Emotional Appeals in Election Advertising: Understanding their Influence on the Political Behaviour of Voters

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Please note this paper represents excerpts from a doctoral thesis in progress, and is not to be cited without the author’s permission. I welcome any queries and feedback. Email: ashley.murchison@gmail.com
Abstract
Political advertisements frequently utilise emotional appeals in an attempt to influence voters. Although there is much discussion on the use of emotion in political advertising, systematic investigation into its effects still remains under-researched in New Zealand. I conducted a set of experiments during the 2011 New Zealand general election to explore whether the presence (or absence) of enthusiasm- and anxiety-inducing images and music in televised election advertising influenced political behaviour in accordance with existing findings of Affective Intelligence Theory.

This paper presents my experiment methodology. Valuable knowledge can be gained from using experiments to explore the motivational and persuasive power of emotion in advertising. There are challenges, however, with this methodology and the paper concludes by considering the problems the researcher faced when using a research design that involved experiments.
Introduction
The exchange of information between political parties and the electorate is essential to the legitimate functioning of any democratic system. The ability to govern with consent is dependent on the participation of an informed citizenry (Valentino, Hutchings, Banks, & Davis, 2008, p. 248), who rely on various forms of political communication to inform their political choices. While such communication permeates our society on a daily basis in varying forms, it intensifies during periods of electioneering. During campaigns, parties actively seek to present their policies, candidates, and values in a manner that will influence voters’ attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour. In doing this, political actors seek not only to inform, but to also persuade (McNair, 2011, p. 86).

Televised political advertising has cemented itself as a pivotal communication tool for political parties in the modern election campaign. The advantage of television advertising is that it enables political parties or candidates to communicate directly to a wide audience. Such advertisements are free from the interpretative filters of news media, and thus enable political parties complete editorial control over the message presented (Kaid, 2004, p. 156; McNair, 2011, p. 86). In constructing television advertisements, parties rely on a variety of written, visual and auditory appeals to present their desired political message (Kaid & Johnston, 2001).

Of particular interest here is the use of emotional images and music in televised political advertisements, and their potential impact on political behaviour. I begin this paper by providing a brief and by no means exhaustive overview of the theoretical discussion on the role of emotions in shaping political behaviour. It touches on the theory of Affective Intelligence, and its application to the study of televised political advertising effects. I then turn to the primary focus of this paper, which is my research into advertising effects in New Zealand. Drawing on the work of Brader (2005; 2006), I outline the experiment methodology used to explore the impact of emotional appeals on political motivation, persuasion and learning. Finally, I conclude by touching on some of the challenges of investigating advertising effects in a New Zealand context, and the upcoming plans for this ongoing research.

Advertising and Political Behaviour
A variety of studies have sought to explore the impacts of exposure to political advertising. Notable areas of investigation include advertising effects on persuasion (Franz & Ridout, 2010; Huber & Arcenaux, 2007), candidate evaluations (Fridken & Kenny, 2004; 2011, Lodge, McGraw, & Stroh, 1989), knowledge and learning (Valentino, Hutchings, & Williams, 2004), and voter mobilisation and turnout (Ansolobehere & Iyengar, 1995; Goldstein & Freeman, 2002; see also, Lau, Sigelman, & Brown Rover, 2007). The use of emotion has also been an area of interest, with a sizable literature now exploring the effects of emotion on voter attitudes, learning and participation (for example, see Brader & Corrigan, 2007; Cwalina, Falkowski, & Kaid, 2005; Kaid, Leland, & Whitney, 1992; Tedesco, 2002; Valentino, Brader, Groenendyk, Gregorowicz, & Hutchings, 2011; Weber, 2012). One particular framework for studying the influence of emotional images and music in election advertisements is that used by Brader (2005; 2006). Drawing on Affective Intelligence theory developed by Marcus, Neuman, & MacKuen (2000), Brader explores the distinct impact of appeals to enthusiasm and anxiety in political advertising, and finds that appeals to these two emotions can uniquely influence political preferences and behaviour. Brader’s framework for exploring these advertising effects is applied here. It was my intention to apply his
methodological framework in a New Zealand context to explore whether we can support the findings of Brader’s (2006) extension of Affective Intelligence theory.

Affective Intelligence argues in favour of affective-primacy, that is, that emotion precedes and guides rational thought and thus plays a pivotal role in our decision-making processes. In essence, our behaviour is subconsciously guided by emotional appraisals made by two distinct emotional subsystems. Each system serves a different purpose and generates different behaviours according to the demands of the immediate environment (Marcus & MacKuen, 1993, p. 673). Marcus et al (2000) label these the disposition and surveillance systems (see also Marcus, 2002; Neuman, Marcus, Crigler, & MacKuen, 2007). We can also describe these as the enthusiasm and anxiety (or fear) systems (see Brader, 2006).

The disposition system is responsible for managing reliance on habits and previously learned strategies, and essentially functions as a comparing system enabling an individual to monitor progress toward their goals. If the task is being successfully executed, then the corresponding result is enthusiasm (or elation, hope, and so forth) and continued motivation (Marcus, 1993; Brader 2005, p. 390). Conversely, if the task is progressing unsatisfactorily then low levels of enthusiasm, often expressed through depression or frustration will ensue, and the individual’s motivation will decline (Marcus et al, 2000, p. 47; Brader, 2005, p. 390). In terms of politics, this system is seen to explain how our political behaviour is often guided by partisanship, ideology and identities.

The surveillance system scans for environmental signals indicating novelty or threat, and functions to interrupt habitual routine and engage thought if required (Marcus et al 2000: 53). Unlike the disposition system, which is associated with determining probability of success and reward, the surveillance system determines the likelihood of failure and punishment. Reliance on the habitual responses of the disposition system in the face of threatening or uncertain circumstances could be potentially dangerous, thus the surveillance system serves to interrupt our habitual behaviour, and focus attention towards the unfamiliar stimuli. In doing this, the system encourages us to engage in explicit consideration of the alternative courses of action available to respond to the new situation at hand. This requires greater attentiveness, deliberation and motivation for learning, all of which necessitate the activation of our higher cognitive functions. The primary affective responses within this system range from fear/anxiety to calmness/relaxation (Marcus, 1993; Marcus, 2000, p. 57). When it comes to political behaviour, it is the activation of this system, which causes us to deviate from political habits, redirect our attention and learning, and become open to persuasion. While this theory is under constant refinement, and a plethora of studies are emerging to explore various facets of it, it has cemented itself as a convincing explanation of the effects of emotions on political behaviour (Brader, 2006b).

Exploring Advertising Effects in New Zealand

Drawing on this research, I decided to investigate whether appeals to enthusiasm (activation of the disposition system) or anxiety (activation of the surveillance system) in televised political advertising influenced the following in voters – their:

1. Interest in and motivation to become involved in the election campaign.

The presence of enthusiasm appeals in political advertisements will stimulate broad interest in and motivation to participate in the election campaign. Interest in the overall
campaign, willingness to volunteer, and intentions to enrol and to vote will all be positively affected by enthusiasm appeals (Brader, 2005; 2006). Conversely, the impacts of anxiety appeals on interest and motivation are likely to be more concentrated. While Brader’s (2006) earlier research suggested anxiety had the greatest impact on more costly forms of participation (for example, donating time), more recent research suggests anxiety will affect only low-cost forms of participation (Valentino et al, 2011).

2. Attention to and desire to seek out additional information on the election campaign and campaign issues.

Anxiety appeals will stimulate a desire to seek out new and relevant information, and should increase attention to relevant information. Appeals to enthusiasm should have little effect (Brader, 2005; 2006).

3. Preference for and likelihood to vote for a particular political party.

Advertisements containing enthusiasm and anxiety appeals should not simply generate positive or negative affect toward the sponsor or opponent. Enthusiasm appeals should encourage an individual to rely on political habit. Existing political preferences (such as vote choice) will be reinforced. Conversely, anxiety appeals increase the likelihood of a shift in political preference (Brader, 2005; 2006).

While some exploration into advertising effects in New Zealand exists (Robinson, 2004), much of the central focus of New Zealand literature is on advertising content and party strategy (for example, see Robinson, 2006; 2009). This absence of testing political advertising effects in New Zealand provides the impetus for applying Brader’s research methodology in this context.

Research Design
I explored my research questions by using experiments. This section will discuss the advantages of using experiments, this study’s specific research design, and issues of validity and limitations. It provides a detailed outline of my methodology to enable replication upon which the ultimate reliability of its findings rests.

Advantages of Experiments
The use of experiments as a methodological tool is not uncommon in political advertising research. A growing body of advertising literature utilises this method to investigate advertising effects on citizens’ political persuasion, attitudes, knowledge and participation. Studies within the field have turned to experimental research to explore the effects of advertising tone (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon, & Valentino, 1994; Geer and Geer, 2003; Pinkleton, 1997), sponsorship source (Hitchon & Chang, 1995; Groenendyk & Valentino, 2002; Pfau, Holbert, Szabo, & Kaminski, 2002), and issue versus image content (Kaid & Sanders, 1978; Kahn & Geer, 1994). Moreover, and perhaps more importantly given the focus of this study, experiments have emerged as a valuable instrument for testing the effects of emotional appeals in advertising (Brader, 2005, 2006; Marcus et al, 2000; Richey, 2012).

The advantage of experiments in this area of research is that they allow for the exploration of complex relationships in greater detail (McDermott, 2002a, p. 39). In a non-experiment setting it would be difficult to disentangle the effects of these various ad
components; however, experiments allow for just that. The creation of treatment and control variables provides the ability to isolate one causal variable at a time, and draw comparisons to determine whether this element is the cause of some observed behaviour (Druckman, Green, Kuklinski, & Lupia, 2011, p. 16; Iyengar S., 2002, p. 2; Kinder & Palfrey, 1993, p. 15). The ability to isolate independent variables of interest is what enables experiments to provide a stronger case for establishing causation. Because the experimental setting provides the researcher with control, all elements, with the exception of the independent variable under investigation, can be held constant. In doing this, we are able to rule out potential confounds, and confidently attribute any changes across conditions to the manipulation of the independent variable (Kinder & Palfrey, 1993, p. 11; McDermott, 2002b, p. 339). Recall that my study wishes to explore whether evoking enthusiasm or anxiety through audiovisual cues alters political motivation, vigilance and persuasion in citizens. The experimental methodology provides me with the tools required to explore whether any causal relationship exists by allowing me to isolate only my variables of interest (enthusiasm and anxiety inducing images and music) whilst holding elements not of interest (such as the verbal content) constant.

The experiment methodology is also conducive to the study of emotions in particular. Emotions are episodic events, that is, they are a temporary response to a particular stimulus (Isbell & Ottati, 2002, p. 56). As Brader (2005) explains:

Because emotions are short-term responses that often escape awareness, their effect on attitudes occurs online, making it difficult to discern their contribution once an emotion has subsided. For this reason, observation in close proximity to when emotions are triggered is desirable (p. 391).

These advantages make experiments a valuable tool for testing the effects of emotional appeals on the political behaviour of voters.

**Testing the Effects of Enthusiasm and Anxiety Appeals**

The methodology used here is based on that set out by Brader (2005; 2006), with adjustments made to suit the New Zealand party system in which the experiments occurred. The fact that this area is being explored in this context should not be overlooked – the role of advertising effects remains significantly understudied in New Zealand. I hope that the method described below will be refined and replicated in future New Zealand research to fill this void.

**Selection and Recruitment of Participants**

I relied on a convenience sample of tertiary students for my study, drawing on Otago University and Otago Polytechnic students, aged 18-25. Participants had to be eligible to vote in New Zealand elections.1

Students were invited to participate in a study on the impact of selective perception on the evaluation of television news content. They were informed that the aim

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1Eligibility criteria mirrored that prescribed by the Electoral Commission: participants had to be over 18, a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident, and have lived in New Zealand for at least one year.

2Deception is frequently used in research designs of this nature (for example, see Ansolabehere et al., 1994; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Iyengar, Peters, & Kinder, 1982). The description of the fictitious study used here is identical to that used by Brader (2006).

3Numerous studies cited in this chapter offered payment in exchange for experiment participation (Ansolabehere et al., 1994, Brader, 2006; Iyengar et al, 1982). The decision to offer entry into a prize draw (rather than individual payment) for completion of this study was made due to financial constraints.
of the study would be to evaluate what information people take away from watching the news, and were given no indication that the study was exploring advertising effects. I recruited participants using a variety of online and traditional marketing strategies. This included promotion via Facebook, Twitter, blogs, student media, and mass emails to various university departments and student groups. In the month prior to the study, I also distributed posters and leaflets on a daily basis throughout campus, and circulated leaflets to homes in student-dense areas off-campus. Assistants were also enlisted throughout the study to recruit additional participants face-to-face. To incentivise participation, subjects were offered entry into a prize draw to win one of three one hundred dollar supermarket vouchers. Individuals signed up for the study by emailing to register their interest and confirm their eligibility. They were then randomly allocated to a condition. A total of 109 participants were included in the final study.

Conducting the Experiments
I conducted the experiments over a two-week period from Monday 15 until Thursday 25 August, 2011. Each day was divided into four sessions, with each one corresponding to one of the pre-specified conditions. Each session ran for approximately sixty minutes with the first beginning at 10 am and the final concluding at 6 pm. I held the experiments in the Otago University Students’ Association Clubs and Societies Centre meeting rooms. This venue was selected due to its close proximity to campus (and thus participants), its casual atmosphere, and it being available at no cost.

The experiments involved three core phases: pre-test, manipulation, and post-test. Upon arrival, participants were greeted by either myself or my research assistant. We began by entering the participants’ names into a database, and assigning each a code corresponding with a pre-coded pre- and post-test questionnaire. Participants were then

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4 I initially streamed participants into the following conditions: a) enthusiasm ad for Labour, b) enthusiasm control ad for Labour, c) enthusiasm ad for National, d) enthusiasm control ad for National, e) anxiety ad for Labour, f) anxiety control ad for Labour, g) anxiety ad for National, h) anxiety control ad for National, and i) no ad. The number per condition varied from 10 to 15 participants. For the analysis, I combined the data from the Labour and National enthusiasm, anxiety and control conditions together.

5 I only ran the experiments on weekdays as this was when students were most likely to be on campus and available. In an unfortunate turn of events, the day-one streams, scheduled to start on Monday 15 August, had to be deferred due to adverse snow conditions.

6 Participants, once allocated to a condition, were able to choose from a selection of session times. Subsequently, the number of people in individual sessions varied from one individual up to six participants.

7 The Clubs and Societies Centre is run by the local students’ association, and is regularly used by Otago University students for meetings and casual gatherings. I felt it appropriate to use this venue, as there was a reasonable likelihood most participants would be familiar with it, and thus more comfortable in this environment.

8 To avoid confusion, the research assistant and I were not present at the same time. Additionally, while the running of experiments was split between a research assistant and myself, I provided them with comprehensive training on how to administer them to ensure they were as similar as possible irrespective of who was present on the day.

9 Participants’ names were recorded and assigned a code purely for administrative purposes. Assigning a code to the questionnaires allows the participants’ responses to remain anonymous (should another researcher wish to access the original data in the surveys), while still allowing me to identify the participant should they later wish to withdraw from the study.
invited to sit at one of two large tables in the room, and were provided with a consent form and information sheet outlining the objectives of the study, how the data would be used, and their right to withdraw at any point. Once the consent form was signed, they were given a pre-test questionnaire to complete. The pre-test questionnaire focused primarily on querying participants’ news consumption behaviours, with only a minority of the questions relating directly to the upcoming election. Minimising the number of election-related questions reduced the likelihood of sensitising participants to the advertisements they were about to view, and questioning the true purpose of the experiments (Brader, 2006, p. 237).

Once all participants had completed the questionnaire, they were invited to shift from the table and to make themselves comfortable in preparation to watch the pre-recorded selection of news footage. They watched a fifteen-minute segment of news footage, recorded from TV One’s One News six o’clock broadcast. The first half of the segment contained five news stories. Approximately halfway through this segment was a commercial break where they watched nine product advertisements. Those in the conditions containing manipulations also saw one thirty second election advertisement during this commercial break, while those in the control condition saw no election ad at all. The footage then segued back into the main news segment where participants continued to watch a further five news stories.

Following this, each participant was asked to complete a post-test questionnaire. Upon signalling they had completed the questionnaire, they were escorted from the room, and taken to a foyer to be debriefed. Here, they were informed of the true purpose of the study, and why it was necessary to initially deceive them. We ensured a thorough debriefing process by providing each participant with a written debriefing statement and talking them through each point. Participants were invited to ask any questions, and were reminded of their right to withdraw. Once satisfied that individual participant had been adequately debriefed, we then thanked them for their time, and confirmed their entry into the study’s prize draw.

**Designing the Stimuli**

The advertisements used here were designed specifically for this study. While using existing ads from real campaigns provides greater ease, reduces costs, and increases the external validity of the results, it requires the researcher to sacrifice a degree of control (Kushner Gadarian & Lau, 2011, p. 222). Had I elected to use existing party ads, I would have faced difficulties in ensuring that the ads, while distinct in their selection of

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10 The survey measures were based on those provided by Brader (2006). I made some minor alternations to the wording to ensure their suitability to New Zealand setting. These were based on wording provided in previous New Zealand Election Study surveys.

11 Television New Zealand’s TV One channel is New Zealand’s main public broadcasting channel.

12 Given the nature of the study, the debriefing also involved us requesting that the participant did not discuss the experiments outside of the setting. This was to reduce the likelihood that future participants would come into the study with a prior knowledge of its intentions. I do acknowledge that the use of deception raises concerns of ‘subject contamination’ whereby participants discuss the nature of the experiment with acquaintances despite the researcher’s requests not to (see Lipton & Garza, 1978). Debriefing participants immediately post-experiment while other streams are still yet to run obviously increases the likelihood of this contamination effect occurring than if they were to be debriefed following completion of all experiments. However, due to legal agreements with both the Labour and National Parties (as outlined in subsequent sections), an immediate debriefing was deemed necessary. I am unable to conclusively determine whether indeed such contamination occurred. I will, however, suggest that the risk was reduced by my student sample being drawn from the wider student population rather than a specific undergraduate class (as is common in experimental studies) who are more likely to have frequent contact.
particular images and music, were consistent in their use of other stylistic and verbal elements. Constructing ads specifically for this study mitigated these problems as I was able to ensure that only the extent to which images and music targeted enthusiasm or anxiety were manipulated, while all other components remained constant.

In contrast to existing studies, which utilise candidate-sponsored advertising stimuli, I chose to focus my ads on the two major political parties in New Zealand, Labour and National. Since New Zealand elections occur within a system whereby a ‘party vote’ for political parties takes precedence, this modification was necessary in order to produce stimuli convincing to the viewer. Having each party sponsor half of the ads, is not only fair and balanced, but also enables us to “…examine more fully the interaction between advertising exposure and initial preferences” (Brader, 2006, p. 82).

Although eight advertisements were designed for this study (four sponsored by Labour and four by National), it is perhaps easiest to think of the study involving four distinct advertisements characterised by the type of manipulation. The first ad was designed to cue enthusiasm, while the second was designed to cue anxiety. However, because I was wanting to measure the effects of the ads in terms of the images and music used, and not the verbal content, I had to control for this (Brader, 2006, p. 81). I did this by creating two additional advertisements: one less emotionally evocative or ‘neutral’ ad to serve as an enthusiasm control, and another to serve as an anxiety control. While the control ads contained the same scripts as the emotionally evocative ads, they contained a set of relatively neutral audiovisual cues. Holding the script constant enabled me to isolate the images and music as the cause for any variation in participants’ political behaviour.

In line with Brader’s (2006) study, we can effectively see these experiments as two separate tests involving a comparison between two sets of ads. The first tested the impact of triggering enthusiasm, comparing the presence of emotionally evocative audiovisual cues (the enthusiasm ad) to an advertisement devoid of strong emotional cues (the enthusiasm control ad). The second tested the impact of triggering anxiety, again comparing the presence of emotionally evocative images and music (the anxiety ad) to an advertisement devoid of such cues (the anxiety control ad). These experimental tests are distinct, as each required a different baseline script. The enthusiasm ad was paired with a positive-toned script, and the anxiety ad was paired with a negative-toned script to ensure their believability (Brader, 2006, pp. 81-2).

However, as in Brader’s (2006) study, I wanted to compare the differences between using enthusiasm and anxiety cues, and the impact of one versus the other on the effectiveness of their respective scripts. To enable easy comparison, I designed the enthusiasm and anxiety ads, despite differences in the tone of the script, to be as similar as possible in their narrative structure (Brader, 2006, p. 82). I based the structure of my script on that provided by Brader (2006), but adapted it to better reflect the language and style used in New Zealand election advertisements. I achieved this by transcribing earlier versions of Labour and National Party ads, and taking commonly used lines or ‘catch phrases’ to apply to my script. I supplemented this by researching both parties’ recent

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13 I chose to focus on only the two major parties, as they are the primary contenders for forming the government, and thus providing the Prime Minister. Because of their dominance within the party system they also receive a larger broadcasting allocation for televised advertisements during the election period. Subsequently, one can reasonably expect that throughout the course of a campaign citizens will be more likely to encounter Labour- or National-sponsored ads than minor party-sponsored ads.

14 The enthusiasm-control and anxiety-control ads differed only in their script. Both ads contained identical audiovisual cues.
press releases to gain a better idea of the language they were using in the lead-up to the election. By drawing on these materials, I was able to construct a script that could be convincingly attributed to either the Labour or National Party. The focus of the script (and the ads overall) was on the state of the economy. The narrative touched on topical, and what were predicted to be crucial election issues including incomes, living costs, skills investment, and jobs. The scripts began with either a positively- or negatively-toned opening statement about the state of the New Zealand economy. The positive script continued to outline the core economic concerns, and promoted the sponsoring party’s position on these issues. In contrast, the negative script outlined the same core economic concerns but attacked the opposing party’s stance on these issues. The positive and negative scripts for Labour and National were identical in all aspects with the exception of the party name they stated.

In terms of constructing the actual advertisements, I wanted to ensure that the ads were as similar as possible to the election advertisements commonly seen in New Zealand, so I began by searching through Labour and National Party ads from previous elections to get a better indication of the type of images and music they used. The advertisements were constructed using video footage taken from existing product and news footage on New Zealand television. This footage was captured by using Pinnacle VHS software. This software enabled me to take pre-recorded high definition footage from the television and save it as a digital file format for editing. In the lead up to the study, I recorded over one hundred hours of footage, from which I carefully selected the images required to construct my enthusiasm, anxiety and control ads. Keeping in line with typical party advertisements seen in New Zealand, I also used Adobe Photoshop CS3 to design a ‘Party Vote’ screen to be inserted at the conclusion of the ad. This screen mirrored the design of the party vote screens typically used by Labour and National, containing the party logo, a ‘tagline’, and an authorisation statement. The music for the enthusiasm and anxiety ads was purchased and downloaded from the allmusiclibrary.com and neosounds.com websites respectively (see Mark Music Production, 2009; Big Sound Music, 2012). Finally, the voiceover for the ad scripts was recorded in a professional recording studio, and was provided by award-winning Natural History New Zealand Series Producer, Ian McGee.

I produced the ads with the assistance of a student producer who had expertise in the area of news editing. The various elements of the advertisements were edited using professional filmmaking software, Apple Final Cut Pro, with final alterations made using Apple iMovie. The ads were designed to ensure that the images, music and voiceover were well timed and integrated seamlessly. Once this task was completed, the ads were spliced into a pre-existing commercial break within my selected news footage, taking great care to ensure their addition was seamless in terms of cuts to and from the ads.

Figure 1 provides a selection of still shots of the images used in the enthusiasm ads. I selected brightly coloured imagery, with close-up shots of smiling, upbeat children. Positive imagery of happy families at the supermarket and cooking reinforce the party’s plan to ‘put food on the table’. Promises to invest in skills and innovation are accompanied by busy doctors (not pictured), and a healthy pregnant woman. The message

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15 Although one close-up shot of a young girl hugging her mother was obtained via the clipcanvas.com website (Menyaylo, P., 2012).
16 Correspondence with the University of Otago Copyright Officer confirmed that this was permissible.
17 This material was obtained in the same manner as the footage for the advertisements. I used Pinnacle VHS software to capture the news coverage, and then used Apple iMovie to insert the experiment advertisements into the news footage.
New Zealand has a proud history of high living standards and a resilient economy.

And while it’s been tough for hard-working Kiwis, under a Labour government it will get better.

Labour has a plan to promote higher incomes to help families put food on the table.

A plan to protect jobs and invest in skills and innovation.

And a plan which will see all Kiwis benefit from a stronger economy.

Let’s protect our future.

Party vote Labour.
of ‘all kiwis benefiting from a stronger economy’ is highlighted by quickly cutting between close-up images of smiling, happy ‘kiwis’. Finally, the tagline, ‘let’s protect our future’, is accompanied an image of two young girls giggling over biscuits and a hot drink. Under the narration, the ad opens with an uplifting piano introduction. Quickly, the piano is joined by a guitar and drums and the music increases tempo, just as we are reminded of Labour’s plans for the future. The music finishes on an upbeat note, fading out so we can hear the ‘Party Vote Labour’. In contrast, the narration for the less evocative ad occurs against a backdrop of silence. The neutral images are dull and uninteresting. Here, we see no bright colours or smiling faces, but rather distant shots of faceless people.

We can see the format of the anxiety ad in Figure 2. While the images and lack of music in the less evocative ad is identical to that in the enthusiasm experiment, the anxiety ad is significantly different. The images are black and white, creating a darker, negative atmosphere. We see images of loan sharks, reinforcing the reality of living during a ‘global economic crisis’. Images of angry protesters marching the streets, and close-ups of children eating less than ideal meals play on the sentiment that families are facing difficult times. The images of a man sitting with his family searching the papers for work, and the workers marching in union with their workboots provides a vivid picture of increasing unemployment. Finally, a close-up of a young girl prompts us to not ‘risk our future’. Throughout the ad a deep, rumbling sound can be heard. As we progress through National’s failings, the pitch heightens and the music very slowly grows in intensity. An ominous toll can be heard before the music gradually fades out, giving way to an important reminder to ‘Party Vote Labour’.

Manipulation Check
The purpose of the manipulation check is to validate whether the advertisements in the experiments cued the intended emotional responses, and whether the ads were in fact distinct in their emotional intensity (Brader, 2006, p. 86). By initiating a cued recall component, I am able to test the internal validity of the experiment. The internal validity is dependent upon the degree of experimental realism, that is, the extent to which the subjects were genuinely engaged in the experiment. If participants do not believe the situation confronting them, in this case the authenticity of the ads, then experimental realism, and subsequently internal validity, is low (McDermott, 2002b, p. 333).

Experiment Validity and Limitations
Any researcher must be give careful consideration to the use of deception in experiment.18 The decision to use incidental exposure to advertisements, and thus deceive my participants, was based on two core aims. First, I wanted to reduce an unnatural focus on the advertisements by reproducing the nature by which citizens are exposed to election advertisements in a non-experiment setting. Exposure to election advertisements is unlikely to occur through a deliberate choice, that is, the average citizen is unlikely to go out of their way to sit down and watch an ad. Rather, “[p]eople usually see campaign ads as a by-product of turning on their TV to watch something else, such as the news, a sporting event, or a favorite show” (Brader, 2006, p. 80). By not drawing participants’ attention to the advertisements in the early stages of the study, and by embedding the advertisement within an assortment of additional information, I was able to construct a

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18 There is an exhaustive literature about the ethical, psychological and scientific impact using deception in experiments. For a more comprehensive overview of the arguments, see Baron, 1981; Christensen, 1988; Bortolotti & Mameli, 2006; Baumrind, 1979, 1985; Hertwig & Ortmann, 2008.
New Zealand has been hit by the worst global economic crisis seen in decades.

It’s been tough for hard-working Kiwis, and under another National government it’ll only get worse.

National has no plan to increase incomes and help families put food on the table.

No plan to invest in skills and innovation.

No plan to protect the jobs of ordinary Kiwis.

And no plan to get us through the tough times ahead.

Let’s not risk our future under National.

Party vote Labour.

Figure 2 Anxiety advertisement
more realistic, scenario for ad exposure (Brader, 2006, p. 80). Second, in not disclosing the true intent of the study, I was able to remove cues from the setting that may have served as indicators to participants of what was expected of them, allowing me to mitigate the potential for ‘demand characteristics’ to bias the results (Iyengar, Peters, & Kinder, 1982, p. 851; McDermott, 2002a, p. 34).

With the aim of enhancing the realism of the study, I situated the experiments during the lead up to the 2011 New Zealand general election. Running the experiments in this context helps “…pose meaningful choices to subjects in order to faithfully reconstruct the process by which citizens make up their minds” (Brader, 2006, p. 76). Presenting participants with salient content and real parties for whom they will soon be expected to vote, increases the realism of the experience and thus the likelihood participants will provide sincere and serious responses (Brader, 2006, p. 76; Kushner Gadarian & Lau, 2011, p. 219). Additionally, while “[s]ubjects may think a fictitious candidate could worry or excite them, without necessarily experiencing these emotions”, exposure to an advertisement promoting real parties, increases the likelihood of provoking genuine emotional responses (Brader, 2006, p. 76).

Of course, presenting participants with realistic scenarios and choices provides no guarantee that the outcomes observed in this experiment can be conclusively generalised to a non-experiment setting. It would be remiss not to acknowledge that this study only explores a discrete event, that is, the effect of one advertisement on participants’ political behaviour. The setting is unquestionably a simplification of the real campaign environment in which exposure to election ads occurs. Indeed, the cumulative effects of exposure to a multitude of other communications, advertising or otherwise, could be sufficient to cancel out the effects of one ad (Kushner Gadarian, & Lau, 2011, p. 218). Additionally, this experiment measures only the short-term effects of the manipulation, and as such can only present them as temporary reactions to the stimuli. Whether or not these effects are in fact more enduring would require additional tests (Kushner Gadarian, & Lau, 2011, p. 218). With this in mind, I do not wish to overstate the findings, but rather present them as just one small piece of a rather large and complex puzzle.

In contrast to previous studies of a similar nature, I decided to sacrifice some elements of realism in order to maintain control over the setting. Efforts to moderate artificially high attentiveness, such as allowing participants access to remote controls, have occasionally resulted in them fast-forwarding through the commercial breaks, bypassing the advertising manipulation altogether (Brader, 2006; Iyengar, 2002). For example, Brader (2006) found himself in a problematic situation when one of his participants who fast-forwarded through the advertisements was viewing the experiment footage alongside another participant, preventing the second participant from exposure to the manipulation also (p. 80-1). While Brader was fortunate that this session only contained two participants, I did not want to expose myself to the risk of this occurring during a much larger group viewing. Because of this, I decided to compromise on the realism of the experiment by not permitting access to a remote control. While the absence of props such as a remote control from the setting may reduce the mundane realism of the experiment, I ensured it was more realistic in an experimental sense as participants were required to sit through the manipulation (McDermott, 2002b, p. 333).

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59 There are, however, studies explore the effects of cumulative campaign communication. For one example, see Chong & Druckman, 2010.
60 Mundane realism refers to what extent the experiment setting reflects the real-world situation in which the phenomenon under investigation occurs. Mundane realism is not crucial to experimental success, while experimental realism is (McDermott, 2002b, p. 333)
I did however attempt to ensure other elements of the venue were as comfortable as possible for participants in order to construct a realistic setting. While the participants were seated at a table and chairs, I encouraged them to make themselves comfortable by moving their seats around the television, and eat their lunch while participating if desired.\textsuperscript{21} The meeting room itself was informal, and bared no resemblance to what one might expect of a typical experiment setting. While the experiments were administered in several different rooms throughout the study, I aimed to keep the environment as similar as possible by ensuring that the layout of the furniture and television was identical irrespective of location. While I (or my research assistant) remained in the room during the viewing, I ensured we were as unobtrusive as possible, remaining at the back of the room and out of the view of participants.\textsuperscript{22}

It also seems pertinent to address unavoidable concerns about the generalisability of this study’s findings given its reliance on a student sample base, despite it following a common sampling approach adopted in political science experiments (Kam, Wilking & Zechmeister, 2007). The issue of generalisation is one relating to the external validity of an experiment, and refers to whether the “causal relationship holds over variations in persons, settings, treatments [and timing], and outcomes” (Shadish et al., 2003, p. 83 quoted in Druckman & Kam, 2011, p. 42). Concerns about the external validity of experiments tend to be preoccupied with concerns about student samples (Druckman & Kam, 2011, p. 42), and question whether research findings based on student samples are generalisable to heterogeneous populations (Sears, 1986).

Perhaps the obvious defence against such a critique is to draw a representative sample of participants from the population in which you wish to investigate. Unfortunately, such an undertaking is easier said than done. As Iyengar (2001) highlights, utilising representative samples can be both labour and cost intensive (pp. 226-7). Accordingly, without such resources at my disposal, a convenience sample was a necessary option. Reliance on such a sample does not consign an experiment to failure however. It is important to note that “…external validity is established over time, across a series of experiments that demonstrate similar phenomena using different populations, manipulations, and measures. External validity occurs through replication” (McDermott, 2002b, p. 335). It is this point of replication I wish to stress. This study by no means attempts to offer conclusive evidence on the impact of emotional appeals on political behaviour, but instead seeks to test whether the claims of Affective Intelligence theory, which find support in American studies, find similar support in a New Zealand context.

Furthermore, when assessing the external validity of an experiment, one must consider the issues of experimental and mundane realism. Mundane realism refers to the extent to which the experimental situation is similar to the real-life environment in which the phenomenon under investigation might occur (McDermott, 2002b, p. 333). Conversely, experimental realism refers to the degree in which subjects treat both the study and the stimuli seriously, that is, whether are they engaged in and believe the setting that confronts them (McDermott, 2002b, p. 333). When assessing the external

\textsuperscript{21} While other studies involving the use of experiments aim to heighten realism by providing couches and other additional props (see Ansolabehere et al., 1994; Gilliam, Jr. & Iyengar 2000; Iyengar, 1996), I was limited by resources, preventing me from being able to fully construct a ‘lounge-like’ environment.

\textsuperscript{22} I am mindful that the presence of the researcher has the potential to create artificially high attentiveness among participants. While I do not feel the study was affected by myself or my research assistant’s presence in the room as we kept interaction with participants to a minimum during both the manipulation and questionnaire phases, I do acknowledge that it may have been more suitable for us to remove ourselves from the setting to reduce the likelihood of unintentionally influencing participants.
validity of an experiment, one needs to bear in mind that it is experimental realism that is essential to experimental success (McDermott, 2002b, p. 333). Even if an experiment is high in mundane realism, the failure to engage subjects convincingly, “compromises internal validity, which in turn renders external validity of the causal relationship meaningless” (Druckman & Kam, 2011, p. 44). Consequently, while criticisms about the use of student samples are perhaps legitimate, one must remember that it should not be the primary concern.

It is necessary to address a further limitation, or perhaps more aptly, complication, associated with this experiment. I refer to the legal difficulties of conducting these experiments in this setting; difficulties imposed not by this particular methodology itself, but by external forces. The biggest difficulty facing any researcher wishing to conduct such a study into advertising in New Zealand during an election campaign is the legislation governing the rules around election advertising during an election. According to section 3A(1) of the Electoral Act 1993, the stimuli designed for these experiments met the legal definition of an election advertisement, and therefore were required to include an authorisation statement from the sponsoring party. This posed numerous difficulties. Convincing the two major political parties to authorise advertising they have no control over in the lead up to the general election is no easy task. It required extensive negotiation, compromise and necessitated the signing of a legal agreement. Perhaps the most significant complication faced was that one provision in the agreement prevented the ads from being ‘broadcast’ in the experiments during the three month regulated period prior to the November 26 election day. While the primary intent was to prevent any costs incurred in the creation of the ads being attributable by law to the parties’ campaign expenses, it is reasonable to assume that this provision also existed to eliminate any potential for my ads to interfere with the parties’ campaign strategies.23

Compliance with this forced me to move my experiments forward by three months, hence why they were conducted during August. My initial intention had been to conduct them closer to when the actual campaign was in full swing, the month before election day. The intention behind this was to ensure that my experiments were conducted while the parties’ campaigns were gaining momentum and were prevalent in people’s minds, increasing the overall realism of the study. Unfortunately, I had to settle for conducting the experiments as close as I possibly could within the parameters of my agreements with the parties.24

**Conclusion**

This paper provides an overview of the work I am currently undertaking for my doctoral thesis, and outlines my methodology for investigating the effects of enthusiasm and anxiety appeals in political advertising on political behaviour. I am currently in the data analysis stage of my research, and am preparing to conduct a series of focus groups to

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23 Of course, the potential for it to do this is virtually non-existent given the extensive debriefing procedures post-experiment. However, concerns were still raised about the broadcasting of ads not designed by the parties necessitating strict guarantees that the ads would not be aired outside of the experimental.

24 Despite the campaign not being in ‘full swing’ during the experimental period, there had been increasing coverage of the looming election on the news media throughout the year. Furthermore, the Labour Party had begun early in the year campaigning, quite visibly, on the issue of asset sales. So while the parties had not begun distributing exhaustive amounts of party vote material during the August of my experiments, it was not entirely unbelievable that one could encounter a campaign ad. Indeed, many participants expressed surprise during the debriefing that the advertisement shown was not real, with only one remarking that he thought it seemed the party was campaigning ‘a little bit earlier than usual’.
explore my experiment findings further. As this research is very much in progress, I sincerely welcome any feedback and suggestions PSA attendees may have to offer.
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