consideration of policy and issue outcomes.

Economic conditions and non-economic policy dispositions, however, are not the only contextual predictors included in the structural equation models. Candidate-centric measures of affective orientations also provide insight into the potential viability of short-term, contextual explanations of presidential voting behavior. As the most important contextual object, candidates should be vital to how people make their electoral choices. The previous chapter demonstrated that these orientations are highly durable, suggesting that the dual process model’s unitization process is possible. As a result, the independent impact of these contextual evaluations must be considered in any model of presidential vote choice. The models contained in this analysis suggest that affective orientations toward each of the major party candidates in the 2008 presidential election were quite important as individuals decided how to cast their ballot. In all of the models, these predictors were significant and quite strong. Even when sophistication, political independence, and the effect of the Lehman Brothers collapse were controlled for, candidate-centric affective evaluations remained significant, and in the models assessing the behavior of independent voters and those interviewed after September 15th the magnitude of these predictors actually increased. These results indicate that in the special cases of independents and those whose attitudes were most impacted by the failing U.S. economy, contextual evaluations of candidates became more important, and not less important as the theory of affective intelligence would predict.

More importantly, however, these findings suggest that in the larger historical, academic debate over whether election results are pre-determined or influenced by short-term factors, both may be impactful. These conclusions, however, should not be over-interpreted at this point. The
two factors that are most obviously short-term, attitudes relative to economic conditions and non-economic policy positions, fail to significantly impact candidate preference. The only contextual factors that matter are the candidate-centric affective orientations. While candidates are the most readily identifiable election specific variable, the early activation and durability identified in the previous chapter suggest that these evaluations are not based upon the political information encountered during the course of the presidential campaign. As a result, they cannot be assumed to be contextually driven until the underlying cause of these orientations is explored and identified. If these evaluations are based upon long held pre-dispositions, in addition to partisan identification, then these seemingly short-term explanations fall apart, instead focusing attention back on the pre-determined side of the coin.
CHAPTER 5: “HE’S JUST NOT LIKE ME!” – THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL IDENTITY TO CANDIDATE-CENTRIC AFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT

The individual seems to vote, other things being equal, with the people whom he most directly feels to be one of his own kind, who are in social status and group memberships like, and hence like-minded with, himself…the question is not so much…for what he is voting as it is with whom he is associating himself in voting.

*Talcott Parsons (Burdick and Brodbeck 1959, p. 96)*

In the previous two chapters, painstaking steps have been taken to demonstrate that affect matters as people make the choices they do on Election Day. Chapter 3 shows that affective orientations toward the candidates in the 2008 presidential election, which are activated quite early in the campaign process, demonstrate a high level of durability over time. Furthermore, the apparent consistency of these orientations is evident across different types of voters (partisans and non-partisans, high interest/knowledge voters) and holds for attitudes toward both the Democratic and Republican nominees. Chapter 4 adds to this enhanced understanding by identifying significant effects, both statistically and substantively, of these candidate-centric affective orientations on an individuals’ vote choice. Again, these findings hold regardless of an individual’s level of partisanship, interest or knowledge. When combined, these findings suggest that in the historical debate over whether elections are largely pre-determined or whether campaigns matter, contextual affective evaluations of the most salient cue in an election, the candidates, provide another mechanism to be considered. By providing a validation of the dual process model (Lodge and Taber 2005; Lodge, Taber and Weber 2006; Cassino and Lodge 2007) using real-world data, these findings suggest that voting behavior in presidential elections is driven in large part by affective evaluations of candidates which do not change over time, raising
doubts as to the efficacy of issue-based explanations of voting behavior. However, these findings do not dismiss, out of hand, the importance of short-term factors. Instead, the ability of the most salient cue in any election cycle, the candidates, suggests that election results hinge on a combination of long-term pre-dispositions and contextual occurrences and objects.

This, on its own, represents an important improvement to the conventional wisdom relative to the balancing of long-term and short-term factors in the political decision-making process. But, the apparent importance of contextual evaluations of presidential candidates does not, on its own, signal a victory for those who claim that campaigns, and the consideration of political information encountered in those campaigns, matter. Instead, new questions need to be evaluated in order to parse out what the real impact of these apparently short-term factors is. Most notable among these questions is the following: What determines the structure of these candidate-centric affective measures? Since affect matters, it is important to consider what foundation, if any, these orientations are built upon. Ample evidence suggests these evaluations are automatically activated upon exposure (Fazio et al. 1986; Fazio 2001; Lodge and Taber 2005; Lodge, Taber and Weber 2006; Cassino and Lodge 2007), but little consideration has been given to what psychological mechanisms individuals use when these affective orientations are generated or activated. This essentially becomes a question of whether or not any pre-existing psychological dimensions can be used to explain and support these automatically generated attitudes.

This is a question that traditional political science models of voting behavior have left largely untouched. If we consider existing literature on the topic as fitting into two very broadly defined categories, we see that neither has been particularly interested in exploring what shapes individual voters’ affective orientations toward presidential candidates. Approaches which
emphasize the importance of the cognitive consideration of short-term events, for example, argue that affect does not impact voting behavior. Accordingly, those taking this more rationally-based approach would argue there is little utility in considering how or why affective evaluations of candidates develop. However, substantial research, including the earlier chapters presented here, cast serious doubt about the viability of rational issue-based explanations of vote choice (Campbell et al. 1960; Campbell et al. 1966, Lewis-Beck et al. 2008; among others), suggesting that the topic merits further consideration here.

Even the more commonly accepted psychological explanations, perhaps most recognizable in *The American Voter* (Campbell et al. 1960), have left the question of why individuals feel the way they do about each candidate largely untouched. Campbell and his co-authors (1960) argued that these orientations are most likely a function of partisan affiliation. As a result of placing partisanship at the leading edge of their funnel of causality, they argue that the processing of all subsequently received political information, and the resultant later evolving political attitudes, are shaped by an individual’s affective orientation toward each political party (Campbell et al. 1960). Without a doubt, partisanship is critical to a thorough understanding of individual political behavior. Substantial research exists which consistently supports the importance of party identification as a determinant of political behavior, and as a determinant of later evolving political attitudes (Campbell et al. 1960; Miller and Shanks 1996; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008; among others). Even in the affectively driven model of vote choice in the 2008 presidential election outlined in Chapter 4 of this work, partisanship remains a substantively and statistically significant predictor of individual decision-making, and an inter-relationship exists between party identification and affective orientations toward individual candidates.
These findings, however, also suggest that the formation and/or activation of these candidate-specific evaluations are somewhat independent of an individual’s party identification. In the measurement model outlined in the previous chapter, the predictive power of partisanship on candidate-centric affective measures is quite strong, explaining between 54% and 59% of the variance in affective orientations toward candidates. While this relationship is quite strong for most social science research, nearly half of the variance in these all important affective measures remains unexplained. Additionally, the structural model outlined in Chapter 4 provides further evidence of the independence of candidate affective orientations. As expected, partisanship has the strongest total effect on candidate preference but, both affective orientations toward Obama and McCain have a significant and independent impact as well. The magnitude of each, particularly orientations toward Obama, suggests that each is quite important even when partisanship is controlled.

With this evidence offering that partisanship leaves a substantial portion of candidate-centric affective evaluations unexplained, and these orientations have a significant and independent impact on vote choice when party identification is controlled, the question at hand becomes the following: What, if any, factors in addition to partisanship can be used to explain how individuals feel about each candidate in a presidential election? To answer this question, we need to look beyond the political science literature and instead examine psychological, sociological and neuro-scientific research that stresses the importance of *groups* to individual attitude formation in order to decipher what these affective evaluations are based on. Using social identity theory as a starting point, this chapter incorporates this research to examine the impact of the relationship between out-group perceptions and perceived candidate
representativeness on affective orientations toward each candidate in the 2008 presidential elections.

**What Impacts Attitude Formation?**

A major source of difficulty in studying decision-making and attitude formation is the identification of the sources of people’s political beliefs (Conover and Feldman 1984). To fully delve into the question of what shapes affective evaluations towards candidates requires an examination of the various approaches to opinion/attitude formation. We can treat opinion and attitude formation as occurring through similar processes because of the theoretical linkages between the two. Perloff (2003) differentiates between four concepts: beliefs, values, attitudes and opinions. According to Perloff (2003) beliefs are the cognitive components that make up our understanding of how things are in the world. As such, beliefs are essentially an individual’s view of how the world *is*. This can be differentiated between values which are how an individual thinks the world *should* exist in normative terms. But, the primary concern is with attitudes and opinions. Attitudes consist of three components, beliefs, affect and behavior, making them the most complex of the four concepts (Perloff 2003). Because of the affective component, attitudes contain an individual’s inherent likes and dislikes. Opinions, then, serve as the process through which these attitudes are expressed (Perloff 2003). As a result, the study of attitude formation follows a similar path to the many models used to study opinion formation.

Early attempts to explain attitude formation were largely driven by behavioral research adapted from psychology. These behavioral approaches typically utilized conditioning effects and can be grouped largely into two categories (Glynn et al. 2004). The first grouping is classical conditioning, which is, in its simplest form, the pure stimulus response relationship. In this process, a neutral stimulus is connected to an affectively charged stimulus in order to produce an
affective response. The second grouping is operant conditioning, people can be expected to act in a manner that minimizes negative outcomes or maximizes positive ones. These behaviorally driven approaches, however, have fallen out of favor for multiple reasons centered on the non-differentiation between the more complex human mind and the less sophisticated animal, most notably the failure to allow for careful thought, the failure to allow for the interconnection of attitudes, the inability to account for the fact that different individuals hold the same attitude for different motivations, and the lack of importance of emotion in the attitude formation process. (Glynn et al. 2004).

These overly simplistic, behaviorally-driven models were replaced by newer theories which attempted to incorporate the increased complexity of the human mind. These theories included cognitive processing models, cognitive response theory and the use of heuristics, each of which overtly rejects the conditioning/behavioral models’ belief in the unthinking mind. Cognitive processing models adjust for the different ways in which individuals think about the messages they receive (Petty and Cacioppo 1981), while cognitive response theories assume the brain is consistently processing new information as it is encountered, resulting in a perception of the ever computing human mind (Eagly and Chaiken 1993). Heuristics, perhaps most famously explored in political science by Popkin (1994), move further away from behaviorally-driven models of attitude formation by arguing that individuals reduce the cognitive burden they face by using pre-existing sub-sets of information to choose from.

Similarly, consistency and judgment theories evolved in response to concerns over the failure of conditioning to account for the interconnection of attitudes. Accordingly, these approaches offer that attitudes come in packages, and therefore, existing attitudes impact new attitudes. Consistency theories describe how attitudes are linked to one another, ranging from
balance theory which argues that attitudes either go together or they do not (Heider 1946), to congruity theory which argues that individuals use a series of positive and negative associations to determine the congruence of attitudes (Eagly and Chaiken 1993), to cognitive dissonance theory which offers that people try to minimize the disagreement between attitudes (Festinger 1957). Each approach, however, argues that the overall goal of individual attitude formation is to ensure a certain amount of attitudinal constraint. Judgment theories on the other hand emphasize the way existing attitudes color the acceptance and interpretation of new information based upon a meaningful ordering of various stimuli (Glynn et al. 2004).

Motivational theories, on the other hand, evolved in response to criticisms of behaviorally-driven approaches centered on the ability of different individuals to form and hold the same attitude for different purposes. In the earliest articulation of the motivational approach, Katz (1960) argued that attitudes might serve four functions for an individual, including adjustment, ego-defense, value expression, or knowledge acquisition. The ability to change attitudes, then, is dependent on understanding which of these motivational bases is at work for an individual. Later evolving models have examined the activation and/or persuasion issue from the motivational question by evaluating how people receive, accept and respond to information (Zaller 1992) and how people use information to move toward social acceptance (Arkin 1981; Tedeschi, Schenkler and Bonoma 1971).

Spurred in large part by the re-conceptualization of the relationship between cognition and affect information (Zajonc 1980, Fazio 1986; Fazio et al. 1986; Fazio 2001; Damasio 1994, Bargh 1997; Westen et al. 2006 among others), emotional theories of attitude formation have emerged in response to general criticisms of earlier models that centered on ignoring the role of emotion. According to this perspective, emotion exerts a large influence on the acceptance and
processing of information, and not the other way around as many earlier theories had argued (Zajonc 1980; Ragsdale 1991; Way and Masters 1996). Of special interest here is the belief that social emotions, such as shame, pride and embarrassment, are of particular importance to the attitude formation process. This suggests that much of our attitude formation process is likely driven by the need to be accepted or validated by other people (Miller and Leary 1992). As a result, much of how people think, and ultimately behave, is driven by the desire to maintain social bonds, which are in many instances not just the ties that bind society together, but also the most important of all human motivators (Scheff 1990).

While these different theoretical approaches each evolved as a response to particular criticisms of conditioning theory, when combined they begin to paint the attitude formation process as not simply a psychological process, but also as a social process. As human actors, individuals are constantly making judgments about people, objects, and events of personal significance. This raises the question of how we go about making these judgments within a world where perfect information is unavailable. In large part, to account for imperfect information, individuals make use of self-generated perceptions about others’ motives, norms, behavior and words when making judgments. Lippman (1922) refers to these perceptions as the “pictures in our heads.” In generating perceptions, individuals make use of whatever information is salient and available. As a result, perceptions are rarely if ever complete, and are generally fairly inaccurate (McCall and Simmons 1978). Perceptions tend to be less than accurate because of either physical sensory capacity limits or the normal cognitive limitations which manifest themselves as reduced attention span or interest of the typical individual.

Even though the accuracy of an individual’s perceptions are somewhat limited, they often dictate not just how we feel, but also how we behave, making them critically important (Glynn et
In the opinion formation process, perceptions can have a number of effects, each of which is dependent on the relative position of the individual and important referent pressures. These effects include the projection of attitudes onto other individuals and/or groups and the misplaced belief of majority consensus (Glynn, Ostman and McDonald 1995; Ross, Greene and House 1977), as well as the assignment of negative intents and motives to the attitudes of others (Fields and Schuman 1977). As a result, the attitude formation and activation process has been reconsidered as a social process in which the perception of others’ attitudes and intentions serve as a strong determinant of what an individual feels (Davison 1958; Noelle-Neuman 1984; Bishop 2005; Crespi 1977; among others).

**Why Should We Expect Groups to Matter?**

Since perceptions of the motives and attitudes of others are critically important to the individual attitude formation process, it is imperative to understand how these perceptions are developed. Perceptions are, to a certain extent, experientially and individually driven (Glynn et al. 2004). Our personality, intellect, and exposure to various experiences throughout our daily lives certainly matter. The values that are developed through these experiences help individuals define the sort of people they are (Rokeach 1973). But, the limitations in terms of sensory development outlined above (McCall and Simmons 1978) suggest that something else beyond simple values is at work as well (Conover and Feldman 1984). Beyond the personal experiences of an individual, perceptions are also driven by a series of relational and contextual factors (Hinton 1993), which impact how people perceive the world around them through the combined effects of socialization and social comparison (Festinger 1954; Tajfel 1981). Socialization provides individuals with a series of beliefs about cultural norms and values that are transmitted from one generation to the next (Glynn et al. 2004). Individuals then use information about the
world around them, according to the social comparison process, to test the correctness of these beliefs (Festinger 1954).

Groups, and the accompanying stereotyping, are vital to this process because they provide a mechanism to sort through an often chaotic world (Lippman 1922). In fact, groups prove to be more important to determining attitudes than values because our values are in large part dependent on the social groups with whom we identify (Conover and Feldman 1984). The term stereotype has taken on a pejorative interpretation in popular parlance because of its association with discrimination (Greenwald and Banaji 1995), but stereotypes are quite important because they provide a method to simplify the world around us. Stereotypes serve as generalizations about individuals based on “category membership” determined by some characteristic (Hogg and Abrams 1988). Under stereotyping, individuals within groups are treated as identical to other group members.

These stereotypes are critically important in understanding social identity theory. Under social identity theory, individuals define themselves in terms of group memberships shared with other people (Haslem et al. 1999; Brewer and Brown 1998; Conover and Feldman 1984; Kinder 1982). This self-definition allows individuals to create two categories of groups, in-groups and out-groups, which serve the important functions of allowing for group inclusion and differentiation (Brewer and Brown 1998). Here, however, it is important to note that group identifications are not absolute. They are, to a certain extent, dependent on context and circumstances at any given point in time. As a result, the various groups individuals could associate with, or distance themselves from, are sorted through, and selected from, based on which identities are salient at any given point in political time (Simon and Klandermans 2001; Haslam et al. 1992; Brewer and Weber 1994; Turner et al. 1987). Salience is determined in large
part by alterations in context that highlight increasing differences between groups, or the increasing awareness of a political objects place within, or representative of, a particular group (Leege et al. 2002; Turner et al. 1987). These differences are especially important when the political context, both the location and time components, aligns with the contemporary political rhetoric (Paolino 1995; Reese and Brown 1995; Lau 1989; Huddy 2003).

Once these salient groups have been identified, accentuation increases the perception of in-group homogeneity and out-group distances (Tajfel 1959). As a result of this perceived increase in homogeneity within groups and distance between groups, the simple act of putting people into groups, according to social identity theory, has several effects, including discriminatory group behavior, intra-group cohesion, and ethnocentric biases (Tajfel 1981). Because many of an individual’s perceptions of social norms are group dependent, perceptions of in-group and out-group status create a source of fundamental tension between perceived competing values and ways of life (Hogg and Abrams 1988). This tension results in the almost un-preventable “us” versus “them” mindset where we look for ways not only to say we are different, but also that “we” are better than “they.” This divide works quite well from a strategic standpoint because of the concept of relative deprivation. Relative deprivation is the tendency of people to judge their condition not just in absolute terms, but rather relative to other groups (Leege et al. 2002). Often times, the comparison groups can be activated by structuring the consciousness of in-group status, heightening the threat to that group’s status, defining which groups are providing the threat, and exploiting modernity and context to create viable conflicts (Leege et al. 2002).

In the broadest sense the recent debate over increasing partisan polarization (Fiorina, Abrams and Pope 2005; Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Fiorina, Abrams and Pope 2008;
Abramowitz and Saunders 2011; among others) provides a valuable case study in how this process moves forward. Those arguing in favor of polarization argue that partisan polarization exists because of an innate desire to conform to the in-group norm (Scheff 1990), but also because of a need to differentiate oneself from other out-group norms and stereotypes (Hogg, Turner and Davidson 1990). This differentiation is reliant on the heavy use of social heuristics, emotional appeals based on enthusiasm and anxiety, and the heavy use of technology to disseminate cues based on plausibility, but not necessarily on consistency (Leege et al. 2002). As a result, according to Tajfel’s (1981) interpretation of social identity theory, three mechanisms begin to activate and inflame perceptions of group differences. Social causality is a mechanism that allows individuals to blame out-groups for some large scale event. Essentially, individuals attempt to “scapegoat” out-groups for negative things that occur in a society. Additionally, social justification allows individuals, or the concomitant in-group, to use this blame to justify actions or statements against the out-group. Finally, social differentiation leads in-groups to support and offer group-centric beliefs, particularly when the uniqueness of the in-group is threatened (Tajfel 1981). Each of these effects points to a theoretical framework which utilizes an increasing importance of groups, and more specifically perceptions about in-groups and out-groups, in how people reach political decisions.

**Groups and Electoral Choice**

There is a long history of research supporting the idea that groups are important in the political decision-making process. As early as the 1940’s, group memberships were identified as critical to how individuals make the choices they do on election day. Under the Columbia Model, individuals’ vote choice is determined in large part by affiliations with a variety of social and identity groups, primarily socio-economic status, race and religion (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and
Gaudet 1948). In fact, Lazarsfeld and colleagues argue that partisanship is structured by these group affiliations. While deviations from partisan behavior are possible, they are quite rare because an individual’s social network, which is the mechanism that can spur a departure from normal voting patterns, rarely wanders too far from our social groups (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995). As a result, partisan strategies pay little attention to conversion, and instead focus on activating the base and attracting undecided voters (Shea and Burton 2001).

Even the Michigan model, with its accompanying focus on partisanship, allowed for the importance of social groups. While the primary group of interest to Campbell and his co-authors (1960) was far and away political parties, they also allowed for the importance of other groups that people affiliate with based on social, economic or personal characteristics. These social groups, according to *The American Voter*, are particularly important because they help explain individual deviations from partisan behavior. This importance, however, is dependent upon the interaction of a “triangle of elements.” These elements include the individual, the group, and the overall world of politics. This dependence is critical to explaining which groups matter at a particular point in political time. The relationship between the individual and the group is dependent, however, on the individual’s psychological attachment to the group which is determined by the “proportion of one’s life spent in close contact with the group” (Campbell et al. 1960; Tajfel 1981; Conover and Feldman 1984). But, it is in the relationship between the group and the world of politics where we begin to really see why some groups matter more than others. Group to politics orientations are dependent on two primary factors. The first is the transmission of group political standards. Essentially, how clearly are group preferences communicated to those who identify with the group and to the general public? If group
preferences are not clearly articulated, then groups will fail to become as politically salient as they might be in other situations. It is this political salience that has the most impact in determining whether or not a particular group membership is important or not. The political salience of a group is increased when there is a heightened awareness of a referent object, either a person, issue or party, group membership, or when there is a high coincidence of group goals and the dominant political issues of the time (Campbell et al. 1960). As a result, salient group memberships, and, by extension, the importance of groups in political judgment is contextual.

The clearest articulation of the importance of social groups to determining political behavior can be found in the theory of cultural differences (Leege et al. 2002). Leege and his co-authors argue that cultural differentiations are critically important to politics, and these differentiations are based in large part on group differences. They define cultural politics as:

> In speaking of a cultural approach to politics, we wish to emphasize not just the subject matter of a political debate – particular issues involving abortion, women’s rights, school prayer – but rather any political controversy that turns on conflicts about social values, norms and symbolic boundaries (Leege et al. 2002, p. 27).

This type of politics fits well with a group-based perspective because values and norms are largely shaped by groups (Hogg and Abrams 1988), which implies that cultural politics are shaped by group memberships, but also that group salience is reinforced by the divisions highlighted under the politics of cultural difference.

Cultural politics, and the accompanying group differences it is both dependent on and reinforcing of, is not a new phenomenon. General appeals to social identity and group difference can be traced back to the New Deal era of politics, and in fact have dominated presidential politics from World War II to the present (Leege et al. 2002). This is partly due to changing times and evolving technology which have raised anxiety among social traditionalists. But, cultural politics also play particularly well because they involve what are generally “easy” issues
which are largely symbolic, deal with ends rather than means, and have been mostly unresolved by the political system (Carmines and Stimson 1989). Because cultural differences are particularly valuable for creating distance between opponents, they help define appropriate political behavior and prescribe political norms. In essence, the cultural differences exposed by strategic politicians under this approach help to define an individual’s political identity.

This political identity, based on transmitted group-based cultural objectives, plays a critical role in shaping individual ideology. As a result, ideology serves as an incredibly valuable tool for political actors. Because of the heavy reliance on the use of negative symbols towards out-groups, ideology becomes a tool of symbolic manipulation (Leege et al. 2002). Political parties, in the modern party system, have become proxies for ideologies, and by extension, reference groups for the different perspectives on moral order that are used to generate ideological orientations. Essentially, the groups we identify with lead us to the affective bonds we form with certain political parties (Leege et al. 2002). The expectations, and affective bonds, are passed on to presidential candidates, which helps explain the indirect impact that party has on vote choice operating through candidate affective measures identified in previous chapters.

However, Leege and his co-authors are looking at the importance of groups primarily through the prism of a partisan/ideological dimension. As presidential campaigns have transitioned from party-centered to candidate-centered (Abramson, Aldrich and Rohde 2007), it is likely that simply examining the importance of groups through this partisan lens may not be sufficient for understanding the impact identity has on voting behavior. Instead, increased exposure to candidates outside of the traditional partisan framework, through increased media coverage and increases in technology, has shifted attention beyond party voting. As a result, it is important to examine what shapes how people feel about the candidate independent of partisan
labels. As a starting point, it seems plausible to think that some of the same group differences that impact how people feel about parties might also impact how they feel about the candidates independent of partisan loyalties. Evidence presented earlier supports the notion that how individuals feel about candidates occurs, to a certain extent, independent of the traditional party dominated model. In order to better understand what drives voting behavior, it is imperative to examine what impact social groups and social identity have on how we feel about candidates.

Research Design

Identifying potential predictive group orientations among individual respondents is a tricky endeavor. Several methods that have been utilized in earlier examinations include content analysis of media coverage and post-hoc analysis of exit poll results. Content analyses and exit polls, however, prove less than ideal for this task, primarily because they do not directly measure how people use pre-existing stereotypes and attitudes, but instead measure justifiable rationalizations of individual behavior (Bishop, 2005; Lau 2003; Lau 1982; Rahn, Krosnick and Breuning 1994). Others have made more direct attempts to evaluate and understand the psychological dimensions that determine which, if any, groups matter as people form their candidate-based evaluations. Perhaps the earliest attempts arose in the American National Election Study (ANES) where respondents were simply asked which groups people felt particularly close to, or which groups contain people who are most like them in terms of ideas, interests and feelings (Huddy 2003). This approach, which grew out of reference group theory, however, is not ideal as it does not separate true in-group status from empathy for out-groups (Conover 1984). In contrast to this approach, others have attempted to measure social identity by directly asking individuals the degree to which they identify with certain groups, but even this approach is lacking because it does not measure the all-important differentiation dimension that
is critical to understanding the true importance of groups. Newer measures, such as the collective self-esteem approach (Jackson and Smith 1999) and measures of implicit attitudes (Payne et al. 2005; Krosnick and Lupia 2008), provide promising new directions, but the lack of application to multiple group-based measures and the costs associated make working with them difficult.\(^{15}\)

Of all the methods that have been employed, the most useful can be found by turning back to the important work of Leege, Wald, Krueger and Mueller (2002) on cultural difference. In *The Politics of Cultural Difference*, Leege and his co-authors examined the interaction of groups and specific issues using the time-tested feeling thermometers employed as a part of the American National Election Study (ANES) since 1964. Feeling thermometers provide individuals a method of expressing feelings toward various political objects and groups by locating these objects on a scale ranging from 0 to 100 (Wilcox, Sigelman and Cook 1989). Using principal components factor analysis, and a subsequent second-order factor analysis, Leege and his co-authors (2002) were able to identify latent constructs in attitudes toward various social groups and towards various policy issues, and linkages between group and issue-based factors. These latent constructs alleviate the problems associated with other measurement techniques by demonstrating which groups are linked in a respondent’s mind and showing where in-group and out-group distance is important. Using these newly constructed factors, Leege and his co-authors constructed models of voting behavior for every election from 1960 to 1996. In these models, several clear themes were readily identifiable, focusing primarily on identity based issues centered around nationalism and patriotism, race, religion and gender (Leege et al. 2002).

While these findings would seem to suggest a valid starting point for this analysis, it is important to temper any enthusiasm based on the conclusions of previous efforts. The

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\(^{15}\)For a full description of the strengths and weaknesses of the implicit measurement techniques contained in the Implicit Associations Test and the Affect Misattribution Procedure, see Krosnick and Lupia 2008.
instructiveness of these findings is somewhat limited because of the contextual nature of social identity (Simon and Klandermans 2001; Haslam et al. 1992; Brewer and Weber 1994; Turner et al. 1987). Instead, as we look at these previous examinations, the value lies not specifically in the findings, but rather in the methodologies used to examine the importance of social identity to the development of candidate-centric affective orientations. Using pre-existing findings would likely create a bias in contemporary research by forcing individual attitudes into constructs that are not contextually relevant while potentially ignoring new, emerging identity issues based on the current tenor of political rhetoric and time. As a result, the methodology and techniques employed in the following analysis make use of Leege and Wald’s (2002) approach as a valid starting point, while the conclusions they reached for various historical elections do not serve as base assumptions moving forward.

To evaluate the attitudinal dimensions underlying the candidate-centric affective orientations in the 2008 presidential election, this analysis turns to the ANES and its feeling thermometers. While previous chapters in this work have utilized the 2008 ANES Panel Study, this chapter will use the 2008 ANES Time-Series Study. The Panel Study did not include the traditional feeling thermometer measures, instead making use of questions that asked respondents to identify their feelings on a seven-point scale ranging from “Extremely Warm” to “Extremely Cold.” The reduced variance of these measures, seven categories as opposed to a 100 point scale, and the inability to account for the empirically demonstrated variability in individuals “warmness” (Wilcox, Sigelman and Cook 1989) makes these measures less than ideal. The Time-Series survey, however, does include the traditional feeling thermometers, as well as the requisite measures of candidate-centric affective orientation, making it a more valuable source with which to attempt empirical verification.
In total, the ANES Time-Series data set contains 42 feeling thermometers gauging attitudes toward various political objects and social groups. Before beginning the analysis, two decisions relative to data utilization were made in order to reduce threats to the internal and external validity of the empirical work. First, the ANES feeling thermometers included measures of feelings toward specific political actors and towards both political parties, each of which presented potential, although slightly different, problems. Questions regarding feelings toward political actors are, essentially, conceptually equivalent to the future dependent variable used in this analysis, levels of anxiety and enthusiasm for each candidate. As a result, these feeling thermometers were not included as potential factor loadings in the construction of the latent constructs used as independent variables. Similarly, feeling thermometers for each of the political parties were excluded from consideration because of collinearity issues with the more commonly utilized measure of party identification.

The second decision centered on existing research relative to the usage of feeling thermometers and the tendency of some respondents to be natural cool or warm (Wilcox, Sigelman and Cook 1989). While a substantial portion of the observed differences, about 20%, in individual responses to feeling thermometer questions can be explained by simply examining real differences in responses to groups, other personal characteristics matter as well. For

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16 The groups and individual feeling thermometers included in the 2008 ANES Time-Series Study include, George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Michelle Obama, John McCain, Cindy McCain, Democratic and Republican House and Senate Candidates, Joe Biden, Sarah Palin, Hillary Clinton, Hispanics, Catholics, Feminists, the Federal Government, Jews, Liberals, the Middle Class, Labor Unions, Poor People, the Military, Big Business, People on Welfare, Conservatives, Working Class People, Environmentalists, the Supreme Court, Homosexuals, Asian-Americans, Congress, Blacks, Southerners, Illegal Immigrants, Rich People, Whites, Israel, Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Atheists, and Christian Fundamentalists.

17 In a simple comparison of correlation coefficients, each of the party specific items asked of all respondents (George W. Bush, Barack Obama, John McCain, Cindy McCain, Joe Biden, Sarah Palin, Hillary Clinton) displayed statistically significant relationships with seven-point party identification. These coefficients ranged from moderate (-.464) to strong (.636). While correlation coefficients are not the most ideal method of directly assessing collinearity, the strong correlation combined with the theoretical concerns centered on including related concepts in both the predictors and dependent variable warrants the exclusion of these items as potential predictors.
example, women tend to be warmer to groups than men. Additionally, non-white respondents tend to be warmer than whites. Education also impacts the average thermometer rating of individuals, according to Wilcox, Sigelman and Cook (1989). In the examination of the 2008 ANES Time-Series Feeling Thermometers, contained in Table 5-1, similar patterns emerge as well. Overall, demographic and psychopolitical factors explain approximately 20% of the variance in average feeling thermometers. Similar to the conclusions reached by Wilcox, Sigelman and Cook (1989), educational attainment, gender and race are all important predictors of average thermometer ratings. Education has a negative relationship with each increase in level of educational attainment resulting in a .52 degree decrease in mean thermometer scores. Additionally, women’s ratings are, on average, over three degrees warmer than men’s, as are those of non-white respondents when compared to those of white respondents. Also, in terms of

Table 5-1: Regression Summary: Mean Thermometer Scores in the 2008 ANES Time-Series Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Factors</th>
<th>Unstandardized</th>
<th>Standardized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Attainment</td>
<td>-0.52</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-3.08</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>-3.32</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Attendance</td>
<td>-0.69</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion important part of your life?</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Union Member?</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Service</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychopolitical Factors</th>
<th>Unstandardized</th>
<th>Standardized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party ID</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Partisanship</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Participation</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Trust</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>57.30</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R $^2$ 0.457
R$^2$ 0.209
Adjusted R$^2$ 0.200

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demographic factors, considering religion to be an important part of one’s life and more regularly attending services also increases a respondent’s general rating temperature. Of the psychopolitical factors, only partisanship, with Democrats typically giving higher average ratings, and political participation and trust, both of which are positively related to thermometer ratings, matter. Instead of controlling for each of the individual factors outlined above, which would add multiple additional variables to the final model, this research utilizes Wilcox, Sigelman and Cook’s (1989) method of adjusting individual’s responses relative to their overall mean rating in order to account for variations based on demographic and psycho-political factors.18

**Factor Analysis of Group and Policy Items**

Having addressed these issues, the first step in determining which, if any, attitudes toward social groups mattered in candidate evaluations during the 2008 presidential election is to begin to sort out underlying relationships in the group and policy items contained in the 2008 ANES Time-Series Study. Even after excluding the overtly candidate and partisan measures, 30 feeling thermometers measuring individual attitudes toward various social and political groups still must be included.19 In order to address this large volume of measures, a factor analysis, similar to that conducted by Leege and his co-authors (2002) was employed. This methodology involves a principal components factor analysis with a promax oblique rotation. An oblique rotation method is appropriate in this analysis because of potential communalities among isolated factors (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007), and because of the need to not only allow factors to

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18 For a more detailed description of this methodology, see Wilcox, Sigelman and Cook (1989), p. 252-256
19The remaining feeling thermometers include, Hispanics, Catholics, Feminists, the Federal Government, Jews, Liberals, the Middle Class, Labor Unions, Poor People, the Military, Big Business, People on Welfare, Conservatives, Working Class People, Environmentalists, the Supreme Court, Homosexuals, Asian-Americans, Congress, Blacks, Southerners, Illegal Immigrants, Rich People, Whites, Israel, Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Atheists, and Christian Fundamentalists.
correlate with one another, but also to allow items to appropriately load onto multiple factors. Factors which made theoretical sense and had eigenvalues greater than one were kept for future use. An item was considered as structurally important to a factor if the rotated loading exceeded .4 (Leege et al. 2002).

As a result of the factor analysis of the social and political group feeling thermometers described above, seven well-defined factors emerged which shed light into how individuals think about various groups when making political decisions. When combined these seven factors explain 47.40% of the variance in these group-based items. The largest of these factors, in terms of eigenvalues and variance explained, is the religion and morality factor. Overall, six attitudes towards groups, atheists, homosexuals, Christians, Christian fundamentalists, Hindus, and Muslims, load onto one dimension with an eigenvalue of 3.98, indicating that this factor alone explains 13.26% of the variance in these items. Of these six items, the only non-overtly religious item that loads on this dimension is the item gauging attitudes toward homosexuals, which implies that even though the conventional wisdom is that sexual orientation is likely to mean different things to different people, it is highly related to the more explicitly religious items. This adds an additional aspect of morality to this dimension, which absent of the thermometer towards homosexuals would be exclusively about attitudes toward specific religious orientations and denominations. Instead, this combined religion and morality factor helps place a sharper point on the somewhat nebulous issue of moral values as, based on the factor loadings, when individuals

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20 Correlations between each of the factors considered below were examined. While multiple significant correlations exist, none is stronger than \( r = .3 \). A full table of correlation coefficients can be found in the Appendix.
21 For a full justification of the methodology employed in constructing the group and issue factor analyses, see Leege et al (2002), p. 139.
22 In addition to the seven group factors described below, two additional factors had eigenvalues greater than one. The first included the items measuring attitudes toward Catholics and Big Business, the second included only the item measuring attitudes toward whites. As a result of the low eigenvalues for each, and lack of theoretical clarity of for the first and the ability to more directly gauge the impact of race for the second, both have been excluded from further analyses.
Table 5-2: Principal Components Factor Analysis, Group Feeling Thermometers, Policy/Issue Items in the 2008 ANES Time-Series Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Feeling Thermometers Item</th>
<th>Loading</th>
<th>Policy/Issue Items Item</th>
<th>Loading</th>
<th>Second Order Analysis Item</th>
<th>Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religion &amp; Morality</strong> (Eigenvalue = 3.98)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Safety &amp; Security (Eigenvalue = 2.80)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tax and Spend Liberalism (Eigenvalue = 2.02)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atheists</td>
<td>-0.676</td>
<td>More or Less Difficult to Buy a Gun</td>
<td>0.637</td>
<td>Liberal/Conservative</td>
<td>0.768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexuals</td>
<td>-0.637</td>
<td>Should Gov't Spend More or Less on Services</td>
<td>-0.624</td>
<td>Safety and Security</td>
<td>0.652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>0.623</td>
<td>Spending -- Tightening Border Security</td>
<td>0.496</td>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>0.577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Fundamentalists</td>
<td>0.614</td>
<td>Spending -- The War on Terror</td>
<td>0.494</td>
<td>Race &amp; the Welfare State</td>
<td>0.439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>-0.608</td>
<td>Spending -- Dealing with Crime</td>
<td>0.414</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>-0.590</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socioeconomic Status</strong> (Eigenvalue = 2.95)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Investment in People &amp; Places (Eigenvalue = 1.44)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Policy Outcomes (Eigenvalue = 1.61)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Class People</td>
<td>0.725</td>
<td>Spending -- Building/Repairing Highways</td>
<td>0.595</td>
<td>Safety and Security</td>
<td>0.636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Class People</td>
<td>0.683</td>
<td>Spending -- School Spending</td>
<td>0.504</td>
<td>Invest. In People and Places</td>
<td>0.635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor People</td>
<td>0.449</td>
<td>Spending -- Social Security</td>
<td>0.501</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Liberal/Conservative</strong> (Eigenvalue = 1.99)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Spending -- Aid to the Poor</td>
<td>0.426</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmentalists</td>
<td>0.650</td>
<td>Spending -- Science &amp; Technology</td>
<td>0.422</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberals</td>
<td>0.635</td>
<td>Taxes (Eigenvalue = 1.10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminists</td>
<td>0.546</td>
<td>Progressive v. Regressive Personal Tax</td>
<td>0.787</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatives</td>
<td>-0.593</td>
<td>More or Less Business Tax</td>
<td>0.776</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor Unions</td>
<td>0.443</td>
<td>Warm &amp; Fuzzy (Eigenvalue = 1.04)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government Institutions</strong> (Eigenvalue = 1.59)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Should Gov't Provide Health Insurance to All</td>
<td>-0.594</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>-0.735</td>
<td>Spending -- Foreign Aid</td>
<td>0.466</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Federal Government</td>
<td>-0.714</td>
<td>Spending -- Child Care</td>
<td>0.454</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Supreme Court</td>
<td>-0.635</td>
<td>Spending -- Welfare Programs</td>
<td>0.415</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accepted Immigrants</strong> (Eigenvalue = 1.37)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>0.760</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian-Americans</td>
<td>0.639</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>0.509</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Illegal Immigrants</strong> (Eigenvalue = 1.25)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal Immigrants</td>
<td>0.732</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanics</td>
<td>0.663</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race &amp; the Welfare State</strong> (Eigenvalue = 1.10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>0.676</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People on Welfare</td>
<td>0.641</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor People</td>
<td>0.441</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
answer questions about their attitudes toward homosexuals they are relying on their religious attitudes. This implies that questions and issues related to sexuality are not just based on lifestyle choice, but rather speak directly to an individual’s sense of personal religious identity.

Directionally, each of these items loads as expected. The items for atheism, homosexuals, Hindus and Muslims load negatively onto the religion factor, while Christians and Christian fundamentalists load positively, implying that, consistent with expectations, individuals who feel warmly about Christians and Christian fundamentalists tend to feel less warm towards these other groups. As a result, the weighted refined factor scores\(^{23}\) provide a proxy measure of religious and moral tolerance, with high values supporting a more pro-Christian position while lower scores indicate a higher level of tolerance for religious diversity.

The second strongest factor taps into attitudes toward socioeconomic status. With an eigenvalue of 2.95, this factor helps explain 9.83% of the variance across these items. The three items which load on this dimension, attitudes toward working class people, middle class people and poor people, all load positively which is consistent with expectations that higher levels of support for one group will be related to higher levels of support for all of these groups. Similarly, a very clear liberal/conservative dimension also emerges. As expected, the items measuring attitudes toward liberals and conservatives fit onto this dimension, but several items that are not explicitly ideological also load on this factor. While these groups, environmentalists, feminists and labor unions, are not explicitly ideological, the factor loadings suggest an individual’s attitudes toward each are largely a function of the perceptions of the political/ideological orientation of each group. In other words, when an individual is answering a question about

\(^{23}\)This type of factor score was utilized because it accounts for the correlation between factors, between loadings and observed variables, the correlation between observed variables and the correlation among oblique factors. Since a PCA method was employed these factor scores have been standardized to a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. For a full discussion of this methodology see DiStefano, Zhu and Mindrila (2009).
attitudes toward environmentalists, feminists or labor unions, their answers are colored, to a certain extent, by political ideological predispositions. The directionality of each item loading is consistent with these expectations with liberalism, environmentalists, feminists and labor unions loading positively and conservatives loading negatively. This implies that, as expected, individuals who feel warmly toward conservatives are likely to feel more coolly towards these easily identifiable liberal groups, resulting in the positive/liberal and negative/conservative direction for this factor score.

The final four factors, while not as strong in terms of explained variance as the previous three, still provide some interesting information. The government institutions factor loads without much intrigue. Based on the loadings, both magnitude and directionality, people who feel negatively about one of these items, measuring attitudes toward the Federal Government in general, and the Supreme Court and Congress more specifically, is likely to feel negatively about the other two as well, as represented by the positive orientation of the resultant factor scores. Similarly, the fifth and sixth factors, which each deal with perceptions of what can loosely be termed non-traditional Americans, operate in much the same way. The fifth factor, what I have termed “accepted immigrants,” indicates that people who feel warmly to Jews are likely to feel warmly about Asian-Americans and Israel and vice versa. A similar positive relationship exists between the items that load on the sixth factor, which on the surface appears to tap into attitudes related toward illegal immigrants. The fact that these two items, measuring attitudes toward Hispanics and illegal immigrants, load so strongly on to the same factor suggests that individual respondents have difficulty severing attitudes towards Hispanics as a general group from more strongly held attitudes toward illegal immigrants. Both of these factors which measure different
orientations toward foreigners have positively scaled factor scores with higher values indicating a greater tolerance of the groups contained in each.

The seventh and final factor merits more discussion. While it has the lowest eigenvalue and explained variance, there are some important considerations that warrant more elaboration. This dimension, which details attitudes about race and the welfare state, includes both the items that measure feelings toward people on welfare and poor people. This pairing is not unexpected but, the third item, attitudes toward blacks, which loads as the strongest item on this dimension does not on the face of things seem related. Because each of these items loaded positively on this factor, it suggests not only that people link people on welfare, poor people and blacks in their minds, but that also people who feel cool towards people on welfare and poor people also feel poorly towards blacks. Perhaps most surprisingly, however, are the magnitudes of these three loadings. While the expectation would be that people on welfare and poor people would display the highest level of association, this is not the case. In fact, poor people has the lowest loading of the three items on the race and the welfare state dimension, and actually more strongly loads onto the socioeconomic status factors. This suggests that while many people view welfare as an issue that is associated with poverty, poverty is more overtly recognized as a socioeconomic issue. Conversely, the loadings suggest that the injection of welfare into the equation draws the issue into more racial terms, implying that attitudes toward the poor and to welfare based remedies are not solely based on socio-economic issues, but instead involve a more complex interaction with issues of race as well. As a result, a higher factor score for this dimension suggests a higher level of support for the groups contained within this factor.

Continuing the utilization of the factor analysis strategy originally employed by Leege and his co-authors (2002), a series of eighteen policy items were also examined to determine
what if any dimensions could be extracted from the large volume of policy and spending items contained in the 2008 ANES Time-Series data set. In total, four clearly defined dimensions emerged from these eighteen policy and spending questions explaining 35.39% of the variance across these items. The strongest of these factors, with an eigenvalue of 2.80, provides an understanding of the inter-relatedness of individual attitudes on safety and security. Four of the five items that load onto this dimension do so in a manner consistent with expectations. Attitudes towards spending on the war on terror, tightening border security to prevent illegal immigration and dealing with crime all load positively with one another and with the item measuring whether or not it should be more or less difficult to buy a gun. The only item that seems, on the surface, not to fit on this dimension is the item measuring feelings toward increased spending on services. However, based on the directionality and magnitude of the loading for this item, it appears clear that people who take a tougher stance on dealing with issues of safety and security do not see spending on this priority as a trade-off with spending on other government services, and instead view general service spending as another tool at the disposal of government. This suggests that while the brunt of this factor is borne by concerns over safety, there is also a component that measures a more general support for spending. Higher factor scores indicate a greater level of support for spending on this priority.

The remaining three policy and spending factors have reduced factor loadings, all less than 1.50, but still provide useful information about the clustering of issues in respondents’

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24 The policy and spending items included in the 2008 ANES Time-Series Study include, spending decisions relative to government services, defense, health insurance for all citizens, building and repairing highways, social security, schools, science and technology, dealing with crime, welfare programs, child care, foreign aid, aid to the poor, tightening border security to prevent illegal immigration, protecting the environment, as well as questions relative to progressive versus regressive tax rates, whether business taxes should be more or less and whether it should more or less difficult to buy a gun.

25 The apparent divergence in the directionality of this item is due to the original coding contained in the ANES data set. This item was coded with negative responses given lower numeric representations, while the more general spending items coded with negative responses given higher numeric representations.
minds as they answer questions and think about governmental decision-making. The first of these measures a respondent’s attitudes towards investment in people and places and includes items relative to increased spending on building and repairing highways, spending on social security, spending on schools and on aid to the poor, and investment in science and technology. These items are all positively related to one another, suggesting that individuals willing to increase spending for one are likely to support increased spending in the other categories as well. As a result, positive and higher factor scores indicates a general support for increased spending across all of these items. Interpretation of the third factor is relatively straightforward as well. Based on the item loadings for the taxes dimension, individual attitudes toward personal tax rates tend to be related to attitudes toward business tax rates, with people who support a more progressive tax system also supporting higher business taxes, implying that higher factor scores represent an increasing willingness to shift tax burdens away from individuals in the middle class and below to the wealthy and to corporations. The final policy dimension identified in this factor analysis taps somewhat into issues of egalitarianism. This dimension, labeled in Table 5-2 as “Warm & Fuzzy,” helps identify the segment of the population that, given a choice, would likely choose to support providing assistance to vulnerable populations both domestically—the poor through health insurance and welfare programs, as well as children through child care—and abroad, through foreign aid spending.26

Consistent with the methodology utilized by Leege and his co-authors (2002) to further reduce the vast amount of data, the regression weighted, refined factor scores for each dimension (DiStefano, Zhu and Mindrila 2009) were entered into a second-order factor analysis to identify

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26 The apparent divergence in the directionality of this item is due to the original coding contained in the ANES data set. The item measuring attitudes toward government provided health insurance was coded with negative responses given lower numeric representations, while the more general spending items coded with negative responses given higher numeric representations.
patterns of association between factors. These values, also contained in Table 6-2, suggest four second-order dimensions emerge when the original factors are intertwined. Very clear patterns emerge among these dimensions based on conventional expectations. The strongest of factors taps into the notion of tax and spend liberalism with the group-based liberal/conservative as well as the race and the welfare state dimensions loading with the issue-based safety and security and taxes dimensions. This suggests an interaction of ideology and attitudes on race and poverty with the dimension that most directly measures government spending, safety and security, and the dimension that most directly assesses the redistributive process of paying for these outcomes, taxes. As a result of the positive loadings for each of the first-order factor scores, higher values in this second-order dimension indicate a greater level of support for increased spending to solve political and social problems.

Similarly, a policy outcomes dimension emerges from the linkage between the issue-based factors measuring attitudes on safety and security and the investment in people and places, as does a “good works” dimension from the linkage between attitudes on religion and morality with socioeconomic status and attitudes towards illegal immigrants. Based on the factor loadings for the policy outcomes dimension, higher factor scores indicate a higher level of support for increased spending on safety and investments in people and infrastructure. Interpretation of the good works dimension, however, is a little more complex. Because the socioeconomic status and religion and morality items load positively, it seems to indicate that high support for Christians is strongly related to support for the working and middle class, but this support does not extend to illegal immigrants because of its negative loading.

Finally, a rough measure of people’s belief in the power of government emerges from people’s attitudes toward accepted immigrants, race and the welfare state, government
institutions and attitudes on religion and morality. Interestingly, however, the religion and morality dimension loads negatively on this second-order factor, which indicates that higher levels of support for religious and moral diversity are related to support for government institutions, racial diversity, and some groupings of foreigners. Upon first pass, these divergent factors seem to make little sense, but when the inverse is examined, in the light of post-2008 election hindsight, this amalgamation of attitudes becomes more theoretically clear and potentially more substantively important. This inverse suggests that certain subsets of the religion and morality factor, notably Christians and Christian Fundamentalists are skeptical of groups and issues contained in the other three first-order factors, notably government institutions, African-Americans and welfare spending and foreigners. This provides a potential indication, based on 2008 data, that attitudes consistent with the emergence of the Tea Party movement, which has received considerable attention, were present and potentially important in the 2008 presidential election.

_A Structural Explanation of Candidate-Centric Affect_

Now that potential explanatory factors have been identified using Leege and his co-authors’ (2002) factor analysis strategy, attention can be directed at the primary research question of this work: what if any impact do longer held attitudes toward identity-based group factors have on measures of seemingly contextual affective orientation toward presidential candidates in the 2008 election? In order to do so, the factors identified above have been included in a structural equation model which also includes party identification as a predictor of candidate-centric affect. Structural equation modeling is the appropriate statistical technique for this analysis because of the multi-dimensional nature of the dependent variable, candidate-centric affective orientations, and because of the need to estimate the impact of predictors on one
another. As evidenced by Figure 5-1, the measurement model includes the seven group-based factors, placed at the top of the model, the four issue-based factors and the lone significant second-order factor, the power of government dimension, located at the bottom, and party identification. A predictive path has been drawn from each of the dimensions identified in the factor analyses to party identification because of the findings of Leege, Wald, Krueger and Mueller (2002) which offer that partisan orientations are shaped in part by issues associated with a person’s perception of social and political identity.

27 While Figure 5-1 shows the model for McCain, the identical model was replicated for Obama but it is not displayed here.
28 A full model was analyzed using all of the identified second-order factors, however, the duplication of variance lead to redundancies in the model and an overspecification error. As a result, the problematic, non-significant items were removed from the model presented here for issues of parsimony.
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<th>P</th>
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<th>Standardized</th>
<th>P</th>
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<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.028</td>
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<td>Obama Affect &lt;--- Power of Government</td>
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<td>0.005</td>
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Squared Multiple Correlations

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<th>McCain Affect</th>
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<tr>
<td>Obama Enthusiasm</td>
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<td>0.320</td>
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<td>Obama Anxiety</td>
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<td>Party ID</td>
<td>0.264</td>
<td>0.183</td>
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Based on these models, an overall pattern of explanation emerges. Of principal interest at this point is the ability of each of our predictors to explain the overall variance in how individuals feel about each of the major party candidates in the 2008 presidential election. Starting first with affective orientations toward Obama, the measurement and structural model outlined above indicates the thirteen predictors explain nearly 65% of how people felt about Obama. In total, ten predictors were statistically significant giving an initial look at which, if any, matter as people form their opinion toward Obama. As expected, party identification has the largest impact, with each one-unit movement towards strong Democratic partisanship, on a seven-point scale, resulting in a .147 increase in affective evaluation of Obama. This item is followed, in declining magnitude, by the dimensions measuring race and the welfare state, spending on safety and security, the power of government, political ideology, religion and morality, socioeconomic status, taxes and attitudes toward government institutions.

A similar pattern emerges when the model for affective evaluations of McCain is examined. Overall, the eleven statistically significant predictors explain approximately 73% of how people feel about McCain. Again, party identification is by far the strongest predictor, with each level movement away from strong Republican partisanship resulting in a .773 impact on affective evaluations of McCain. This predictor is followed in importance by attitudes toward race and the welfare state, religion and morality, spending on safety and security, political ideology, taxes, government institutions, the power of government, spending on people and infrastructure, accepted immigrants, and egalitarianism. The similarities between the two models prove to be quite instructive. For example, as expected, partisanship is the strongest predictor of affective evaluations for both McCain and Obama even as the importance of attitudes toward various social groups is controlled. This finding is not only consistent with theoretical
expectations, but also with empirical findings offered in Chapters 3 and 4 of this work. However, the typically all important party identification variable is not the only cause of how an individual feels about either candidate. For example, race and the welfare state enter each model as the second strongest predictor, suggesting that independent of party identification the way people felt about African-Americans had a significant impact, both statistically and substantively, on candidate evaluations. Similarly, the consistency of dimensions which clearly tap group-based concepts, such as religion and morality, political ideology and attitudes toward socioeconomic groups and some foreigners, indicates that these dimensions not only explain partisan attachments (Leege et al. 2002), but also how individuals feel about candidates when party is removed from consideration.\footnote{In this instance, the influence of party is removed via statistical control.} Finally, attitudes toward illegal immigrants failed to reach statistical significance in either model. This should not, however, be interpreted as implying this issue had no impact. Instead, the high level of division within each camp of traditional supporters, a general lack of public perception on each individual’s position and/or the perceived similarity of candidates on this issue likely cancelled out any apparent differences.

While simply comparing the items which appear as significant in both models is instructive in demonstrating that these shared items matter across evaluations with different political referents, examining the differences, both in terms of significance and magnitude ordering, provides an additional layer of information. Table 5-4 contains measures of significant differences between predictors across the models for Obama and McCain respectively. While partisanship shows up as the strongest predictor in both models, the coefficients between each are not significantly different, implying that individuals are not more or less reliant on party identification when forming evaluations of either candidate. Similarly, the liberal/conservative
dimension predictor which is significant in both models does not display significantly different magnitudes across models. Also as expected, the coefficient difference test for the only item not statistically significant for evaluations of either McCain or Obama, attitudes toward illegal immigration, was also not significant. But, the remaining ten predictors exhibited statistically significant differences across the two candidate-specific models. For example, the calculated differences with positive directionality indicate these items were significantly more important to evaluations of McCain than they were to evaluations of Obama. These factors include attitudes toward spending on people and infrastructure, accepted immigrants, spending on safety and security, egalitarianism, and religion and morality. Negative directionality, however, implies dimensions were more important in evaluations of Obama, with individuals being more reliant on attitudes toward socioeconomic groups, the power of government, government institutions, taxes and race and the welfare state in forming evaluations of Obama.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dimension Predictor</th>
<th>Coefficient Difference</th>
<th>S.E. of the Difference</th>
<th>t_{diff}</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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</table>
Logistic Models of Anxiety and Enthusiasm

The findings of the structural equation model, however, do not provide the complete picture of how important these social groups and issue-based determinants are in terms of how individuals feel about the candidates. Critics of the approach outlined above are likely to argue two points. First, those skeptical of this line of research would argue that the significant differences between the magnitudes of predictors across models indicates an inability to use this approach to generate any type of replicable conclusions. This critique is somewhat misguided because it fails to account for the importance of context in political elections. Each election is defined by a specific set of factors, such as the candidates, the contemporary political discussions, and the general political climate of the time. As such, variations between candidates within elections, and across elections more generally, is not only likely, it is actually essential for developing a thorough understanding of the impact of social and political identities on how individuals feel about each candidate in any given election. At different moments in time, when stimulated with different candidates, the salience of certain identities will be elevated while others will recede (Simon and Klandermans 2001; Haslam et al. 1992; Brewer and Weber 1994; Turner et al. 1987).

A second critique of the above approach is based on the multi-dimensional nature of affective orientations, expressed as consisting of both anxiety and enthusiasm in much of the existing research, most notably Marcus, Neumann and MacKuen (2001). What is not evident in these overall structural equation models of candidate-centric affect is the impact of attitudes toward these various social groups and issues on each of the dimensions of affect, anxiety and enthusiasm. By looking at each of the components of the overall affective dimension independently we can better understand whether or not some of the demonstrably significant
predictors only impact one dimension of affect, whether the direction and magnitude of some predictors changes in the uni-dimensional analysis, or whether some of the non-significant predictors become significant. Just as we should expect context to matter in the multi-dimensional model, as described above certain factors should have a stronger impact on the overall evaluation of each candidate, we should also expect certain factors to impact whether, and to what extent, the positive and negative affective dimensions, anxiety and enthusiasm respectively, differ for each candidate.

To evaluate the uni-dimensional impact of these social group and issue-based predictors, four logistic regression models were constructed, one for anxiety towards Obama, one for enthusiasm towards Obama, one for anxiety towards McCain, and one for enthusiasm towards McCain. In each model, respondents were assigned to one of two categories on the dependent variable, either having the condition in question toward the candidate in question (1) or not (0). This dichotomous assignment is appropriate in order to equalize category membership. The measure using five categories has an unequal distribution of values across categories with the majority of observations falling into the null, or exhibiting no anxiety or enthusiasm, category. As a result, estimating coefficients would be problematic, and potential relationships would likely be hidden (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007).

Table 5-5 contains the results for these logistic regression models. Beginning with the Obama anxiety model, a series of demographic, political attribute, group and issue items emerge as significant predictors of anxiety towards Obama. In purely demographic terms, only two of the potential predictors included in the model are significantly related to anxiety towards Obama. Increasing levels of educational attainment, for example, result in increasing odds that an individual will feel anxious about Obama. The logged odds ratio for this relationship indicates
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Exp(B)</td>
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**Table 5-5: Logistic Regression Models: Candidate-Specific Anxiety and Enthusiasm by Demographic, Group and Issue Predictors (cont.)**

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<td>White</td>
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<td>.423</td>
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that each additional level of education attained increases the likelihood of feeling anxious towards Obama by a factor of 1.14. Consistent with expectations, an individual’s race, more specifically, whether or not the person is African-American, significantly impacts anxiousness about Obama. While the coefficients for white and Hispanic respondents fail to reach statistical significance, African-Americans were much less likely to feel anxious about Obama than other respondents. Similarly, party identification was significantly related to anxiety levels towards Obama, with each level increase, or movement towards Strong Democrats, resulting in a reduction of odds relative to feeling anxiety towards Obama.

The only issue-based factor that reached statistical significance for its predictive power of anxiety towards Obama was attitudes toward spending on safety and security, but several interesting findings arise out of the social group factors as well as the second-order dimensions. Among the social-group dimensions, attitudes towards accepted immigrants had the largest impact with each one standard deviation increase in support for these groups of foreigners resulting in a decrease in the odds of feeling anxiety towards Obama. Similarly, political ideology had a large impact on anxiety towards Obama with each one standard deviation increase towards conservatives resulting in a 1.25 increase in the odds of feeling anxiety. Additionally, attitudes on race and the welfare state and religion and morality had the expected impact on anxiety towards Obama, with positive feelings on each resulting in a decrease in the odds of feeling anxiety respectively. Attitudes towards socioeconomic groups had an impact on Obama anxiety as well, with each standard deviation increase in positive feelings towards the groups resulting in a decrease in the odds of feeling anxious towards Obama. Finally, the lone second-order factor included, attitudes relative to the power of government, was statistically related to anxiety towards Obama with decreasing beliefs in the power of government to address
social and political problems, increasing anxiety towards Obama by a factor of 1.32 per each increase in standard deviation.

Far fewer predictors appear as statistically significant predictors when enthusiasm towards Obama is examined. Somewhat incongruently with findings relative to anxiety towards Obama, increasing levels of education increases the odds of feeling enthusiastically by a factor 1.18. While the probability of a single variable having a positive relationship with both enthusiasm and anxiety is somewhat hard to fathom, education should be treated differently. It is highly likely that increasing education also means increasing exposure to each candidate. This greater exposure likely leads to a greater awareness and crystallization of attitudes that manifests itself through increased feelings, both positive and negative, among the highly educated. Again, as is the case with anxiety towards Obama, respondent race matters for feelings of enthusiasm. African-Americans are significantly more likely to feel enthusiasm as suggested by the logged odds ratio with indicates African-Americans are 4.00 times more likely to feel enthusiasm towards Obama than others. Additionally, whites were significantly less likely to feel enthusiasm towards Obama as indicated by the logged odds ratio less than one. As a result of the increased importance of race, many of the social-group and second-order factors that mattered in terms of anxiety fail to reach statistical significance. In fact, only political ideology mattered with decreasing support for conservatism increasing the odds of feeling enthusiastic towards Obama.

In terms of anxiety towards McCain, only six of the possible predictors reach statistical significance. Measures of respondent race, gender, age and region of residence have no statistical impact on anxiety towards McCain, while education following the pattern outlined above has a significant impact on anxiety with each level increase in educational attainment increasing anxiety towards McCain by a factor of 1.18. Political partisanship impacts anxiety levels with
each level of change in partisanship toward Strong Democrat increasing anxiety towards McCain by a factor of 1.36. Of the dimensions identified in the three factor analyses described above, only individual attitudes toward socioeconomic groups, political ideology and spending on safety and security having a significant impact on McCain anxiety levels. Each is directionally consistent with conventional expectations; high support for spending on safety and security decreases feelings of anxiety, as do movements toward conservatism on the ideology factor, but the variable tapping attitudes toward socioeconomic groups somewhat defies convention with higher support for the socioeconomic groups which load on that factor having a negative effect on anxiety levels.

The McCain enthusiasm model, however, is more complex. Again, education has a similar impact here to its impact on Obama enthusiasm. Gender, for the first time, becomes a statistically significant predictor of any of the emotional identifications with men being 1.48 times as likely to report enthusiasm for McCain. Race reappears as a significant predictor, but only for respondents who reported being African-American, who indicated lower levels of enthusiasm for McCain. Also for the first time, age enters the model as a significant predictor with each additional year increase in respondent age increasing the likelihood of enthusiasm for McCain by a factor of 1.02. Partisanship is still significant, with its impact meeting expectations. Several group-based predictors, however, return to significance in this model as well. Support for government institutions and accepted immigration both have a negative effect on enthusiasm for McCain. Similarly, expressions of low levels of support for the items on race and the welfare system items results in higher probability of enthusiasm for McCain with each one standard deviation decrease in support on this factor score resulting in an increase in the likelihood of feeling enthusiastic about McCain by a factor of 1.39. Additionally, the second-order factor
measuring attitudes relative to the power of government, an early indication of the attitudinal
dimension of a significant segment of the Tea Party movement, enters this model as positively
impacting McCain enthusiasm by a factor of 1.935.

Summary of Findings

Previous chapters in this work have identified that individuals’ affective orientations
towards candidates, which are activated early in the campaign process, are durable and are
meaningful as people make their decisions on Election Day. The next step was to examine what
helps shape these apparently contextual candidate-centric affective orientations. Traditional
political science approaches have largely left this question unexamined because of the lack of
focus on candidate-centric affect as an important predictor. Using social identity theory as a
starting point, the findings detailed above offer that a portion of how individuals felt about the
presidential candidates in 2008 was a function of perceptions about social groups and the
interaction of these groups and various latent issue constructs. Consistent with earlier work on
groups and affect (Leege et al. 2002), three separate principal components factor analyses
revealed a total of eleven first-order and four second-order dimensions. These dimensions were
utilized in a structural equation model to test their efficacy in explaining how people feel about
each of the candidates. Based on these models, several constructs in addition to party
identification were important predictors of candidate affect. In a minimum of one of the two
models, one for Obama and one for McCain, six of the social group-based factors, each of the
issue-based predictors, and one of the second-order dimensions were significantly related to
candidate affect. Party identification and political ideology were essentially equally important in
both models. While several other predictors appeared in both models, the impact of these
predictors on candidate affect was not equal in both instances. For example, attitudes on religion

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and morality, accepted immigration, spending on safety and security, investment in people and infrastructure, and egalitarianism were more important in determining how people felt about McCain, while attitudes about socioeconomic status, government institutions, race and the welfare state, taxes, and the power of government—the only second order factor that appeared as significant—were more important as people evaluated Obama.

While instructive, these findings do not paint the full picture of the impact of group-based predictors on how people felt about the candidates in the 2008 presidential election. Due to the multi-dimensionality of candidate affect, the impact of significant predictors can be unclear in a single structural equation model, and some non-significant predictors may be important in explaining the individual dimensions underlying candidate feelings. To account for these issues, a second set of statistical models were constructed, this time using logistic regression models. When the coefficients from these four models are compared, several interesting patterns emerge.

First, only three predictors are consistent across all four of the candidate-centric, affectively driven logistic regression models. Two of these, party identification and spending on safety and security, behave as expected. Movement along the partisan spectrum from the Republican pole to the Democratic pole has the anticipated impact of decreasing anxiety towards Obama and increasing enthusiasm, while also increasing the likelihood of anxiety towards McCain while lowering the probability of enthusiasm. Similarly, increased support for spending on safety and security impacts each model as expected. Those respondents who indicate a greater support for spending on this priority are more likely to feel anxious towards Obama and enthusiastic about McCain, while respondents at the other end are more likely to report anxiety towards McCain and enthusiasm towards Obama. These two consistencies suggest that as individuals evaluated each candidate in the 2008 presidential election, partisan identities and concerns about national
security were still salient for nearly all respondents. Education, which also mattered in all four of the models, had a consistently positive impact on arousing emotional reactions, both positive and negative, for both candidates. As indicated by the logged odds ratios contained in Table 5-6, education was statistically significant in all four models, increasing the likelihood of feeling both anxiety and enthusiasm for both McCain and Obama. This apparently contradictory finding is likely a function of the increased salience of the two candidates that is driven by increasing levels of education.

While these findings supporting the importance of partisanship and education are interesting, several other demographic and factor based predictors point to the importance of identity-based factors in explaining how people evaluated each of the candidates. Several variables that have occupied important places in popular explanations of the 2008 presidential election mattered only in one or two of the affective evaluation models. Age, for example, mattered only in respondents’ level of enthusiasm for McCain, with older respondents being more likely to express enthusiasm than younger individuals. Similarly, gender mattered only for evaluations of enthusiasm of McCain; consistent with contemporary research on the gender gap in American politics, men were more likely to report feeling enthusiastic about McCain. While attitudes toward various liberal and conservative groups had the expected impact in three of the models, other traditionally important dimensions reached statistical significance in two or fewer of the evaluative models. Religion and morality, for example, mattered only in the model assessing individual anxiety towards Obama. While the direction is consistent with expectations (lower support for religious diversity lowered the likelihood of feeling anxious about Obama), the failure of this item to significantly enter any of the other models suggests it was only
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important as people evaluated how they felt about Obama. Similarly, attitudes about socioeconomic groups and foreigners only mattered in certain instances.

However, two sets of identity based concepts merit further discussion. The first of these are identification with and attitudes toward racial groups. In three of the four models, considerations of race were important, independent of the traditional racial/party dynamic. Driven in large part by the unique nature of the 2008 presidential election, it was wholly expected that issues of racial identity would be particularly salient in this election cycle, and the statistical evidence supports this conventional wisdom. Respondents who identified themselves as African-Americans were less likely to indicate anxiety towards Obama and enthusiasm for McCain. More importantly, however, was the strength of the impact of race on enthusiasm for Obama with whites reporting a lower likelihood of feeling enthusiastic, and with African-Americans being four times as likely to report feeling enthusiasm towards Obama when compared to other racial groups. Even when these explicit expressions of racial identity were controlled for, constructs that tapped into latent dimensions of racial attitudes related to African-Americans, poverty, and welfare remained statistically significant in the models analyzing individual anxiety towards Obama and enthusiasm towards McCain. This suggests that, consistent with expectations and previous research (Pasek et al. 2009), race mattered in how people evaluated the candidates in the 2008 presidential election, and by extension race mattered in how people voted, independent of the traditional racial/party interaction.

Similarly, the only second-order factor included in the models, the power of government dimension, was significantly important in two of the evaluative models. This factor, which includes attitudes toward religion and morality, race and the welfare state, accepted immigrants and support for government institutions, appears to incorporate several dimensions that are part
of the Tea Party movement. This movement has been largely viewed, to this point, as emerging in response to the 2008 presidential election, but the findings offered here suggest that this grouping of attitudes in an individual respondent was present prior to the 2008 contest, and played a significant role in increasing the likelihood that an individual felt anxious about Obama and also enthusiastic about McCain.

**Conclusion**

Taken together, these findings offer some new insight into the long-running debate over whether election results are pre-determined or whether campaigns matter as people decide how to cast their ballots on election day. Evidence from Chapter 4 indicated that vote choice was, to a certain extent, influenced by both long-term partisan pre-dispositions and reactions to the most salient short-term cue in a given election context, the candidates. This suggests that while partisanship certainly matters, elections are not simply articulations of party identification, but rather contextual elements of the campaign, most notably the competing candidates, also shape how people behave. This conclusion, however, cannot be accepted without further evaluating what these affective reactions are actually based upon. The durability demonstrated in Chapter 3 indicates these reactions, which are activated early in the campaign process, are relatively impervious to change, raising questions as to what shapes how people feel towards the candidates. If the importance of candidate evaluations is truly contextual then they ought to be based on the consideration of contemporary information.

Instead, evidence presented earlier in this chapter offers that these affective orientations towards each candidate are a function of party identification and attitudes toward various social groups. This suggests that much of the apparent importance of the contextual nature of candidate evaluations is actually a function of long-held, group-based pre-dispositions. While the spending
and policy items matter in terms of the overall candidate-centric affective orientations, these findings are tempered by two factors. First, in the overall structural models, the magnitudes of group and partisan predictors are consistently larger than the magnitudes of the policy/spending factors. Second, when the importance of the issue and spending factors are examined in multi-dimension models designed gauge the impact on both anxiety and enthusiasm towards each candidate, most of the spending dimensions fail to reach statistical significance. In total, only attitudes towards spending on safety and security display any consistency in explaining candidate-centric affective evaluations.

As a result, a picture of candidate affective evaluations emerges that is based largely on pre-existing group-based dispositions, both partisan and socially driven, at the expense of more issue- and policy-centered dimensions. This suggests that even the election-specific evaluations of candidates are driven by pre-existing dispositions providing additional support to those who offer that election results are largely pre-determined. This does not, however, imply that context does not matter. Instead, it suggests that how we think about the importance of context needs to shift. Rather than the cognitive evaluation of short-term factors, context matters because of the ability of the presence of certain candidates in any given election to raise the salience of certain groups. Essentially, which groups matter in the determination of affective reactions is dependent on which candidate and which affective dimension are under consideration.
CHAPTER 6: WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN? WHERE DOES IT GO FROM HERE?

Within both the mass and academic publics, perhaps no topic has occupied as much of the collective attention as have questions about how individuals make the choices they do on election day. The voting process holds a particularly important place in consideration of the American political process for a multitude of reasons. Normatively, elections represent the symbolic transfer of power from the larger population to a smaller set of elected and appointed officials. More pragmatically, elections represent the only direct form of contact between many individuals and their elected officials or government apparatus (Niemi, Weisberg and Kimball 2011). Furthermore, elections have been demonstrated as having a meaningful impact on government outcomes (Campbell et al. 1960; Ginsberg and Stone 1996). This all suggests that in a government “of the people, by the people and for the people” understanding electoral behavior is critical to understanding American democracy.

While traditional, widely accepted accounts of voting behavior typically focus on the consideration of some critical issue or event which is particularly salient in an election, academic explanations have been largely unable to settle on a universal model which neatly aligns individual voting behavior with normative expectations. For the better part of the past fifty years, the academic debate over the determinants of voting behavior has revolved not simply around the cognitive consideration of issues, but rather generally around the distinctions between sets of plausible long-term pre-dispositions and various short-term, contextual factors (Niemi, Weisberg and Kimball 2011; Bartels 2008). The relative balance of these two sets of factors provides the framework for the more fundamental question of whether elections are pre-determined or whether campaigns matter as people determine how to cast their ballots on election day. From

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30 As described by Lincoln in the Gettysburg Address.
the earliest attempts to study individual voting behavior, evidence has suggested that individual vote choice may be based on little more than long-standing social (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954; Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet 1948) and political (Campbell et al. 1960; Goldberg 1966; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008; among others) attachments which are characterized as being highly stable and relatively impervious to change (Campbell et al. 1960; Converse and Markus 1979; Jennings and Niemi 1981; Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002). These findings suggest that electoral decision-making, and by extension electoral outcomes, are determined well in advance of the campaign cycle, leaving little room for the normatively expected consideration of political information.

These attempts helped establish the dominant paradigm through which much of the later work on American voter behavior has evolved. They did not, however, end attempts to reassert the importance of the cognitive consideration of election-specific information. Instead, the works offered by the Columbia and Michigan schools of thought inspired an on-going debate about the relative importance of long-term and short-term factors that continues to this day. The potential contextual culprits offered in these attempts to refute the pre-determination paradigm are quite varied and include; rational choice approaches (Downs 1957), heuristically driven models (Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Popkin 1994; Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1991), ideological/issue models (Nie, Verba and Petrocik 1976; Pomper 1972; Carmines and Stimson 1989; Petrocik 1996); economic models (Fiorina 1981; Key 1966; Kramer 1971; Kinder and Kiewiet 1981), as well as models that argue the importance of individual candidates (Popkin et al. 1976; Markus 1982) and campaigns (Bartels 1988; Johnston et al. 1992; Iyengar and Kinder 1985; Johnston, Hagan and Jamieson 2004; Ansolobahere and Iyengar 1995; Green and Gerber 2004). While offering very different causal mechanisms, each of these models represents an
attempt to realign normative expectations about considered judgment with the importance of electoral context by offering that various short-term factors do matter as people make their vote choices.

**Evolution of the Neuro-Scientific Approach**

Many of these mainstream political science approaches to explaining individual voting behavior, which are outlined in much greater detail in Chapter 2, are based on the underlying assumption that cognition and affect are governed by separate neural processes, and that cognition must precede affect. In other words, before an individual can determine how they feel about a political object, they must be exposed to it and cognitively process that exposure into an affective tag. This assumption has critical consequences for the way electoral behavior has been examined and understood for a significant portion of the past fifty years. For those who argue in favor of the cognitive consideration of short-term factors, the evolution of long-term affiliations, such as partisanship, and the consideration of contextual issues and objects should be treated, to a certain extent, as independent occurrences.

There is, however, a growing body of literature from the field of cognitive neuro-science which suggests that the assumption on which this differentiation is based is likely faulty. The deficiency of this assumption arises largely from the way in which emotional reduction is treated. Traditionally, emotional orientations have been reduced to a manageable number using either valence or discrete theories. Both of these approaches use mutually exclusive continuums which allow individuals to identify themselves as feeling good or bad when exposed to a stimulus (Averill 1990; Tooby and Cosmides 1990; Neuman et al. 2007; Lazarus 1991; Forgas 1995; Ekman and Rosenberg 2005). Recently, these traditional approaches have been challenged by the emergence of the dimensional approach to emotional reduction. Dimensional approaches
reject the mutual exclusivity of valence and discrete theories, and instead allow individuals to experience various emotional states, both positive and negative, towards the same object simultaneously (Bradley et al. 1992; Russell 1980; Clark and Watson 1988; Plutchik and Kellerman 1989; Feldman 1995).

Perhaps more important for the study of political decision-making, dimensional theories offer that emotions arise prior to, and independent of, cognition (Adolphs et al. 1995). This reconsideration of the structure of emotion allows for affect to be primary, basic and inescapable, suggesting that it need not be dependent on cognition (Zajonc 1980). As a result, the overall evaluative process has been updated to include two separate sets of processes, one automatic and the other requiring more conscious deliberation (Fazio 1986). These two sets of processes remain largely independent, but in some instances they do influence one another (Zajonc 1980) with the causal arrow of influence generally moving from automatic affective reactions to the more cognitively driven conscious processes (Fazio 1986; Fazio et al. 1986; Bargh 1994; Forgas 1995; Bargh et al. 1986). This re-conceptualized relationship has already begun making its way into the examination of political questions generally (Neuman et al. 2007; Westen et al. 2006; Westen 2007; Lau 2003; Rahn, Krosnick and Breuning 1994; Lodge Taber and Weber 2006; Cassino and Lodge 2007) and the study of voting behavior more specifically (Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000).

These resultant, and often contradictory, examinations can largely be grouped into two schools of thought under the banners of the theory of affective intelligence and the dual process model. While each of these two perspectives begins from the assumption that affect precedes cognition, they end at two different final decision-making models. Affective intelligence uses multiple affective sub-systems to argue that individuals, when confronted with novelty or threat,
turn to political learning in order to make voting decisions (Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000). The dual process model, on the other hand, argues that little learning is possible because once automatic affective evaluations are activated they color the reception, acceptance and interpretation of all later evolving political information (Lodge, Taber and Weber 2006; Lodge and Taber 2005; Cassino and Lodge 2007). This casts strong doubts as to the validity of explanations of individual voting behavior which make use of anything other than long-term pre-dispositions, but the variations across election cycles raises doubts as to the validity of the simply pre-determined perspective. When looked at together, these two disparate approaches, the theory of affective intelligence and the dual process model, offer a compelling case for the importance of affective orientations to the vote choice process.

Each, however, does have shortcomings. The theory of affective intelligence, for example, makes use of a secondary-level rationality which represents another attempt to re-introduce cognition into the decision-making process. This opens the door for the importance of short-term, contextual factors, but it is not consistent with ample evidence from cognitive neuroscience that suggests cognition rarely overcomes or shapes affective reactions (Fazio 1986; Fazio et al. 1986; Bargh 1994; Forgas 1995; Bargh et al. 1986). The dual process model, however, is not without its problems. First, Lodge and his various co-authors give little attention to potential short-term determinants of voting behavior. This reduces the ability of dual process research to explain contextual variations in election results. Second, dual process models have largely been evaluated using only experimental methods. This raises concerns as to the generalizability of automaticity and unitization to larger, real-world settings. In order to more fully delve into issues of whether or not affect matters, and by extension whether elections are pre-determined or whether campaigns matter, this dissertation incorporates both long-term and short-term factors
into a model designed to evaluate the importance of affective evaluations of the most important
contextual factor in a given election, the candidates, in a real-world setting.

**A New Way to Think About Long-Term and Short-Term Factors**

Using the 2008 election as a test case, the research presented in the preceding chapters here points to the conclusion that the distinction between long-term and short-term factors may not be as clear as offered by traditional political science approaches to individual voting behavior. Using the dual process model as a starting point, Chapter 3 examines the critical, but previously unexamined, component of the dual process model; affective durability. Durability is critical to evaluating the importance of affect as a determinant of voting behavior. Without durability, affective orientations are subject to constant updating, suggesting that affect can have little, if any, independent impact on individual electoral choice. Based on seven different structural equation models, the evidence presented in Chapter 3 indicates that affective orientations activated early in the campaign process are highly durable and resistant to contrary influence. Regardless of which candidate was being considered, Obama or McCain, the purely affective models which incorporated only emotional evaluations of the candidates measured in February and party identification were able to explain a statistically and substantively large portion of the variance of affective evaluations in September. For the full sample, the multiple squared correlations of .925 and .778 for the Obama and McCain models respectively indicate that once activated, how the average individual feels about each candidate is relatively immune from the influence of the persistent information encountered during the course of the campaign. This finding is strengthened when individual political sophistication is controlled. For the high interest/knowledge subset of the sample, the explanatory power of the models increases by approximately 7 percentage points for September affective evaluations of both Obama and
McCain, suggesting that individuals who possess the cognitive skills to process and utilize political information are less likely to update their evaluations than the mass public.

Establishing durability, however, only indicates that candidate-centric affective evaluations are relatively immune from the influence of the acquisition of additional political information, and by extension possibly important determinants of political behavior. It does not, by itself, provide any information about the relative importance of candidate-centric affective evaluations. To answer this question, Chapter 4 uses another set of structural equation models to examine the importance of various short-term and long-term factors as predictors of individual vote choice. The resultant model, which utilizes only candidate-centric affective evaluations, party identification, views of socio-tropic economic conditions and a measure of an individual’s non-economic policy dispositions, explains over 80% of the variance in candidate preference. These findings held even when the structural equation models were restricted to only high interest/high knowledge and independent voters.

Within these models, the relative importance of each predictor sheds additional light on the question of whether election results are pre-determined or whether contextual factors matter as well. The importance of partisanship holds across all models in which it was included, suggesting that, to a certain extent, candidate preference in the 2008 presidential election was pre-determined by partisan affiliation. The importance of partisanship, however, does not preclude the importance of contextual factors. While the coefficients for the issue-based predictors failed to reach statistical significance in nearly all of the models, candidate-centric affective evaluations were statistically and substantively significant, indicating that an individual’s durable emotional identifications with each candidate help shape electoral behavior. Even when the potential catalyzing event of the Lehman Brothers collapse was controlled for,
cognitive, issue-based predictors failed to have a substantive impact on vote choice. When combined, these two findings suggest that affect is important to the vote decision-making process, but its importance is more appropriately modeled using the dual-process model than the affective intelligence paradigm.

On the surface, the importance of affect could be interpreted as proof that contextual events matter. However, this conclusion is dependent upon the examination of what factors underlie the formation/activation of the candidate-centric affective evaluations. Using social identity theory, and the important works of Leege et al. (2002), as a starting point, Chapter 5 examines the relative importance of group identifications, both personal and the perceived identifications of each candidate, to the affective developmental process. Employing a combination of factor analyses, structural modeling, and logistic regression models, several clear dimensions emerge as predictors of overall affective evaluations. While party identification, political ideology and several of the spending dimensions had the anticipated impact in the models assessing overall affective orientations toward each candidate, the impact was not felt equally across candidates or the individual dimensions of affect--anxiety and enthusiasm, respectively.

As a result, a picture of the affective orientations towards the candidates in the 2008 presidential election emerges based on various social identity related concepts. This picture displays a high level of contextual importance both in terms of the candidates and affective dimensions under consideration. Only three predictors were significant in all four dimensionally specific models. As expected, party identification appears as statistically significant and vitally important in each of the four models, and in ways consistent with expectations. Similarly, attitudes toward spending and security were significant in each model implying that as
individuals evaluated each candidate in the 2008 presidential election, partisanship and concerns about national security were still salient for most voters.

But, it is the differences within the models that prove to be most instructive in furthering the understanding of what shapes affective orientations. Age and gender, for example, were only significant predictors of enthusiasm for McCain. Additionally, two sets of identity based predictors merit special consideration. The first of these incorporate both explicit articulations of racial identity and more implicit measures of attitudes toward race and the welfare state. Respondents who identified themselves as African-Americans were less likely to report anxiety towards Obama and enthusiasm for McCain. In terms of enthusiasm for Obama, race played a vital role with whites reporting a lower likelihood of feeling enthusiastic and African-Americans being four times more likely to be enthusiastic towards Obama. The importance of race in the 2008 presidential election is increased when latent attitudinal dimensions on race and welfare spending are included, with low levels of affect for African-Americans, people on welfare, and poor people increasing the likelihood of anxiety towards Obama and enthusiasm towards McCain. Additionally, one second-order dimension remained statistically significant in two of the logistic models. The significance of this dimension, a proxy measure of individual beliefs about the power of government that includes attitudes on the race and the welfare state, religion and morality, accepted immigrants and government institutions, suggests that attitudes that are now viewed as indicative of the Tea Party movement were present and important before the 2008 presidential election.

When combined, these findings point to two important conclusions about individual voting behavior. First, context does matter, but not necessarily in the way it is expected to. Instead of the cognitive consideration of short-term factors such as issues or campaign events,
the contextual importance of an election is actually driven by affective evaluations of the most important contextual item in any given election: the candidates. Affective orientations towards each candidate evolve, to a certain extent, independent of party identification and other political considerations. These affective evaluations impact political behavior independent of the traditional party dynamic, suggesting that deviations from election to election might be the result of candidate-centric affective orientations. But, the apparent contextual nature of these orientations can mask the underlying importance of longer held attitudinal pre-dispositions. Instead of viewing the development of candidate-centric affective orientations in a purely short-term context, the development of these affective tags should be viewed through the prism of increasing the salience of various social identity based pre-dispositions.

Directions for Future Research

This re-conceptualized model of individual voting behavior opens up several new, potential research avenues for those interested in studying voting behavior. Two merit mention here. The first grouping of new lines of inquiry deals with the temporal importance of candidate-centric affective evaluations. The research presented in the previous chapters deals only with the 2008 presidential election. The unique circumstances, both in terms of data collection and the collapse of Lehman Brothers, provide an ideal election in which to examine the importance of affective orientations. Future research should advance the conclusions presented here by applying a similar model to future elections as they occur to determine if the importance of affect extends to other contests with differing electoral contexts. Similarly, the findings put forth here should also be tested across different types and levels of elections to see if the importance of affect is limited to presidential voting or whether it can be applied to a larger set of electoral contests.
Additionally, much of the previously stated theoretical importance of candidate-centric affective evaluations rests on the transition from party-centered to candidate-centered elections (Abramson, Aldrich and Rohde 2007). As a result, a retrospective examination of past election results would be valuable in determining the impact of candidate-centric affective evaluation over time. If, as argued earlier, the evolution of the modern campaign played an important role in the increasing importance of affective orientations, then a longitudinal model of individual vote choice should show a gradual evolution in importance of affective predictors over time. If the trend line of the affective dimensions is not evolutionary, then further examinations would be required to determine what caused affective orientations to suddenly become important.

The second new line of inquiry does not directly deal with individual decision-making, but instead revolves around the interaction between candidate affect and the various strategies employed by candidates, campaigns and other political actors operating within the political system. Since affect matters, and now that we have a growing understanding of how and why it matters, new attention can be directed at examining how strategic actors can make use of affective tags by seeking to activate certain pre-dispositions. While the interaction of affect and multiple campaign-related areas would be beneficial, one area which is likely to prove particularly valuable is the examination of affective cues in televised campaign commercials. Understanding that affect matters, and how it operates on multiple dimensions, could prove useful in determining why some campaign commercials, in particular negative advertisements, are successful and others are not.
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APPENDIX A: QUESTION WORDING OF 2008 ANES ITEMS USED

Positive Affect Negative Affect Scale

Has CANDIDATE -- because of the kind of person he is or because of something he has done, ever made you feel ANGRY? How often would you say you’ve felt angry -- VERY OFTEN, FAIRLY OFTEN, OCCASIONALLY, or RARELY?

Has CANDIDATE -- because of the kind of person he is or because of something he has done, ever made you feel HOPEFUL? How often would you say you’ve felt hopeful -- VERY OFTEN, FAIRLY OFTEN, OCCASIONALLY, or RARELY?

Has CANDIDATE -- because of the kind of person he is or because of something he has done, ever made you feel AFRAID? How often would you say you’ve felt afraid -- VERY OFTEN, FAIRLY OFTEN, OCCASIONALLY, or RARELY?

Has CANDIDATE -- because of the kind of person he is or because of something he has done, ever made you feel PROUD? How often would you say you’ve felt proud -- VERY OFTEN, FAIRLY OFTEN, OCCASIONALLY, or RARELY?

Non-Economic Preferences

Some people think the government should provide fewer services even in areas such as health and education in order to reduce spending. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Other people feel it is important for the government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6.

Where would you place YOURSELF on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?

How important is this issue to you personally? NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL, NOT TOO important, SOMEWHAT important, VERY important, or EXTREMELY important?

Where would you place CANDIDATE on this issue?

OR

Do you think the government should provide MORE services than it does now, FEWER services than it does now, or ABOUT THE SAME NUMBER of services as it does now?

Do you think that the government should provide A LOT more services, SOMEWHAT more services, or SLIGHTLY more services than it does now? /Do you think that the government should provide A LOT fewer services, SOMEWHAT fewer services, or SLIGHTLY fewer services than it does now?
How important is this issue to you personally? NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL, SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT, MODERATELY IMPORTANT, VERY IMPORTANT, or EXTREMELY IMPORTANT?

What about CANDIDATE? Does CANDIDATE think the government should provide MORE services than it does now, FEWER services than it does now, or ABOUT THE SAME NUMBER of services as it does now?

Does he think that the government should provide A LOT more services, SOMETHING more services, or SLIGHTLY more services than it does now? / Does he think that the government should provide A LOT fewer services, SOMETHING fewer services, or SLIGHTLY fewer services than it does now?

THEN

Some people believe that we should spend much less money for defense. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others feel that defense spending should be greatly increased. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6.

Where would you place YOURSELF on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?

How important is this issue to you personally? NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL, NOT TOO important, SOMEWHAT important, VERY important, or EXTREMELY important?

Where would you place CANDIDATE on this issue?

OR

Do you think that the government should spend MORE on national defense, LESS on national defense, or ABOUT THE SAME on national defense as it does now?

Do you think that the government should spend A LOT more, SOMETHING more, or SLIGHTLY more than it does now? / Do you think that the government should spend A LOT less, SOMETHING less, or SLIGHTLY less than it does now?

How important is this issue to you personally? NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL, SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT, MODERATELY IMPORTANT, VERY IMPORTANT, or EXTREMELY IMPORTANT?

What about CANDIDATE? Does CANDIDATE think the government should spend MORE on national defense, LESS on national defense, or ABOUT THE SAME on national defense?

Does he think that the government should spend A LOT more, SOMETHING more, or SLIGHTLY more than it does now? / Does he think that the government should spend A LOT less, SOMETHING less, or SLIGHTLY less than it does now?
THEN

There is much concern about the rapid rise in medical and hospital costs. Some people feel there should be a government insurance plan which would cover all medical and hospital expenses for everyone. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others feel that all medical expenses should be paid by individuals through private insurance plans like Blue Cross or other company paid plans. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6.

Where would you place YOURSELF on this scale, or haven’t you thought much about this?

How important is this issue to you personally? NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL, NOT TOO IMPORTANT, SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT, VERY IMPORTANT, OR EXTREMELY IMPORTANT?

Where would you place CANDIDATE on this issue?

OR

Do you FAVOR, OPPOSE, or NEITHER FAVOR NOR OPPOSE the U.S. government paying for all necessary medical care for all Americans?

Do you favor that A GREAT DEAL, MODERATELY, or A LITTLE? /Do you oppose that A GREAT DEAL, MODERATELY, or A LITTLE?

How important is this issue to you personally? NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL, SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT, MODERATELY IMPORTANT, VERY IMPORTANT, or EXTREMELY IMPORTANT?

What about CANDIDATE? Does CANDIDATE FAVOR, OPPOSE, or NEITHER FAVOR NOR OPPOSE the U.S. government paying for all necessary medical care for all Americans?

Does he favor that A GREAT DEAL, MODERATELY, or A LITTLE? / Does he oppose that A GREAT DEAL, MODERATELY, or A LITTLE?