



# Emotion Researcher

ISRE's Sourcebook for Research on Emotion and Affect

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## Editor's Column

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## ISRE Matters



ISRE's President talks about politics and emotions, and reveals ISRE 2017's keynote speakers.

## Spotlight



This issue's spotlight is on Michael Kraus, a psychologist from Yale University.

## THE ROLES OF EMOTIONS IN POLITICS



In this issue of Emotion Researcher, we focus on the roles emotions play in politics. We will explore in particular the relation between emotions and political irrationality and the strategic appeals to emotions in political ads.

## An Interview With Martha Nussbaum



Read an interview with Martha Nussbaum, one of the world's leading philosophers and public intellectuals. Martha traces the history of her celebrated career, shares her candid memories of family life, and offers a wide-ranging overview of her influential ideas on emotions and their impact on public life.



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# Editor's Column

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 [emotionresearcher.com/2017/02/editors-column/](http://emotionresearcher.com/2017/02/editors-column/)

2/17/2017

[Andrea Scarantino](#), Department of Philosophy & Neuroscience Institute, Georgia State University

February 2017 – This is my last column as *Emotion Researcher* editor. I accepted Jerry Parrott's offer to take over the editorship from Christine Harris in July 2013, and it is now time for me to move on. I thoroughly enjoyed my stint as editor. I am proud of what has been achieved, most significantly the transformation of the *Emotion Researcher* from paper newsletter to online sourcebook focused on interdisciplinary and cutting-edge research.

I am also extremely grateful to all those who have contributed to this sourcebook over the past four years, putting up with my persistent requests for interdisciplinary comprehensibility. Finally, I want to thank Arvid Kappas and the executive committee of ISRE (Stephanie Shields, Diana Montague, Jody Clay-Warner, Agnes Moors, Christine Harris, Gerrod Parrott, Ursula Hess, Yochi Cohen-Charash, Julien Deonna, Michelle Yik, and Louise Sundararajan) for their trust and good advice over the past few years. If my tenure as editor has shown anything, it is that interesting ideas, whether they originate from psychology, philosophy, political science, neuroscience, sociology, linguistics, literature, affective computing, history, anthropology or other disciplines, can be stripped of their jargon and made available across disciplines to everyone's benefit.

This issue of *Emotion Researcher* focuses on *Emotions and Politics*. The long political campaign for the US Presidency we have just witnessed has stirred in me, as in millions of other people, powerful emotions. It has also put on display for all to see the extent to which emotions can influence political outcomes. The received view on what happened is that Trump won the presidency against Clinton because he exploited the fear and anger of his supporters, who, whipped into an emotional frenzy, bought into his dystopian vision of a failing America only he could make great again.

But is this really how things went down? Did the Clinton and Trump campaigns truly elicit different emotions in their respective constituencies? Would their campaign ads shed light on the matter? More generally, are emotions inevitably a source of political irrationality? Are people of different political persuasions driven by distinctive emotional responses? What roles do specific emotions play in the political arena (e.g. fear, anger, pride, hope, etc.)? These are some of the questions at the core of this issue of *Emotion Researcher*, which broadly investigates the roles emotions play in politics.

As usual, we are guided in our exploration by a distinguished cast of leading researchers in a variety of disciplines. We begin with political scientist [George Marcus](#)'s overview of his influential Affective Intelligence Theory or AIT (not to be confused with the similarly named theory of Emotional Intelligence or EI). AIT provides one of the dominant theoretical frameworks for understanding the role emotions play in politics. The take home message of Marcus' analysis is that emotions are not necessarily a source of political irrationality. In fact, on his view some emotions are instrumental for the activation of the rational assessment of political options.

Philosopher [Jason Brennan](#) defends a very different view, according to which emotions are indeed responsible for some of the cognitive biases that make our politics so divisive. Brennan begins by distinguishing three archetypical categories of democratic citizens: Hobbits, Hooligans and Vulcans. Political *Hobbits* don't give politics much thought, and are happy to go with the flow. Political *Hooligans* are the sports fans of politics, and they tend to filter information so as to have their pre-existing political opinions confirmed. Political *Vulcans*, finally, impartially evaluate the evidence and let it dictate their political views. Brennan's thesis is that typical non-voters are Hobbits, registered party members and political activists are Hooligans and most Americans fall on the spectrum between Hobbit and Hooligan, with practically no one thinking about political matters like a Vulcan. An unsettling corollary of Brennan's analysis is that hard-to-eradicate emotion-driven cognitive biases systematically prevent citizens from processing

political information in a rational way, leading to the detrimental political polarization we witness today.

Political scientists [Kathleen Searles and Travis Ridout](#) zero in on the strategic use of emotional appeals by political campaigns. Much of their work focuses on how political ads target different emotions. For example, they considered all political TV ads that aired in U.S. Senate races in 2004, and discovered that pride was the emotion appealed to most often, followed by enthusiasm, anger, and fear. Another relevant aspect of their research concerns the timing of emotional appeals over the course of a political campaign and the impact of incumbent or challenger status on emotional communication strategies. In what promises to be an especially interesting part of their article, Searles and Ridout provide the first quantitative analysis of the campaign ads run by Trump and Clinton in 2016, finding out important differences between them.

The article by [Samuel Justin Sinclair, Matthew Ciccone, Kelly Main, Gabrielle Arroyo, Olivia Kolodziejczak, Holly Dulaney, David Barbosa, & Jennifer Sheets](#) focuses on how terrorism impacts the psychology of its victims, with special focus on anxiety/fear. They discuss what factors affect people's reactions to terrorist attacks, underscoring in particular the crucial role played by media re-exposure even in the absence of physical proximity to the attacks. They also highlight the worrisome connection between elevated fears of terrorism and biomarkers of inflammation that predict increased mortality risk. Finally, they provide an analysis of the reasons why the objectively low probability of dying in a terrorist attack does not translate into subdued fear of terrorism.

Emotions and politics is also the topic of Arvid Kappas' customary [ISRE Matters column](#). Kappas urges us to be careful in trying to explain recent political upheavals such as Brexit or Trump's election victory in terms of emotions running amok, for a variety of reasons he explores. Kappas also announces the three keynote speakers for ISRE 2017 in Saint Louis, so make sure to check out who they are!

The Young Researcher Spotlight is on [Michael Kraus](#), who has done noteworthy work on the role of emotional communication in social life. In particular, Kraus has studied how tactile expressions promote trust and cooperation in basketballs teams, how the amount of smiling at the ritual weighing ceremony predicts the result of boxing matches, and how one's position in a social hierarchy affects the degree of empathetic engagement with others.

Last but not least, I am delighted to announce a wide-ranging interview with [Martha Nussbaum](#), one of the most celebrated living philosophers and a deeply influential student of the many roles emotions play in social life. The interview is a model for how to combine one's personal history with substantive philosophical discussions. I am very grateful to Martha for her generosity throughout the interviewing process. In addition, you will also find several never-before-seen photos of Martha throughout her life, so there are many reasons not to miss this interview!

In conclusion, I thank you all for your attention and support over the past four years. Your feedback has been helpful for fine-tuning the publication, and your praise and occasional critiques have both motivated me to do better. What is next, you may wonder? We do not have a new editor just yet. But the search is on, and hopefully Arvid Kappas will be able to announce a new editor in the not-too-distant future. A delay between this issue and the next appears to be inevitable at this stage. What you can count is this: the *Emotion Researcher* will continue in its vigorous march towards becoming the premiere online reference work on emotions in the world. Meanwhile, enjoy this issue, and stay tuned!

Yours,

Andrea Scarantino

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# ISRE Matters – Emotions and Politics

 [emotionresearcher.com/isre-matters-emotions-and-politics/](http://emotionresearcher.com/isre-matters-emotions-and-politics/)

2/17/2017

Arvid Kappas, Department of Psychology, Jacobs University Bremen

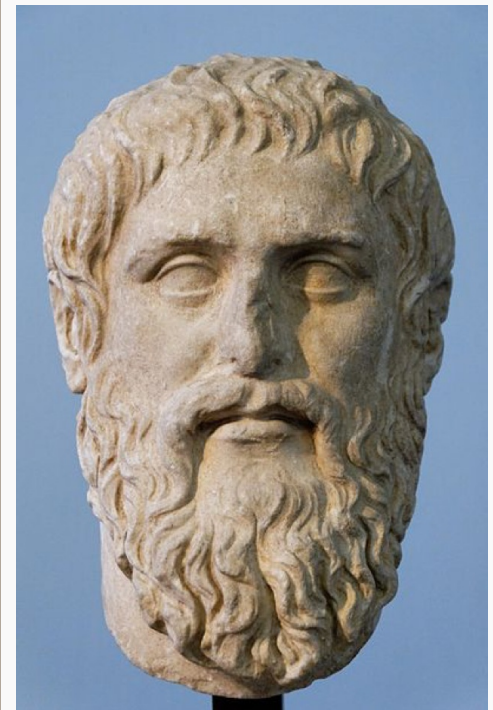
February 2017 – The way I understand Plato, he assumed the soul to be divisible into three different parts that modern psychologists might refer to with the modern terms *cognition*, *emotion*, and *motivation* (see Scherer, 2000). He assumed further that society could be understood as being composed of three classes – rulers, military and common folk – whose functions in the *polis* (the state) could be mapped to the three parts of the soul. At a first approximation and without getting into the complexities of Platonic scholarship, the rulers use or represent reason, the military use or represent emotions (e.g. the anger of fierce warriors), and the common folk use or represent primitive motivations.



So far so good. Fast forward to 2017 and one is arguably at a loss to find much reason in politics: the rulers, the military and the common folk seem to all have gone mad. While appeals to the voters' fears and objects of rage have a certain tradition in political campaigning, we are at present confronted with politicians in several western countries that seem confused about when reason would be appropriate – to state it in the friendliest of ways. Voters even seem to be confused about whether grabbing someone, motivated by primitive urges, might indeed be great predictor of political prowess. What happened?

## [Enter Brexit, Stage right]

As media reports on Brexit would have it, the winning *Leave* side used emotional appeals, whereas the losing *Remain* side tried to use reason (at least more so). Of course, as we all know, reason is infinitely more boring than emotions. And yet, I wonder whether the Brexit vote was truly an emotional one to the degree the media and common wisdom would have us believe. I think it is time to step back a little bit and analyze what part emotions might have really played here. As so often, much depends on how the term emotion is defined. As emotion seems to take center stage in politics in 2017, we should not remain quiet, given that the readers of this sourcebook are arguably the keepers of the expertise as regards emotions. To a degree the hype surrounding the current shift towards a *post-factual world* is a good chance to weigh in with some of the knowledge emotion scientists have accumulated over the past decades.



Plato. Luni marble, copy of the portrait made by Silanion ca. 370 BC for the Academia in Athens. Musei Capitolini MC1377.jpg, commons.wikimedia.org

Conventional wisdom thus is that when people are highly emotional, they do not consider facts – hence, the post-factual world. But what emotions are we talking about here and did emotions necessarily trump reason [pun obviously intended] in these elections? As so often it is time to start defining concepts here. If emotion is some internal process in individuals that lasts between 500ms and 4s – as some (e.g., Paul Ekman) hold, then the election process would not be a function of emotions, unless the voter at the stage of making his mark on the ballot briefly recreates the state of the world in her mind, has an emotional response and ... *bingo* – a spontaneous

emotional choice results. Of course, this is not how this works.

Most people vote “in cold blood”. They have thought about their choice many times and the act of voting is not an outburst of emotion. Instead, the choice might appear irrational depending on the observer’s values. For example, consider Brexit. Someone might choose a course of action that would lead him/her to have *less* prosperity. How could they! They must be crazy! If indeed, maximization of prosperity were the only rational choice, then this would not make sense. However, if some perceived state of national independence was appraised as being more valuable or relevant, then voting for Brexit would indeed be a rational choice from that point of view. I would assume that in many cases the so-called emotional votes were in fact “rational” within the idiosyncratic belief system of the voter.

Yes, you might say, but – one could easily observe emotional voters on TV! Every day and all the time! Indeed, but these people were emotional whether they were supporting Leave or Remain, or, to change political scenery, Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump. Most political stump speeches are designed to elicit strong emotions, regardless of the specific view they aim to support. The mobilization of voters involves underscoring the importance of certain goals or beliefs, and ritualistic affirmation in meetings, such as political conventions, creates a sense of unity and cohesion in the relevant constituency.

This is hardly specific for any given political direction or set of belief systems. Instead, politicians of all *couleurs* would try to identify topics that to the voters are emotional and shared among many. It is obviously easier to get people to vote for you if your promises are aimed at inhibiting things that people would appraise as threats or facilitate those that people would appraise as beneficial. This could be immigration, out-groups, financial well-being, health, environment, military strife, etc.

By selecting topics of relevance and trying to amplify their emotional value, for example emphasizing the threat of X, those who orchestrate campaigns, or public opinion, attempt to shift the probability of voters leaning this way or that way. For example: Assume that 1000 refugees entered your country. This might be a fact and it is per se not particularly emotional at that. The emotional power comes from the associated beliefs – 1000 refugees means 1000 criminals + I feel threatened for myself and my loved ones by criminals. If we assume that this would sway voters to vote for those who say they will refuse all refugees, then the emotionality is not with the vote as such, but with the arguments that have created the appraisal that 1000 refugees are dangerous. A simple “no that is not true” does not defeat the fear. That should be obvious. Thus, it might be relevant to shift the discussion from the irrational and emotional voters to the attempts to charge events or actors with a high emotional value.

Thus, before acknowledging that emotions drive the vote, we should decompose the different elements that

William Jennings Bryan during the 1896 campaign for US president. At least he seems energetic. Not so sure the listeners are energized. U.S. National Archives and Records



Administration



Richard M. Nixon, Pat Nixon. Subject: Campaign – 1968. The smiles here come mainly from the main actors, but there are indications that there were more emotions in the time of Nixon’s presidency. U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

contribute to the seemingly alarming drift towards political extremes that can be observed at present – and here particularly in the context of alt-right, nationalistic, and anti-globalization forces.

## Break

In the meanwhile, I broke my arm and this slowed me down sufficiently to stop my rambling at this point as I am not as fast in typing as I am in the best of times. Suffice it to say that we, as emotion scientists, should get involved in the discussion of how emotions and reason, values and the post-factual interact to create volatile and dangerous situations. We are used to emotion science being applied in clinical contexts. I have discussed a few times the importance of applied emotion science in the new world of smart machines – the field of affective computing. But today, more than ever, a discussion of politics could benefit from applied emotion research. ISRE, being a highly interdisciplinary and international forum, is the best possible place to start and maintain such discussions.

## In different news

Perhaps our new online discussion forum would be a great place for such discussions. If you haven't done so, just go to <http://www.isre-forum.uni-kiel.de/>, select a new username and password (your ISRE credentials are independent of this forum – it is safer that way), and dive in. Let's see whether this is a useful tool to bundle discussions in the ISRE community. Until the conference, the Forum is open to everybody. Afterwards, the right to post will be restricted to ISRE members. Another benefit of ISRE membership.

Speaking about the conference: I hope to see all of you in St. Louis between July 26 and 29. The deadline for the submission of papers has passed and the scientific committee, headed by Jerry Parrott, is currently busy reviewing proposals. The homepage for the conference is <http://isre2017.org/> and we will update it in the next couple of months with info on registration, travel etc. We will have pre-conference events on the 26 and the program will start with the reception in the afternoon of July 26.

Here are the three confirmed keynote speakers:



Ruth Leys

Academy Professor and Henry Wiesenfeld Professor of Humanities; Johns Hopkins Drieger School of Arts & Sciences



Jonathan Gratch

Research Professor of Computer Science and Psychology; Director for Virtual Human Research; USC Institute for Creative Technologies



Lynn Smith-Lovin

Robert L. Wilson Professor of Sociology; Trinity College of Arts and Sciences at Duke University

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# THE ROLES OF EMOTIONS IN POLITICS

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10/2/2016



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In this issue of *Emotion Researcher*, we focus on the roles emotions play in politics. We are guided in our exploration by a distinguished cast of leading researchers in a variety of disciplines:

1. George E. Marcus, Williams College: [How Affective Intelligence Theory Can Help Us Understand Politics](#)
2. Jason Brennan, Georgetown University: [Politics Makes Us Mean and Dumb](#)
3. Kathleen Searles, Louisiana State University, & Travis N. Ridout, Washington State University: [The Use and Consequences of Emotions in Politics](#)
4. Samuel Justin Sinclair, Matthew Ciccone, Kelly Main, Gabrielle Arroyo, Olivia Kolodziejczak, Holly Dulaney, David Barbosa, & Jennifer Sheets, William James College: [Fear and Loathing in a Post 9/11 World](#)



# How Affective Intelligence Theory Can Help Us Understand Politics

 [emotionresearcher.com/how-affective-intelligence-theory-can-help-us-understand-politics/](http://emotionresearcher.com/how-affective-intelligence-theory-can-help-us-understand-politics/)

2/18/2017

George E. Marcus, Department of Political Science, Williams College

February 2017 – What follows is the story of how the Affective Intelligence Theory came into being and of how it can be used to better understand the dynamic changes of political systems. It is a personal narrative because I played a critical role in developing the theory and because I am understandably invested in its success. I proceed by telling why the theory came to be. Thereafter I shall give some examples of its payoffs to date.

To forestall misunderstandings, let me first emphasize that Affective Intelligence Theory and the theory of emotional intelligence, the latter developed by Peter Salovey and Jack Mayer (1990), are fundamentally different in their history and objectives. That also applies to a comparison of cognitive appraisal theories and the Affective Intelligence Theory. As to the first comparison, the impetus for Mayer and Salovey's theory of emotional intelligence came from trying to understand whether there is a specific type of ability that enables some to more accurately identify emotions in oneself and in others. Those who had that ability could make use thereof to better manage one's actions. All of this is described in their seminal 1990 piece "Emotional Intelligence". One of their primary concerns was to provide a measure with good psychometric properties that could do for emotional intelligence what IQ measures have done for general intelligence. As I hope will become clear, the Affective Intelligence Theory has a quite different focus.



Additionally, many understand the Affective Intelligence Theory as being one of various cognitive appraisal theories. Clore and Ortony (2008) lay out the respective terrains of Affective Intelligence Theory and cognitive appraisal theories as follows. They note that some affect processes are "fast, automatic, and perceptual" while others, those that largely fall within the focus of cognitive appraisal theories, focus on "full-blown emotional states" (Clore and Ortony, 2008, p. 638). Affective Intelligence Theory is focused on the "fast, automatic, and perceptual". To expand on that comparison, Affective Intelligence Theory is concerned with accounting for what lays before the later cognitive appraisal processes that seek to explain emotion as it is expressed within consciousness. Another way to put it is that Affective Intelligence Theory focuses on the preconscious, understood as what comes before consciousness in the temporal order.

The impetus for Affective Intelligence Theory came from the then sterile debate taking place among American political scientists concerning the question of whether the American electorate was competent to make collective action political decisions (Bartels, 1996; Converse, 2000; Erikson, 2007; Key Jr. & Cummings, 1966; Lau & Redlawsk, 1997; Schudson, 1998; Smith, 1989). Much of the debate presupposed a crude reason-passion dichotomy which saw passion as a threat to competence, and dispassionate reason as the principal conduit to competence. Below is a fine example on the conventional view that emerged of the public's performance. It was, and remains, the dominant view. In a study of how Californians came to pass a referendum in 1978 to limit property tax increases, Proposition 13, the two scholars explained its passage thusly (Sears and Citrin, 1982, pp 222-223):

"[A] surge of recklessness, a period of nearly blind emotion, surrounding the passage of Proposition 13, when anger at the government seemed to dominate the public's thinking. The usual explanations for the voters' choices still held sway, but this added hostility proved a potent weapon for the tax revolt. At this point, the tide of anti-government

emotion eroded stable attitudes about what government should do. The public's desire for maintaining the status quo of services plummeted, their perceptions of government inefficiency rose considerably, and their anger focused on the 'bureaucrats.'

My primary concern was to re-examine the ancient and persistent dichotomy between reason and passion exemplified by this passage. The longstanding presumption has been that emotion is, by definition, the opposite of reason. Much of the political science research on voters' competence in democratic societies fell into one of two camps. The first largely ignored emotion while the second used emotion to blame the electorate for its failure to make the correct judgment (as in the case given above, i.e., to reject Proposition 13). I thought it was time to see if emotion re-imagined could prove useful to better understand all forms of political behaviors.

### **The Reason-Passion Dichotomy**

Survey research became available in the 40s and 50s. This enabled collecting systematic empirical data that could be used to examine what the American public knew and how voters went about making political decisions (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944; Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960). The portrait of the American electorate that emerged was largely dystopic. The public was understood as poorly informed, largely moved by partisan affiliations rather than reliance on fulsome understanding and consideration of the dominant public issues of the day (Converse, 1964; Converse & Markus, 1979; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Lodge & Taber, 2013). Other scholars and theorists attacked this dystopian view, suggesting that the electorate was not entirely prey to irrational forces and gullible to misinformation (Page & Shapiro, 1992; Popkin, 1991). The debate has continued with little in the way of change or movement (Converse, 2000; Converse, 2006; Achen, 2016).

This is of course a highly simplified characterization of the state of play. A more nuanced and precise account can be in Marcus (2000) (see also Brader, Marcus, & Miller, 2011; Brader & Marcus, 2013). In effect, much of the political science discipline has taken to being critical of the public's competence while giving but momentary attention to the many repeated signs of elite incompetence. Beating up on the plebeians is an old game, currently played by both intellectuals and conservatives (the former to display their intellectual pretensions, the latter to resist democratic oversight of the established hierarchies of wealth and social station).

But all parties to the debate bought into the idea that the competence of the electorate hinged on the relative influence of reason and emotion: the more influential reason and the less influential emotion is, the more the electorate is competent. This is the very presupposition we challenge in our Affective Intelligence Theory (Marcus, 2002). Nonetheless, the reason-passion dichotomy remains influential. Just to pick an example from among many, consider this letter to the editor published in The New Yorker (Clow, 2016):

"It seems that [Bernie] Sanders finds all these Trump supporters silly. But, in nominating Trump, Republicans have thrown out the whole epistemology of governing by facts in favor of governing by assertions. And Trump's assertions aren't empty: they're weapons against reason, which means they're attacks on the ideas of justice, science, and culture. His assertions are promises to wreck those things if voters fail to deliver Hillary Clinton to those who want her head. When passion is the medium for political participation, not reason, the result isn't "ungentleness" as Sanders describes but mob behavior, barely in check." David Clow, Los Angeles, California.

Here we find the ancient tropes. Reason and passion are assigned their familiar roles with the former presumed to enable fact-based deliberation and autonomous action while the latter is assigned the role of instigating turbulent irrationality and mob action.

In 1984-85, I was invited to spend a sabbatical year at the University of Minnesota. For a while I had been wondering whether giving emotion a reconsideration might offer a way out of the sterile debate on electorate competence. However, I had no particular insights as to how to do so. As it turned out a casual discussion about my hopes for the year with Prof. Auke Tellegen, who is a psychologist at the University of Minnesota, led to a momentous recommendation to read neuroscientist Jeffrey Gray's work. That I did immediately after our

conversation by taking a trip to the library, devouring first Gray's work in affective neuroscience (Gray, 1970; Gray, 1981; Gray, 1985) and then later expanding my focus to Edmund Rolls' theory of affect (Rolls, 1992; Rolls, 1999; Rolls, 2005).

This literature offers a new and more complex account of emotion and of reason. This led to a critical insight that in turn was instrumental in generating Affective Intelligence Theory as a dual process model. In dual process models humans are understood to have two modes of judgment. The first, the normal default mode of judgment is often labeled intuitive, automatic, or system 1. The second is often labeled deliberative, rational, or system 2 (Haidt, 2001; Kahneman, 2001; Chaiken and Trope, 1999; Sherman, Gawronski & Trope, 2014). Crucially, emotion is involved in both modes of judgment, with anxiety playing a pivotal role in triggering when people depart from reliance on the default mode to take up the reasoning mode. Similarly, our understanding of reasoning is also reshaped by this formulation, with reasoning serving different functions in each of the two modes of judgment. In what follows, I will provide some of the missing details.

### **The Lesson from Neuroscience: Consciousness as the "Tip of an Iceberg"**

I was of course familiar with Freud's claim that consciousness is just the tip of the mental iceberg, with the bulk of mental processes occurring *below* the surface of consciousness. The work of Benjamin Libet established to my satisfaction that conscious volition is not the sole place to focus on to understand political behavior but that many of the appraisals that orient our political behaviors are preconscious. Libet's research demonstrated that it takes about 500 milliseconds after the sensory and somatosensory electrical signals arrive in the brain for the brain to construct consciousness (Libet et al., 1979, Libet et al., 1983, Libet, 1985, Libet, 2004). Crucially, within this 500 millisecond period the brain is already making lots of determinations and lots of fast flowing decisions. For example, we appraise the sexual orientation of a person, male or female, within 50 milliseconds even though we do not visually, consciously, see someone until the 500 milliseconds (Rule and Ambady, 2008; Rule et al., 2009).

This suggests that unconscious neural activity is actually in charge of much of human behavior, with conscious processes commonly serving to provide post-hoc semantic accounts (Kunst-Wilson & Zajonc, 1980; Zajonc, 1980). And, for these forms of pre-conscious appraisals and executive control, affect plays an essential role (Bechara, et. al, 1997, 2005) in that affect is the principal mechanism by which the preconscious realm influences behavior in human and non-human animals (see also, Aglioti et al., 1995). The recognition that consciousness is too slow and inaccurate to have granular control of actions suggests that consciousness, in the words of Jeffrey Gray, is an "error correcting space", with most actions commonly under the control of preconscious systems (Gray, 2004). The "preconscious system" has since been labeled in a variety of roughly equivalent ways, including the "intuitive system" (Haidt, 2001), the "automatic system" (Bargh & Pietromonaco, 1982; Bargh, Chaiken, Gollwitzer, & Pratto, 1992; Bargh & Chartrand, 1999) or simply "system 1" (Kahneman, 2011).

As has long been known, much of that process of construction is largely hidden, not below consciousness as standard conventions would have it but before consciousness. The question is: how can we map what is happening in the actions that take place before consciousness? That is the task of the theory of affective intelligence. But before turning to that theory I most likely need to convince you that the hidden is actually there, a task difficult because the brain artfully generates consciousness with a sense of immediacy and veracity that makes us all not just dubious but even resentful when the claim that the preconscious is fundamental is advanced.

I use the following simple demonstration that you can each execute to make the hidden apparent. Take one of your forefingers and touch your nose. How many touches do you feel? For most the correct answer is one. That is, subjectively we experience a single touch. But the brain actually records two touches. The first touch is generated by the nerve signals that arrive from the nose. This signal arrives well before the nerve signals that arrive from the forefinger, since the former have far less distance to travel. But what does the brain do with these two separate 'touches'? It hides that two-touch experience. Rather, it generates a convergent subjective experience, the 'single' touch that what we experience in consciousness. This simple trial shows that the brain actively manages consciousness. It is also important to note that the brain falsifies our sense of time by generating the sense that *the*

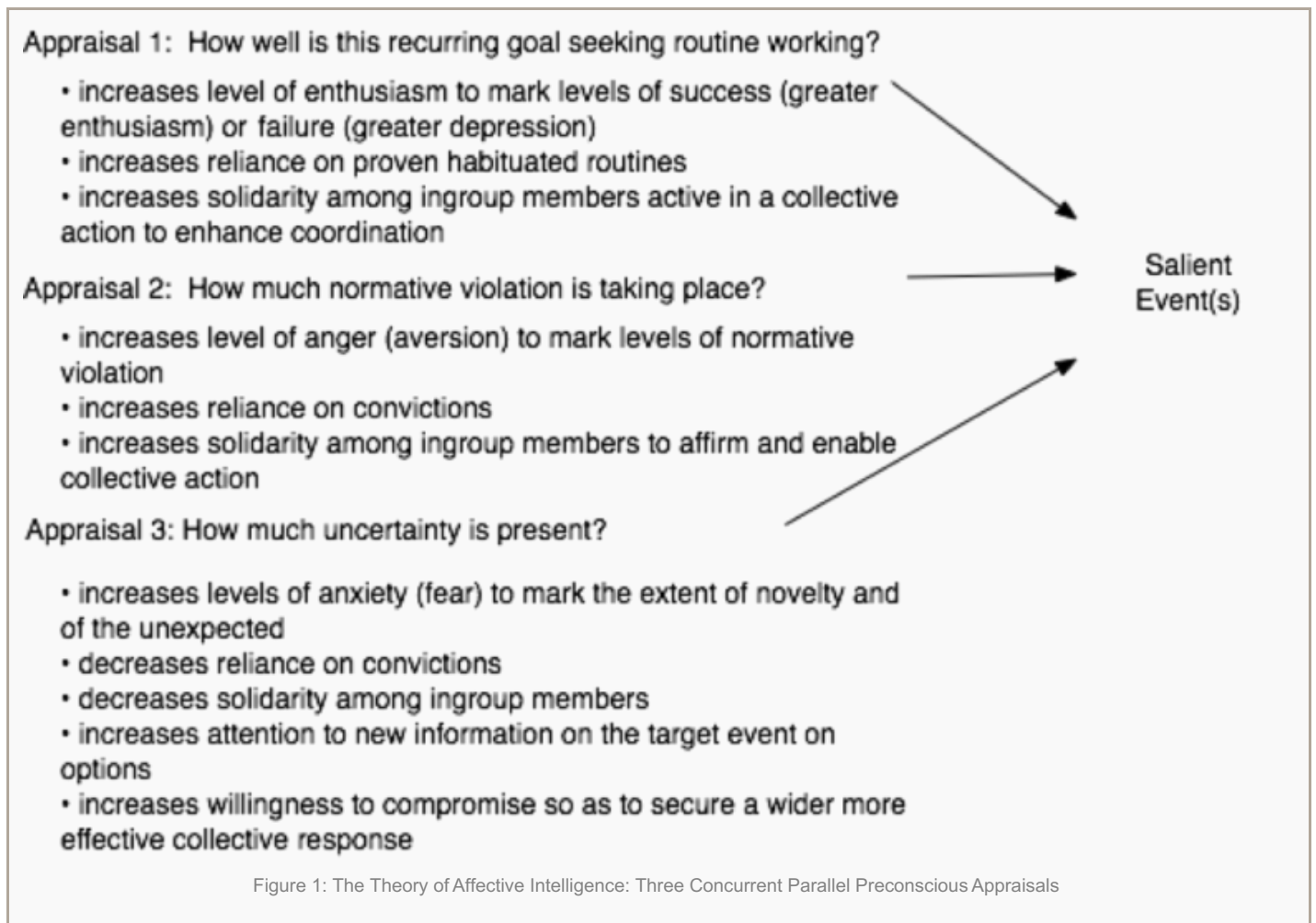
*single* touch is instantaneous with the event. Beyond that, none of have access to the actual way the brain manages the movement of our forefingers to accurately and lightly touch our noses so that we don't miss, and poke an eye instead.

But if the preconscious is so demonstrably influential, then why then do we have consciousness? This seems an especially important question given that consciousness, the so-called seat of our "higher cognitive functions", has a very high caloric demanding capacity. Why invest so much energy if that capacity offers but a rarely used standby capacity? Jeff Gray in his last posthumous book, offers the best explanation: consciousness is an error correcting space (Gray, 2004, p. 312). By that Gray meant that not all circumstances are well suited to the "automaticity" of the preconscious. More specifically, when humans confront novel and unfamiliar settings, prior habits are most likely to lead to error. In sum, when we face the unusual, we are best served by having our conscious capacities take over. Affective Intelligence Theory serves to account for when we rely on the preconscious capacities we all have and when we shift to conscious deliberation (Marcus, 1988). Here then is a brief overview the Affective Intelligence model that my colleagues Michael MacKuen, W. Russell Neuman and I have developed (MacKuen, Marcus, Neuman, & Keele, 2007; Marcus, 2013a, 2013b; MacKuen, Wolak, Keele, & Marcus, 2010). And, following that description I shall describe some of the new understandings of political behavior and judgment that were uncovered thereby.

### **The Theory of Affective Intelligence**

The first important axiom of Affective Intelligence theory (AIT) is that in a normal wakeful state multiple affect-eliciting appraisals are active at the same time, generating rapid shifts in strategic assessments of the world allowing early control over those actions that are then underway. Because these appraisals occur well before conscious awareness, only those that are sufficiently robust and persistent become subjectively available. Affective Intelligence Theory is primarily concerned with the functional dynamics associated with each of three ongoing preconscious appraisals. Each appraisal uses a specific affect to assay one of three distinct strategic tasks (Marcus, 2013a; Marcus, 2013b; Marcus, 2013c). These tasks are shown below.





As shown in Figure 1, at any given instance all three appraisals are ongoing. Two of the appraisals are concerned with the swift assessment and control of actions that implement familiar goal seeking routines. We understand these as habits, habits that can be relied on to manage the familiar recurring tasks of life. Most of what we do requires little in the way of active conscious control (James, 1890). That is the case for driving and it is true for voting (Spezio, et al., 2008; Willis & Todorov, 2006). The first appraisal uses the affective range that goes from depression to elation, to which we assign the rubric enthusiasm. The neural system which makes use of this range does so by monitoring and managing the progress of and adjustments to the actions meant to secure rewards by means previously learned. As reward seeking actions unfold successfully, this neural process generates greater levels of enthusiasm. And, to the extent these efforts prove less successful we feel greater frustration and even depression. When the actions are social, as is often the case in politics, enthusiasm manages our in-group actions (as it does our less social habits).

The second appraisal process uses the affective range we assign the rubric “aversion” to monitor and manage the progress and adjustments of actions meant to protect and minimize punishments by means previously learned. Just a few examples of the latter should suffice. We each have practiced routines to manage the various familiar grievances, minor and major. We all rely on this neural program because it swiftly identifies the presence of normative violations by increasing states of aversion or anger (bitterness or contempt for more modest levels and anger and hatred for the most compelling instance). This neural program also has access to procedural memory which then enables it to then actuate and monitor the appropriate routinized habits that manage the affair. Among these might be a grimace, a public display of disdain, a scornful comment directed at a target, or increased solidarity with partisans to marshal a more effective riposte. Anger also leads to defensive retrenchment, and as a result makes people more reliant on preexisting convictions and less open to change.

Because the human species is notably mobile and because we live in a world that has, and likely will, change in

ways visible and not, we have a third appraisal to help us adapt to novel and uncertain conditions if and when we encounter them. The third appraisal uses the affective range we assign the rubric “anxiety” or “fear” to scan for the unexpected. As uncertainty and anxiety increase, reliance on convictions decreases, and in the public sphere, solidarity among in-group members goes down. And, also with greater anxiety, interest in and attention to new information goes up along with a willingness to find a compromise that will resolve the anxiety-producing uncertainty. Of great interest from the outset is the anticipation of what has come to be called the dual process model of decision-making or judgment (Chaiken & Trope, 1999; Kruglanski & Gigerenzer, 2011; Mukherjee, 2010; Smith & DeCoster, 2000).

Notably then, two of the affect channels posited by Affective Intelligence Theory, enable deft articulation of recurring actions that take place in the preconscious realm (various named as ‘intuitive,’ ‘automatic,’ or ‘system 1’) while appraisal 3 serves to inhibit reliance on fast automaticity so as to enable thoughtful deliberation to have executive capability (Marcus, 1988; Marcus & MacKuen, 1993). In sum, why are we sometimes committed to a cause while at other times willing to engage in compromise? AIT offers some testable hypotheses that my colleagues and I have been exploring over the past two plus decades. Ted Brader and I offer a recent summary overview (Brader & Marcus, 2013). I focus on two of them below.

### **The Benefits of AIT**

For my colleagues and I, the appeal of this theory is that it offers new and unexpected lines of inquiry, and with this the possibility of new insights, especially on long established received wisdom (MacKuen et al., 2007; MacKuen et al., 2010; Neuman et al., 2007). I’ve chosen two of these. The first has to do with understanding how people go about voting. The second has to do with a longstanding claim that what animates conservatives is fear of change, one the core epistemic motives currently understood as the foundation of the conservative personality (Robin, 2004; Jost et al., 2003; Hibbing et al., 2014).

Let’s begin with voting (at least as practiced in the United States). From scholars at the University of Michigan came the Normal Vote model (Converse, 1966): a now well-known and widely accepted portrait describing public ignorance of the major candidates and where they stood with respect to the predominant issues of the day. The Normal Vote model advances the claim that partisan voting decisions are derived from a robust reliance on partisanship, whereas the voting decisions of independents results from responsiveness to “short-term” forces (hence the colloquial name “swing voters”). The rational choice account arrived shortly afterward from economics. In its initial formulation, rational choice held that voters engaged in a rational consideration of the alternatives presented to them, choosing that which best served their interests (Downs 1957).

Rational choice posits an attentive and thoughtful electorate that makes explicit comparisons and adjudicates among them through rational evaluation of their respective costs and benefits. Unfortunately this model has a remarkable lack of empirical support (Quattrone and Tversky 1988). Both conventional approaches find that the public does not satisfy the common normative standards held up for assessing the capacity of the public to serve as empowered citizens. If democracy requires an attentive and politically learned electorate and requires voters to give at least modest attention and thoughtful consideration to the policy and leadership choices before them, then neither account suffices.

AIT argues that the Normal Vote Model and the Rational Choice Model have both gotten something right, but share a similar error by taking a special case of political judgment and treating it as if it were the general case. How can it be that the Normal Vote and Rational Choice models are special cases, that is, theoretical specifications that apply only in some rather than in all circumstances? The two established theories presume that voters have invariant patterns of judgment and behavior. In the case of the Normal Vote account, voters are either partisan or not, and these immutable qualities fully control what people do, for example, whether they will pay attention (partisans do, independents do not), when they decide for whom to vote (partisans early in campaigns and nonpartisans late), and so forth.

Partisans have certain qualities and they consistently display them, just as nonpartisans display their characteristic qualities (as we shall see, a similar case can be made for ideology as a stable defining quality). In the case of Rational Choice theory (or its more recent variant, bounded rationality), voters think and act rationally all the time and in every circumstance so long as at least minimal stakes are in play. The orienting insight of Affective Intelligence Theory is that voters shift between different decision strategies, roughly along the lines suggested by the dual process understanding of human judgment.

The theory, as shown in figure 1, demonstrates how we can integrate the Normal vote and Rational Choice accounts (with one important change to the latter). When people feel they are in familiar circumstances, engaged in recurring previously learned habits, they will act as partisans (voting their ideological and partisan predilections). However, when they feel themselves in novel, unfamiliar settings, they will abandon – at least temporarily – those convictions (both implicit and explicit). Instead, feeling anxious, they will seek to learn more about the candidates and more about where they stand on the issues of the day. And, they will then vote based on what they learn (Marcus and MacKuen, 1993). Thus, they act under the guidance of the “system 1” intuitive mode of judgment when conditions are familiar, but under the guidance of the “system 2” deliberative mode of judgment when conditions uncertain (MacKuen et al. 2007, 2010).

In sum, the theory of Affective Intelligence leads us to reject both the dystopic portrait of the ill-informed and irrational public and the more utopian aspiration for the full-time rational citizen. Instead, we arrive at a more complex and a more dynamic understanding in which citizens display shapeshifting capacities, moving, on occasion from steadfast partisan determination to deliberate consideration freed from convictions (Marcus, 2013b). An important corollary of this analysis is that, contrary to common belief, it is not the case that reason and emotions are in complete conflict. Fear of the uncertain is clearly an emotion and yet, according to AIT, it is involved in the engagement of a system 2 process (Appraisal 3 in Figure 1).

This shows that the ability to have emotions may be an essential part of the very ability to reason (on this topic, see also influential work by Bechara and colleagues (1997; 2005)). On the other hand, the AIT model also accounts for the role emotions play in non-deliberative system 1 processes, which are often related to the emotions of enthusiasm (Appraisal 1 in Figure 1) and anger (Appraisal 2 in Figure 1). If AIT is on the right track, the reason-passion dichotomy is a coarse and inappropriate tool for making sense of political behavior, because it hides from view the complex role emotions play in sometimes facilitating and sometimes hindering rational deliberation.

The second conventional wisdom has to do with conservatism. The “conservative mind” has long been of interest to scholars, pundits, and academic scholars (Adorno et al, 1950; Jost, 2003; Robin, 2004, 2011; Wilson, 1973). A popular account in the academy puts fear at the center of why some adopt conservative views and values and others progressive (or liberal) views and values. Standard accounts, both old and more recent, have argued that it is fear that drives the public towards nationalist, often xenophobic and authoritarian parties (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Fromm, 1965; Wilson, 1973; Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003; Landau et al., 2004). And, central to this line of inquiry are two fundamental points.

The first is that understanding the liberal mind need be of little interest, reflecting the Enlightenment presumption that a liberal mind is now the new normal orientation that humans will and should adopt. And, continuing, the conservative mind is thus viewed as retrograde (Marcus, 2008). But it is the second point that is best understood as perplexing from the perspective of the Affective Intelligence Theory. Is it plausible, in light of the Affective Intelligence Theory that what draws people to conservatism is the emotion of fear? Many, including Jost and colleagues argue yes: “people embrace political conservatism (at least in part) because it serves to reduce fear, anxiety, and uncertainty; to avoid change, disruption, and ambiguity” (Jost, 2003, p. 340).

From the perspective of the theory of affective intelligence, fear seems an unlikely basis for conservatism. Take another look at Figure 1 and note that anxiety and fear rise with one’s state of uncertainty. These emotions are driven by the unexpected, but the deliberative state that follows makes it unlikely that anxiety and fear drive support for conservatism. According to AIT, it is far more likely that the fundamental motivation for conservatism is anger.

Anger arises when we face challenges to important norms that we find to be foundational to the social order. In other words, conservatives are not so much xenophobic (afraid of foreigners) as they are xenocholeric (angry at foreigners). My current research with colleagues Pavlos Vasilopoulos, Martial Foucault, and Nicholas Valentino, examines support for the Front National and authoritarian policies in France, and for Republicans and Donald Trump in the US.

What we have found is that anger fuels support for conservative policies and voting for conservative candidates, whereas anxiety undermines support for such policies and candidates. According to AIT, anger and anxiety will activate two distinct patterns of information processing. Heightened anger will make people use system 1 or intuitive judgments and make them reliant on their pre-existing convictions. Heightened anxiety will shift people to system 2, or deliberative reasoning and undermine the influence of pre-existing convictions. And in a number of unpublished studies we find precisely that (Vasilopoulos, et al, unpublished). As anger rises among conservatives, their convictions are strengthened. On the other hand, anxiety undermines conservatives' reliance on their convictions. This happens because anxiety initiates a new judgment stance, that of deliberative reasoners interested in exploring collective action solutions that are not bound to or by our normally potent convictions.

Hence, in the main, the role of anxiety (fear) has been mis-judged as the principal motivator for support for authoritarian policies and leaders (Jost et al., 2003; Landau et al., 2004). Conversely, the crucial role of anger has been underestimated. In sum, we anticipate that generalized public anger – whatever its target may be – explains why so many electorates are turning to the right.

## **Conclusion**

It was the inspiration provided by Gray's neuroscientific research on the importance of unconscious processes that led me to set aside the stale 1990s debate as to whether citizens are competent and eventually gain new insights about the way political decisions are made. The turn to emotions, understood in the context of a dual process model of decision-making, has led us to new understandings of politics. Voters, as it turns out, are neither so partisan as posited by the Normal Vote model nor so free from irrational influences as posited by the Rational Choice model. They are complex creatures capable of both blind faith and rational assessment. This is why this new understanding is not utopian.

Humans are still bedeviled by lack of foresight (Hobbes, 1968), but they can at least temporarily engage in evidence-based deliberation. Affective Intelligence Theory, as a dual process model, offers an explanation of how humans, and likely other species, have adapted by having multiple available decision strategies. On the one hand, habituated processes are swiftly and deftly executed by reliance on the capabilities offered by neural systems that manage the familiar recurring tasks. But if that were the sole capacity available to humans we all would be vulnerable to anything that is unusual and unexpected.

Hence, the importance of having a neural system dedicated to early identification and assessment of the magnitude of the novelty. While complete foresight is not thereby obtained, heightened anxiety in the face of uncertainty alerts us to conditions that can benefit us from setting aside lessons that have most often served us well. That does not protect us against human fallibility. We may incorrectly understand the circumstances we face, acting as if circumstances are familiar when they are not or acting as if circumstances are uncertain when they are not. Nonetheless, having protean capacities would seem to give us greater adaptive flexibility.

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# Politics Makes Us Mean and Dumb

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## Two Hypotheses about Political Participation

February 2017 – In *Considerations on Representative Government*, the great nineteenth century economist, philosopher, and early feminist John Stuart Mill advocated experimenting with more widespread political participation (Mill 1975). Mill hoped that participation would make citizens more concerned about the common good, and would entice them to educate themselves. He hoped getting factory workers to think about politics would be like getting fish to discover there is a world outside the ocean. As he said, “Among the foremost benefits of free government is that education of the intelligence and of the sentiments which is carried down to the very lowest ranks of the people when they are called to take a part in acts which directly affect the great interests of their country.” (Mill 1975, 304.)



20<sup>th</sup> century sociologist and economist Joseph Schumpeter tendered a grimmer hypothesis about how political involvement affects us: “The typical citizen drops down to a lower level of mental performance as soon as he enters the political field. He argues and analyzes in away which he would readily recognize as infantile within the sphere of his real interests. He becomes a primitive again.” (Schumpeter 1996, 262.)

Both Mill and Schumpeter were scientific thinkers, but neither quite had the data needed to test their hypotheses. However, we now possess over sixty years’ worth of detailed, varied, and rigorous empirical research in political science and political psychology. The test results are in. Overall, Schumpeter was largely right and Mill largely wrong. In general, political participation makes us mean and dumb. Emotion has a large role in explaining why.

## Hobbits, Hooligans, and Vulcans

Let’s describe three archetypical models of democratic citizens (Brennan 2016, 4-6). These models both serve as a shorthand for actual citizens and help us think more clearly about what political participation is likely to do.

In the *Lord of the Rings* fantasy novels, the race of Hobbits care little about adventure or the outside world, and are mostly content to just live their mundane lives. By analogy, political *Hobbits* are apathetic and mostly unconcerned about politics. They lack strong or fixed opinions about most issues. They have little social scientific knowledge, and are largely ignorant of major current events, world history, or national history. They prefer to live their lives without giving politics much thought.

Political *Hooligans* are the rabid sports fans of politics. They hold strong and fixed world-views. They can explain and argue for their own views, but they cannot adequately explain the views of those with whom they disagree. They consume information that confirms their pre-existing political opinions, but evade evidence that contradicts or disconfirms their pre-existing opinions. They know some social science, but only the research that supports their own views. Their political opinions form part of their identity. For the American hooligans (each country of course has its own share), being a Democrat or being a Republicans is an essential part of one’s self-image. They regard the other side as misguided at best, and stupid and evil at worst.

Political philosophers tend to envision an ideal democratic participant, which I label political *Vulgans*. (In *Star Trek*, Vulgans are a race of almost perfectly rational beings.) *Vulgans* think scientifically and rationally about politics. Their opinions are strongly grounded in social science and philosophy. They change their minds when the evidence calls for it. They can explain and defend contrary points of view. They are interested in politics, but at the same time, dispassionate, in part because they actively try to avoid being biased and irrational.

Mill's hypothesis was that most citizens are Hobbits, but participation should turn them into Vulgans. Schumpeter thought most citizens are Hobbits and Hooligans, but participation would make them more Hooliganish.

Schumpeter was largely right. In the United States, the typical non-voter is a Hobbit. Most regular voters, active political participants, activists, registered party members, and politicians are Hooligans (Brennan 2016, 23-53). Most Americans fall on the spectrum between Hobbit and Hooligan. Hardly anyone can call herself a true Vulcan, though some approach that ideal more than others. Since in politics hooliganism largely rules, we need to better understand how the minds of Hooligans work.

### **Emotion, Bias, and the Hooligan Mind**

The distinctive feature of the Hooligan mind is that Hooligans have strong *preferences over beliefs*, in the sense that they prefer to believe some things rather than others. To put it very broadly, they are driven to believe what they *want* to believe (especially what they find comforting or flattering to believe), rather than driven by a rational assessment of the evidence. They engage in "motivated reasoning": that is, they try to arrive at beliefs that maximize good feelings and minimize bad feelings.

Here is how political psychologists Milton Lodge and Charles Taber summarize the body of extant work: "The evidence is reliable [and] strong...in showing that people find it very difficult to escape the pull of their prior attitudes and beliefs, which guide the processing of new information in predictable and sometimes insidious ways" (Lodge and Taber 2013, 169) Political psychologists Leonie Huddy, David Sears, and Jack Levy concur: "Political decision-making is often beset with biases that privilege habitual thought and consistency over careful consideration of new information" (Huddy, Sears, and Levy 2013, 11).

This predisposition to motivated reasoning leads to paradoxical results. We are accustomed to think that reasoning about evidence would make political agents more likely to acquire true beliefs and reject false beliefs. But this assumes we think like Vulgans. For Hooligans, "reasoning" can actually undermine rationality. As psychologist Jonathan Haidt (2010) puts it,

"...reasoning was not designed to pursue the truth. Reasoning was designed by evolution to help us win arguments. That's why [psychologists Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber] call [their theory of why reasoning developed] The Argumentative Theory of Reasoning. So, as they put it..., "The evidence reviewed here shows not only that reasoning falls quite short of reliably delivering rational beliefs and rational decisions. It may even be, in a variety of cases, detrimental to rationality. Reasoning can lead to poor outcomes, not because humans are bad at it, but because they systematically strive for arguments that justify their beliefs or their actions".

In short, the evolutionary purpose of "reasoning" is not so much to turn us into scientists who can discover how the world works. Rather, it is to give us the power to influence, manipulate, and control one another. As a result, when it comes to politics in particular, when we confront contrary points of view from our own or evidence that shows we are wrong, we tend to react by getting angry and becoming more extreme in our views.

### **The Root of the Problem: Cognitive Bias in Politics**

Why are Vulgans benefitting from reasoning and exposure to evidence, whereas Hooligans are not? In a nutshell, true Vulgans are free of *cognitive bias*, while Hooligans are thoroughly infected by it. A cognitive bias is a systematic pattern of deviation from rational thought. Biases are like software bugs in our brains. They prevent us from believing what we ought to believe given the information and evidence we have.

A huge and diverse range of studies indicates that most citizens process political information in biased, partisan, motivated ways, rather than in dispassionate, rational ways. Here are some examples of prevalent biases:

*Confirmation Bias and Disconfirmation Bias:* We tend to search for and uncritically accept evidence that supports our pre-existing views. We reject or ignore evidence that disconfirms our pre-existing views (Lord, Ross, and Lepper 1979; Taber and Lodge 2006). For example, embattled political philosopher Thomas Pogge (2005, 30) dismisses economic critiques of his theories of global justice by calling economists shills. Many political partisans are so biased that when presented with evidence that they are mistaken, they *increase* their confidence in their pre-existing beliefs (Nyhan and Reifler 2009; Bullock 2006).

Confirmation bias explains how we consume news and information. Most people only read news that supports their pre-existing opinions. Left-liberals read the *New York Times*. Conservatives flock to Fox News. Indeed, it turns out Facebook supplies conservatives and liberals with entirely different news feeds, which may explain why the US was so polarized in the 2016 presidential election.

*Affective Contagion and Prior Attitude Effect:* I have so far characterized Vulcans as dispassionate, suggesting that emotions stand in the way of a rational assessment of the evidence. A few political theorists have taken a different tack, and complained that Western political philosophy has long had an unfounded distrust of emotion (Kraus 2013). But the psychological evidence indeed shows that emotion corrupts our thinking. For instance, when people are (for reasons unrelated to politics) sad, angry, joyful, this corrupts their ability to think clearly about politics. How you evaluate political information, what conclusions you draw, depends upon your current mood. How you respond to evidence depends upon how you are feeling.

Experiments show that emotion causes us to ignore and evade evidence, or to rationalize political beliefs. For instance, the fact that your cat just died might change how you respond to statistical evidence of falling crime rates, even though these are unrelated things. Further, when people feel strongly about an issue, that is, when they think it is important and when it evokes strong emotions, they are more likely to evaluate arguments about that issue in a polarized, biased way (Eisen, Lodge, Taber and Young 2013; Taber and Lodge 2006).

*Intergroup Bias:* In politics, we are tribalistic. We are biased to form groups and to identify ourselves strongly with that group. We automatically develop animosity toward other groups. We assume our group is good and just, but members of other groups are bad, stupid, and unjust. We are biased to forgive severe transgressions within our own group but damn minor errors from other groups (Haidt 2012; Westen, Blagov, Harenski, Kilts, and Hamann 2007; Westen 2008).

To illustrate: Psychologist Henry Tajfel conducted experiments in which he randomly assigned subjects to groups. He told subjects group members shared some frivolous trait, such as shared art preferences. He then conducted experiments to determine how people would treat members of their own group and other groups. He repeatedly found that, right away, on the basis of frivolous distinctions, subjects showed strong favoritism toward their own group and distrust toward other groups (Tajfel 1981; Tajfel 1982; Tajfel and Turner 1979).

*Peer Pressure and Conformity:* We are biased to conform our opinion to that of the majority (or that of whatever group we want to be part of), even when it is irrational to do so. For instance, Solomon Asch found that when experimental subjects are surrounded by large numbers of people claiming that two non-identical lines are identical, many subjects would agree with the majority, even though the majority was obviously wrong (Asch 1955, 37; Asch 1952, 457-8). Even those who disagreed with the majority experienced severe discomfort and anxiety.

These are just a handful of the biases psychologists have discovered. The point is that we are not dispassionate scientific thinkers when it comes to politics. Rather, we are motivated to re-affirm our pre-existing beliefs. We are motivated to use political beliefs as a means to create and maintain tribes. Random moods we happen to be feeling can cause us to evaluate evidence in entirely different ways—the way you revise your beliefs after a news report might depend heavily on whether you were watching a comedy or a tear-jerker beforehand.



## How Political Deliberation Corrupts

John Stuart Mill did not simply want citizens to vote. He hoped to they would deliberate with one another in dispassionate, reason-driven ways. Following Mill's lead, in contemporary political philosophy, "deliberative democracy" refers to various forms of democracy in which people come together in an organized way, usually under the guidance of a moderator, to advance ideas, argue about those ideas, listen to one another, and criticize each other's ideas with an open mind. Most deliberative democrats advocate an ideal under which citizens argue with one another in a dispassionate, scientific way, and then, as a result, reach a consensus about what ought to be done.

Philosophers seem convinced that organized group deliberation will deliver a wide range of positive moral and psychological benefits. Bernard Manin, Jane Mansbridge, and Elly Stein claim that democratic deliberation is a process of training and education (Manin, Stein, and Mansbridge 1987, 354, 363). Joshua Cohen (2006, 174) claims that deliberative procedures can be expected to "shape the identity and interests of citizens in ways that contribute to the common good."

But what deliberative democracy does to us depends on our psychology, on whether we are inclined to develop into Hooligans or Vulcans. Of course, deliberation enlightens would-be Vulcans. Vulcans apportion belief according to the evidence and have no dogmatic loyalty to their beliefs. But we can expect deliberation to make Hooligans more entrenched in their pre-existing beliefs. Hooligans will just ignore, jeer at, and dismiss contrary evidence, digging in their heels and getting angry at the opponent.

This brings us to the empirical question philosophers are ill-equipped to answer: in political matters, do we deliberate like Vulcans or Hooligans?

In a comprehensive survey of the empirical research on democratic deliberation, political scientist Tali Mendelberg (2002, 154) concludes that the "empirical evidence for the benefits that deliberative theorists expect" is "thin or non-existent". Deliberation tends to undermine cooperation among groups (Mendelberg 2002, 156). When groups are of different sizes, deliberation tends to exacerbate conflict rather than mediate it (Mendelberg 2002 158). Status-seeking drives the discussion. Deliberators try to win positions of influence and power over others (Mendelberg 2002, 159). High-status individuals have more influence, regardless of whether the high status individuals actually know more (Mendelberg 2002, 165-7). During deliberation, people use language in biased and manipulative ways (Mendelberg 2002, 170-2). As Mendelberg concludes, "in most deliberations about public matters", group discussion tends to "amplify" intellectual biases rather than "neutralize" them (Mendelberg 2002, 176, citing Kerr, MacCoun, and Kramer 1996). She says (2002, 169),

"The use of reasoned argument to reinforce prior sentiment is a widespread phenomenon that poses a significant challenge to deliberative expectations. Motivated reasoning has considerable power to interfere with the motivation that deliberative theory cherishes—the motivation to be open-minded, evenhanded, and fair. Deliberators can hardly pursue truth and justice if they view everything in favor of their priors [i.e., pre-existing beliefs] through rose-tinted glass and everything against it through dark ones".

In short: people "deliberate" on political matters like Hooligans, not like Vulcans.

Mendelberg's take on the empirical literature is not unusual. Other reviews of the extant political literature—including by people who *favor* deliberative democracy—find similar results (Landmore 2012, 118-19; Pincock, 2012). For instance, deliberation tends to move people toward more extreme versions of their ideologies rather than toward more moderate versions (Sunstein 2002). Deliberation over sensitive matters—such as pornography laws—often leads to "hysteria" and "emotionalism", with parties to the debate feigning moral emergencies and booing and hissing at one another (Downs, 1989).

Relatedly, political scientist Diana Mutz's (2006) empirical work shows that deliberation and participation do not

come together. The people who are most active in politics tend to be Hooligans. Vulcans tend to stay home.

Mutz finds that being exposed to contrary points of view tends to lessen one's enthusiasm for one's own political views. Cross-cutting political exposure decreases the likelihood that a person will vote, reduces the number of political activities a person engages in, and makes people take longer to decide how to vote (Mutz 2006, 92, 110, 112-113). In contrast, active, participatory citizens tend not to engage in much deliberation and tend not to have much cross-cutting political discussion (Mutz 2006, 30). Instead, they seek out and interact only with others with whom they already agree. When asked why other people hold contrary points of view, participatory citizens tend to respond that others must be stupid or corrupt.

Many political theorists advocate provide more meaningful opportunities for political participation. Mutz, in effect, finds that the people most likely to take advantage of such opportunities are extremists and partisans (Mutz, 135-6).

Some might wonder, if deliberative democracy does not work, then what does? Unfortunately, the answer might be nothing.

## The Economics of Emotion

In some sense, it is strange that emotion and motivated reasoning dominate our political beliefs. After all, in general, having *false* beliefs is dangerous for an agent. If our ancestors' had had mostly false beliefs about how to get food or protect children, we would not be here. Further, while people are irrational on occasion in their daily lives, it seems odd that they are so disproportionately irrational when it comes to politics. We need some explanation for why people are like this, and psychology does not seem to have the answer.

Perhaps we should turn to economics for the answer instead. Economics offers a simple but powerful account of *why* voters behave the way they do. When we look more closely at the *costs and benefits* of political rationality, it makes sense that people indulge their biases. To acquire and retain information takes time and effort. From an economic standpoint, we would expect people to acquire and retain information only if the expected benefits of doing so exceeds the expected costs. So, for instance, I remember where the local gas stations are because such information is useful, but I remain rationally ignorant of where the gas stations are in Alaska. Further, to overcome biases and to think rationally takes time and effort. Again, from an economic standpoint, we would expect people to think rationally about a subject only if the expected benefits of doing so exceeds the expected costs.

Suppose a person is about to cross the street. She would first gather information by looking both ways. She would not allow herself to remain ignorant of whether a car is coming, as such ignorance could *kill* her. Further, if she sees a truck barreling toward her, should not dare indulge the fantasy that the truck is, say, made of ectoplasm and cannot harm her. Indulging such irrationality could kill her.

But when it comes to politics, we can afford to be ignorant and irrational. As individuals, most of us can only influence politics through our votes. But the probability that our votes will make a difference is, for most of us in most major elections, vanishingly small. (A voter in a genuine battleground state might have as high as a 1 in 20 million chance of determining the outcome, while a voter in California has no chance at all). While the *outcome* of an election, i.e. the aggregate result of millions of people voting, matters a great deal, how any one of us votes (or whether any one of us votes at all) *does not* matter. In the same way, winning the lottery is worth hundreds of millions, but an individual lottery ticket is worth almost nothing.

In short, the reason people are mostly ignorant and biased about politics is that the *incentives* are all wrong. Democracies make it so that no individual voters' votes (or political beliefs) make a difference. As a result, no individual is punished for being ignorant or irrational, and no individual is rewarded for becoming informed and rational. Democracies incentivizes us to be "dumb".

## Why It Matters

There are two major sets of reasons why bias-driven politics is dangerous.

First, it contributes to the growing political polarization in the United States. Americans have become more distrustful of each other on the basis of political differences. Legal theorist Cass Sunstein (2014) notes that in 1960, only about 4-5% of Republicans and Democrats said they would “displeased” if their children married members of the opposite party. Now about 49% of Republicans and 33% of Democrats admit they would be displeased (Sunstein 2014, citing Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012). Sunstein says that explicit “partyism”—prejudice against people from a different political party—is now more common than explicit racism. In fact, it appears that “implicit” partyism is stronger than implicit racism too (cf. Iyengar and Westwood 2014).

For instance, political scientists Shanto Iyengar and Sean Westwood (2014) find that people are much more likely to discriminate against job candidates with different political viewpoints than they are to discriminate on the basis of racial differences. At least in some cases, for democracy to work, we need people to reach across the aisle, compromise, and work together. What the various biases discussed above tells us is that this is unlikely to happen.

Second, in a democracy, what we as a collective electorate believe about politics matters, even if what any individual voter believes does not. Individual voters do not matter at all, but voters as a whole matter a great deal. While many things—special interest lobbying, party politics, legislature preferences, bureaucratic autonomy, luck—influence and determine political outcomes, how voters vote makes a difference. Voters elect candidates with certain policy slants, and electing such candidates makes it more likely such policies will be enacted. Further, who makes it on the ballot in the first place is largely depends on what voters want.

But what voters want depends on what they know. Most citizens and voters have low levels of information; they are generally ignorant or misinformed (Somin 2013). But, it turns out, better informed voters have systematically different political beliefs from badly informed voters, and these differences in policy preferences are *not* explained by demographic factors, such as race, income, or gender (Althaus 2013). But, as this article has discussed, what voters know (or do not know) is not primarily guided by a dispassionate, reason-driven search for truth. Instead, our beliefs are largely determined by emotion-based biases.

In short, emotion-driven politics does not just make us biased. Rather, it makes us dislike each other and mistreat each other. It causes mutual distrust and diffidence. Further, it leads to us voting in ways that we would not vote if only we were better informed or if we processed political information in rational ways. Emotion-driven politics means we get worse political culture and worse government.

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# The Use and Consequences of Emotions in Politics

 [emotionresearcher.com/the-use-and-consequences-of-emotions-in-politics/](http://emotionresearcher.com/the-use-and-consequences-of-emotions-in-politics/)

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February 2017 – Emotional appeals are a central part of politics in America, and examples of their use in political campaigns are many. The classic “Daisy Girl” ad of 1964 used images of a nuclear explosion to try to raise voters’ anxiety so that they would show up to the polls and vote for Lyndon Johnson. The American flags that appear on stages at campaign rallies (and on lapel pins) are designed to associate specific candidates with the emotion of pride. At the same time, anger over “Washington insiders” and the “Washington establishment” pervades many political speeches. Here we review the literature on the effects of emotions on people’s participation in politics, their opinions on political matters and the choices they make at the ballot box. We also review the small but growing literature on the use of emotions in political campaigns, that is, how political actors try to deploy emotions strategically to achieve their desired electoral ends (e.g., Ridout and Searles 2011; Cranmer 2015; Cho 2013; Brader 2006). Finally, we examine the use of emotional appeals in advertising by Clinton and Trump during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign.



## Political Emotions Introduced

While there is little doubt campaigns use emotional appeals strategically, it is not always clear whether such strategies are informed by professional norms or by research on the effects of emotions (Schnur 2007). Regardless, a rich literature echoes what ad executives and campaign professionals seem to know: emotions are essential to understanding political attitudes and behaviors (Zajonc 1980).

The empirical study of emotions in psychology spans several decades (Adorno et al. 1950; Abelson 1963; Zajonc 1982; Damasio 1994; Bargh and Chartrand 1999; Bechara and Damasio 2005), though philosophers have long debated the merits of human passions (Hume 1739; Madison 1961; Marcus 2000; Neblett 2007). What is relatively new is the burgeoning interest in the study of emotions in political science (Marcus and MacKuen 2000; Valentino et al. 2011; Albertson and Gadarian 2015; Zeitzoff 2016).



While emotion was traditionally seen as a nuisance to good governance (Edelman 1985; Kuklinski et al. 1991), more recent work suggests emotion is central to political participation (Valentino et al. 2007), public opinion (Brader 2006), processing of information (Lodge and Taber 2005), political discussion (Cho 2013), political tolerance (Small et al. 2006), and policy attitudes (Albertson and Gadarian 2015). Before discussing the effects of the most popular emotional appeals in advertising (Brader 2006) – anger, fear/anxiety, and enthusiasm/hope – we briefly discuss the mechanics behind emotional influence.

## What Are Emotions?

The 2016 US presidential campaign was often characterized by journalists and pundits as irrational and wrought with emotions like anger and fear. Such depictions fail to consider emotions as evolutionary adaptations designed to solve recurrent problems when the costs of a mistake would be high (Frijda 1988; Tooby and Cosmides 2008; Izard 2009). Work in this vein considers emotions to be triggered by appraisals, providing vital information to processing systems such as attention and perception (Clore and Isbell 2001). This research tradition treats emotion as a moderator/mediator (O’Leary and Isbell 1996), an outcome variable (Lerner and Keltner 2000) and a predictor (Marcus and MacKuen 1993). Building on these approaches, political psychology is often interested in how emotions shape the evaluation of socio-political objects and thereby elicit a response (Lodge and Taber 2005).

For example, Druckman and McDermott (2008) find that when people are presented with a hypothetical disease outbreak framed (or presented) to either emphasize gains (e.g., saving lives) or losses (e.g., death), emotions can temper or amplify the effects of that frame on risky choices. When measured as an outcome, anger and fear have been found to increase following group-based appraisals (Mackie et al. 2000). While used as a predictor, Ryan (2012) found anger to increase the likelihood that a person would seek additional information online.

The psychological underpinnings of political science research on emotions can be further characterized in several ways. First, many political psychologists assume emotions to be automatic and nearly impossible to disentangle from cognition (Huddy et al. 2007; Winkelman and Cacioppo 2001; Murphy and Zajonc 1993). Drawing on findings from neuroscience (Adolphs and Damasio 2000, 2001), Lodge and Taber (2005) demonstrate the automaticity of emotional response in their work on affective contagion.

Second, they demonstrate that all political objects are to some extent emotional (Lodge and Taber 2005; Abelson et al. 1982; Fazio et al. 1986). Originating in work on hot cognition (Abelson 1963), politicians and other objects become emotion-laden upon repeated processing of a stimulus, during which time affective responses occur first (Zajonc 1980), and then cascade across subsequent higher-order processing (Lodge et al. 1989). Third, emotions can be described in terms of valence (Osgood et al. 1957), which is typical of traditional campaign advertising models (Kern 1989), in terms of arousal (Russell 1980), and as discrete states (Frijda 1986; Lazarus 1991). The latter approach is most often associated with the theoretical framework of cognitive appraisal theory (Roseman 1984). As we focus on the effects of discrete emotions, it is worthwhile to explain this framework further.

More specifically, in a political context, we can think of emotion as a result of the process by which individuals appraise the significance of a political situation and act accordingly (Smith and Ellsworth 1985). For example, following an electoral outcome (e.g. a Trump victory) that an individual appraises as surprising, people may feel anxiety and, consequently, engage in behaviors designed to cope with such feelings, like watching more political news. To summarize, one approach to understanding emotions in political psychology is as appraisal-caused solutions to fundamental life tasks that orchestrate synchronized bodily responses to challenges while interacting in a variety of ways with cognition. We will be exploring in particular how the appraisals involved in specific emotions (e.g. anger, fear, etc.) can help us understand the roles played by emotions in politics.

### **Appraisal Profiles of Political Emotions**

Broadly, appraisal theorists claim that objects are appraised in terms of their likelihood to facilitate or inhibit an individual's goals, triggering an emotional response and action tendency (Frijda et al. 1989; Roseman et al. 1990; Spezio and Adolphs 2007). Different theories identify different dimensions of appraisal. A popular proposal distinguishes six dimensions: certainty, pleasantness, attention, control, effort, and responsibility (Ellsworth and Scherer 2003; Ellsworth 1991). In what follows, we will consider the political role of the three emotions found to occur most frequently in American campaign messaging (Brader and Corrigan 2005): anger, fear/anxiety, and hope/enthusiasm.

#### *Anger*

Anger is a response to an object that is inhibiting or frustrating a relevant goal (Carver 2004), particularly when the challenger is identifiable and perceived to be unjust (Mikula et al. 1998). According to most appraisal theorists, anger differs from fear in that the former, unlike the latter, is elicited when the individual perceives the situation to be under control (Tiedens and Linton 2001). Anger is also more often characterized by certainty about potential outcomes and feelings of betrayal. The experience of anger is also related to approach behaviors (Mackie et al. 2000), which are typified by risk-seeking and a higher tolerance for risk (Lerner and Keltner 2001; Huddy et al. 2007). Moreover, anger often includes haphazard processing, which increases the likelihood people will use cognitive shortcuts and stereotypes in their evaluations (Lerner et al. 1998). Anger has been linked to aggression (Eisenberg 2000), blaming (Quigley and Tedeschi 1996) and antisocial behaviors (Spector 1997).

Perhaps most importantly, anger is thought to affect the content of cognition. Anger drives attitudes towards punitive policies and punishment (Lerner et al. 1998; Lazarus 1991), a potentially powerful response in the political arena. These downstream effects explain, in part, why inducing anger increases the likelihood an individual will blame an agent rather than situational characteristics (Keltner et al. 1993) and why angry individuals are less likely to behave altruistically (Zeitzoff 2016). Such blame-seeking tendencies (Huddy et al. 2007) diminish risk associated with political actions such as war, increasing individuals' support for military action (Lerner et al. 2003). Indeed, Small and colleagues (2006) found that following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, angry individuals were more likely to blame others than sad individuals.

Angry individuals are also more likely to support risky policies (Lerner et al. 2003; Nabi et al. 2003). This may explain why anger appeals are used in political rhetoric more frequently following a terrorist attack (Castella et al. 2009), an effective strategy given that anger also makes individuals more optimistic about the future (Lerner and Tiedens 2006). In an interesting reversal, participants who are informed they'll be held accountable for angry behaviors are less likely to engage in biased processing (Bodenhausen et al. 1994).

While one of the more difficult emotions to study, anger is also one of the most powerful political emotions (Searles and Mattes 2015). Work in political science often focuses on how anger may influence political behaviors and attitudes. Anger predicts presidential approval ratings, for example, with angry citizens reporting more disapproving attitudes towards President Reagan (Conover and Feldman 1986). Anger also increases personal efficacy (Weber 2007) and mobilizes individuals to participate in campaigns (Valentino et al. 2006). In a field experiment in Zimbabwe, Young (2015) found that anger appeals increased the likelihood an individual would engage in pro-opposition speech. Zeitzoff (2013) adds additional nuance to these findings.

In an interesting economic game fielded in areas of Israel subject to varying levels of violence, he induced anger and then gave subjects the opportunity to "pay to punish" their partners for actions in a previous round. He found a conditional effect of anger, with participants in areas with high levels of violence less likely to pay to punish and participants in areas with low levels of violence more likely to pay to punish. He reasons that retribution is not linearly related to exposure to violence and as a result, people who endure long and intense durations of violence may be more willing to make accommodations.

Some work finds that anger depresses information-seeking behaviors (Valentino et al. 2008) while also decreasing attention to the political environment (MacKuen et al. 2010). Other research finds that the medium and motivation matter. Angry citizens will look for partisan or ideological information in a web search on candidates, and they are more likely to use this information rather than policy information to make vote choices (Parker and Isbell 2010). The same angry citizens are also more likely to consume pro-attitudinal news, while decreasing their consumption of counter-attitudinal news (Song 2016). This type of biased search also makes angry citizens less likely to correctly recall the issue stances of their preferred candidate (Redlawsk and Lau 2006).

In a related vein, MacKuen and colleagues (2010) find that anger triggers a partisan style of citizenship, leading individuals to dig-in and defend their pre-existing attitudes. Thus, an angry citizen is more likely to rely on political habits and is less likely to compromise.

Similarly, angry citizens are less likely to demonstrate tolerance in the wake of a crisis (Skitka et al. 2004). This may explain why anger mediates the effects of opinions about welfare recipients on attitudes towards welfare, such that recipients who are portrayed as not actively seeking employment were likely to elicit anger and negative attitudes towards welfare in individuals exposed to such messaging (Petersen et al. 2012). The authors argue that anger is adaptive, allowing groups to monitor the deservingness of assistance.

Taken together, the research suggests that anger is potent when utilized in campaign messaging. Particularly, anger might be most effective when used in ads aimed at turning out loyal partisans. Indeed, while campaign advertisements often receive scrutiny for their attempts to impugn the opponent, they are just as often geared at turning out the candidate's base—an objective anger may be well suited for.

### *Fear/Anxiety*

Fear is believed to be driven by innate mechanisms that allow humans to adapt to threatening circumstances (Gray 1987; Hebb 1949). Although fear has often been lamented in the public sphere for its seemingly irrational properties (Lippman 1922), it serves an adaptive purpose: it is associated with heightened awareness and a focus on threats (Eysenck 1992). Indeed, a fear state is likely to result in the release of the hormones epinephrine and cortisol which have been found to strengthen recall (Civettinni and Redlawsk 2009). Fear is also likely to elicit avoidance behaviors such as withdrawal (Small and Lerner 2008), risk aversion (Lerner and Keltner 2001), higher political tolerance via the affirmation of political values (Skitka et al. 2004), and even miscalculation of risk (Lowenstein et al. 2000; Lerner et al. 2003). Specifically, Lerner and Keltner (2001) found that fearful individuals were more likely to be pessimistic and worry about common causes of death, unlike their angry counterparts.

Shedding a more positive light on the effects of fear, psychologists have found that fear drives systematic, deliberative, and in-depth thought processes (Bernbau et al. 1995; Clore et al. 2001). Work in political psychology finds similar results for anxiety, with anxious individuals paying increased attention to campaign information (Marcus and MacKuen 1993) and news on threatening topics (Albertson and Gadarian 2015). It is worth noting that fear and anxiety are often used interchangeably in the literature: both are treated as a response to a threat and there is overlap in their physiological and behavioral mechanics. Indeed, some scholars even suggest anxiety is just a form of fear we've adapted to handle distant, vague threats in our increasingly complex societies (Barlow 2000; also see Albertson and Gadarian 2015).

However, for the sake of clarity, traditionally anxiety is seen as related to a more generalized, unknown danger while fear is related to an immediate threat (Craig et al. 1995). Fear is also more likely to elicit a flight-or-fight response. As such, when talking about situations characterized by uncertainty – situations that often typify the political arena – anxiety is often the emotion elicited (Tiedens and Linton 2007; Bower 1988; Huddy et al. 2007).

Anxiety serves an important function in the political arena, guiding the public's attention to salient issue areas. Anxious citizens are likely to redirect their attention to a political threat and are more likely to shed their partisan habits (Marcus et al. 2000; see also Marcus this issue). In a high information electoral context, such as a presidential race, this often means more attention is allocated to news on a preferred candidate (Redlawsk and Lau 2006). For example, anxious Trump voters were likely motivated to seek news that suggested their candidate was winning (Marcus and MacKuen 1993; but see Ladd and Lenz 2008). Such attention shifts may also result in increased political learning (Brader et al. 2011; but see Civettinni and Redlawsk 2009), motivating individuals to engage in deliberation (MacKuen et al. 2010). On the other hand, Weber (2007) finds that appeals to anxiety decrease feelings of personal efficacy.

Building on this framework, Brader (2006) exposes a representative, non-college population to emotion-laden campaign advertisements during a gubernatorial race. He finds that contrary to previous work that suggests negative ads demobilize (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995), ads using anxiety appeals—which are often negative—motivate those with high levels of civic competence. When exposed to attack ads, anxious individuals are also more likely to engage in political discussion with homogenous groups (Cho 2013). In addition to ads, other political stimuli such as rhetoric (Druckman and McDermott 2008), policies (MacKuen et al. 2010) and candidates themselves (Valentino et al. 2009) can cause anxiety.

Anxiety is particularly effective in political talk as it facilitates persuasion (Brader 2006) and makes frames more influential (Druckman and McDermott 2008). That said, anxiety may also interfere with memory (Civettinni and Redlawsk 2009) and the processing and recall of information (Huddy et al. 2007). Moreover, while anxiety is associated with cheap participation requiring little effort, anxiety is not



associated with more serious forms of political participation like volunteering or donating money (Valentino et al. 2011).

Societal threats without clear solutions, such as immigration (Albertson and Gadarian 2015), lead anxious citizens to cope in political ways. To cope with the unpleasantness of the feelings, anxious individuals might seek more news on the subject. Specifically, anxious citizens are likely to consume more pro-attitudinal news, but this additional consumption does not necessarily impede their consumption of news they do not agree with (Song 2016). Similarly Parker and Isbell (2010) found that anxious individuals are more likely to look for information online regarding candidates than their angry counterparts. These same individuals were then more likely to report that they would vote for the candidate closest to them on the issues, suggesting a normatively desirable product of anxiety.

Anxious individuals may also be more supportive of protectionist policies (Brader et al. 2008; Albertson and Gadarian 2015). Similarly, Huddy and colleagues (2007) find that anxiety is more likely to increase the likelihood an individual supported the war in Iraq, while Merolla et al. (2012) find anxiety decreases support for democracy in the developing world. As another means of coping, Albertson and Gadarian (2015) also find that anxiety causes individuals to place more trust in political leaders. However, these tendencies are shaped by political predispositions such that partisans will trust their leaders and their anxious rhetoric more than out-party partisans (Albertson and Gadarian 2015).

Overall, this research points to the complexity of using emotions in political messages. Often pundits lament the use of anxiety in political rhetoric, and embedded in this criticism is an assumption that the public responds to fear appeals by blindly supporting the sponsor. The research suggests a much more nuanced portraiture of political fear. For example, Albertson and Gadarian (2015) find the effects of fear are constrained inasmuch they are effective only for candidates that have previously made a case for aptitude in specific issue areas. We can think about this in the context of the 2016 U.S. election campaign. The Republican Party is said to “own” national security issues as these are policy areas in which the public perceives Republicans to be most adept at handling. Thus, when Republican candidate Donald Trump aired campaign ads emphasizing national security, this research suggests appealing to anxiety in these ads was an effective strategy. On the other hand, using anxiety as a blanket political strategy is ineffective when airing ads on issues that are not perceived as “owned” by a party.

### *Hope/Enthusiasm*

Hope is defined by a sense of both agency and a path forward and thus is much more integrated with an evaluation of the future than other emotions (Snyder 1994; Just et al. 2007). Individuals who perceive an outcome to be without agency and without any pathways forward will be less likely to experience hope. Inversely, hope offers the possibility of change from the status quo to an improved future. This estimation of the future is tinged by uncertainty and a lack of perceived control, in contrast to enthusiasm or joy (Frijda et al. 1989). Similar to fear, hope can be seen as functional inasmuch that it motivates people to adapt goal-directed behaviors when confronted with changing circumstances (Groopman 2004). Indeed, researchers have found hope to be associated with fear towards political opponents, and behaviors often associated with fear, like information search (Just et al. 2007).

As hope requires forecasting, in an electoral context, a hopeful voter would need to have confidence in some aspect of the candidate’s record, personality, or rhetoric (Fromm 1968). Thus, hope is instrumental in political rhetoric, lending credence to politicians’ claims that they represent change and linking the fates of hopeful voters with politicians. Indeed, Just and colleagues (2007) found that voters who did not feel hopeful at the outset of an election campaign were influenced by candidate appeals. Feelings of hope regarding the in-party candidate were also accompanied by feelings of fear regarding the out-party candidate. This transformative nature of hope can be recognized in the “hope and change” rhetoric of the Obama 2008 presidential campaign and in Ronald Reagan’s classic “Morning in America” ad from 1984.

As a bonus, feelings of hope towards a candidate have been shown to increase the consumption of news and the likelihood a participant will watch a political convention (Just et al. 2007).

Indeed, scholars suggest that positive emotions such as hope are essential in political decision-making and even more important in decisions about for whom to vote (Belt et al. 2005). However, the two positive emotions most common to politics – hope and enthusiasm – are conceptually different. Primarily, enthusiasm is a positive emotional state preceded by a certainty appraisal, and rooted in the present as opposed to the future (like hope). Also in contrast with hope, enthusiasm does not convey uncertainty or transformation and is less coupled with cognition and estimation of future outcomes as a result (Just et al. 2007). Often times it is difficult to differentiate hope and enthusiasm because scholars utilize survey data that ask participants how they felt after the election, and hope is oriented to how an individual *will* feel.

Examining the consequences of enthusiasm, Brader (2006) found enthusiasm increased people’s reliance on partisan habits, such as always voting for the Republican Party or the Democratic Party, and decreased their attention to the campaign environment, much like anger. Affective intelligence theory also suggests enthusiasm will cause voters to engage with partisan loyalties, digging into existing predispositions (Marcus et al. 2000). While Brader (2006) finds that enthusiasm stimulates participation generally, another study found that individuals equipped with income and education were motivated by enthusiasm to both engage in cheap political participation (e.g. wearing a button) and costly forms of participation (e.g. donating money to a candidate) relative to people without similar resources.

Redlawsk and Lau (2011) use dynamic process tracing to demonstrate the positive effect of enthusiasm on information search. However, they find that while enthusiasm may increase the time spent on search for information, this additional effort is not rewarded with better accuracy. Enthusiasm influences attitudes towards policies as well as candidates. Brader and co-authors (2008) demonstrate enthusiasm towards immigration policy to be a function of partisanship and nationalism levels. When it comes to political news, enthusiastic voters seek out pro-attitudinal sources, while only Democrats also seek out counter-attitudinal news as a function of enthusiasm (Song 2016). This finding comports with physiological data that suggests liberals and conservatives have different orientations towards information, with the former being more open to new information (Hibbing et al. 2013).

Taken together, enthusiasm appeals can be influential during a campaign as they can motivate individuals to get behind their candidates, get involved, tune-in, and vote. This may be particularly beneficial in the early-stages of a campaign, in June and July, when the focus is on defining the candidate's image and narrative as opposed to attacking the opponent. Enthusiasm appeals are best suited to "feel good" biographical ads, such as Bill Clinton's "The Man from Hope."

Hope appeals, on the other hand, are ideal when a campaign wants a positive emotion but would also like to motivate more effortful information processing such an evaluation of future circumstances. "Yes We Can" is an example of such an ad. The online ad, produced by Black Eyed Peas singer will.i.am, motivated voters to think about how to achieve change and also provided an answer: by voting for Obama.

### **Using Emotions Strategically**

Campaign professionals recognize the importance of speaking to potential voters at an emotional level. As communications consultant Tucker Martin states, "Emotion is at the center of American politics. You have to have people excited if you want to win" (Warren 2016). Author Rick Shenkman speaks of Donald Trump's effective use of emotions in the 2016 presidential campaign: "What Trump has been doing since he joined the race is to trigger ancient instincts that swamp our other faculties. Like a sadistic dentist who seems eager to make us feel pain, he's constantly drilling around sensitive nerves as if he wants to make us cry out with a loud yelp, the louder the better" (Lindley 2016). And Trump was not alone. Says Shenkman: "It's true of all politicians. They're all pushing emotional buttons in the hope of drawing a strong response."

Empirical research suggests the use of specific emotional appeals in political advertising is quite common. Brader (2006) reports on coding of the emotional appeals contained in over 1,400 political ads aired in 1999 and 2000. He finds that enthusiasm is the most common emotional appeal, appearing in 73 percent of ads. Appeals to pride were found in 54 percent of ads, anger appeals were present in 46 percent of ads, followed by fear appeals in 41 percent of the ads and compassion appeals in 21 percent of the ads. Appeals to sadness and amusement appeared in 9 percent of the ads. Only .28 percent of the ads contained no appeal to emotion, though about one-fourth of ads contained only a weak appeal.

We similarly coded emotional appeals made in 628 political advertisements that aired in U.S. Senate races in 2004 (Ridout and Searles 2011). Our findings were fairly consistent with Brader's findings: pride was the most common emotional appeal, with 85 percent of ads containing an appeal to pride. Eighty-four percent of ads contained an appeal to enthusiasm, 48 percent contained an appeal to anger, and 24 percent employed a fear appeal.

Here are some more recent examples in each category:

Appeal to anger (with hope at the end)

Appeal to fear/anxiety:

Appeal to hope:

The emotional appeals within political messages are conveyed not only by the spoken words but by the visuals, music and narration as well. For instance, Brader (2006) finds that ads filmed in black and white are ten times more likely to contain a fear or anger appeal than a pride or enthusiasm appeal, while bright colors coincide with positively valenced emotions. Moreover, "uplifting, sentimental or patriotic music" is typically present in enthusiasm and pride ads but not in fear or anger ads (Brader 2006). And while American flags appear in about 25 percent of ads that contain an appeal to fear or anger, they appear in about 45 percent of ads that contain an appeal to enthusiasm or pride.

Two caveats, however, are worth noting here. First, just because a political message contains an appeal to a particular emotion does not mean that all viewers will experience that emotion (Schnur 2007). An ad that raises the specter of Hillary Clinton appointing the next justice of the U.S. Supreme Court might raise anxiety or fear among many Republicans while invoking enthusiasm or calmness among many Democrats. Second, the coding of emotional appeals can be fraught. Coders are typically instructed to assess which emotion or emotion the message was intended to invoke, not the emotion that the coder experienced. Even with this instruction, it can be a

challenge to get coders to agree on the emotions being invoked. Although coders tend to agree when coding appeals to pride, there are often disagreements when coding appeals to enthusiasm (Brader 2006).

When do campaigns choose to use appeals to certain emotions? One theory that has provided some theoretical guidance on this question is affective intelligence theory (Marcus, et al. 2000; Marcus and MacKuen 1993). This theory relates emotional responses to one of two systems, the disposition system and the surveillance system. The disposition system identifies behaviors that have been successful in the past and calls emotions from one dimension arrayed from happiness to sadness, with each emotion representing the endpoints. Other emotions arrayed along this dimension include hope, pride, and enthusiasm. A second “aversion” dimension was later added, and is characterized by anger (Marcus et al. 2000).

Marcus and colleagues theorize that the experience of any of the emotions unique to the disposition system, such as enthusiasm, leads to predictable behavioral consequences. For example, the experience of enthusiasm results in a person relying on partisan habits, such as consuming news from CNN every evening. Anger has a similar effect, leading partisans to dig-in to their political beliefs, for example, and double-down on behaviors that have proven successful in the past, such as voting for Democrats again and again. This buoying effect is of import to political strategists who might utilize appeals to emotions such as pride anger to reinforce people’s partisan attitudes and motivate them to support the party’s candidate. Thus, incumbents, candidates in less competitive races, and leading candidates should be more likely to invoke the emotions on the disposition system.

By contrast, the surveillance system alerts individuals to stimuli (i.e., pay attention!), calling emotions from a dimension defined by calm and anxious at each endpoint. Marcus and colleagues argue that emotions from this dimension, such as fear, lead to individuals searching for information and re-evaluating their current political circumstances. For example, voters experiencing fear may assess their economic situation and decide they need to look into Trump’s tax policy. It follows, then, that challengers, candidates in more competitive races, and candidates who are trailing should be more likely to invoke the emotions of fear and anxiety to encourage voters to re-evaluate life with the incumbent candidate and possibly, opt to vote for the challenger.

A couple of studies have examined how campaign context influences the decision to use particular emotional appeals. First, the stage of the campaign matters. Ridout and Searles (2011) report that ads making appeals to anger peak in the month before Americans vote on Election Day in early November. Enthusiasm appeals, by contrast, were most common in August, while pride appeals peaked in July. It seems, then, that appeals with a positive valence are more common early in a campaign when candidates are trying to consolidate the support of those voters inclined to back them. Democratic candidates want to make sure Democrats are solidly in their camp, and Republican candidates want to make sure that Republican voters are solidly in their camp.

Second, incumbency status affects the use of emotional appeals. Conventional wisdom from campaign professionals is that incumbents use appeals to fear—often times fear of change—and challengers use appeals to hope—hope that things can be better (Vallance 2016). Yet data from American political campaigns do not universally support this claim. Challengers are more likely to use fear appeals (Brader 2006) and are more likely to use anger appeals (Ridout and Searles 2011), though there is disagreement on whether incumbents are more likely (Brader 2006) or less likely to use appeals to enthusiasm (Ridout and Searles 2011).

The competitiveness of the race can also have an impact on the specific emotional appeals that are employed by a campaign. Brader (2006) finds an increase of fear-focused ads in more competitive races, while Ridout and Searles (2011) find that anger-focused ads increase when the race is more competitive. Finally, whether candidates are leading or trailing can also influence the likelihood that their campaign will use certain emotional appeals (Schnur 2007). Candidates who are leading are less likely than those who are trailing to use anger or fear appeals, and those who are leading are more likely than those who are trailing to use enthusiasm or pride appeals (Ridout and Searles 2011). In sum, it seems that negatively valenced emotional appeals are more common when a race is more competitive and when a candidate sponsoring the message is trailing.

Of course, other factors might influence when campaigns choose to use certain emotional appeals. For instance, Schnur (2007) suggests that campaigns might employ different appeals depending on the characteristics of the audience. In short, the decision to use an emotional appeal is a strategic one.

### **The 2016 Campaign: Trump and Clinton Ads**

In 2016, presidential candidates Trump and Clinton used appeals to emotion in a much different way. We examined the emotional appeals in 22 ads pro-Trump ads and 32 pro-Clinton ads that aired between Labor Day and Election Day. The pro-Trump ads were largely sponsored by the Trump campaign but there were five sponsored by Future 45, a pro-Trump super PAC, and one ad sponsored by the National Rifle Association’s political arm. The pro-Clinton ads were largely paid for by the Clinton campaign, but a few were sponsored by Priorities USA Action, a super PAC that supported her. We coded for the presence of hope, enthusiasm, anger and fear appeals in each ad and then noted whether the appeal was weak or strong.

Anger was the dominant appeal in pro-Trump ads, appearing in 77.3 percent of them (Table 1). Most of the appeals were strong ones. Many of the pro-Trump ads that appealed to anger made reference to Clinton’s email “scandal” or her allegedly profiting from the Clinton

Foundation. A few were more focused on policy issues, such as trade, immigration and ISIS. Forty-five percent of pro-Trump ads appealed to hope, often making reference to how Trump was going to change the system. Fewer than a quarter of pro-Trump ads contained appeals to fear, while only 9 percent contained appeals to enthusiasm. That pro-Trump messages would focus on anger and hope makes sense in some ways, given that he was running against a political insider who was closely tied to the current administration.

**Table 1: Presence of Appeals to Specific Emotions in Campaign Ads**

	Trump	Clinton
Hope	45.5%	28.1%
Enthusiasm	9.1%	53.1%
Anger	77.3%	53.1%
Fear	22.7%	21.9%

Pro-Clinton advertising, by contrast, was evenly split between appeals to enthusiasm and anger, each of which appeared in just of a half of pro-Clinton advertising. The anger expressed was almost always directed at Donald Trump and his offensive remarks about women and people with disabilities. Enthusiasm appeals centered on Hillary Clinton and her history of going to bat for families. Hope was found in 28 percent of ads favoring Clinton, while fear was present in about 22 percent of pro-Clinton ads. Many of those fear appeals had to do with the danger of Trump's having access to the nuclear codes. It is not necessarily surprising that hope would be downplayed in Clinton's advertising; it was difficult for her, someone with decades of experience in Washington, D.C., to make a case that things would change for the better. That said, we do find it surprising that pro-Clinton advertising did not appeal to fear over the prospect of a Donald Trump presidency more often.

One other thing we noticed that differed between Clinton and Trump advertising was that the appeals in the advertising for Trump were much stronger. Sixty-eight percent of the appeals in pro-Trump ads were strong appeals, compared to 52 percent of the appeals in pro-Clinton ads.

## Conclusion

In sum, the subject of emotions in politics is a wide-ranging topic. Those who study emotions in politics, by and large, focus on the impacts of emotions. Often, the focus is the impact of discrete emotions found in political messaging. But other research, still in its infancy, examines how campaigns and other political actors choose to deploy emotions strategically. One thing is certain, however: the attention given to the study of emotion in politics has grown dramatically over the past 20 years, and we expect that scholarly interest in the topic will continue to grow.

Future research, building on evidence that emotions have distinct attitudinal and behavioral consequences like voting, news consumption, and wearing a campaign button, will likely be more focused on the nuances of such appeals. For example, it is likely that more work using sophisticated new technologies – such as galvanic skin conductance, eye tracking, and facial recognition software – will evaluate when, where, and for whom types of anger or enthusiasm appeals may work in different types of ads. Additionally, we expect that campaign professionals and academics alike will utilize the affordances of the Internet to test more types of ads featuring different types of emotional appeals on a variety of participants, not just college sophomores.

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# Fear and Loathing in a Post 9/11 World

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February 2017 – The events of September 11, 2001 fundamentally altered the psychological landscape of society in ways that are unprecedented. Its effects continue to reverberate in contemporary culture, and are exacerbated by new terrorist attacks, and the very real and ongoing prospect of future violence. As a result, our society has pivoted in many ways – with much greater attention now to securitization and defense as a means of keeping us safe from these threats. This becomes immediately apparent when traveling through airports, entering large sports stadiums, or simply watching the evening news. At its core, terrorism is inherently a psychology of fear – where uncertainty and insecurity are used instrumentally by some to affect the larger political and social zeitgeist for the many. In spite of this, only recently have we begun to explore the impact of more chronic fear, worry, and insecurity (Sinclair & Antonius, 2012).



Prior to the September 11, 2001 attacks, research on the psychological effects of terrorism was relatively sparse and specific to regions such as the Middle East and Northern Ireland – which in turn has led some to debate its generalizability. However, following these attacks there was a proliferation of epidemiological and other population-based studies in the United States, which examined how people were impacted psychologically (for a comprehensive review see Sinclair & Antonius, 2012). Notably, the vast majority of this research explored prevalence rates of various psychiatric disorders / symptoms in the general population and areas immediately impacted, using clinical frameworks such as the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV; American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

In aggregate, this body of research demonstrated an immediate and significant spike in various types of psychiatric conditions (e.g., depression, anxiety, trauma reactions) in the general US population following the attacks. For example, it was determined that approximately one-third of people directly exposed to a terrorist attack will subsequently experience clinically significant distress, such as Acute Distress Disorder and/or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Friedman, Hamblen, Foa, & Charney, 2004; Lee, Isaac, & Janca, 2002). There were also multiple national studies highlighting increases in psychiatric symptoms (e.g., PTSD, depression, substance misuse, etc.), irrespective of whether people were immediately exposed to the attacks themselves (Sinclair & Antonius, 2012). In part, this has been explained in terms of a mass exposure effect phenomenon, where people across the country were vicariously traumatized through perpetual media exposure (Ahern, Galea, Resnick, & Vlahov, 2004; Marshall, Bryant, Amsel, Suh, Cook, & Neria, 2007; Jhangiani, 2010).

Research over the last 15 years has also demonstrated that many variables interact in explaining how people react to terrorism emotionally, including: proximity to the attacks, extent of subsequent *re*-exposure through the media, pre-existing psychiatric vulnerabilities, level of social supports / interpersonal connections, income and education, chronic disease, degree of life stressors, etc. (Bonanno et al., 2006). Collectively, this body of work highlights how people directly exposed are at greater risk for developing some form of psychopathology, but also that people in the general population remain vulnerable – underscoring the unique role that media plays in terms of exposure.

Perhaps most surprising, numerous longitudinal studies demonstrated a gradual, normalizing trend in rates of



psychopathology over time. Taken together, this body of work suggests that prevalence rates for most psychiatric conditions returned to pre-September 11, 2001 levels at roughly 6-12 months following the attacks – a return to normalcy, if you will (Sinclair & Antonius, 2012; Sinclair & Antonius, 2013). There are some exceptions to these trends, of course – for example, those most proximate to the areas affected (e.g., lower Manhattan) tended to exhibit a greater degree of psychiatric disturbance, which persisted over longer periods of time. However, as a whole this research indicates that we as a nation have essentially returned to normal.

### **Fear as Distinct from Psychopathology**

In spite of this “new normalcy,” there is evidence that many remain fearful and worried about the prospect of future terrorism, and these fears impact people in meaningful ways. For example, numerous national polling and social science research studies have demonstrated varying levels of fear and worry in the general US population, which continue to persist irrespective of psychopathology (Boscarino, Figley, & Adams, 2003; Boscarino, Adams, Figley, Galea, & Foa, 2006; Eisenberg et al., 2009; Pyszczynski et al., 2003; Richman, Cloninger, & Rospenda, 2008; Schuster et al., 2001; Silver et al., 2002; Silverleib, 2008). These fears are perpetuated by ongoing threats / warnings that are communicated by the media and those in government, and have been found to be associated with increased levels of distress and behavioral change (usually avoidance-type behaviors), and fluctuating levels of trust in government (Kramer, Brown, Spielman, Giosan, & Rothrock, 2003; Sinclair & LoCicero, 2007; Sinclair & LoCicero, 2010).

Sinclair and Antonius (2012) recently provided a more circumscribed overview of the psychological effects of terrorism, as well as how *fear* specifically may impact people uniquely and independent of psychopathology. For example, elevated fears of terrorism have been shown to be associated with greater levels of behavioral avoidance, physiological stress, and symptoms of anxiety and depression (Sinclair & LoCicero, 2007; Sinclair & LoCicero, 2010). Perhaps more alarmingly, Shenhar-Tsarfaty and colleagues (2014) recently conducted a survey of over 17,000 Israeli citizens undergoing routine annual medical examinations, and found that elevated fears of terrorism were associated with increased heart rate and other biomarkers of inflammation, which have been shown to be strongly predictive of myocardial infarction and stroke – and thus increased mortality risk.

Taken together, these findings suggest that while prevalence rates for most psychiatric conditions essentially returned to baseline, anticipatory fear and insecurity surrounding future terrorism have remained prominent. Of note, this dynamic of fear reactivity is one primary reason why the US Department of Homeland Security revised its color-coded alert system in 2011 – as a means of providing greater specificity and detail surrounding potential threats, and reducing anxiety and anticipatory fear. This change was in reaction to criticism that a change in threat level, as denoted by an “elevation” in color code, did much to prime people’s fears that a threat was imminent, but little to help people mitigate these fears / threats through concrete steps they could take to feel safe. As such, the current system (implemented in 2011) sought to reduce this fear priming by eliminating the color-coded differentiations, and increase locus of control by providing more specific information as to the nature and target of the threat (for example, whether it related specifically to the transportation system).

### **Do Our Clinical Assessment Frameworks Need to Change?**

To sum up, it becomes apparent that the research on the psychological effects of terrorism has presented two very disparate messages. On the one hand, society has “normalized” in terms of psychopathology rates and we now appear as we did prior to September 11, 2001. On the other hand, many people remain fearful (among other emotions), and these experiences influence how people live their lives – for example, where they work and live, with whom they socialize, amenability to taking public transportation, and the list goes on. As summarized above, these fears also have the potential to impact individuals’ physical and mental health in ways that are meaningful.

Some have argued that conventional mental health models may not be sufficient in assessing the psychological effects of terrorism, particularly in terms of the pervasive sense of anticipatory fear and worry that manifests (Marshall et al., 2007). For example, when evaluating for conditions such as PTSD using diagnostic frameworks like

the DSM-IV (APA, 2000), the focus is primarily on symptomatology that is *secondary to* a discrete traumatic event (e.g., terrorism). In fact, direct exposure to a traumatic event is requisite for a diagnosis to be made. In contrast, there really is no mechanism in the DSM or other frameworks for evaluating the fears, worries, and insecurities that may arise in *anticipation of* future violence / terrorism.

Taking this one step further, Marshall and colleagues (2007) also discuss how traditional mental health frameworks usually consider trauma exposure in terms of a “bull’s eye model” – where those most proximate to the traumatic event will be at greatest risk of developing conditions such as PTSD, and this susceptibility decreases incrementally as distance is gained from the event. Transposed to research disseminated post-September 11, 2001, these types of models do not sufficiently explain the *national* spikes in PTSD and other types of trauma reactions that were consistently observed, even though most of these individuals were not *directly* exposed – which is again a criterion for diagnosis.

Collectively, these findings raise questions about whether existing mental health models are sufficient in explaining the psychological effects of terrorism more generally, as well as the unique phenomenon of anticipatory anxiety about future (unknown) threats specifically. Marshall and colleagues echoed a similar sentiment, noting “...the presence of persistent fears in the general population of being personally harmed in future terrorist attacks is a poorly understood phenomenon that may represent a vulnerability in the general population...” (p. 305).

### **Terrorism as a Unique Threat**

The events of September 11, 2001 are unique in terms of how fear and insecurity were primed in the general population, and there are ways in which this reflects a new type of threat paradigm unlike any other in history (Sinclair & Antonius, 2012; Sinclair & Antonius, 2013). For example, some are quick to point out how unlikely we are to perish as a result of terrorism, and frequently juxtapose these types of threats with other common dangers we face in life that are far more threatening, at least statistically (e.g., automobile accidents, health ailments, smoking, etc.). However, there are several key features that distinguish terrorism from other threats we face, which in turn may explain the differences in fear responses (and other emotional responses) that people experience.

The first of these is locus of control. In contrast to the dangers posed by driving or heart disease, where people are able to take concrete steps to assert greater levels of (perceived) control, there is no blueprint for establishing control or prediction when it comes to terrorism. It can happen anywhere and at any time, and through an infinite number of means. Indeed, according to the most recent statistics provided by the US Center for Disease Control (through 2013), eight of the top ten leading causes of death are health-related (e.g., heart disease, cancer, stroke, etc.) (CDC, 2016). However, the locus of control one may experience across these different threats is likely to vary significantly.

In the case of illness or automobile accidents, individuals are more able to pinpoint the threat and take measures to mitigate it – whether through improving health (e.g., through increased exercise, diet modification, medication, etc.) or putting on seatbelts and/or driving slower when operating an automobile. However, in the case of terrorism, there is a significantly reduced sense of control and fewer options available for people to feel in control. As a result, people may respond in a variety of ways – often through some form of avoidance (i.e., avoiding flying or using public transportation, crowded public gatherings, etc.). Terrorist attacks are often perceived as random and elusive, with varying targets, methods of attack, and perpetrators. As a result, a person’s sense of agency in mitigating threat is significantly reduced. This likely explains the sense of cognitive dissonance people feel when told to live their lives normally.

The second feature is the catastrophic nature of the threat. Although terrorism may result in fewer overall mortalities statistically than other threats faced in everyday life, there are ways in which it is unique – both in terms of the sensationalism involved (e.g., beheadings, mass shootings) and potential scope (e.g., the prospect of nuclear / biological / chemical threats). Fear and anxiety are not only reactions to the discrete events themselves, but also to the *potential for future* catastrophe that is far worse. The events of September 11, 2001 were unique in terms of the

sheer destruction and lives lost, with no other event on US soil even approximating this level of devastation – all of which raised the specter of terrorism in a manner never seen before.

However, it was also the national discussion that ensued in the following months and years which really catapulted terrorism into the public's awareness. Frequent warnings from government officials (and others in the media and academia) about the possible use of biological, chemical, radiological, and even nuclear weapons bombarded the public and led people to consider catastrophes far worse than those observed on September 11, 2001. For example, in his 2004 book, *Nuclear Terrorism*, Harvard Professor Graham Allison noted, "...a nuclear terrorist attack on America in the decade ahead is more likely than not" (p. 15). Thus, while most attacks to date have been *relatively* smaller in scale, the perceived potential for far greater catastrophe and destruction have become boundless and terrifying in and of themselves.

Slovic (1987) highlighted these two factors when discussing how people develop heuristics for appraising risk in their everyday lives. Whereas *Dread Risk* relates more to the catastrophic and destructive quality of the threat faced, *Unknown Risk* has to do with the lack of control and predictability one experiences when faced with these threats (also reviewed by Marshall et al., 2007). Based on their configuration, a person's level of perceived risk and subjective fear will vary across a continuum of threats. While these heuristics have been applied to many types of situations / threats, they are especially relevant to terrorism and may help to explain the pervasive sense of fear experienced by many post-9/11.

The third feature is the prospective, ongoing nature of the threat. Whereas disorders such as PTSD, by definition, examine symptom clusters (anxiety, avoidance, hyper-arousal) that manifest *relative to* a specific traumatic event(s) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), terrorism is unique in terms of how it elicits *anticipatory* fear of what is to come. Thus, in addition to the catastrophic quality described above, there is also an enduring (and even never-ending) aspect to it – with no concrete parameters to indicate a beginning and an end. The threat continues to exist regardless of whether there are specific attacks, and fuels a more chronic and perpetuating insecurity within people.

Some have termed this phenomenon a *Pre-Traumatic Stress Syndrome* to highlight the fear and anxiety associated with a future, probabilistic threat that has not yet manifested (Zimbardo, 2003). These fears may vary to some degree, but are easily stirred up in the wake of new threats or attacks, and are perpetuated by ongoing threat priming through the media at a near constant rate (e.g., 24-hours new coverage, television shows and movies with terrorism themes, political rhetoric, etc.).

The fourth and final feature is the ubiquitous nature of the threat. That is to say, unlike most other dangers we face in life, where one is able to clearly identify the specific threat dynamic (e.g., driving in a car, running away from a bear, living in poor health, consuming too much alcohol), the threat of terrorism lacks a clarity and definition in a way that ignites fear. This is different from the catastrophic and perpetual qualities discussed above, and relates more to the lack of definition and ability of someone to clearly identify a threatening stimulus. The term "terrorism" itself is fundamentally unusable as a descriptor, as there are an almost infinite number of possible situations or threats that could qualify, rendering it almost meaningless. This may explain why in many ambiguous catastrophes, where cause has yet to be determined, terrorism is often among the first that needs to be formally ruled out.

### **Fear in Recent Historical Context**

Although the imminence of national security threats has waxed and waned over the last fifteen years, the last twelve months have seen a resurgence of terrorism in western nations, with attacks in Paris (November 2015), San Bernardino, CA (December 2015), Brussels (March 2016), Orlando (June 2016), and Berlin (December 2016) to name a few. As a result, terrorism fears have reached their highest levels in the United States since 2003, with recent polling studies suggesting that nearly three-quarters of Americans believe terrorism is likely within weeks (Agiesta, 2016) and half worry that they or a loved one will be a victim of terrorism (Gallup, 2016). The ongoing terrorism threat has become a source of fear, insecurity, and even anxiety for many; and there are wide-reaching implications in terms of how these types of emotional reactions have the potential to impact public and political

discourse.

Some would suggest that terrorism and national security have evolved into the most important sociopolitical issues of our time (Sinclair & Antonius, 2012), with immediate relevance to the recent 2016 United States' Presidential election. Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, these dynamics have permeated political / public discourse in a myriad of ways, including with respect to immigration policy, second amendment rights, the Syrian refugee crisis, border protection, national security policy, the relinquishing of basic civil liberties, decisions about war, increases in hate crimes directed at those seen as responsible, and our economy to name but a few. At its core, terrorism is a complex psychology of emotion – uncertainty about the future, anxiety about victimization, fear of annihilation, anger at not being able to stem the threat, worry about change, and an infinite number of other affective experiences. It has become embedded within our collective consciousness in ways that now seem routine, pervaded our sense of culture and community in a manner that both repels and draws people together, and altered the basic fabric of our society in fundamental ways – both for better and worse.

Within the political spectrum, these emotional reactions have meaningful consequences in terms of which governmental policies are supported and enacted (Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, & Fischhoff, 2003). For example, in a large national survey of Americans in the months following the 9/11 attacks, Lerner and colleagues (2003) investigated the differential effects of fear versus anger on subsequent policy preferences. Notably, they found that fear increased future risk estimates and were more associated with precautionary, conciliatory policies aimed at mitigating risk. In contrast, greater levels of anger were associated with higher levels of optimism (and reduced sense of risk), as well as a greater preference for more punitive responses.

Research has also revealed varying levels of trust in government over time, often as a function of terrorism – with a significant spike in governmental trust observed immediately following the 9/11 attacks (Chanley, 2002). This was thought to be associated with the uncertainty and fear that many experienced in the days and months after the attacks, and sense of protection people sought from their elected officials. This pattern of findings was also observed in Spain following the 3/11 attacks on the transit system in Madrid, although was found to be short-lived with rates of trust returning to *pre*-attack levels by roughly seven months' post 3/11 (Dinesen & Jaeger, 2013). Given these types of trends and questions about the role of emotions specifically, Sinclair and LoCicero (2010) formally tested whether fear was a meaningful predictor of governmental trust in a large sample of university undergraduates in 2006. As expected, they found that fear was a meaningful predictor of governmental trust even after controlling for other demographic variables.

Further illustrating the relationship between emotion and political beliefs / attitudes, Renshon, Lee, and Tingley (2015) recently published a study examining how anxiety specifically may impact political decision-making. Notably, they found that experimentally-induced anxiety led to higher levels of physiological arousal, which in turn was strongly predictive of anti-immigration attitudes. They explained these findings in terms of how people in negative affect states are more prone to interpreting ambiguous information in threatening ways. These findings have immediate implications in the current political context – specifically as it relates to the Syrian refugee crisis and border protection laws, and what seems like an increasing polarization in viewpoints on both sides of the debate.

Several studies have also examined the relationship between terrorism and engagement in political activity, where emotional reactions are hypothesized to play a significant role. For example, Robbins, Hunter, & Murray (2013) evaluated whether increased voter turnout was related to terrorism activity internationally, and found robust associations between the two. The authors highlighted the important role that emotion plays in terms of political decision-making, especially when faced with an external threat – which in turn motivates people to analyze and engage the political process more carefully. Similarly, Hersh (2013) conducted a study where he analyzed a number of governmental databases in the United States and found that relatives and neighbors of 9/11 victims became more engaged politically (e.g., election participation) after the attacks, as compared to their control counterparts – and remained so even 12 years following September 11, 2001.

## **Social & Political Implications**



The implications of high levels of emotionality and perceived threat on our politics, government, and society at large are many and significant. The terrorism threat is quite unique in terms of the stranglehold it now has on the United States. It polarizes peoples' perspectives and moves individuals to take even more extreme steps in order to feel safe. Following 9/11/2001, it moved people to relinquish even the most basic civil liberties to ensure protection (The PATRIOT ACT). It has led some to stockpile weapons, and others to advocate for an outright repeal of the second amendment. This year, it moved 31 United States Governors to block entry (at least temporarily) to individuals fleeing war in Syria simply because of their nationality. The threat of terrorism has even led some to consider banning an entire religious group from entry into the United States, which should give everyone serious pause – given that our country was founded by people fleeing religious persecution. Finally, the threat of terrorism pervades national security policy and the conditions under which it becomes acceptable and even necessary to go to war – all in the name of feeling safe. One could argue the threat of terrorism has fundamentally altered the fabric of our society in ways that are not consistent with how the country was originally established.

It is equally important to emphasize here that terrorism can be a catalyst for good. Some have referred to this phenomenon as Post-Traumatic resilience or growth – where people are also able to negotiate these types of difficult and painful experiences in ways that are meaningful and transcend the trauma itself (Sinclair & Antonius, 2012). It brought tremendous kindness and kinship from people and nations around the globe in the days, weeks, and months following 9/11/2001. It has also brought communities of people together, and made us forget our differences for a time. We are specifically reminded of how poignant these sentiments were as we in Boston watched the arch-enemies Boston Red Sox and New York Yankees play one another, initially following 9/11/2001 and then again in 2013 after the Boston Marathon bombings – where community and solidarity superseded any sense of rivalry or competition. In ways, this new era of terrorism has redefined what it means to be resilient, and provided new opportunities for individual and societal growth. Following the Boston Marathon bombings, it became the impetus for the *Boston Strong* movement and energized a city. As such, it is also important to highlight how these threats have brought people together in union and relationship in ways that are unprecedented.

As we gain distance from the recent US Presidential Election and move into the future, we must be mindful of what is at stake and how the threats we face move us in both positive and negative directions. As a society, we must be cognizant of how insidious and divisive fear (and anger) can be, as well as the many ways it can be exploited for political, social, and economic gain. The terrorism threat we face is complex and will not be mitigated by simple solutions, such as excluding an entire religious or ethnic group of people, new wars, or escalating violence. We must step back, take stock of the threats we face and fear it produces, and begin to have a thoughtful discussion about how to respond in a way that adheres to our core values and unifies us as a people. The alternative seems to be the track we are on currently, where fear breeds a never-ending sense of uncertainty and divides people in a way that is destructive. We must be proactive and methodical, as opposed to reactive and reflexive.

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# On Anger, Disgust, and Love

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2/18/2017

## An Interview With Andrea Scarantino (February 2017)

*Martha Nussbaum is the Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics, appointed in the Philosophy Department, Law School, and Divinity School at the University of Chicago. She is a world-renowned philosopher whose ideas on emotions and their roles in social life, developed in dozens of best-selling books and 500 articles, have had a profound influence both in academia and in the world at large. Her work on basic human capabilities, carried out in concert with Indian economist Amartya Sen (1998 Nobel Prize in economics), has changed the way the United Nations measure quality of life in developing nations. Her recent honors include the Prince of Asturias Prize in 2012, the Nonino Prize in 2015, and the Inamori Ethics Prize, also in 2015. She was selected by the NEH to deliver the 2017 Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities. This is the highest honor the federal government bestows for distinguished intellectual achievement in the humanities. Her lecture will take place on Monday, May 1 at the [John. F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts](#) at 7:30 p.m. The lecture is free and open to the public and will also stream live online at [neh.gov](#).*



## Where did you grow up? What did your parents do? Do you have a general sense of how early family dynamics have shaped your adult personality?

I was born in New York City, but when I was six months old my father took a job with a large Philadelphia law firm, and we moved to the Philadelphia suburbs, first to Wyndmoor (near Chestnut Hill) and then, when I was nine, to Bryn Mawr. In Wyndmoor we rented an apartment over the huge garage of a millionaire named Wharton Sinclair, who had a large estate (now a conference center for the University of Pennsylvania), and he had the manor house and outbuildings of the Earl of Surrey moved brick by brick from Britain to Wyndmoor. The manor house was off limits to our plebeian family, though I think my mother went there once for tea, but I was allowed to roam all over the estate and its woods, and I used to bring all my dolls and books to one unused shed containing discarded sculptures of fish and deer, and sit on the dusty floor and read. I am sure this place shaped my rather romantic sensibility! It was so marvelous to have space, and mystery, and books. No TV until I was eleven!

My parents were very loving. My father had some negative traits: I often mention the racial attitudes he imbibed from his Macon, Georgia upbringing, and by the time I was a teenager we quarreled a lot about that. When I married a Jewish man, he didn't come to the wedding – though he did meet Alan later on, and liked him, as I had known he would. But anyway, he was a real intellectual and loved ideas. He had wanted to be a scientist, and didn't get to do that because he had to make money quickly to support his younger siblings, since it was a working class family. So he was practicing law by the time he was 21, and he achieved something very unusual by becoming a partner in a leading Philadelphia



Martha in happy baby pose, age 2 or 3 months

firm, something few people with a law degree from Mercer could achieve in those days. His area was tax, and particular federal estates and trusts. He wrote one monograph on the gift tax and one on federal estates and trusts, and he gave lectures for the practicing law institute. He loved me and encouraged me no end.

He gave me the sense that hard work and discipline were total fun and pleasure. He had a very strong sense of joy, and used to sing a lot on car trips, or recite Robert Service poems, such as “The Cremation of Sam Magee” and “The Shooting of Dan McGrew.” The latter we even staged, since I loved family theatricals, so I did the piano part, and my sister did the woman who screamed when the lights went out, etc. Much earlier, when I was around seven, he was a good sport playing Colonel Ludington in my dramatic enactment of Ride for Freedom, the true story of Sybil Ludington, who did a ride as long as Paul Revere’s, and over more challenging terrain, at the age of 16. I read this in a kids’ magazine and was totally inspired. I wanted to be that daring girl. So, the family all had to help me act it out, and my mother was also a good sport. Horses were lacking, but I think we had some saw horses in our basement.

So this gives you an idea of my father. He loved effort and will, and would recite William Ernest Henley’s “Invictus” often — also Nelson Mandela’s favorite poem. But my father recited it with a twinkle in his eye, so it was not about grim fortitude, but about the joy of a life fully lived. He also loved fashion, and, within the narrow limits open to a professional man of that time, had great fashion sense. His suits were all tailor-made, and he had about 150 ties. He took me shopping, and I derived the lesson that wearing subversive yet elegant clothes is part of being an intellectual, that one should enjoy color and shape and more generally enjoy life.

I remember one particular pink suit he bought for me at Bergdorf’s when I was around 18, a minidress and a matching coat, and I wore it to his lecture on “Powers of Appointment” for the PLI, as a send-up of that rather grim topic (which he told me was the most boring topic he lectured on), so we had fun creating a mystery, like who was that woman in the pink minidress? We just enjoyed the subversiveness of it. I note that when I gave the John Locke Lectures at Oxford in 2014 I asked a designer I know to make me a bright pink suit for the first lecture. I was not consciously recalling that earlier suit, but I know the spirit was the same: to send up the stuffiness and sexism of Oxford, with humor and panache.

My mother was a very different type of person, and I am so lucky that I had both parents. She was not an intellectual. Her career had been interior design, and she gave it up when she married my father, but she kept it up in our home, very much so. She was a very loving and nurturing person. She curbed my father’s desire to boast about me, which was quite good of her, and good for my future in all sorts of ways; she taught me the equal worth of all people; and she encouraged friendships and emotional expression. My younger sister was very attached to her, and much less so to my father, since he could be quite demanding, and she was a rebellious kid. She is now a first-rate musician, but at that time she seemed like someone who didn’t want to succeed at anything. Well, my mother understood her and loved her, and my father really didn’t quite have a love that unconditional.

Later, after we moved to Bryn Mawr, isolated in the suburbs and without much to occupy her, my mother started drinking heavily, a typical case from the writings of early feminist Betty Friedan (whose The Feminine Mystique spoke eloquently about depression in middle-class women). This made life hard for my sister and me, and it lasted





roughly from the time I was ten until the time I got married at 22. She never collapsed, or even appeared totally drunk, it was a quieter sort of drinking, but it impaired her emotions and made us very unhappy. Then she joined Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), and between about 1970 and her death in 1991, she was a leading member, going to national conventions and so forth. What was great about AA was that she got to work helping other people as soon as she was sober, and that way she met many people from different walks of life and acquired an occupation. At her funeral, all these people she had helped stood up to speak about her, and I was so moved, seeing how her capacity for love had won out and created a world for her.

I think it is easy to see someone very disciplined and think that this person is not having fun. But actually, it is only when you have long internalized habits of discipline that you CAN have fun as an academic. It's a very lonely life after all. Nobody tells you what to do. You must plan your own work. Many people find this incredibly stressful. Because of my father, I find it joyous; and because of my mother and my father (who was loving in his own way) I make room for love. If you are disciplined, then, and only then, as an academic, do you have room for friendship and love. Otherwise you are always fretting about whether you will actually sit down to write. But when you have confidence that you have just finished this thing and you will finish the next, then you can go spend time with the people you care about. So for me, discipline, fun, and love go well together – and preferably with subversiveness and humor.



Warren Craven

**Were there other important influences in your upbringing? What were your career dreams as you were growing up?**

I have to mention the wonderful teachers at my all-women school, The Baldwin School, who gave me relentless criticism and did not let me rest on my laurels at all. I often go back there. I was especially fond of the drama teacher, who really understood emotions, as much of the “Main Line,” that elite WASP area where I grew up, did not: a real bohemian, married to a painter, and so refreshing in that stifling social environment. And my amazing French teacher, Marthe Melchoir, around 4’10”, full of fire, and a total tyrant. Anyone who spoke a word of English in her class had to pay a penny: “Un sou pour le petit chien,” she trumpeted, and extended a piggy bank shaped like a dog. She helped my best friend Sara and me start a French Drama society. We put on plays by Molière and others, but when we were seniors in high school we also wrote our own plays, because we were really fluent in French after years under her tutelage. Sara wrote a play about George Sand and Chopin, and acted the role of George Sand.

I did a very heavily researched play about Robespierre and his break with the Girondins, including sending his close friend, journalist Camille Desmoulins, to the guillotine. The theme of political virtue fascinated me even then, and the tragic collision between a political ideal and personal friendship. I put what in retrospect I would call Aristotelian sentiments in the mouth of an eventual enemy of Robespierre, Collot d’Herbois, who was revolted by Robespierre’s espousal of abstract perfection while he was indifferent to the fate of his friends. It’s a theme I keep returning to, and I still have that play. Needless to say, I played the part of Robespierre myself. Most of my acting roles were men, since I was the second tallest girl in the class. On one trip back to Baldwin, I saw Marthe Melchoir, then in her mid-eighties, and we spoke about that play and her encouragement of the production. She cackled with delight and said, “Vous voyez, Martha, je suis encore jacobine.”

And then my friends. I always had a special best friend, always women at that time; one between the ages of 6 and 9, then, after we moved, another one who came from a very musical family, and we always did plays and sang duets



together. She then changed schools at age 13, and shortly after that Sara arrived, who was my closest friend until I went away to college. We are still in touch. She married a professor of religious studies at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington, so she is far away, but very good on email. We loved drama, French drama, and also mischief and plotting, often to puncture the arrogance of boys we did not like.

It won't surprise you that my career plans were varied: acting, writing, and some type of intellectual endeavor all figured. And you know what? They still do. Whenever we have a law-literature conference we do some drama, and I corral my colleagues into acting and singing. I'll say more about that later. I was known to other girls as an intellectual. They used to call me "Artha Marguer" because I guess they saw that I liked argument.

At first I followed the intellectual arm of those interests, going to Wellesley College, since most of the great universities did not admit women at that time. I found Wellesley socially and emotionally stifling, and I left in the middle of my second year to take a professional acting job in a repertory theater. After that, for one year, I went to what is now called the Tisch School, the school of theater and film at NYU, in the professional acting program. But then I learned what I'd begun to

learn earlier, that professional theater is a horribly competitive world, and not one that makes much room for intellectuals. I also learned that what I really wanted to do was to think and write about plays, not act in them.

So I transferred to the regular part of NYU, majoring in Classics, which I had pursued already at Wellesley, and indeed in my professional acting career as well, since my job was in a repertory company dedicated to ancient Greek drama. I had some wonderful teachers at NYU, and my soon-to-be husband and I could basically make up our own curriculum, since there were very few undergraduates with advanced skills in Greek and Latin. We went to graduate school at Harvard together, he in Indo-European linguistics (he's now a professor of Linguistics and Classics at Cornell), and I in Classics, shifting later to ancient Greek philosophy but still getting a Classics Ph.D.

**You are one of the world's best known and most celebrated living philosophers, as testified by your 57 honorary degrees and by your reception of the most prestigious honors in philosophy (just in the last two years: Philip Quinn Prize 2015, for outstanding service to the profession of philosophy; Inamori Ethics Prize for Outstanding Ethical Leadership, 2015; Nonino Prize for a "Master of Our Time," 2015; Kyoto Prize in Philosophy, 2016; NEH Jefferson Lecture, 2017). And yet, your graduate education was not in philosophy but in classical philology. Your PhD dissertation, defended in 1975 at Harvard University, was entitled Aristotle's De Motu Animalium, and it was more or less the same as the book of that title, published in 1978. What attracted you to classical philology in the first place, and why did you eventually make the transition to philosophy? Is your graduate training in philology to be credited in part for your success as a philosopher, and if so how?**



Martha at age 6, at the seaside in Long Beach Island, N. J.

I was attracted to Classics by my love of Greek tragedies and comedies, which I read first in English and then, as soon as I could, in Greek. When I went to graduate school I wanted to write about tragedy – and lo and behold, I did! – but later. Because when I got to Harvard I found that nobody was addressing the deep ideas in the tragedies. Some were editing texts, and others were doing literary criticism of a somewhat superficial and vapid sort. The people who really commanded my respect were G. E. L. Owen, the great scholar of Plato and Aristotle, and Glen Bowersock, the historian. I don't have a gift for history, but in order to work with Glen I made Tacitus my "special author" in Latin, and I've always delighted in Glen's prodigious learning, his grace, his wit.



Harvard was a shocking and repugnant place: anti-semitic, sexist, anti-gay. My change of name from Craven to Nussbaum was much commented on, and my husband was given the cold shoulder. There was a lot of sexism too: I have often told the story of how, when I became the first woman in the Society of Fellows, an eminent classicist wrote me a letter of "congratulation" wondering (archly) what we could call a female fellow. "Fellowess" was too awkward. So maybe the Greek language could solve the problem. Since the word for "fellow" is hetairos, I could (he said) be called hetaira. But of course I knew well, as did he, that that was the term for a courtesan. So, back to Glen: as an openly gay man with a life partner (the eminent scholar Christopher Jones), he was the target of "jokes" of a similar nature, so I felt a bond. Having been a professional actress I knew quite a few gay men and already felt that their exclusion and inequality was a shocking and repugnant fact about my world, so I made a great point of inviting Glen and Christopher over for dinner, and I still feel great delight when by serendipity they turn up somewhere in the world where I am—as once a few years ago in a restaurant in Beirut, when both of us were lecturing on something there.

I remember attending the Mahler 9<sup>th</sup> with Christopher once, and it was a marvelous experience on account of his keen musical sensitivity. I am sure the seeds of my lifelong passion for gay rights were sown earlier, in my theater days. But Glen and Christopher figure prominently in my decision to bring that issue into my academic work. Glen, you know, was a brilliant Dean at Harvard, and he had all the equipment to have been one of our truly great university presidents. But the glass ceiling was so obvious, it might as well have been a cement ceiling. I note that despite our rapid progress we still have not seen an openly gay man hold an Ivy League presidency, although the great Ralph Hexter, a first-rate Classical scholar whom I had gotten to know in that way, broke through the cement ceiling as President of Hampshire College and now as Interim Chancellor at UC Davis.

And we have to mention the remarkable Biddy Martin, long an outspoken lesbian, who began as a scholar of German literature at Cornell and rose to be Provost there – before going on to be Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, and now the President of Amherst College. I think she certainly broke the ceiling for lesbians.

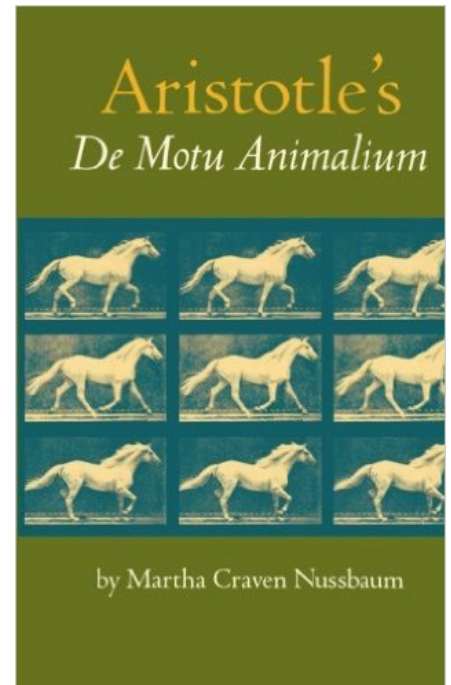
I enjoy friendships with gay men, and the gay studies pioneer David Halperin is among my closest friends. He says I was the one who first steered him to writing about the history of sexuality in Greek antiquity, when he was a young Plato scholar. He has since gone on to more general comparative studies of gay cultures in different times and places. I find that my gay male friends share good taste and are fun to shop with, and share my passion for opera. But I got to know them through our shared work on ancient Greek sexuality.

Ok, so now to Owen, and the world of ancient Greek philosophy. That was an amazing subculture, such exacting scholarship, combined with such a vivid sense of which philosophical issues were the most exciting. The ancient writers were treated like living interlocutors who had something fascinating to say – but not without the most diligent historical and linguistic analysis. It was that combination of philosophical insight and superb scholarship that drew so many excellent younger philosophers to Owen, and I loved the philosophy and the philology both. I never

changed my degree program simply because the philology program had tougher exams, and I felt the need to improve my Latin – and a good thing too, since most of my historical scholarship in recent years has been on Cicero and Seneca, and I teach a Latin course every year, right now on “Roman Philosophers on the Fear of Death.”

When it came time for my dissertation I chose a topic – editing Aristotle’s *De Motu Animalium* – where I could do it all. The work is very short, and involves Aristotle’s attempt to give what he calls a “common explanation” of all animal movement. It touches on central issues in Aristotle – the nature of scientific explanation, the role of cognition and desire in explaining behavior, the nature of imagination – but little had been written about its contributions, because for a time the work had been considered spurious. I wrote five philosophical essays on central themes, I edited the text from a new analysis of the manuscript tradition, I translated it, and did a line by line commentary. Textual criticism is a marvelous discipline.

In 2015, Oliver Primavesi, a scholar in Munich who is preparing the first new edition of that treatise since mine, and has newly discovered evidence, including technical apparatus for looking at writing written under other writing that was unavailable to me, wrote to tell me that he has now absolutely confirmed that a bold conjecture I made – that there was a third independent manuscript family – had now had decisive proof. So he very kindly proposed a little conference to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of my dissertation, and we all gathered here in Chicago and celebrated philology.



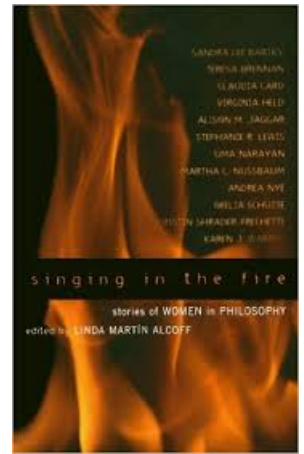
I gave a little speech to my grad students (we are strong in this area and some of my very best students are working on ancient Greek topics) about how important it is to know about manuscripts and the principles of textual criticism. So I loved that work. When Bernard Williams visited at Harvard, I began working, with his advice, on what eventually became *The Fragility of Goodness*, and Williams had a philosophical personality much closer to mine than Owen’s: Owen really didn’t care about moral and political philosophy, and emotions embarrassed him. So, Williams said to Owen that I really should change my dissertation topic and write about tragedy and luck, not “boring old *De Motu*.” But that was him, not me. I loved *De Motu*, and I told Bernard that I would do both.

**Philosophy has long had a reputation as a work environment inhospitable to women, even though there have certainly been significant improvements on this front over the past few years. Did you face gender-specific obstacles as a woman trying to make a career in a male-dominated discipline?**

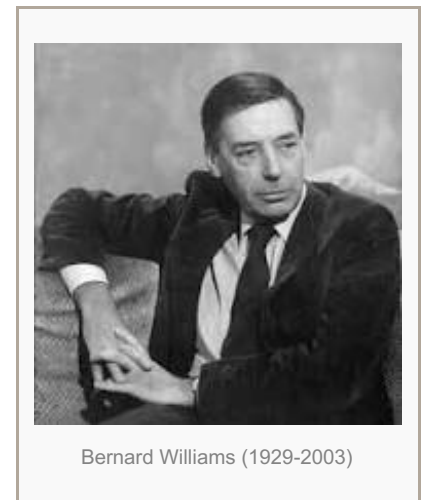
Well of course in those days every discipline was inhospitable to women. There was only one tenured woman in the whole of Harvard when I arrived there, the classicist Emily Vermeule, and she was in a chair reserved for a woman. I did not expect sexism, because my family was incredibly supportive, my school prepared me for success, and my undergraduate days at NYU were pretty terrific for those days. But Harvard! I felt I had entered a weird world that combined complacent elitism in astonishing ways with gross injustice.



I've discussed the problems of sexual harassment and child care I faced at the time in my essay in Linda Martín Alcoff's Singing in the Fire: Stories of Women in Philosophy. I spent a lot of time on the writing in that essay, since I was speaking of grave matters, but I wanted to do so in a spirit of sassy defiance and optimism. So I will not try to recap all that. I will only add that, although Owen was, as I describe there, a constant sexual harasser, he was the sort who inspired pity more than fear, because he was destroying himself through alcohol; and he did not retaliate against women who said no, since he basically knew that they had made the right choice. I still think his behavior was terrible and did harm, both to the climate of instruction and to people who were very demeaned and insulted by his conduct. I suppose I always felt he was harming himself, not me, and I also understood that he had always been demeaned and insulted himself at Oxford for his lower middle-class Welsh upbringing. So I saw him as basically a victim. Because of my mother I knew the toll alcohol can take on the personality. Sadly, he did not recover as my mother did, but died shortly after his sixtieth birthday.



And then, all of a sudden, there was Bernard Williams, a real feminist. He was just getting divorced from Shirley Williams, but he had already lived the life of a man who was an equal-time child care provider, and he went on to do the same in his second marriage, to Patricia Williams, a high-ranking editor and a simply wonderful human being with whom I am in touch today. (I dedicated the anger book to Bernard's memory, and we've corresponded about that.) So Williams understood care, and he understood love, and he also had seen up close what women endured. Although there was no sexual harassment policy or procedure, he single-handedly undertook to be that grievance person, and if he could not alter institutions he certainly could tell us that we were correct to feel that our dignity had been insulted and that things must change. I should add that I fell totally in love with him, as I've recorded in the long obituary article for Williams that I published in the Boston Review (October 2003) but he behaved in the most appropriate way, respecting his new wife, his supervisor role, and women in general.



**One of the distinctive aspects of your philosophical method is its eclecticism, as you creatively combine domains of knowledge that are often kept separate, most significantly philosophy, literature and science. What does philosophy miss out on when it is not combined with literature on the one hand and with science on the other?**

I am not overjoyed by the term “eclecticism,” since, at least to me, that suggests a lack of a central rationale. “Interdisciplinary” is the term that I would favor. I think any philosopher who works on the emotions needs to be aware of developments in cognitive psychology, neuroscience, anthropology, and psychoanalysis. I totally agreed with ISRE for supporting communication and dialogue as essential for progress. (Not everyone will be willing to include psychoanalysis, but let people judge for themselves, in terms of the insights I derive from that.)

ISRE has been an important force for intellectual progress. By now philosophy is quite well-informed, though not always about cultural differences or developmental trajectories. I have to say that the other disciplines don't always care about philosophy or take care to define their concepts in a philosophically rigorous way. Some experiments are deeply flawed by this failure (see my critique of Schachter and Singer in Political Emotions.) So I read widely but select certain “heroes” who seem especially trustworthy because of their conceptual rigor: Dan Batson, Paul Rozin, and in neuroscience, Joseph Le Douarin. (This is not an exclusive list, so please do not infer criticism of people I have omitted.) Philosophy needs to check its insights against what science has found, or it will be prone to error.

**ISre** International Society for  
Research on Emotion

You mention literature, but actually literary works are sources of both error and truth, since they emerge from cultures that are often unjust. So for normative ethics we should trust literature only with careful preselection. As you see in Upheavals of Thought, I reject the insights of most of the literary works I examine in Part III, though their errors are instructive and help us approach truth. For descriptive insights things are better, since much literature does aim to portray human experience and can therefore test our theories better than our ad hoc personal intuitions, since novels are typically written for a broad audience, and must be recognizable to that audience. However, the main use I have for literature in the theory of emotions is as an ally of psychoanalysis. I find that many people who won't take seriously the work of great theoretical psychoanalysts such as Donald Winnicott or Ronald Fairbairn (both in the "object-relations" school, the branch of psychoanalysis that interests me most) will respect similar insights when they are located in Proust. So I lean on Proust, since I want to get to the truth, and I do believe that Proust is a great descriptive psychoanalyst, although his normative views of love, as I record, are deeply flawed.

In political philosophy there is also an urgent need for interdisciplinary cooperation, which is the main rationale for the Human Development and Capability Association, the association started by a group of younger economists and philosophers who thought there should be an ongoing home for regular dialogue about the approach that economist Amartya Sen (Nobel Laureate for 1998) and I had pioneered. Sen and I are its two "Founding Presidents," and its function is to bring people together from many countries and also across disciplinary divisions, to stimulate high-level work about (including criticism of) the "Capabilities Approach" that we began. Political philosophers need to learn history and politics if they are to make useful recommendations for a complicated world, and they had better be in close conversation with economists if they want their proposals on global development to win a hearing. Once again, these other disciplines are better on the descriptive front than on the normative. The normative conceptions embedded in neoclassical economics are highly questionable, and need constant skeptical prodding.



**You have often characterized your theory of emotions, most systematically described in *Upheavals of Thought*, as Neo-Stoic. The Stoics had a complex theory of emotions as judgments of appropriateness. Just to give a couple of examples, they took fear to be “the judgment that there is a bad at hand and that it is appropriate to avoid it” and appetite to be “the judgment that there is good at hand and that it is appropriate to reach for it” (Sorabji 2000, 30). In *Upheavals*, you also write that ‘[e]motions are appraisals or value judgments’. How is your theory of emotions similar to the original Stoic theory, and how does it differ from it? Also, does your notion of appraisal differ from the notion of appraisal used by contemporary appraisal theorists in psychology to designate the mental process that *causes* an emotion (rather than the emotion itself)?**



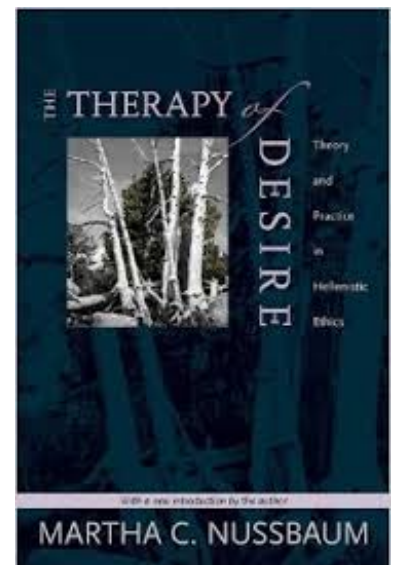
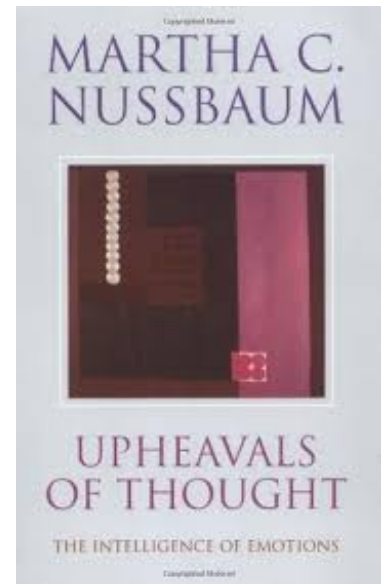
I am not at all sure why you begin with Richard Sorabji's reconstruction of Stoicism, which is very different from my own. Had we not been writing at the same time, I would have devoted attention to why his view doesn't get the texts right. (I note that Sorabji is a great scholar and a prince among men, so this criticism is meant to be combined with the highest respect.) Surely it would be unfortunate if the Stoics had defined emotions in the circular way he proposes, in which emotion is defined in terms of the thought that it is right to have an emotion. But anyway, I believe they don't define emotion that way. And since we're discussing my own Neo-Stoic theory, we had better begin with what I take the Stoics to say, as argued in Therapy of Desire.

I think that for the Stoics an emotion is the acceptance of a proposition whose content combines an object with a thought of deep importance for the person's flourishing (*eudaimonia*), and both of these with some further thoughts about the current fortunes of the object. I'll elaborate these points further below. (It is thus very similar to the views that Richard Lazarus and Andrew Ortony have advanced in psychology, since both, rejecting the behaviorist view of emotions, have stressed the importance, in emotion, of awareness of an object that is taken to have considerable significance for the creature's flourishing.) Grief, for example, has as its content something like, "My mother, who is absolutely central to my life, is gone." That judgment doesn't say that it is "right to get upset": rather, the full acceptance of that alarming proposition, namely that someone central to your life is gone, is the upheaval, like a wound in the self. As Seneca's Medea says, betrayed by her husband and seeking to take revenge: once you love someone else, "there is a space open for a wound." In that case, she relies on the fact that Jason's high valuation of the importance of their children for his own flourishing, combined with news of their murder (by her), will tear him apart.

I believe that my notion of appraisal is the same as that used in the psychologists I cite and study, though psychologists, like philosophers, often use key terms in different ways. One difference from some would be that I think all moving animals are capable of appraisal, and I think Lazarus agrees with this, but others do not, for example Zajonc in his debate with Lazarus, although I think that at crucial points they are talking past one another. (Typically people who spend their lives studying animals are convinced that they are capable of many appraisals, and I have learned a lot from the work of Frans De Waal, and from other scientific work on apes, elephants, whales, and dolphins. (My daughter is an animal law attorney, and we work on these issues together.)

My theory agrees with the Stoics in holding that: (1) emotions always have an object; (2) the object is an intentional object, that is to say, it figures in the emotion as the creature itself sees it (thus one might grieve on the basis of false information); (3) the directedness toward an object is typically combined with beliefs about the fortunes of the object, whether it is doing well or badly, whether it is threatened or safe, etc. (in the case of animals we then have to argue about what "belief" is, but let's postpone that); (4) these beliefs or whatever we shall call them appraise or evaluate the object as important; and (5) this importance is importance relatively to the person's own conception of *eudaimonia*. (Thus one might believe that all human beings are of equal worth and yet grieve for the deaths of only a few of them, those to whom one is attached – the source of much moral difficulty.)

In addition, for the vast majority of the cases, the emotions perceive their object as under the sway of fortune and mutability, not unchanging or under the full control of one's rational will. I believe that wonder and awe are exceptions to this point: those emotions may be directed at objects such as God or permanent features of the world of nature that the person does not see as mutable. But the Stoics do not discuss those emotions (which may not



even be eudaimonistic). Spinoza, who does discuss them, thinks that they are exceptions to his general argument that emotions are bad forms of dependency on the mutable world.

That was the core account that I presented in Upheavals, ch. 1, saying very explicitly that it was a crude sketch to be modified by subsequent chapters. We do not get the full theory until the end of chapter 5. So it is astonishing to me that philosophers have classified my approach as “judgmentalist,” showing that they have not read beyond chapter 1. It’s ok to put a book down if you don’t like it, but not to write about the person’s theory without doing the requisite work.

In chapter 2, I say that the Stoic view needs very basic modification in order to do justice to the emotions of non-linguistic creatures such as infants and non-human animals. I hold, and show evidence for, the view that all moving animals (in other words not committing myself about sponges and molluscs) have emotions, which are important in explaining their movements. Most scientists working closely on animals now agree, and a major part of my current work being on animal rights, I follow this literature closely. So what changes do we need?

First, the attitudes cannot be envisaged as involving a linguistically formulable proposition, and the beliefs aren’t propositional in form if that means linguistically formulable. What we need is a looser and more inclusive notion of predication or combination: emotions combine perception of an object with some processing of information about the current fate of the object. (For me, “cognitive” means only “involving the processing of information,” whereas Jesse Prinz has a far more exacting definition of “cognition.”) So, for example, the fear of a deer as the wild dogs are charging and about to leap involves a perception of this pack (I leave to others the question of what specific concepts we should ascribe to the deer), combined with the idea that this pack is bad for me, and this bad thing is imminent. (Some philosophers would think this sufficient for the ascription of a “belief,” some would not.)

So, that is the first modification, and we then would do specific research on the neuroanatomy of particular creatures to determine how sophisticated their perceptions might be. (Very specific, in some cases. Thus elephants can identify strange bones as elephant bones and grieve for the dead, even without knowing the individual as a member of their herd. According to Hal Whitehead and Luke Rendell, whales can have thoughts something like, “Hey, that’s a cool new song and I want to learn to sing it right now.”)

In chapter 3, I introduce the second modification: in human species, emotions are relative to a culture, and derive a good deal of their specific content from the surrounding culture, and I then go into detail about the different ways culture influences emotion. I now think that this cultural richness pertains, as well, to whales, dolphins, apes, and elephants. Whitehead and Rendell’s book The Cultural Lives of Whales and Dolphins offers a rigorous argument that in at least some cases these species exhibit culture (which they carefully define after going through all the prominent definitions), which would mean that their emotions do too, as in the case of the new song, which produces delight.



In chapter 4, I modify the view yet further by showing that the emotions of an adult human being bear traces of an infantile past: the present object is typically a collage of past objects. It’s here that Proust becomes very important for me. The specific history of human beings profoundly influences the emotions they have and how they interweave, and sets humans up for many difficulties in life, as when the person you think you love is seen by you as a vague image of your parent.

In chapter 5, turning to music, one of my great passions, I show how all these modifications help us solve some problems that many philosophers have tried to solve concerning the emotional content of music. For our purposes, the new theoretical contribution of this chapter is the fact that even very sophisticated emotions of a human adult may not be linguistically formulable, but formulable, or more accurately formulable, in musical terms. Here I draw on

Mahler's insightful discussions of how his symphonies seem to demand a verbal map of the emotions that they express, and yet this verbal account always turns out to be what he calls a "stammering translation" into a different medium. In other words, there are musical ways of making the nuances of an emotion precise that do not exactly correspond to any linguistic formulation. And I note that this insight helps us vindicate Schopenhauer's judgment that music has a particularly deep connection to the emotions. Language is used every day, and easily becomes shopworn, and it takes a poet to recall it to its freshness, its ability to embody eudaimonistic insights in a meaningful way. Music is not as shopworn, and thus may cut straight to the heart.

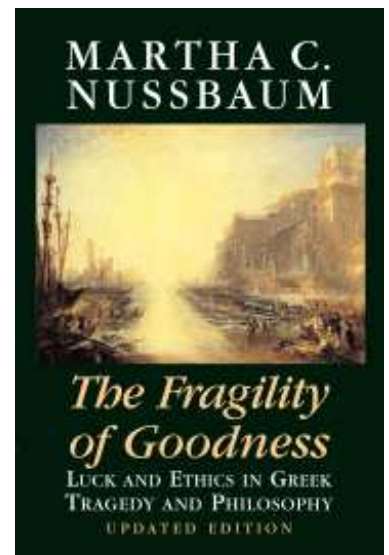
In writing a lot, lately, about opera, I develop these insights further, showing how the musical dimension of (say) a Mozart opera can add greatly to the emotional texture of what the libretto sometimes presents in only a skeletal way. And in a long article on "Mercy in Music," forthcoming in the [Oxford Handbook of Music and Philosophy](#), I argue that although we could not recognize mercy without some sort of plot conveyed in words, once the plot lines are laid down, the mercy may be communicated purely through music. I use a variety of examples to study this point, including Mozart's [La Clemenza di Tito](#), Puccini's [Suor Angelica](#), and Britten's [War Requiem](#).



**Your first best-selling book was the *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*. The book introduced two major themes of your life's work. First, the idea that vulnerability is an essential and valuable feature of human life. Second, the idea that emotions play a central role in manifesting our vulnerability. Can you briefly explain what is good about vulnerability and how emotions are connected to vulnerability? Have you often felt vulnerable in your own personal and professional life, and do you find those moments especially life-affirming?**

Actually [Fragility](#) does not say that vulnerability is in general a good thing, although it is often read that way. I was perhaps not clear enough, and most of my subsequent work has been an attempt to sort out what types of vulnerability are valuable and what types are pernicious. In [Fragility](#) and [Therapy of Desire](#) I was confronting philosophical views that urged us to get rid of all vulnerability by not attaching importance to anything we can't control.

On Aristotle's behalf, I responded by saying (a) that even the activities that seem most under our control, thinking and contemplating, are not totally so. Not much thinking goes on, says Aristotle, when you are being tortured, and nobody would say that it could, "unless he were defending a philosophical position at all costs." Thinking needs nutrition, health, political non-persecution, a stable livelihood, and so forth. And (b) some activities through which people incur very deep and obvious vulnerability – friendship and personal love, family love, political attachments and activities – have intrinsic importance, and a life without them is just not a flourishing human life. Aristotle even says that "one would not choose to live without friends, even if one had all the other good things of life."



So that is my basic position, then and now: all human activities are vulnerable in some ways, since we are embodied beings; and some of the most particularly vulnerable ones are crucial to life's value. But that does not entail that all forms of vulnerability are good or that one should seek to maximize vulnerability as if it were a value in its own right. No child should be vulnerable to hunger or violence, no citizen should lack stable health care. No woman should have to walk in fear of sexual assault. My capabilities approach is basically an attempt to describe the bad forms of vulnerability that a good society should prevent for its citizens, insofar as possible, thus creating space within which the good sorts of vulnerability can flourish. (There's not much room for friendship when you are homeless and desperate for a square meal.) Even with respect to the good things, one would not, I think, seek to maximize

vulnerability. When one chooses friends wisely, as Aristotle and Cicero both note, one looks for deep traits that are not so likely to change with time. And that is not an error. You can't control the health and happiness of your children, but you can certainly try to set their lives on a stable course.

OK, now to emotions. What the Stoics understood very well (and this is a big part of Therapy of Desire is that our emotions are responses to valued and yet uncertain external objects (external relative to the will, since emotions can certainly be about the state of one's own body). They chart the fortunes of the things and people we care about. Fear embodies the thought that something or someone very important is threatened; hope is fear's cousin, reporting that a good outcome might possibly ensue. Almost always, as Seneca insists, the two go together. Then there are love and grief: if you love someone, then you cannot avoid deep grief, whether at a death or in a breakup or divorce. Loss and love go hand in hand.

I started Upheavals with the story of a person sort of like me whose mother dies (it's a philosophical example a la Seneca, not autobiography). The reason I chose a parent is that every reader has had that experience, if not with a parent, then with a grandparent, or guardian of some type. If I'd chosen a child, readers might think, "Oh, my child will die long after I'm gone." So I wanted to make the point that cultivating deep attachments makes one vulnerable to grief. Anger and gratitude are responses to the way other people treat the things and people one values: sometimes good, sometimes bad. Insofar as you care whether other people treat you well or ill, you have hostages to fortune. It was not for nothing that Lucretius, imagining really perfect beings outside of our world, wrote, "They are not captives of gratitude for benefits, nor are they tainted by anger." Envy, jealousy, all the major emotions have this structure of need and dependency.

Obviously I've encountered grief and loss. Both of my parents have died, as did, much later, my grandmother. The deaths of my parents, at ages 71 and 76 respectively, were very painful. They were a huge part of my life; also, I felt that they should have lived much longer. Since my grandmother lived to be 104, I felt less grief, and tended rather to congratulate her, since she kept her health and her mental faculties to the end. But of course it was still a loss. When I break up with someone after a long and deep relationship, that is also a terrible loss, almost like death, requiring mourning and a reweaving of one's life.



Martha and her daughter Rachel, circa 1996 in her home in Chicago.

And of course being a mother, even of a most wonderful and delightful and gifted daughter, sets one up for many sleepless nights! But yes, of course that is life-affirming. The grief and anxiety register the depth of the commitment. And when political events take place that upset me, well, again, that upset takes the measure of the commitment.



One grief that was not life –affirming was not getting tenure at Harvard. It was a huge mess: philosophy voted narrowly yes, classics voted narrowly no. Sex discrimination was a big factor. It should not have happened.

When I had an offer from Harvard in 2008, they all said to me, “This will rectify that injustice.” (And I remember that the great scholar Albert Henrichs, who is now terminally ill, and for whom I’m just now writing a small contribution to an honorific volume, said it most sincerely and feelingly.) Imagine that, the same ones who had voted against me were apologizing. For about a day I found that moving. But then I thought, that’s the past, and my decision is about the future: do I really want to go to that diseased and self-complacent place? (And I say this in full recognition of the great scholars it contained and contains.)

The vulnerability that is useless is the sort that comes from things that are not worth getting upset about, like the many examples of stupid anger that I depict in Anger and Forgiveness. I am pretty prickly about imputations of weakness or incompetence by strangers, especially if I think it’s about either gender or age.

**Another distinctive aspect of your philosophical work is its ambition to have practical import. In your *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*, you cite approvingly Epicurus’ claim that “empty is that philosopher’s argument by which no human suffering is therapeutically treated”. On this view, the point of philosophizing is to contribute to solving the most painful problems of human life. Do you think that contemporary philosophers should embrace this Hellenistic ideal more? Do you see yourself as a sort of therapist when you teach philosophy? Should philosophers take a more public role in society to meet Epicurus’ test, and why do they rarely do so, at least in the USA?**

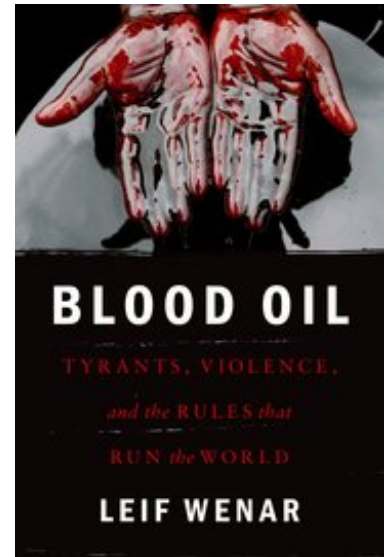
I don’t have a view about what other people ought to do. They should do what they love and what brings them joy. Most parts of philosophy are not directly practical and I do not think that someone whose passion is for the philosophy of physics should do political philosophy just to make a practical contribution. I do think that every human being should make some contribution to the future of humanity somehow, but there are so many ways of doing that: political engagement, giving money, teaching, raising children. You don’t have to do it through your writing.

I do think that political philosophy in both the Western tradition and any non-Western traditions I know anything about has always aimed to give normative guidance for political practice, and all of our great political philosophers did that: Aristotle, Rousseau, Kant, Bentham, Mill, Sidgwick, Rawls. So I do think that it makes sense for contemporary political philosophers to find ways of emulating them. That means writing at least some work for the general public — as Sidgwick, for example, wrote two types of works, popular and academic, and even Kant wrote with great simplicity and lucidity in essays for the public at large.

Hegel was the one who missed the boat, in the sense that his undoubtedly important works are impenetrable except by academics. Goethe took him to task for that, but to no avail. John Rawls was not a public speaker, because of his speech impediment, and he felt that he was not good at journalistic writing. One day at lunch he urged me to devote part of my energy to writing and speaking for a broader public: if you can do it, he said, you have a moral duty to do it. I recall that lunch (in Bartly’s Burger Cottage, a Harvard square hangout) very vividly, and I try to follow that advice. For example, after giving the lectures that later became Upheavals of Thought, a detailed philosophical project I adored, I deliberately turned to a book, Cultivating Humanity, that addressed a crisis in higher education and tried to intervene in a useful way.



I worry that young philosophers today simply do not learn to write very well. This problem has grown larger lately, when young philosophers are less inclined to read literature. People should work on this, if they do really want to change the world. Think of Leif Wenar's recent Blood Oil. That, to me, is a superb example of how a philosopher should write for a general public: vivid, punchy, urgent, and at the same time rigorous and factually precise. I try to do the same sort of thing in Women and Human Development and Creating Capabilities, but I have to give him the good writing prize. I guess my best writing is typically in my more poetic moments, as in Upheavals of Thought.



There are many ways to change the world as a philosopher, apart from writing like Leif Wenar. You can have a blog, or a Twitter account. I do not read blogs or write for them (except rarely on invitation), and I do not use any social media, so I don't know how much political philosophers are doing there. We all teach, and that is surely a way to change the world. I love it when a former undergraduate of mine does something great in politics: for example the marvelous Ro Khanna, just elected to Congress in a district that includes Silicon Valley but also some extremely poor districts. Since he was an undergraduate I've known he has the political skill to do something big, and now let the ascent begin! And of course one can create a movement or organization. Wenar does this with his Clean Trade website. Sen and I have done it with the Human Development and Capability Association, an international association with a journal, annual meetings, and much more. It currently has around 800 members in 80 countries. Its main aim is to stimulate good work that crosses national boundaries, youth-age boundaries, and the big theory-practice boundary. Networking is its most productive function.

I would also like to mention that countries vary greatly in the openings they give to philosophers who would like to address the public culture. In terms of writing for newspapers or doing press interviews, the best in my experience are India, Italy, Germany, and Belgium. The most difficult is the U. S. And the prize goes to The Netherlands, where there is a general-interest philosophy magazine that sells 10,000 copies per month, philosophical cafes that working adults eagerly seek out, and great support for translation. Every single book of mine except the De Motu book has been translated into Dutch, even though people know English: but they want to study the book more closely. I was just there to do a book tour for my Dutch publisher, apropos of the translation of the anger book, and I gave four lectures in four cities. The average attendance was 700, even though they sold tickets, and in some cases required people to buy the book! And I was on the Dutch equivalent of 20/20 with Ian Buruma; I've never been on a show like that in the US.



But once in a while the US does come through: a long blogpost I wrote about the emotions of our political crisis turned into a book proposal, and I got a large advance from Simon and Schuster, so now I have to write that book. Its provisional title is Powerlessness and the Politics of Blame: A Philosopher Looks At Our Political Crisis. That will also be the title of my National Endowment for the Humanities Jefferson Lecture, to be delivered at the Kennedy Center in Washington this May. This work will be fun, because I have new ideas about emotions, putting fear in a much more central position than I did previously, and developing an account of when and why anger and disgust turn toxic. I was in Japan for the Kyoto prize when the election happened, so I felt pretty isolated, unable to commiserate with my friends. So I sat and wrote, and I hope I am beginning to turn my grief into something constructive. Moreover, I am giving the Jefferson Lecture for the NEH this May, on the same topic, so that is at least one chance to have a large public Washington audience.

**The clearest example of how your philosophical work has had a practical impact concerns your analysis of basic human capabilities, carried out in concert with Indian economist Amartya Sen (1998 Nobel Prize in**

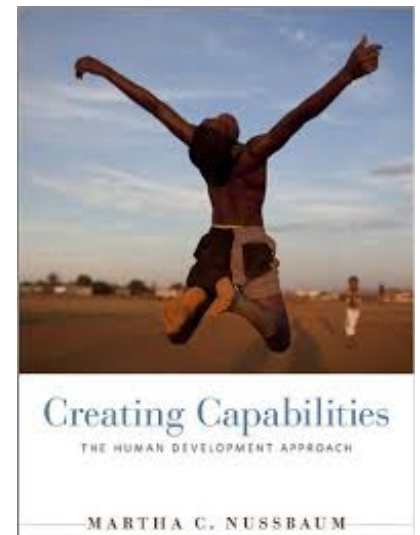
economics). This work has changed the way the United Nations measure quality of life, shifting the focus from aggregate measures of economic wealth to measures of the extent to which governments secure to their citizens the satisfaction of some “basic capabilities”. Your influential list of ten basic capabilities includes, among others, being able to live a life of normal length, having adequate health and nutrition, being able to exercise one’s mental capacities, being able to form an individual conception of the good, being able to enjoy recreational activities, being able to form attachments with both humans and animals, being able to play, and being emotionally healthy. What is the basic argument as to why governments should guarantee a minimum threshold of these capacities to their citizens? Secondly, why did you feel the need to add emotional health to the list of basic capabilities? Third, are there not going to be cultural differences concerning what counts as emotionally healthy in a given society, reflecting for instance the degree to which a society favors individualism (e.g. USA) or interdependence (e.g. Japan)? Fourth, isn’t there a serious worry that explicitly putting the government in charge of the emotional health of its citizens may lead to unwelcome side effects such as invasions of privacy or even totalitarianism (e.g. should there be governmental TV channels, given the unparalleled impact TV has on shaping public emotions?)?

Sorry, if you don’t mind, let’s get the terms straight. I use the term “basic capabilities” to refer to the innate unshaped equipment with which people come into the world. “Internal capabilities” are then those nascent abilities shaped into readiness through nurture, nutrition, and so forth, all of which requires political action (compulsory education, health policies, etc.). But internal capabilities might be present and yet people are not in a position to choose to act on their abilities: as when one has employment-related skills, but there are no jobs; or education but there is no freedom of speech. “Combined capabilities” are internal capabilities plus the social and political circumstances that make their exercise truly available. The Central Capabilities on my list are defined as “combined capabilities.”

The argument proceeds in two steps: first, Sen and I both defend capabilities as the appropriate space of comparison, by specific arguments addressing the claims of GDP, average household income, preference-satisfaction, and all-purpose resources. Those are long arguments and quite familiar, so I will leave people to find that in my Creating Capabilities. Next I raise the question, if we are going to make a constitution, or in some other way define citizens’ basic entitlements, how should we proceed? What capabilities will we focus on? Constitutions have to make judgments of centrality and importance. No constitution says “maximize human capability.”

At this point, on the one hand I invite people to imagine a life without a sufficient level of X or Y or Z: and I ask, Is this a life worthy of the dignity of a human being? (I say human, but please note that elsewhere I extend the approach to all sentient beings, all of whom have their own types of dignity.) This part of the argument is intuitive. It has to proceed case by case. I then work in the other direction, deriving empirical support from the most respected constitutions of the world, such as India and South Africa, looking at what intelligent political planners have seen fit to mark as central. Similarly I look at a variety of human rights documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and others. The list also corresponds closely to what Sen and other capability theorists emphasize and think central, though they do not make a list. My list is provisional and humble. It will not be enacted unless people in some nation decide to do so: it is a template for persuasion in the international community.

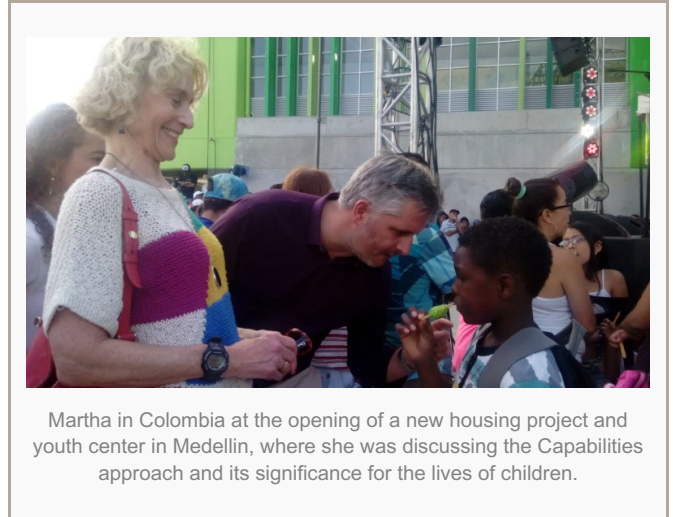
Let me take your third question next. All the capabilities on my list are specified vaguely, precisely in order to leave lots of room for citizens in a given nation to make them more specific in accordance with their traditions. There is flexibility, but it isn’t limitless: thus it would not be admissible for a nation to say, “We’ll have free speech for men only.” Ideas of equal human dignity and equal respect enter into the argument constantly. But still, there is meant to be room for plurality. Moreover, the whole conception is a form of Rawlsian “political liberalism”: it is not a



comprehensive view of the flourishing life, but a partial political module introduced only for political purposes. Citizens are encouraged to persist in their religious and secular comprehensive doctrines, so long as they do not trample on the rights of others.

OK, now to emotions. You say “add” to the list as if there were an antecedent list and I put that in. But really, I invented the entire list. So why emotional health? I think you are imagining the wrong thing here. Let me illustrate my point with a song I heard some poor women in India singing at the meeting of their women’s group: “In every house there is fear. Let’s do away with that fear. Let’s build a women’s organization.” That fear was fear of domestic violence, marital rape, child sexual abuse, and the trafficking of girls into prostitution. Ok, they concluded that what they could do about it was to build a women’s organization, but that is because India, until a couple of years ago, had no comprehensive legislation against domestic violence.

Even today, the police are totally ill-trained in this area, laws are not enforced, and women who complain of rape within marriage are laughed at. In a recent parliamentary debate, a progressive piece of legislation on sexual violence that made rape within marriage a crime was gutted, and that part dropped out. So, what I am saying is: let’s build a women’s organization, sure. But let’s also have good laws, police who enforce the laws, and in general a national commitment to the eradication of nonconsensual sex, including marital rape. That’s one thing government must do to protect women’s emotional health, and if men grouse that their privacy is invaded, as they do, we ought to reply that the home is not a space free from law. Nor indeed is the workplace, although men have complained bitterly about legal intervention with sexual harassment. So that is just one example.



Another example is bullying and harassment of gay, lesbian, and transgender children in schools. Their emotional life is warped in a very fundamental way when their peers and teachers do not show respect for them. Schools have improved a lot, but there is still a huge amount of work to be done. Disability is a similar issue: individuals are emotionally crushed by insult and stigma. So let’s get rid of that behavior. I do not think that it is too intrusive to ask all public school teachers to treat all their students with respect and to enforce norms of respect in the classroom. I realize some Americans think this is intrusive, but then they used to think that racial integration was too intrusive. In short: law protects our equal dignity and emotional health in many fundamental ways, and it should do this job better.

And what about mental health care? One of the saddest results of our Illinois lack of a budget is the cutting of mental health services for the poor. The lack of mental health services is a problem nation-wide, and many people are shunted into “quick-fix” drug treatments when what they really need is talk therapy. So let’s dedicate ourselves to comprehensive support for mental functioning.

I want the New Deal, basically, a comprehensive governmental program to make it possible for people to live free from fear (of going without needed coverage, etc.). Physical health care is in jeopardy too now, across the nation, and that is causing many people terror – they will get old, and lo and behold, no Medicaid.

These are just a few examples, but let me give one more. Adam Smith drew attention to the importance of being able to appear in public without shame. Many things affect this ability, but here’s just one that you might not have thought about: dental insurance. So many poor people have terrible teeth, because they can’t afford needed care. This makes them not only pained but also ashamed. When they go for a job interview, they don’t want to smile. And they carry themselves defensively. Often this means they don’t get the job. You get the idea now, I hope. I am saying that governments should think about fear, shame, and so forth, and adopt policies that remove the fear that is “in



every house.”

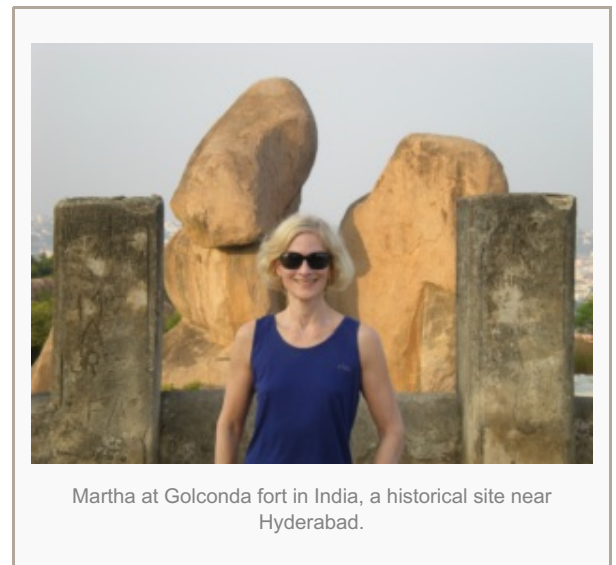
As for personal privacy, which you are right to care about: defending that also requires law: the new laws against “revenge porn” are one example of legal response to a new state of affairs.

**While working on capabilities, you have lived in India for extended periods of time, becoming deeply acquainted with Indian society and politics. Has this experience had an important impact on your life and career, and if so how?**

Actually, I’ve never been in India longer than three weeks at a time. How could I? I have a job. (And summer is not exactly the time to go to India, though once I had to, when I was writing The Clash Within.) I was a visiting professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi for two and a half weeks, but that did not pay my salary, in fact there was no salary at all. No organizations I work with have money, and at the other end I have responsibilities to my university, and our Law School has no regular

sabbatical policy. So I go once or sometimes twice a year, during spring or winter vacations. I first got to know India through the field studies Amartya commissioned for our capabilities project, and visited it in that connection. I quickly loved the country for some of the same reasons I was drawn to Jewish culture and exited from WASP culture: noise, argument, emotional openness, people protesting and demanding. I think the founding of the Indian nation is one of the most incredibly moving and appealing parts of any history I know.

When I listen to Nehru’s speeches on recordings I have, I weep. Among my great heroes in life are both Nehru (India’s first Prime Minister) and B. R. Ambedkar (the great legal architect of India’s Constitution, who was a dalit). I’ve written a lot about Ambedkar lately. And Rabindranath Tagore (1913 Nobel Prize in literature) is a third hero, a towering artist, writer, philosopher, educator. Amartya knew him, and his mother Amita knew him even better, and wrote two books about his school, so in my friendship with Amita I came to feel close to Tagore and teach his works often. Gandhi is a hero too, but of a more mixed kind, since his views about women and sex seem to me pernicious.



Martha at Golconda fort in India, a historical site near Hyderabad.

My main aim in spending so much time in women’s development groups in India was self-education: I felt that I needed to listen to poor women and what problems they were facing. But in the process, already half in love with India, I fell in love fully. For a long time, despite writing about development issues, I was reluctant to opine about Indian politics, since I am a foreigner. But then, as Modi rose, and the Gujarat genocide of 2002 was largely ignored in the West, my friends in India asked me to write about their struggle for the American audience, so I undertook the book The Clash Within. It was a new thing for me, interviewing politicians and so forth, but I think it worked in part because they saw me as an unthreatening figure, and they loved the glamor of being cited in a book published by Harvard University Press, so they said all sorts of incriminating things on tape and after signing a release.

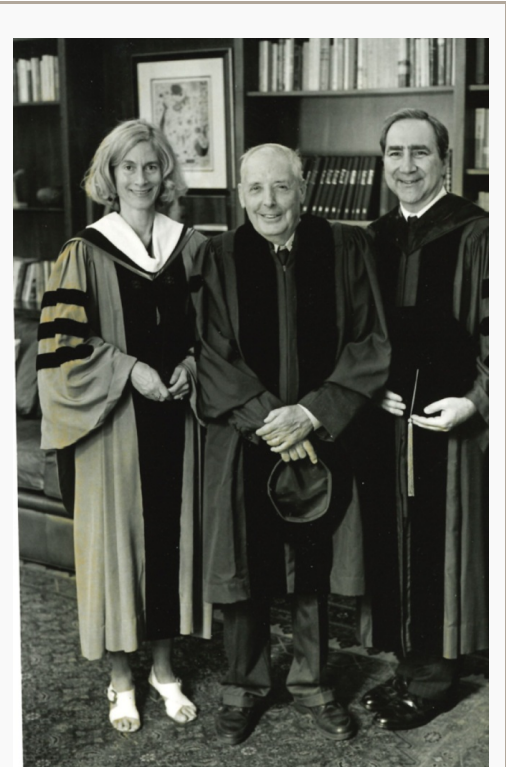
From that time on I’ve been writing regularly on Indian politics for Indian newspapers and American media like Dissent and Boston Review. Our university opened a center for collaborative research in Delhi in 2014, and from the start of the process of planning, around 2009, I’ve been on the Steering Committee. I just returned from the first large conference I’ve organized there, a comparative conference on prejudice, stigma, and discrimination, which was tremendously exhilarating and exciting. The aim was to examine caste prejudice, American racial prejudice, prejudice against Muslims, gender prejudice, sexual orientation prejudice, disability prejudice, and age prejudice, asking what common threads run through all and what differences there are. This will ultimately be an edited volume. So India is woven into most things that I do.

Let us now shift to your influential normative work on emotions, which seeks to establish which emotions we ought to experience in the personal, legal and political realms. The Stoics famously recommended *apatheia*, or freedom from the passions. On this view, a rational person should not experience any type of emotion, with the exception of what the Stoics called *eupatheiai* (joy, caution and will). Aristotle recommended instead *metriopatheia*, or moderation in the passions. On this view, we can experience all kinds of emotions without irrationality, but we should do so “to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive, and in the right way” (*Nicomachean Ethics*). If you were to characterize in the broadest possible terms your own normative theory about emotions, would you say that it is Stoic, Aristotelian, a combination of the two, or none of the above?

Actually *metriopatheia* is not a word Aristotle ever uses; the term belongs to Epicureans. And for good reason: because feeling a moderate amount of emotion is not what Aristotle recommends. He recommends what you say in your quote: the appropriate emotion for the circumstances, which might be a lot, or it might be zero. So his view is actually compatible with the Stoic view, only they argue that the appropriate amount is always zero! Kant thinks Aristotle’s a silly empty view, giving no guidance, and of course he’d be right if that were all Aristotle said. But he then has detailed accounts of fear and courage, of anger, of shame.

My overall view is Aristotelian, and I agree with Aristotle about some emotions: for example that the love we have for friends leads appropriately to grief if the friend dies or leaves. And I think he’s good on fear as well, insisting that a courageous person still feels fear of death, since he values his life highly and doesn’t want to lose it. On anger I differ, since he thinks that retributive projects after the murder of a parent are crucial if one is not to be slavish. Anyway, Aristotle’s in the right ballpark, looking at the texture of the whole life piece by piece and asking how emotions fit in. The Stoics are right about some things: for example when they urge us not to get wrought up about money or reputation. But their sweeping project of uprooting the emotions totally leaves life denuded of richness and politics of its urgency.

Cicero knew their writings well, but when his daughter died and the republic was imperiled he told his friend Atticus that he could not stop grieving, and, furthermore, that he did not think he ought to stop grieving. As for the daughter, his grief led him to write several works on grief that are valuable. As for the republic, his grief led him to return to Rome, denounce Marc Antony in the Philippics, and stay on too long, trying to do something to save the republic. He was assassinated as he attempted to board a ship to join Brutus and Cassius in Asia, and he courageously stuck his neck out of the litter to receive the assassin’s stroke. That’s emotional courage for you. And love. Antony ordered the assassins to cut off his hands and nail them up, since those hands had penned the Philippics. Too late, however, since the Philippics survive to move people everywhere to a love of republican liberty. (The American Revolution was centrally inspired by this period of Roman history, and in that case they did create a republic, which we had better hope we can preserve.)



Martha with Bernard Williams and President Hugo Sonnenschein at the President’s House, University of Chicago], during lunch prior to his honorary degree ceremony, 1999

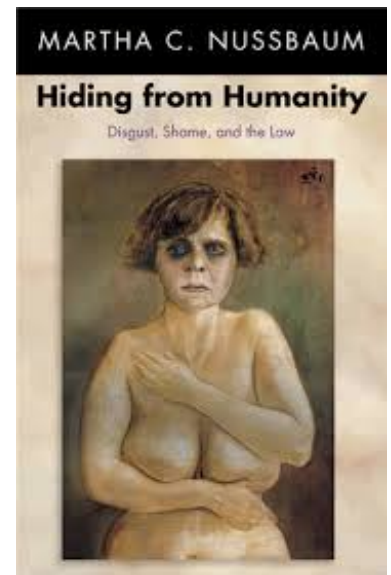
**In *Hiding From Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law*, you have argued that what is normatively wrong with emotions such as disgust and shame are their *cognitive contents*, namely the way they construe their objects. In both cases, you have suggested that disgust and shame involve “hiding from humanity”, and that they should not play any roles as “guides to public practice”. Can you explain why disgust and shame involve “hiding from humanity”, and what guiding roles exactly they should be excluded from in the law?**



**Finally, do you acknowledge any normatively unproblematic instances of disgust and shame in the private and in the public sphere? For example, is there anything wrong with being personally ashamed for having been put in jail, or with being publicly disgusted by the hypocrisy of politicians?**

What I mean is that disgust involves discomfort with the messiness and decay of the mortal human body. By fleeing from contamination by our own bodily fluids, we are fleeing ourselves. Walt Whitman makes this point splendidly in “I sing the body electric,” one of my favorite poems. And things get even worse when we project animality and a hyper-bodily nature onto some subordinate group (lower castes, racial minorities, women) saying, “They are the animals and I am not.” This is always full of self-deception, since the bodies of African-Americans, which were supposed to be so smelly and so hyper-sexual, are no different from the bodies of the whites doing the projecting. Think of Gulliver’s Travels and the terrible flight from self in which Gulliver engages at the end, unable to tolerate the presence of those “Yahoos” such as his wife and children, but of course never fully facing his own Yahoo-dom.

I think that disgust at spoiled milk and other decaying foods is not harmful, and may even be useful. Although, as Rozin shows, it isn’t a good proxy for danger, nonetheless, it is close enough to be a good heuristic for what might be discarded.



People often point to moralized disgust, such as disgust at rich bankers, as a morally useful emotion. I have a lot to say about that in Hiding From Humanity. Basically, when the word is used precisely, not as a loose way of talking about anger, it always involves a thought of contamination, and always involves a desire to separate oneself from the object. That is often a childish and useless way to behave politically. Sure, there are politicians who disgust me: I would not want to shake their hand, I would feel as if a rat had crawled into my living room. But how does that make our world better? Protest and constructive action are what we need. I think that Bernie Sanders sometimes appealed to a desire for constructive action and sometimes to mere disgust with the rich. We need to focus on the former, and learn to see the latter is an impediment, since we need to unite and work together. Dr. King pointedly asks his audience to imagine joining hands with Southerners, because we have to rise above even a moralized disgust to solve our problems.

Shame is much more complicated. With Freud I connect it to an ego-ideal, and shame is therefore often constructive, registering the thought that we have fallen short of a valuable idea. The problem is that in early infancy we become ashamed of our own finitude and helplessness, and this “primitive shame,” as I call it, leads us to want to tyrannize over others. That is a big source of evil in life, and unfortunately the good sort of shame is often infected with primitive shame, as when people stigmatize sexual minorities, or the “fallen woman,” in an effort at social control. Behind the veneer of moral argument there is often something more insidious going on.

**You have relied in part on scientific accounts of disgust to make your case that disgust is problematic because it reminds us of our animal origins. In the past few years, however, the animal reminder theory of disgust has been heavily criticized. Authors like Joshua Tybur or Daniel Fessler have proposed that there is no specific animal reminder function for disgust. For example, they have suggested that disgust toward corpses, deformity, and bad hygiene functions to reduce physical contact based on the pathogen-relevant information associated with these objects (rather than their being animal reminders) and that disgust toward sex has the function of motivating avoidance of specifically sexual contact with individuals who impose net reproductive costs as sexual partners (rather than sex being an animal reminder). I am not asking you to arbitrate an ongoing scientific controversy, but to say something about the role you ascribe to scientific research in shedding light on the cognitive content of emotions. If scientific consensus in a few years were to converge on the idea that there is no animal reminder function for disgust, would you consider your theory of disgust in the law in need of fundamental revision? If not, what exactly is the role**

## that scientific evidence plays in your normative work?

In Hiding I already make my own criticisms of Rozin, since I hold that the animal reminder view is too crude to account for the cases: some properties of animals, such as strength and speed, do not inspire disgust. I conclude that it is not just animality, but something about the vulnerability to decay and dissolution that is the lot of animal bodies, which inspires disgust. I believe this to be a friendly amendment, in keeping with Rozin's insights and the actual data of his experiments. As for the arguments you mention, I think that they do not grapple (at least as you summarize them here) with a raft of experimental evidence elicited by Rozin, showing that disgust is distinct from a perception of danger.

So I don't believe everything I read, with psychologists any more than with philosophers, and I think that any psychologist with a powerful theory is always going to be challenged and attacked. Dan Batson has spent forty years elegantly rebutting various objections to his theory of altruism; that's what great scientists do. So my critical but generally positive view of Rozin is based on my evaluation of his reasoning based on his experiments. Of course if he had faked the experiments I would not know that, so that I leave to scientists to police. (A fascinating case in point was the controversy between Frans De Waal and Mark Hauser about animal emotions and altruism. I had taken the side of De Waal based simply on my own analysis of the evidence he presented, which seemed, and seems, compelling. But then it turned out that Hauser was guilty of fraud, which of course I had not known, so the whole controversy went away.)

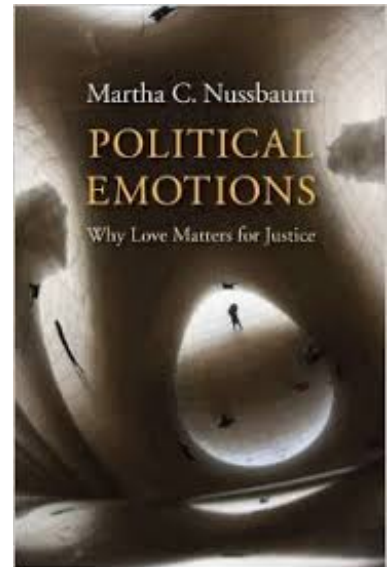
As for the claims you mention about sex: they need to take account of the fact that some very weighty thinkers, such as Adam Smith and Freud, believe that disgust is ineliminable from human sexual contact. I am not convinced by that, but in any case, where sex is concerned, we quickly shift from what I call "primary disgust", which is the business of scientists, to what I call "projective disgust," which is the business of cultural historians. That is, to figure out what southern racists thought about the bodies of African-American men, we don't look to laboratory experiments, we look at journals, letters, diaries, and so forth.

In my case, working on homophobia, we look to pamphlets aimed at inspiring disgust. When we move into cultural history we must keep an open mind and see what we find. I think that it's a very good starting point to look at prejudice and discrimination from the point of view of "projective disgust," asking how and to what extent racial, caste-based, religious, and gender out-groups are depicted as disgusting animals from whom the allegedly superior and clean dominant group must segment itself. Magical ideas of contamination are amply in evidence in many forms of prejudice. But not all. For example, prejudice against Muslims in India is heavily inflected by ideas of the Muslim male as hyperbodily and hyperanimal, the Muslim woman as animal and hyper-fertile. But prejudice against Muslims in the US does not appear to have these features, and is based more on fear.

**Samuel Johnson famously defined patriotism as "the last refuge of the scoundrel". In *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters For Justice*, you have argued instead that love of country, and a variety of other forms of love, have an important role to play in liberal democracies. In a nutshell, why does love matter for justice?**

Of course there are many bad forms of patriotism, and the philosophical tradition I study there (including Rousseau, Herder, Comte, Mazzini, Mill, Renan, and Tagore) thought it was crucial to make sure that the nation was conceived as continuous with a wider world of human beings, and as based upon sound moral principles rather than on ethnicity or religion.

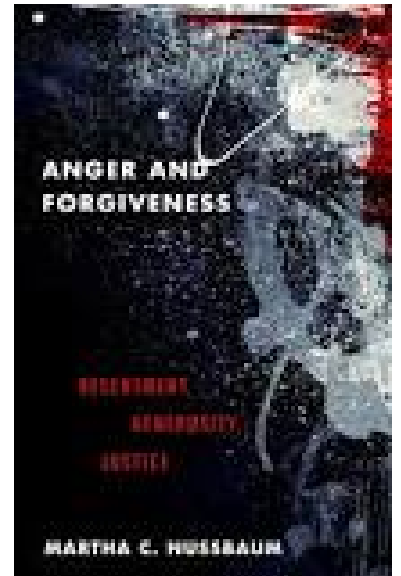
The basic problem all these thinkers saw was that people are inclined to be selfish and narrow in their sympathies. To get them to endorse any political project involving sacrifices of personal self-interest (redistributive taxation, support for national defense) they need to be summoned outside themselves by some sort of sustaining emotion. What might the object of such emotions be? John Rawls thought that emotions could take abstract political principles as their object: love for the principles of justice will render the well-ordered society stable over time. I argue that developmental psychology makes this seem unlikely: we learn our strong emotions in intimate personal settings, and unless politics can somehow hook onto those early loves, it will be impotent and will not long endure.



The nation is typically conceived as a parent or a loved one, for this reason. I argue that political love needs to be particularistic in this way, but that care must always be taken to harness that particular love to good moral principles and keep people moving back and forth. Good political rhetoric does this instinctively, and I study many cases. Think of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech. If Rawls had written it as an abstract structure of principle, the civil rights movement would never have succeeded. It was the soaring particular poetry, the rhythm of the language, its ability to capture Biblical images of love and justice, that made hearts leap out of their narrow breasts and soar toward something beautiful. Good thinkers have to do this each in their own context. King could not ape Gandhi, he had to create a different type of poetry and I would say a more openly erotic form of love, though he would have denied that. By this I mean a type of love growing out of our passionate attachments to loved people in our childhood, a love that is deeply particular (although we must tether it firmly to moral principles), and characterized by wonder and delight.

**In your more recent book, *Anger and Forgiveness*, you have made the case that anger is normatively problematic both in the private and the public realms. You acknowledge that anger's cognitive content – roughly, the construal of someone's action as a wrong – is not necessarily problematic, unlike in the cases of disgust and shame. The trouble with anger is in your view a desire it contains by conceptual necessity, namely the desire for payback. Can you explain what is normatively wrong with the desire for payback? You also mention a borderline case of anger you call Transition-anger: can you explain what that is, why it is borderline, and how it avoids the shortcomings of garden-variety anger?**

You have me wrong: I say that the cognitive content of anger includes not just the thought that a wrongful damage has been inflicted on something or someone one cares about, but also that it would be good for the wrongdoer to pay for what he or she has done. Of course that latter part usually gives rise to a desire, and so I do often talk about the desire for payback, but it's a desire with a very firm cognitive content. Anger appraises future payback as importantly good. That's not just me, it's common ground among all the major theorists of anger in the Western tradition, and also Santideva and Gandhi in India. I understand that the philosophical traditions of Ghana (oral traditions in origin) contain a similar view, that anger involves thoughts about wrongdoing and payback. Anyway, payback involves the idea of proportional rectification: the wrong must be counterbalanced by a pain or suffering elsewhere. This idea of cosmic balance is ubiquitous and very human, and it can take many forms.



Herb Morris gives it a very sophisticated form: the wrongdoer has encroached on someone else's liberty, so it is good for his liberty to be proportionally diminished. The angry person does not need to wish to take revenge herself. She may want the law to do it, or even some type of divine justice. Or she may just want life itself to pay her back: think how often, when breaking up with someone who has been guilty of a betrayal, we wish that the new relationship will be a terrible failure, and that will somehow serve him right, give him his comeuppance. The problem, however, is that proportional penalties don't as such do any good for the important things that have been damaged. Killing the murderer doesn't bring back the child who was killed. The failure of the betraying ex's new marriage does not actually fix my life, or give me a new relationship. Legal punishment sometimes does good, but not because it atones for the past. When it does good, it is because it changes the future: incapacitating a violent offender, deterring that person from committing a new crime, deterring others from committing similar crimes. The future is what we can change, so we ought to face the future, not stay riveted to the unchangeable past. Realizing this, our thought should make a Transition, facing forward and asking what actually would make sense going forward.

Transition-Anger is anger that has already made this shift. It faces the future from the start. Its entire content is: How outrageous that is! It must not happen again. So it has abandoned the thought that payback would be a good thing. Its whole question is how to make the future better, not how to inflict proportional punishment. Parents typically have this type of anger toward their young children: what the child has done is truly outrageous, but the parent wants to fix the future, making things better for all. It never occurs to good parents that they should "make the child pay". Instead, they do whatever it is that will make the bad behavior less likely to continue.

**Let me briefly follow up on our answer with a possible objection. On your view, anger always involves either a desire to inflict pain in the offender as a way to assuage one's own pain for something that has already happened (*Road of Payback*), or a desire to restore a balance of status with the offender for something that has already happened (*Road of Status*). Since you consider the first desire irrational because of its involvement in magical thinking and the second desire morally flawed because of its involvement in narcissistic thinking, you conclude that anger is always normatively problematic. But there is a third and I would argue more common desire associated with lots of forms of anger, and it is simply the desire for the offender to stop his or her offensive behavior. I would call this the *Road of Influence*, because in this case anger aims to modify an ongoing behavior rather than exact retribution – in the form of payback or down-ranking – for a behavior that has already taken place. For example, when I get angry towards people who are trying to cut lines at movies, my anger is first and foremost a means, and a generally successful one at that, to the end of making them give up on their ongoing attempt. In this case, unlike in the case of getting angry at a rape after the fact, there does not seem to be anything magical in my thinking: I am in fact getting back what I want, which is that the miscreant goes to the beginning of the line. And it is hard to see why it would be narcissistic on my part to expect that everyone gets in line and waits for their turn at the movies. You discuss the theme of influence a bit when you talk about anger as a *deterrent*, but your focus seems to**

**be on the deterrent effects of one's reputation for anger rather than on the deterrent effect of actual, ongoing anger. So my question is: do you acknowledge the possibility of a normatively unproblematic *Road of Influence* for anger, and, if not, why not?**

First of all, let's be clear that the Road of Status is one version of the Road of Payback, namely, in my view, the only one where the payback makes sense: by pushing that person relatively lower, you automatically do push yourself relatively higher, and so long as we imagine a zero-sum exercise of that sort, where it is not absolute but only relative status that is at issue, you've succeeded. Ok, on to your case. As you describe it, it strikes me as a classic case of Transition-Anger: your whole effort is to make things better moving forward, and the entire content of your emotion is, "How outrageous: that should not happen again."

I have to say, though, that things are rarely this pure, or you're a lot better at this sort of interaction than I am. When I encounter that sort of thing (and typically it is boarding lines at airplanes), I do also desire suffering for that person, whether just the pain of going to the back of a long line, or, more likely, a certain humiliation. I'm thinking, "you think you are above it all, and now, by making you suffer, I will show you that you not as important as you think." A little bit like Herb Morris's retributive theory of punishment, in fact. So, if you're free from that, it's Transition-Anger.

I was thinking of the deterrent effect of the belief that an angry explosion is likely. Sometimes that belief is based on a person's reputation, sometimes only on the size and behavior of their large SUV. Does a performance of anger deter bad behavior? Yes, sometimes, and I discuss this in chapter 5. I think that there are times when, knowing the culture you are in, the best way to get your message across is to give a performance of anger, as I did in the hair salon incident (where I performed anger in order to underline for management the unsafe condition of the cabinets, which had allowed a large bottle to drop down on my head while I was having my hair washed); and as the Utku (studied by Jean Briggs) think Jesus did with the money-changers in the temple: they say that of course he was not really angry, since he was perfect, but he understood that in that culture a performance of anger was the best way to get his point across.

Richard Sorabji, in his generous comments on my manuscript, said that he often used a performance of anger to influence his children. But the first point I'd make is that the performance is better than the real thing, because more easily controlled. And, second, even performance is probably not the best way to lead to a world of peace. I would worry about whether children would be getting a mixed message from Richard's behavior. (I think the hair salon is different, since by performing anger to the management I was going to bat for the employees, who did not misunderstand me, and were not likely to imitate my behavior; moreover, the incident was a one-time thing, whereas presumably Sorabji's performance with his children was repeated.) One thing I will concede: non-anger is not always well received. It is sometimes read as being cold or unfeeling. In a woman especially, it tends to be read as superior and condescending. But then it is not my business to cater to men who think that women should behave like submissive irrational beings.

**One of the common themes in the public commentary on the rise of Donald Trump is that his campaign explicitly aims to elicit anger and fear in the electorate. Do you agree with this assessment? More generally, do you see any fundamental differences in the way Democrats and Republicans cultivate the emotions of their potential voters?**

Yes, I totally agree with this assessment of Trump, and this will be the topic of my new book, Powerlessness and the Politics of Blame. I think that Democrats are sometimes guilty of playing on fear and anger too, for example a resentful desire to smash elites without any realistic constructive analysis. I think that Sanders is admirable in many ways, but by inviting people to feel anger and in a sense fear of elites, and then offering them only hopelessly unworkable programs, he encouraged emotional irresponsibility. I think the model for how one should conduct a protest movement is Martin Luther

King, Jr., who never unleashed protest without cultivating hope and a desire for concrete types of cooperation and reconciliation. Mandela too. We need figures like that. My former student Ro Khanna, whom I've mentioned, gave



a victory speech, citing Lincoln's Second Inaugural, that was deeply moving in its hope for reconciliation, and his entire campaign, in a district including the elites of Silicon Valley and the poor people of East Palo Alto, was a model of bridge-building. Ro is a good model for the future; Sanders is too retributive for my taste. Hillary was just so muzzled by the attacks made by Trump that she did not inspire any emotions, unfortunately.

**Your productivity is proverbial. You have so far published 24 books, 22 edited books, 448 articles, and 69 book reviews. What motivates you to work so hard? How do you achieve your amazing feats of productivity? What is your daily routine?**



Martin Luther King (1929-1968)

I am not a stressed-out person. I get 7-8 hours of sleep a night. I enjoy my friends and close relationships. I also like shopping, cooking, opera, concerts, movies, and even sports. And I watch TV: it might not surprise you given some of the things I've said about sexual violence that "Law and Order SVU" is my favorite show. (And it isn't a retributive show: it's about the victims and how to repair their lives, and also about the toll that this effort takes on the various law enforcement officers, superbly acted.)

First of all, I am coddled in an amazing way: I have tenure at a first-rate institution that lets me teach more or less what I want, and if in any given year I needed to teach less I could do it, though in fact I do not. I am not given too much committee work, although the law school exacts a lot of presence at workshops and lunches; but that is so great, because it builds an exemplary intellectual community in which I have the best colleagues in the world, who teach with me, give me incredibly great comments on work, and bring me ice cream if I have a tooth pulled.

I have rules: I do nothing but write in July and August, and every morning when I wake up, I love to read my email and reject lots of invitations before I get up! It makes me feel free. The only times I travel internationally are June 15 to 30 and December 5 to 20. And within the US about one out-of-town lecture or conference a month, never canceling classes.

So I get up around 6:30 AM, have coffee, juice, and an energy bar, do some type of cardio from 8 to 9 (usually running, on the gym-quality treadmill in my home), and then some situps or arm weights, and twice a week in the late afternoon I go downtown to my gym to do weight machines. Then at 9:15 or so I shower, dress, and practice singing until around 10:15. Then I go to the office. After that it all depends what and when I'm teaching, whether I have taught that thing before, whether we're interviewing job candidates or I'm on a tenure committee or whatever. Basically, I write whenever I don't have something else to do. I love writing and get to it eagerly whenever time permits. But in the evening I just read stuff, and don't typically write. So that's the plan.

I think I am productive because I am happy and look forward to writing. Amita Sen called her book about Tagore's school Joy in All Work, and that's sort of how I feel. I am only miserable when I can't get any time at all to write. Last year I taught five courses, and I did feel a little irritable by the end of that. (The reason was that the Law School paid for Anthony Freud to come and co-teach the opera class that I'll describe shortly, so in return I thought I should regard it as an add-on, not one of my usual four courses.) So I asked the Dean if instead of my doing the opera course as an add-on I could count it toward my regular teaching load, and since the students really liked the class, including lots of law students, he said yes.

**I have read that your principal hobbies are singing and working out. Is that right? What do you find rewarding about, respectively, singing and working out? How much do you do of each?**

Running is one passionate hobby, and I have been a runner since around 1969. I still run half-marathons. Mind you I have always been very slow, and in school I was about the worst at all sports, so it was a boost to discover that I could go a long distance very slowly. Because I am not trying to set records but just to finish, I have great pleasure in running and rarely get injured, and I don't look back at my younger self and think how much better I used to be. I also do weight training twice or three times a week, which is one reason I do not get injured. Most people my age

have blown out their knees. But by strengthening the quads you take pressure off your knees. I also run on a soft surface (gravel, dirt, an outdoor track, a good treadmill) when I can, and my favorite half-marathon is in a forest preserve on a dirt track. I love experiencing places while running through them, and I find the contemplative aspect of running very joyful. I don't think of work, I usually listen to audiobooks, but it certainly helps ideas germinate.

Singing was my great passion already in high school. I was a pretty good pianist, and I soloed with a local symphony orchestra, but acting and singing were what I really enjoyed. I was a professional actress for a while, between my first three semesters of college and my last two years; and now I still act in plays we put on at the law school. I was recently Clytemnestra in extracts from the Oresteia. But singing: I had talent, but I also had lots of allergies and still do. In those days, the only treatments were powerful antihistamines that put you to sleep. So I had to give up singing. I took it up again in 2008, when I was preparing for my adult bat mitzvah, and, lo and behold, with the aid of new allergy medications and a wonderful teacher, I made rapid progress. By 2012 I could sing opera arias that I really love. I take one lesson a week and sing around an hour a day.

I perform in my teacher's recitals and at other events in the university, but also at my temple, both in the choir and as a soloist. My voice has strengths and weaknesses. I am, it turns out, a dramatic soprano with very powerful high notes, and can perform up to high C sharp. My low notes, however, are weak, so I have to choose carefully. Things I've performed recently: "In Questa Reggia" from Turandot, "Or Sai chi L'Onore" from Don Giovanni, the sleepwalking scene from Verdi's Macbetto. Right now I am choosing pieces for a February recital, and will definitely do the suicide aria from Madama Butterfly, with either her earlier aria, "Un Bel Di" or "Mi Tradi Quell'Alma Ingrata" from Don Giovanni. I'm also working on Rezia's big aria, "Ocean, thou mighty monster," from Weber's Oberon (the original libretto was indeed in English), but that is too long to sing in a recital.

I am totally fascinated by opera, teach a class on opera with Anthony Freud, general director of Lyric Opera of Chicago, and write program notes for Lyric. (I'm their go-to Mozart person.) I plan to write a book on opera before long. But the experience of singing is such total joy. Of course it takes hard work, and it is also a nerve-racking sort of performance, as even the best singers will tell you, since the voice changes with the weather and with bodily conditions one may not be aware of. I'm sensitive to a variety of allergens, to indoor dry air (I am a zealot for measuring the humidity of our office building, which is usually at a level that the Illinois Department of Public Health calls "hazardous").

Yesterday in my lesson my low notes were even weaker than usual, though the high notes were fine, and I got worried that there was some serious vocal problem – and then, to my relief in a way, this morning I woke up with a chest cold – so that's a singer's life. You have a problem, and you only find out why the next day. I could not stand to do it professionally, too uncertain and stressful. Still, what joy! I love the feeling of the sound buzzing in my sinuses right over my eyes. And getting to the point of being able to interpret the character, that is really great.



Martha as Clytemnestra in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, at a conference in 2014 on Crime in Law and Literature.



Martha in 2008 chanting the Haftorah at her adult bat mitzvah at temple K. A. M. Isaiah Israel in Hyde Park, Chicago

Another voice teacher who heard me do Turandot said that I had made her more human and vulnerable, and that was really wonderful for me to hear. I think perhaps the Lady Macbeth was my favorite because of its enormous dramatic range and subtlety. It's much better in Verdi than in Shakespeare, since singing can go to emotional places that even great acting can't: you simply use more of your bodily equipment. I want my book on opera to be about the connection between breathing and emotional and political freedom. I am fascinated by Elektra's statement, in Strauss's opera, that she feels choked and stifled, as if something is around her neck. That is what anger does, and Strauss understands that. So her music has to be, in a real sense, anti-music and anti-breath, until at the end she simply falls silent and dies. (You asked about a recording, but unfortunately there has never been a recording of my singing, to my knowledge.)



Opera, with Jajah Wu as Pirate Jenny and Lynette Li as Polly Peachum

This is the wrong place to insert this, but you did not ask about my religious affiliation and its importance. I am a convert to Reform Judaism, and I find it a very important course of emotions supporting the pursuit of social justice, both through the community and also through the ritual and the music.

**You are 69 years old, and currently writing a book about aging in collaboration with Saul Levmore, a colleague at the University of Chicago Law School. Can you give us a preview of a couple of themes of your forthcoming book?**

Yes, Aging Thoughtfully is now finished and in production. It will appear from OUP in fall 2017. Saul is a remarkable individual. Brilliant, a leader in his field, but also with deep human understanding. He was Dean of the Law School for 8 great years, and has an unerring sense of how to build an intellectual community. He wins the teaching prize virtually every year. He is hilariously funny, but also very perceptive and curious about people. A great father, an equally great friend. He can make me laugh better than anyone ever, often by teasing me relentlessly about my obsessions. At our Roundtable lunch sometimes he will suddenly make a point about India or feminism, just to make a gentle point about how I always talk about India and feminism. (But then he was made the chair of our campus committee on sexual violence, so now he can't do that particular joke any more, people are used to seeing him as a feminist, which he is.)

We both think that friendship is one of the most important aspects of aging, and that one crucial aspect of the friendship that sustains is humor and teasing. So I guess what we are doing is to illustrate the conversation two friends might have, sometimes serious, sometimes light-hearted. We take as our model Cicero's correspondence with his friend Atticus, the dedicatee of both On Aging and On Friendship (written when both men were in their sixties, and looking ahead – the lead character in Cicero's dialogue on aging is 83). Unlike Cicero we didn't write in dialogue form, but the book has paired essays that respond to each other. Its basic idea is that aging is not just pain and death, it is, increasingly, a long span of life, maybe thirty years, and there are lots of things to think about: friendship, love, sex, money, whether compulsory retirement is good or bad, how we might deal with age discrimination and the stigma attached to the aging body. There's one part that talks about backward-looking emotions: are they ever useful as one ages, or should one avoid dwelling on the past, since it can't be changed.

**Please list five articles or books that have had a deep impact on your thinking.**

Why do you insist on articles or books? I would rather include musical works as well. So: Mahler's Second Symphony, Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides (sorry), Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro, Verdi's Don Carlos.

**What are the main challenges the philosophy of emotions should focus on in the next few years?**

I don't like to tell people what to do. Progress in a field usually comes by encouraging people to do what they love most.



# The Roles of Emotions in Social Hierarchies

 [emotionresearcher.com/the-roles-of-emotions-in-social-hierarchies/](http://emotionresearcher.com/the-roles-of-emotions-in-social-hierarchies/)

2/18/2017

Michael Kraus, School of Management, Yale University

February 2017 – Emotions have been called the grammar of social life—people use expressions of emotion to communicate internal states to others both rapidly and accurately. Emotions serve particularly crucial functions during social interaction because they convey information, sometimes unintentionally, about our own internal goals and motivations. Without the ability to express and read emotions, social interactions would be much less smooth and often break down completely.

My interest in studying emotions and their roles in social life emerged during graduate school at the University of California (UC) Berkeley. There, I worked with one of the leaders in emotion research, Dacher Keltner, primarily on issues of social class inequalities. In that line of work, emotions kept surfacing as a key player in driving differences between people who are higher versus lower in the economic hierarchy of society.

I later received postdoctoral training at UC San Francisco (UCSF) under the tutelage of another authority in the field of emotion, Wendy Berry Mendes. At UCSF, I studied psychophysiology methods, and have continued to use these tools to better understand how emotions link mind and body in reaction to threats and opportunities in the environment. My views on human psychology have been deeply shaped as a result of this training: I now tend to see and understand complex patterns of social influence and group conflict in terms of their underlying emotional dimensions. More specifically, much of my research is built on the assumption that emotions are not merely reactive feeling states that are the result of decisions we make. Instead, they are active drivers of our decisions, shaping the ways in which we decide to help or harm out-groups.

In what follows, I offer some highlights from my research on how emotional expressions communicate information and how social hierarchies affect empathetic processes.

## Tactile Expressions Support Teamwork and Cooperation

The importance of touch in social processes and emotional bonding has been largely overlooked by researchers. Some non-human primates spend upwards of 20% of the time grooming, a behavior primates rely upon for its social functions and ability to solve conflicts—a gentle touch is sometimes enough to prevent an aggressive encounter from escalating further. In humans, touch may be even more important. Touch is the most highly developed sense at birth, far preceding language as a means of communication in human evolution. It's surprising then that such a small amount of research has been conducted on touch relative to other senses in all of science and in the realm of emotion research in particular.

One of the primary functions of touch is to promote trust and cooperation. For example, teachers who touch students get them to volunteer more readily in classroom settings (Burgoon et al., 1996). As a second example, a touch on the arm by an experimenter led participants to give more money to an experiment partner—a sign of cooperative intent—compared to participants who were not touched (Kurzban, 2001). Touch also soothes in times of stress. For example, women showed decreased threat-related brain activation while anticipating a shock delivered from an experimenter when holding the hand of a spouse versus holding the hand of a stranger (Coan et al., 2006). In addition, infants who are touched by their caregivers respond more resiliently to uncomfortable medical procedures (Gray et al., 2002). Together, these results suggest that touch might be important for group processes. Specifically, touch within groups





may enhance cooperation in team settings.

Dacher Keltner, Cassy Huang and I decided to test this hypothesis with respect to basketball teams. Basketball is a game where teams thrive on cooperation. Defensively, teams that work together can overcome individual deficiencies. Offensively, teams that work together will share the ball more, and will take (and make) easier shots as a result. The great Duke basketball coach, Mike Krzyzewski, said it best: “A basketball team is like the five fingers on your hand. If you can get them all together, you have a fist. That’s how I want you to play.”

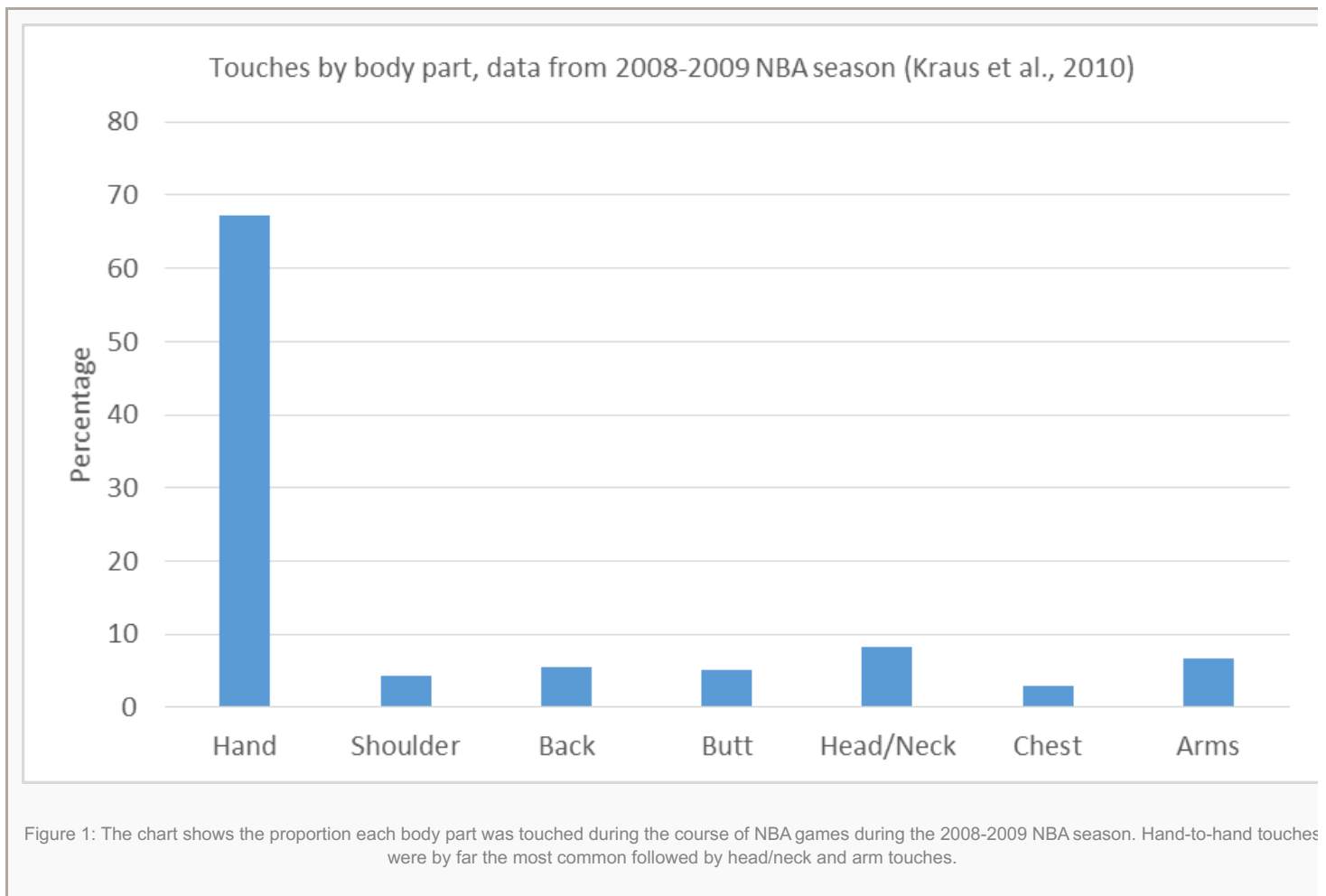
Given the importance of cooperation in basketball, we set out to try to understand whether we could determine how well teams cooperate with each other just by watching recorded basketball games. In particular, we wondered if observable behaviors during games would signal the levels of trust and cooperation endemic to each team, and whether this signal would predict actual wins and losses during the season. Based on the above analysis, we reasoned that physical touch was likely to be the best signal of cooperation in these team settings.

Knowing this background, we (actually Cassy) painstakingly watched recorded basketball games during the 2008-2009 professional basketball season, cataloguing the duration of every high five, butt slap, and chest bump that players laid on their teammates.

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We only watched games during the first month of the season, and restricted our analysis to games that were competitive (the final score separated the two teams by 9 points or less).

We expected that teams who touched more would win more across the entire season, and that is precisely what we found. Teams like the Lakers and Celtics who touched the most, also tended to perform the best over the course of the entire season, and in the games immediately following the game coded for touch. Moreover, this effect occurred even when we statistically accounted for how well teams performed during game coded for touch, preseason expectations for the performance of each team reported by basketball experts, and team salaries (Kraus, Huang, & Keltner, 2010). From these data, we reasoned that touch is an important indicator of teammates’ cooperation with each other, and is therefore an important barometer of success in a cooperation-based game like basketball. More broadly, emotion expressions communicated through touch can be a means for diagnosing the health of relationships within a group of individuals.



### Emotions Communicate Dominance and Affiliation

When I was in graduate school I had a brush with road rage. I had inadvertently cut off another driver and, in retaliation, that driver responded with dangerous and erratic driving behavior of his own. When we stopped at the next intersection, the driver appeared to want to escalate the confrontation into something more physical. My first reaction was to smile. It felt strange and out of place, but there I was grinning at a man who was willing to challenge me to a fist fight. Thinking back on this event, I realize that my impulse to smile may have helped deescalate the confrontation by signaling to the other driver that I had no intention of being aggressive.

This anecdote is indicative of a larger program of research that I have conducted about how people navigate the ambiguity of social interactions. It turns out that emotional displays provide us with a sensible roadmap or a set of heuristic responses that allow individuals to learn a great deal about interaction partners prior to any actual deliberate information exchange. In this sense, emotions provide windows into our intentions, motives, and competencies well before we have had a chance to provide that information intentionally.

My road rage confrontation inspired a new research program. In collaboration with my colleague Teh-way David Chen, I started examining professional fighters at the ritual weighing ceremony held one day prior to the fight. The ceremony is traditionally used by the betting public to size up the contenders and determine which fighter they believe will win the bout. We examined posed photographs from this ceremony when the two fighters engage in a face-off—staring directly at each other. We coded zygomatic major activity, which is the major muscle group that controls the lip curl of the smile.

Our findings aligned with the road rage anecdote: fighters who smiled more tended to lose more in the fight following the weighing ceremony, tended to be punched and kicked more, and tended to lose more by submission or knock out rather than by decision. Moreover, the smile coding predicted fight outcomes over and above estimates based on

betting odds set by experts on fight gambling—even when controlling for betting odds predicting the likelihood of a win for each fighter, smiles predicted performance in the contest (Kraus & Chen, 2013). We interpreted these results to indicate that despite the demonstrable toughness and grit of each fighter, smiling fighters standing across from a dominant opponent were conveying their lack of enthusiasm for escalating the confrontation further.



Figure 2: An example of the (graduate student) fighter face-off that we coded for smiling. All fighters pose in this position following the weighing ceremony. A photo taken by M. Kraus of students N. Segal and J. Hepler. Used with permission.

Building on this initial work we have subsequently examined how expressions of pride communicate a person's support for meritocratic beliefs. Prior research indicates that pride signals socially valued success, and because of its success-signaling function—pride may be an expression of not only achievement, but also of one's values about achievement. That is, people who tend to express pride might be also implicitly acknowledging that their achievements are based on merit. Consistent with this view, people who tend to feel more pride in their everyday lives also tend to believe that society is more meritocratic and observers who perceive proud, versus joyful, expressions in lab settings believe that the expressers of pride tend to support meritocracy (Horberg, Kraus, & Keltner, 2013).

### **Empathic Processes and Social Hierarchy**

I currently teach MBAs at the school of management at Yale University, and in my course called Power and Politics we are obsessed with empathic processes. Our obsession stems from the realization that in business exchanges it is vital to understand what others are feeling before we can know what they want. The problem of figuring out what people feel becomes more complex in the context of social hierarchies. Specifically, as space opens between people on the social ladder, the chances for misunderstanding increase. My final line of research on emotion and social hierarchy aims to understand empathic processes across status divides.

Much of my earlier research was based on an examination of how hierarchy shifts our attention to other people's mental states. As we rise in social and economic status, we tend to focus on the self more (Kraus et al., 2012). This means focusing proportionately less on other people's mental states on average, and applying our other-directed attention only to the most meaningful exchanges. This attentional focus might be driven by a need to perform more complex mental tasks while safeguarding our current resources from others. Whatever the cause, one result of this lack of attention to others is reduced empathic accuracy. Conversely, as you move down social and economic hierarchies your need to understand other people intensifies—you must be aware of the threats and opportunities in your environment, because a lack of awareness could negatively impact your life outcomes.

In a series of studies, we found that those higher in social class measured in terms of income, education, and self-

perceived position in society tend to report lower levels of empathic accuracy in social interactions with strangers and on standard tests of empathic accuracy relying on accurately recognizing emotions in posed facial expressions relative to their lower social class counterparts (Kraus, Cote, & Keltner, 2010). In related work, we found this same pattern among pairs of friends. High social class friends were good at perceiving their friend's positive emotions, but impaired in their ability to recognize hostile emotions (anger, contempt, disgust). In contrast, lower social class friends were equally good at accurately perceiving their friend's positive and negative affective states (Kraus, Horberg, Goetz, & Keltner, 2011). This body of research suggests that, as people rise in social class, their attention to others' mental states diminishes.

There are several potential consequences of reduced empathic processes among high social class individuals. Perhaps the most alarming of these consequences is the compassion divide that results. Compassion is defined simply as caring about the suffering of others and it is a main emotional motivator of prosocial behavior. One problem with persistently reduced empathic accuracy is that high social class individuals might not care as much about the suffering of others. In effect, high social class individuals may pick up less of the cues of suffering expressed by others, and experience less compassion as a result. In contrast, those lower in social class who attend to others' emotional processes may respond more readily to others' suffering.

In collaboration with Jennifer Stellar of the University of Toronto and Vida Manzo of Northwestern University, we exposed high and low social class participants to a video showing children suffering with cancer and a neutral instructional video in counterbalanced order. We found that high social class participants had reduced changes in heart rate and self-reported compassion responses to the suffering video than did the lower social class participants (Stellar, Manzo, Kraus, & Keltner, 2012). These data suggest that high social class individuals responded less to the suffering of cancer patients than did their lower-class counterparts.

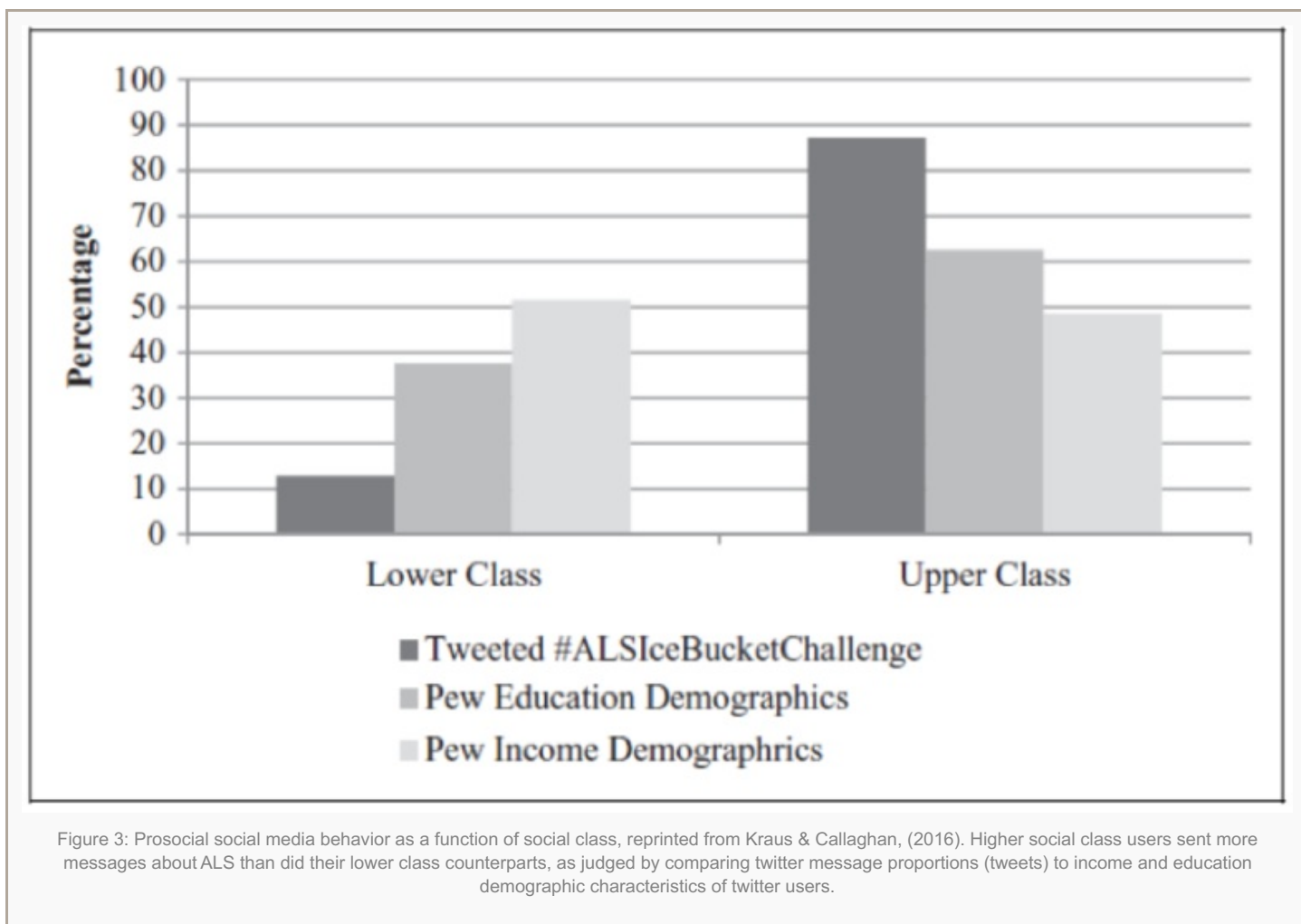
Lack of understanding of others' intentions and mental states also has direct consequences for compassionate behaviors, specifically helping others. For instance, in one series of studies we found that higher social class participants gave less in a dictator game or trust game to an anonymous partner online than did their lower social class counterparts—a finding mirroring the compassion results reported above (Piff, Kraus, Cote, Cheng, & Keltner, 2010). Reduced understanding of others' mental states might also mean more callous judgments of society and intergroup resource sharing more broadly.

In this realm, we have found for instance that individuals higher in social class tend to see societal inequality as caused by the hard work and superior talent of successful people, whereas lower class individuals tend to see it as caused by structural advantages and disadvantages (Kraus, Piff, & Keltner, 2009). Relatedly, we also found that higher social class individuals are more likely to think of social class differences as caused by genetic superiority or inferiority than their lower class counterparts (Kraus & Keltner, 2013).

But our findings are not all doom and gloom for cooperation and resource sharing among societal elites. In other experimental work, we found that showing a compassion-inducing video of suffering before an experiment makes high income participants just as helpful as low income ones—ostensibly because suffering cues attention to the possibility that others may need help (Piff, Kraus, et al., 2010). These results suggest that high social class individuals have the capacity to be prosocial when motivated properly. Follow up work shows more of the same—when reputation is involved, high social class participants tend to give more than lower social class participants (Kraus & Callaghan, 2016).

For instance, on a visible social media campaign like the Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) ice bucket challenge, higher social class participants were more likely to participate on twitter by sending messages about ALS than were their lower social class counterparts. We also found that patterns of cooperation and defection are quite malleable in our experiments. For instance, putting people in upper class clothing (i.e., a business suit) increased competitive behaviors in a negotiation and reduced cooperation relative to neutral clothing, regardless of the social class of the participant (Kraus & Mendes, 2014). This shows that people higher in social class are not, by their nature, unable to focus on others.





Overall, there is much to be learned about how empathic processes can be shaped to allow individuals with more resources to connect with those around them who might be in need. Darwin's words ring true with respect to this research program: "Sympathy... will have been increased through natural selection, for those communities with the greatest number of sympathetic members will flourish best and rear the greatest number of offspring." (Darwin, 1877/1998).

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