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Correcting for Mood-Induced Bias in the Evaluation of Political Candidates: The Roles of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

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Participants were induced to feel either happy or sad while reading an article that described a politician’s stand on issues. When participants were unmotivated to evaluate the candidate at the time they read the article, they evaluated him more favorably when they were happy than when they were not. However, when participants were either intrinsically or extrinsically motivated to evaluate the candidate, they adjusted their evaluations to compensate for the biasing influence of the target-relevant affect they were experiencing. In fact, they overadjusted, reporting less favorable evaluations of him when they were happy than when they were not. These adjustments for bias occurred on-line, as the candidate’s issue stands were presented, rather than after all of the judgment-relevant information had been received.

People often base their judgments of themselves and others on their affective reactions to the person or attribute being judged (Clore, 1992; Schwarz & Clore, 1983; Wyer & Carlton, 1979; for reviews, see Clore, Schwarz, & Conway, 1994; Schwarz & Clore, 1996). This tendency is implied by many early theories of attitude formation (e.g., Staats & Staats, 1958; Thurstone, 1959) and interpersonal attraction (Clore & Byrne, 1974). However, it was not until Schwarz and Clore’s (1985) seminal work that the use of affect as an informational basis for judgment was firmly established. These authors demonstrated that people often cannot distinguish clearly between their reactions to the object of judgment and the affect they are experiencing for other, unrelated reasons (e.g., the mood they happen to be in). Consequently, affect from extraneous sources (e.g., the weather) can influence the judgments that individuals report (Schwarz & Clore, 1983; Strack, Martin, & Stepper, 1988; Strack, Schwarz, & Gschneidinger, 1985). Specifically, people often make more favorable judgments of stimuli (including themselves) when they are feeling happy than when they are not (Clore et al., 1994).

However, when people are aware that the affect they are experiencing is contaminated by feelings that are irrelevant to the judgment they are asked to report, they may attempt to correct for its influence (Ottati & Isbell, 1996; Schwarz & Clore, 1983). In some cases, they may simply discount the implications of their feelings entirely and use other, affect-unrelated criteria instead. In many instances, however, this cannot be done very easily. Many attitudes, for example, are based primarily on one’s subjective feelings about the object being judged (Zanna & Rempel, 1988), and alternative, nonaffective criteria are either irrelevant, unavailable, or difficult to apply. In such instances, people who believe that the affect they are experiencing is biased by judgment-irrelevant factors may estimate the magnitude of this affect and then, in constructing its implications for the judgment to be made, adjust this estimate to compensate for that portion of the affect they believe to be extraneous. These adjustments, of course, may not be accurate. If persons do not adjust enough, the judgment-irrelevant affect they are experiencing will continue to have an

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influence. If they adjust too much, however, this affect could actually have a negative, contrast effect. That is, persons may judge the target more unfavorably when they are happy than when they are not (Ottati & Isbell, 1996).

Although corrections for affect-induced bias have been identified in previous research (e.g., Ottati & Isbell, 1996), several questions remain to be answered. For example, when individuals receive new information about a target stimulus, do they correct for the extraneous affect they are experiencing in response to each piece of information as they receive it? Or do they forego making these corrections until after all of the information has been acquired and integrated into an overall impression of the target to which it refers?

A second question concerns the conditions in which corrections are actually attempted. Individual differences in the ability to correct for mood-induced biases have been identified by Ottati and Isbell (1996) (see also Wegener & Petty, 1997). Perhaps surprisingly, however, the way in which motivational factors come into play has not been investigated. Particularly unclear is how the effects of different sources of motivation combine to influence affect-based judgments and correction processes.

The research to be reported addressed these questions. Participants were induced to feel either happy or sad before they read an article describing a political candidate’s stands on a number of social issues. Some participants read the article for the purpose of deciding whether they would vote for the candidate. Others were told to evaluate the quality of the writing and the way the article was organized. Then, either immediately or after a 24-hour delay, all participants reported both their attitudes toward the candidate and their own positions on the issues to which his stands pertained. In the absence of motivation to evaluate the target carefully, participants’ moods should have a positive, informational effect on their evaluations. However, we expected that situation-induced motivation to form an accurate impression of the candidate and the intrinsic motivation to do so (as reflected in the strength of participants’ strength of partisanship) would stimulate participants to correct for the judgment-irrelevant affect they were experiencing. These motivational influences are of particular interest in the domain of political judgment because they are likely to underlie the processing of information received about political candidates outside the laboratory.

When Do Corrections Occur?

When people are asked to evaluate a familiar target stimulus or in the absence of new information about it, they are likely to base this evaluation on the feelings they are experiencing at the time they are asked to report it (Levine, Wyer, & Schwarz, 1994; Schwarz & Clore, 1983; but see Forgas, 1995, for a discussion of possible limits to the generality of this tendency). They may correct for the influence of judgment-irrelevant affect they are experiencing at this time as well.

In many judgment situations, however, people receive several pieces of information about an unfamiliar target. In these conditions, they must evaluate the implications of each piece of information as it is received and integrate it into an on-line impression they are forming of the target. In such a case, the judgment-irrelevant affect that recipients experience could influence their evaluations in two ways. On one hand, recipients might wait until they have received and integrated all of the information available about the target before they assess their affective reactions to it. The feelings they are experiencing for reasons that have nothing to do with the target might enter into this postinformation assessment and, therefore, might influence the evaluations they report. Attempts to correct for the influence of this affect may also occur at this time.

A second possibility, however, is that recipients assess their affective reactions to each piece of information separately at the time they encounter it and construe its implications for the judgment they wish to make. In the present research, for example, the information presented consisted of a political candidate’s stands on issues, each of which might spontaneously elicit either a positive or negative affective reaction. However, the affect that recipients happen to be experiencing for other reasons could influence their assessment of this reaction at the time it occurs. Corrections for the influence of this extraneous affect in construing the implications of the candidate’s issue positions for evaluations of him could also occur on-line.

Evidence bearing on this possibility is equivocal, however. For example, Ottati and Isbell (1996, Study 3) found that both the influence of judgment-irrelevant affect that persons experienced at the time they received information about a political candidate and their adjustments for the influence of this affect were evident as long as 8 days after the affect had dissipated. In this study, therefore, participants’ corrections for the extraneous affect they experienced were clearly not a result of processes that occurred at the time their judgments were reported. This does not mean, however, that participants corrected for biases in their interpretation of each piece of information at the time it was presented. That is, they may have waited until after all of the information had been received and integrated into an overall impression and then corrected for bias in construing the implications of this global impression.
To evaluate these alternative possibilities in the present research, we assessed participants’ estimates of the evaluative implications of each of the candidates issue stands as well as participants’ overall evaluations of the candidate himself. If participants adjust for the biasing influence of their affective reactions to each piece of information as it is presented, the effects of these adjustments should be apparent in evaluations of each individual issue stand as well as the candidate himself. If, on the other hand, these adjustments are not made until after all of the information is received, this would not necessarily be the case.

Motivational Influences on Correction for Bias

Schwarz and Clore (1983) found that people who judge their life satisfaction adjust for the influence of the extraneous affect they are experiencing only if the possible irrelevance of this affect is called to their attention. However, even when people are aware that the affect they are experiencing is due in part to other judgment-irrelevant factors, they may be unable or unmotivated to correct for its influence. Moreover, even when they make a correction, their estimates of how much correction is necessary may be inaccurate (for a discussion of the role of implicit theories in adjustment for bias, see Petty & Wegener, 1993; Strack, 1992; Wegener & Petty, 1995, 1997). In a study by Ottati and Isbell (1996, Study 3), for example, persons with relatively little knowledge about politics apparently had difficulty construing the implications of the political information they received, and so, they did not have the cognitive resources required to adjust for the impact of extraneous affect. On the other hand, persons with high political expertise, who did have the necessary cognitive resources available to them, misconstrued the amount of adjustment they should make and, therefore, adjusted too much.

Corrections for bias may also depend on recipients’ motivations to think carefully about information they receive and to assess its implications accurately. This motivation could come from two sources. On one hand, extrinsic motivation to correct may be influenced by the extent to which an accurate assessment of the information’s affective implications is relevant to the task that recipients are called on to perform. Thus, in the present research, instructions to use the information about a political candidate to decide whether to vote for him may stimulate participants to make an accurate assessment of the information’s implications for this decision. Consequently, they may be motivated to correct for the influence of extraneous affect on their perceptions of these implications.

On the other hand, some individuals may be intrinsically motivated to form an impression of political candidates even in the absence of explicit instructions to do so. This motivation could reflect a general desire to engage in cognitive activity (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982; Wegener, Petty, & Klein, 1994). Alternatively, it might be specific to the domain of information presented and the referent to whom it pertains. In the present context, for example, some people may have a strong personal interest in politics. These individuals’ motivation to evaluate the quality of a political candidate may be activated spontaneously by exposure to information about the candidate.

It is not clear on a priori grounds whether the effects of intrinsic motivation would override the effects of situation-specific demands that require the use of information for other purposes. In the present research, for example, some participants were told to read the article about a candidate’s issue stands in order to assess the quality of the writing. It was unclear whether the pursuit of these task objectives would inhibit the influence of intrinsic motivation to form an accurate impression of the candidate or whether the latter motives would prevail despite the existence of competing situation-specific task objectives.

The research to be reported provided insight into these matters. Participants’ intrinsic motivation to form an impression of political candidates is likely to be reflected in the strength of their political partisanship. Strong partisans are more emotionally involved in politics than are weak partisans (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; see also Marcus & MacKuen, in press). Strong partisans are also relatively more inclined to become politically involved (Campbell et al., 1960; Teixera, 1987; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980). It therefore seems reasonable to assume that strong partisans would be more intrinsically motivated than weak partisans to think carefully about the information they receive about a candidate, and therefore, they would be more likely to correct for biases produced by the candidate-irrelevant affect they experience when they construe the implications of this information. A preliminary study was nevertheless performed to confirm this assumption.

PRELIMINARY STUDY

This study validated our assumption that strong partisans are more intrinsically interested in information about political candidates and in evaluating these candidates than are weak partisans. We administered a political questionnaire to 152 undergraduate psychology students (66 males and 66 females) who did not participate in the main study to be reported. Participants were informed that we were interested in what college students think about politics and that, to help us understand this better, we would like them to answer a variety of political questions. This questionnaire contained the
following questions, which were administered in the order they are described.

Strength of partisanship. Participants were asked to indicate whether they viewed themselves as either a strong Democrat, a Democrat, an independent leaning toward Democrat, an independent, an independent leaning toward Republican, a Republican, or a strong Republican. Participants who identified themselves as strong Democrats, strong Republicans, Democrats, or Republicans \((n = 42)\) were classified as strong partisans, and the remainder \((n = 90)\) were classified as weak partisans.

Overall interest in politics. Participants reported their overall interest in politics along a four-category scale from 1 (not at all interested) to 4 (extremely interested).

Interest in evaluating candidates and issues. To investigate the relative interest of strong and weak partisans in evaluating both candidates and issues, participants read the following:

Some people read political information about a candidate for the purpose of evaluating political issues—that is, they may try to form an opinion on some political issue or become more informed about an issue and they may not care too much about evaluating the candidate. Other people focus more on evaluating the candidate when they read candidate information—that is, they may try to decide how much they like the candidate or how likely it is that they will vote for him.

Participants were then asked, "To what extent would you say that you evaluate and think carefully about political issues when you read candidate information?" and "To what extent would you say that you evaluate and think carefully about the political candidate when you read candidate information?" Participants reported their judgments along 11-point scales from 0 (not at all) to 10 (very much).

Political behavior. Participants were asked a series of 10 questions designed to assess their political behavior. Specifically, participants were asked (a) whether they are registered to vote, (b) whether they voted in the last election, (c) whether they intend to vote in the upcoming election, (d) whether they have ever worked for a political campaign, (e) whether they have ever worn a button or placed a bumper sticker on their car in support of a political candidate, (f) whether they saw either of the presidential debates this year, (g) whether they ever worked in a local organization to try to solve a community problem, (h) whether they ever contacted an elected official to express their opinion on a topic, (i) whether they ever signed a petition dealing with a political issue, and (j) whether they ever tried to convince someone to vote for a particular candidate. The number of "yes" responses was summed for each participant to obtain an overall index of political behavior.

Political sophistication. Participants completed a political sophistication questionnaire containing 15 multiple-choice questions in which they were to match various political individuals (e.g., Warren Christopher, Al Gore) and organizations (e.g., Office of Management and Budget, Democratic National Committee (DNC)) with an appropriate description. In addition, participants were asked to identify which party had the most seats in each House of Congress, how many years a member of each House serves in one full term, and how many years the president serves in one full term. All questions were presented to participants in multiple-choice format.

Results

Consistent with expectations, strong partisans reported greater interest in politics than did weak partisans \((2.55 \text{ versus } 2.10), t(130) = 3.30, p = .001\). No differences in mean political sophistication emerged between strong and weak partisans \((14.14 \text{ versus } 13.78), t(130) < 1\). These results suggest that strong partisans are more politically motivated than are weak partisans but are not necessarily more knowledgeable about political matters.

We further expected that these motivational differences would be localized primarily in differences in the interest in evaluating political candidates and might not necessarily reflect differences in the interest in political and social issues per se. This assumption was also confirmed. Strong partisans reported greater interest in evaluating political candidates than did weak partisans \((6.86 \text{ versus } 5.87), t(130) = 2.04, p < .05\), and were relatively more likely to engage in political behaviors \((4.71 \text{ versus } 3.84), t(130) = 1.96, p = .05\). In contrast, strong partisans were only slightly and nonsignificantly more interested in evaluating issues \((7.21 \text{ versus } 6.67), t(130) = 1.19, p > .20\). Taken together, these results suggest that partisan strength reflects participants’ intrinsic motivation to think about information about candidates in an effort to form evaluations of them independently of their interest in evaluating social issues per se. The use of partisan strength as an index of intrinsic motivation to evaluate political candidates therefore seems justified.

MAIN STUDY

Participants who felt either happy or unhappy as a result of writing about an affect-eliciting past experience read a news article describing the stands of a political candidate on a number of social issues. Later, they reported their evaluations of the candidate and also indicated their agreement with the candidate’s issue posi-
tions. Participants’ extrinsic motivation to evaluate the candidate was manipulated by instructing them either (a) to form an impression of the candidate to decide whether they would vote for him (impression-formation condition) or (b) to evaluate the structure and format of the article independently of its content (article-focus condition). Participants’ intrinsic interest in evaluating political candidates was inferred from the strength of their partisanship. We expected that judgment-irrelevant affect would have a positive impact on candidate evaluations when the situation-induced motivation to evaluate the candidate and the intrinsic interest in doing so were both low (that is, among weak partisans under article-focus conditions). We further expected that explicitly instructing participants to form an impression of the candidate would motivate them to make an accurate evaluation of him and, therefore, to correct for the biasing influence of extraneous affect on their judgments. However, it was unclear a priori whether participants’ intrinsic motivation to evaluate politicians would be sufficient to override the effects of situational demands to use the presented information for a candidate-irrelevant purpose. Therefore, whether strong partisans would correct for the effects of judgment-irrelevant affect under article-focus conditions or whether the effects of this affect would be similar to its effect on weak partisans under these conditions was not predicted.

To determine when affect has its influence and when individuals correct for its influence, we examined the extent to which our experimental manipulations influenced participants’ agreement with the candidate’s issue positions as well as their judgments of the candidate himself.

Considered in isolation, the evidence that extraneous affect influences participants’ evaluations of individual stands on issues in the way it influences candidate evaluations would not necessarily indicate that these effects occurred at the time the issue stands were presented. That is, participants could correct for the biasing influence of extraneous affect on both candidate and issue evaluations at the time these judgments are reported. If this is the case, however, the influence of affect and corrections for its influence would be likely to generalize to all evaluations of all issues that participants rated at this time. In contrast, the hypothesis that the impact of extraneous affect occurs on-line at the time the candidate information is received and evaluated implies that its impact will be restricted to the particular issues described in the candidate-relevant information that participants received—and should not generalize to evaluations of other issue stands that are not presented and do not provide the basis for candidate evaluations. This possibility was also examined.

Method

OVERVIEW AND DESIGN

Participants wrote a story about a personal experience that made them either (a) happy or (b) sad. Immediately afterward, they read a news article containing information about a political candidate. Participants were told that while reading through the candidate information, they should either (a) form an impression of the candidate in an effort to decide whether they would vote for him (impression-formation condition) or (b) focus on the structure and format of the article (article-focus condition). Then, either immediately or 24 hours after reading the article, participants reported their overall evaluation of the political candidate and the likelihood they would vote for him. After doing so, participants were asked to recall the information presented in the article and then to report their own opinions about both the issues on which the candidate expressed an opinion and other, previously unmentioned issues. Finally, participants reported their political party identification and their current moods.

PARTICIPANTS

Participating in this experiment in partial fulfillment of a course requirement were 68 male and 72 female introductory psychology students. Participants were assigned randomly to the eight combinations of induced mood (happy versus sad), instructions (impression formation versus article focus), and delay (none versus 24 hours). Data were analyzed as a function of these variables and partisan strength (strong versus weak).

CONSTRUCTION OF STIMULUS MATERIALS

The information about the political candidate (Thomas Millark) was presented to participants in a news article. The article reported the candidate’s endorsement of positions on 15 issues, such as affirmative action, sex education in schools, and the death penalty. The article indicated that the candidates’ issue positions were compiled by the League of Women Voters. Twelve positions were selected from a pool identified by Ottati and Isbell (1993). Of these, 6 were liberal (e.g., “voted for a proposal [HR101] to increase federal aid to dependent children”), and 6 were conservative (e.g., “voted in favor of a 15% increase in federal defense spending [HR0891]”). The remaining three issue positions were ideologically neutral (e.g., “favors a proposal to establish the rose as the National Flower”). All issue positions were stated in a clear and unambiguous manner. For example, the candidate’s position on sex education in the schools was stated as follows: “Millark opposes state and federal funding of sex education in the schools
and believes that it is the responsibility of parents to provide their children with such information."

To ensure that participants' evaluations of the candidate would be influenced primarily by his issue stands and affect, indications of the candidate's party affiliation and ideology were not provided. By assigning the candidate an equal number of liberal and conservative issue positions, we minimized the effects of differences in political sophistication. That is, regardless of their sophistication, participants were unlikely to infer the candidate's ideology from his issue stands and use it as a basis for evaluating him.

Four stimulus articles were constructed, which varied in the order in which the issues were presented. Averaged over articles, the mean serial position of each type of issue (liberal, conservative, and neutral) was the same.

**PROCEDURE:**

Participants were run in small groups of between 2 and 6. They were seated in individual booths for privacy. Participants were first informed of their right to refuse to participate and were told that all of the information they provided would be kept completely anonymous and confidential. Participants were then told that they would be participating in several different studies that were unrelated to one another.

*Mood induction.* The procedure we employed to induce affect has been shown in several previous studies to produce reliable differences in mood (e.g., Schwarz & Clore, 1983; Strack et al., 1985). It was introduced as the first of several unrelated studies to be performed during the experimental session. Participants were told that Dr. Mann, a psychologist at another university and a friend of the experimenter, was in the process of developing a Life-Event Inventory (LEI) that would assess the positive and negative experiences that people have in their lives. They were also told that to develop the questionnaire, Dr. Mann needed to collect a variety of life events of the sort that college students often experience. On this pretense, participants were asked to describe either a happy or a sad event that had recently occurred to them.

*Instructional conditions.* After the mood manipulation, the experimenter handed out the materials for the political part of the study, which participants were led to believe was unrelated to the task they had just completed. Participants in the impression-formation condition were informed that we were interested in how people form impressions of individuals that are discussed in the news. Participants were given a copy of the stimulus news article, preceded by a separate sheet of instructions that the experimenter read aloud as the participants followed. Participants were told, We are interested in how people form impressions of and evaluate political candidates on the basis of information they receive in newspaper articles. Attached is a copy of an article that recently appeared in a local newspaper. The article is about Thomas Millark, a current member of the U.S. House of Representatives, who is running for a seat in the U.S. Senate. As you read through the attached article, please try to form an impression of Thomas Millark and try to decide whether or not you would want to vote for him. Later, we will ask you some questions about the impression that you have formed of Thomas Millark.

In the article-focus condition, participants were informed that we were interested in how information is presented in newspapers. As in the impression-formation condition, participants were given a copy of the news article with the instructions attached on a separate sheet. The experimenter read the instructions aloud as the participants followed along. They were told, We are interested in people's perceptions of how well information is presented in newspapers. Each of you has received an article that recently appeared in a local newspaper. Please examine the article and try to determine if it is clearly written. As you read the article, think about its format and structure as well as how clearly the information is presented. Later, we will ask you some questions about these matters.

Participants were given approximately 5 minutes to read through the article. Then, participants in no-delay conditions were administered the dependent measures to be described in the next section. Participants in delay conditions were dismissed immediately after being read instructions about why they would complete the remainder of the experiment on the following day. These latter instructions depended on the ostensible task being performed. Specifically, participants in the impression-formation condition were told, In the real world, people do not discuss news stories until some time after they read them. This is especially true with political news because people do not vote immediately after finding out about the candidates who are running for office. Because of this, we think that it is better to get your impressions of the candidate discussed in the article after some time has passed.

Participants in the article-focus condition were told, In the real world, people often do not evaluate the clarity, structure, and format of news articles until some time has passed. We have found in previous research that
such evaluations of articles are actually more reliable after some time has passed.

With this preamble, participants in delay conditions were instructed to return to the laboratory at the same time on the following day. Upon returning, they completed the measures to be described below.

**ASSESSMENT OF DEPENDENT VARIABLES**

**Attitude toward the candidate.** Participants were asked to indicate (a) how much they liked the candidate, (b) the extent to which they felt positively or negatively toward him, (c) the favorableness of their impression of him, and (d) how much they would like to have him as a U.S. senator. These judgments were reported along scales from −5 (very unfavorable, very negative, or dislike very much) to +5 (very favorable, very positive, or like very much). In addition, they estimated the likelihood they would vote for the candidate if they lived in his district. This estimate was reported along a scale from 0 (very unlikely) to 10 (very likely).

**Recall.** After reporting their attitudes toward the candidate, participants in the impression-formation condition were told that “In understanding how impressions of politicians are formed, it is often helpful to know what information people can recall.” On this pretense, they were then told,

> Write down all of the information that you can remember from the news article that you read. Write the information down in the order it comes to mind. Write it down in as close to the original wording as possible. However, if you cannot remember the exact wording but can remember the idea, write that down. Write down all of the information that you can remember regardless of whether or not you took it into account in forming your impression of the candidate.

Instructions in the article-focus condition were identical except for the first sentence, which was replaced with the following: “In understanding how news articles are evaluated, it is often helpful to know what information people can recall from the article that they read.”

Participants were not given a time limit in which to recall the information. However, all participants completed the recall task within approximately 5 minutes.

**Participants’ own issue positions.** Following the recall task, participants completed a political questionnaire in which they reported their agreement with each of the 15 issue positions espoused by the candidate as well as 15 additional issues that were never presented. Of the latter positions, 6 were liberal, 6 were conservative, and 3 were ideologically neutral. Specifically, participants were instructed to “read over each of the following statements and rate the extent to which you would personally agree or disagree with a candidate who takes the stated issue position.” The 15 issue positions that were previously espoused by the candidate were presented in the same words they had been described in the news article. Participants recorded their positions on all of the issues along 11-point scales from −5 (strongly disagree) to +5 (strongly agree).

**POLITICAL PARTISANSHIP, INTEREST, AND SOPHISTICATION**

Participants’ political party affiliation and overall interest in politics were assessed using scales identical to those employed in the preliminary study, and strength of partisanship was assessed on the basis of the same criteria. Political sophistication was assessed using a measure similar to that employed in the preliminary study.

**MOOD MANIPULATION CHECK**

At the end of the study, participants were asked to report their moods “at this moment” using a mood thermometer. Specifically, they were told to use any number between 0 and 100 to make their ratings, assuming that “ratings between 50 and 100 mean that you feel in a good mood and ratings between 0 and 50 mean that you don’t feel in a very good mood.”

After completing all parts of the study, participants were debriefed, thanked, and dismissed.

**SCORING**

**Attitude toward the candidate.** Participants’ attitudes toward the candidate were inferred from their responses to the five attitude-related questions described earlier. Responses to these questions were all highly related (Cronbach’s alpha = .96). Therefore, the responses were converted to values from 0 to 10 and averaged to provide a single index of each participant’s attitude toward the candidate.

**Recall.** Recall was coded using a gist criterion. Recall of issues on which the candidate expressed a position in the news article and recall of other general information in the article that was unrelated to the candidate’s issue positions were coded separately.

**Issue agreement.** Each participant’s judgments of the 15 issue positions espoused by the candidate were averaged to provide a single index of issue agreement. A similar index was computed for the 15 additional unmentioned issues that were contained in the political questionnaire. Each of these indexes could range from −5 to +5, in which higher numbers indicate greater agreement with the candidate-relevant or candidate-irrelevant subset of issues. These two separate indexes permitted the effects of mood on agreement with the candidate-relevant issues to be examined separately from the effects of mood on agreement with the issues in general.
Results

PRELIMINARY ANALYSES

Mood. The mood that participants reported under no-delay conditions was analyzed as a function of the type of mood induced, instructional set, and partisan strength. Participants reported feeling happier when the experience they had written about was happy ($M = 59.0$) than when it was sad ($M = 55.9$). This difference was not reliable ($p > .10$) or contingent on either instructional set or partisan strength ($p > .10$).

Although the statistical unreliability of our mood manipulation was unexpected, it was not considered to be a severe constraint on our interpretation of its effects. The time between the mood manipulation and the mood measure was quite long (approximately 30-35 minutes in no-delay conditions). It therefore seems likely that the manipulated mood had worn off somewhat by the time it was assessed. When mood is measured closer to the time it is manipulated, significant and reliable effects are more likely to emerge.

Instructional set. We expected that participants would focus more attention on issue positions in impression-formation conditions than in article-focus conditions and that this difference would be reflected in the types of information they recalled. This was the case. Pooled over delay conditions, participants recalled more issue positions when they were told to form an impression of the candidate ($M = 6.22$) than when they were told to focus on the structure of the article ($M = 4.75$). $F(1, 124) = 14.01, p < .001$. Moreover, they recalled more candidate-relevant material from the article under article-focus conditions ($M = 1.33$) than under impression-formation conditions ($M = .40$). $F(1, 124) = 17.58, p < .001$.

Partisan strength as a measure of motivation. Strong and weak partisans performed equally well on the political sophistication test ($16.13$ versus $15.65$), $t(135) < 1$. This suggests that all subjects were equally knowledgeable about political matters, regardless of partisan strength. However, strong partisans reported greater interest in politics compared to weak partisans ($2.33$ versus $2.03$), $t(135) = 2.05, p < .05$. Taken together, these results provide further confirmation of the assumption that partisan strength reflects differences in political interest rather than differences in knowledge.

EFFECTS OF MOOD ON ATTITUDES TOWARD THE CANDIDATE

If participants misattribute their mood to the candidate they are evaluating and use it as information about their feelings toward him, they should report more favorable attitudes toward the candidate when they are happy than when they are sad. However, we expected that explicit instructions to evaluate the candidate would induce extrinsic motivation to make an accurate judgment and, therefore, would stimulate participants to correct for the biasing influence of candidate-irrelevant affect. In addition, we expected that participants who were intrinsically interested in evaluating politicians (as inferred from their partisan strength) would spontaneously attempt to form an accurate impression of the candidate even in the absence of an extrinsic reason to do so and, therefore, might also attempt to correct for the influence of judgment-irrelevant affect. To this extent, a positive influence of mood on candidate evaluation should be most evident when participants' extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation were both low (i.e., among weak partisans under article-focus conditions). In contrast, corrections for the influence of extraneous affect should be particularly evident when extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are both high. However, the effects of extraneous affect in other conditions were less predictable. In article-focus conditions, for example, where participants were told to consider the information for a purpose that was unrelated to candidate evaluation, whether the effects of participants' intrinsic motivation to do so would override the effects of these competing task demands was unclear.

To evaluate this possibility, candidate evaluations were analyzed as a function of mood, instructional set, partisan strength, and delay. In these analyses, both political sophistication and party identification were covaried, thus controlling for both participants' political sophistication and for biases that might result from their political orientation. No effects of mood, instructional set, and partisanship were contingent on the time interval between information presentation and the judgments participants reported ($p > .10$). The data to be reported are therefore pooled over the delay condition.

Mean candidate evaluations, adjusted for the covariates, are shown in Figure 1 as a function of mood, instructional set, and partisan strength. (The unadjusted means show an identical pattern.) The implications of these data are very clear. Weak partisans under article-focus conditions evaluated the candidate more favorably when they were happy than when they were sad. However, this effect of mood was reversed in each of the other three conditions. That is, weak partisans who had been told to form an impression of the candidate at the time they received the information about him and strong partisans regardless of the instructions they were given evaluated the candidate less favorably when they were happy than when they were sad. This conclusion is confirmed by an interaction of mood, instructional set, and partisan strength, $F(1, 122) = 4.31, p < .05$. More specifically, the effect of mood was significantly different under weak-partisan, article-focus conditions (4.16 vs.
3.11) than under the other three combinations of partisan strength and instructional set (2.74 vs. 4.03), $F(1, 124) = 8.48, p < .01$, whereas the effects of mood under the latter three conditions did not differ from one another, $F < 1$. Thus, situation-induced motivation to evaluate the candidate was sufficient to stimulate participants to correct for the biasing influence of their target-relevant mood. However, participants' intrinsic motivation to evaluate political candidates also led these participants to make these corrections, despite instructions to use the information for a different purpose.

Evidence that differences in political knowledge and expertise were not major contributors to the effects we observed in the present study was obtained from a supplementary analysis. Specifically, we dichotomized the measure of political sophistication by performing a median split and then replicated the above analysis substituting this measure for partisan strength. All interactions involving political sophistication were nonsignificant (all $p > .25$). Thus, differences in knowledge were not an important mediator of the effects we obtained. This does not mean, of course, that the ability to correct for the biasing influence of extraneous affect is unimportant (Ottati & Isbell, 1996). This matter is discussed later in this article.

**Figure 1** Adjusted-mean candidate evaluations as a function of mood, instruction set, and partisan strength.

**Figure 2** Mean issue agreement as a function of mood, instruction set, and partisan strength.

**EFFECTS ON ISSUE AGREEMENT**

As noted earlier, the effects of mood on candidate evaluations did not depend on the delay between information presentation and judgment. This indicates that corrections for mood-induced bias did not occur at the time participants reported their attitudes. However, it does not necessarily indicate that the corrections occurred on-line as the information was presented. Rather, participants might have spontaneously formed an overall impression of the candidate as they read the information about him but waited until all of the information had been received before correcting for the biasing influence of mood on their impression.

The relative merits of these two possibilities were inferred from the effects of mood on issue agreement. If participants correct for the biasing effects of mood on their evaluations of the candidate's individual issue positions at the time they encounter these positions, and if these corrected issue evaluations provided the basis for the overall attitudes toward the candidate that they reported later, then the effects of experimental manipulations on issue agreement should parallel their effects on overall attitudes. As shown in Figure 2 and consistent with this prediction, issue agreement increased with mood only among weak partisans in the article-focus
condition. Strong partisans in this condition and participants in the impression-formation condition regardless of partisan strength agreed less with the candidate’s issue positions when they were happy than when they were sad. The three-way interaction of mood, partisan strength, and instructional set implied by these results was significant, $F(1, 123) = 6.87, p < .01$.

This effect cannot be attributed to a general influence of mood on participants’ evaluations of issue positions that occurred at the time of judgment. If this was so, analogous effects would be evident in participants’ agreement with issue positions that were not mentioned in the article they read and were not associated with the candidate they evaluated. This, however, was not the case. No effects of mood on participants’ agreement with the candidate-relevant issues emerged, $F < 1$. Thus, mood did not have a general effect on participants’ agreement with the issue positions that they considered at the time of judgment. It only influenced agreement with those positions that were mentioned in the article they had read earlier.

If candidate evaluations are based on issue agreement, the effect of mood on these evaluations should be eliminated when agreement with the presented issues is entered as a covariate. To evaluate this, a supplementary analysis was performed in which attitudes toward the candidate were analyzed as a function of mood, instructional set, partisan strength, and delay using issue agreement, partisanship, and political sophistication as covariates. As expected, all effects were nonsignificant (all $p > .10$). In contrast, when issue agreement was analyzed as a function of mood, instructional set, partisan strength, and delay using attitude toward the candidate, partisanship, and political sophistication as covariates, the interaction between mood, instructional set, and partisan strength remained significant, $F(1, 117) = 4.19, p < .05$. This suggests that the effects of mood on issue agreement do not reflect post hoc rationalizing of the candidate evaluations that participants formed and reported on the basis of other considerations. Rather, the effects of mood on participants’ attitudes toward the candidate were mediated by its effects on participants’ agreement with the candidate’s individual issue stands at the time these stands were first considered.

RECALL

The above analyses suggest that the effects of induced mood on attitudes toward the candidate were mediated by on-line issue agreement. It is still possible that participants’ mood influenced the attention they paid to the candidate’s issue stands at the time they were presented. However, if participants selectively attend to and encode into memory those issue stands that are affectively congruent with their mood state, then happy participants should recall a greater proportion of issue positions with which they agreed than other participants. To investigate this possibility, a recall bias score was computed by subtracting the proportion of disagreed-with issue positions that each participant recalled from the proportion of agreed-with positions the participant recalled (Ottai & Isbell, 1996). This index was analyzed as a function of mood, instructional set, partisan strength, and delay. As expected, all effects were nonsignificant (all $p > .20$). This suggests that participants’ mood at the time they were exposed to the candidate information did not influence the information that they attended to and encoded into memory.

SUPPLEMENTARY DATA

Our interpretation of the correlation processes we observed in this study assumes that participants have implicit theories of the way in which their judgments are likely to be biased by their mood and that their corrections for bias are based on these theories (Petty & Wegener, 1993; Wegener & Petty, 1995, 1997). To validate this assumption, 18 participants who had not taken part in the main experiment were asked, “How do you think being in a happy mood will influence how you judge a political candidate that you never heard of before?” Nineteen other participants answered the same question about the influence of sad mood. Participants reported their responses along scales labeled from −4 (judge candidate more negatively) to +4 (judge candidate more positively). As expected, participants reported that happy moods would have a positive influence on candidate evaluations ($M = 1.11$) and that sad moods would have a negative influence ($M = -1.60$). This difference was significant, $t(35) = 5.60, p < .001$. Thus, our assumption concerning the theories that underlie persons’ corrections for bias seems justified.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The results of this study confirm Ottai and Isbell’s (1996) conclusion that the affect people experience at the time they receive information about a political candidate has an enduring influence on their evaluations of the candidate. Moreover, they clarify the cognitive mechanisms through which adjustments are made for the biasing influence of affect that is irrelevant to these evaluations. When people are asked to evaluate a target in the absence of new information about it, they may use the affect they are experiencing as a direct, informational basis for this evaluation (Schwarz & Clore, 1983, 1988). When people receive new information about a person or object, however, they may assess the affect elicited by each piece of information separately and, after doing so, compute an overall evaluation by integrating the implications of these individual assessments.
Their attempts to correct for the biasing influence of extraneous affect they are experiencing appear to occur at the time the individual pieces of information are evaluated rather than later, at the time of judgment. This conclusion is supported by evidence that the affect participates experienced influenced their agreement with only those issue stands that were associated with the candidate in the article they read, and this influence was not contingent on the delay between exposure to the candidate and judgment.

Corrections for the influence of extraneous sources of affect can be induced either by situational demands that increase the importance of making accurate evaluations or by intrinsic interest in the domain of knowledge to which the evaluations are relevant. In the political arena, for example, people with intrinsic interest in politics may spontaneously use information about a politician to evaluate him, even in the absence of any externally imposed incentive to do so. Moreover, they may spontaneously attempt to correct for the influence of judgment-irrelevant affect they are experiencing when they receive information that is relevant to the evaluation.

Our conclusions concerning the adjustment processes that occur when people are motivated to evaluate a political candidate should be considered in the context of the positive impact of judgment-irrelevant affect that occurs when this motivation does not exist. One might expect that under these conditions, participants might pay little attention to the implications of the information they receive and might evaluate the candidate at the time of judgment based on the affect they were experiencing at that time. However, extraneous affect had a positive influence on these participants’ agreement with the candidate’s issue stands as well as their evaluations of the candidate himself. It is conceivable that in this condition (unlike other conditions), the effects of extraneous affect on issue-stand evaluations reflected a post hoc rationalization of the affect-based candidate evaluations that participants had reported earlier. Another possibility, however, is simply that participants spontaneously assessed their affective reactions to the issue stands but, in the absence of any extrinsic or intrinsic reason to consider them further, did not bother to confirm the validity of these reactions. Implications of these two interpretations may be worth pursuing in future research.

Other Considerations

The conclusions drawn from this study should be evaluated in relation to other conceptualizations of the effects of mood on judgments. Ottati and Isbell’s (1996) attributed differences in the tendency for participants to adjust for the biasing influence of extraneous affect in evaluations of a political candidate to differences in their ability to assess the implications of the information they received. However, political sophistication had no effect on adjustment processes in the present research.

Several differences between Ottati and Isbell’s (1996) studies and the present one should be noted, however. First, the candidate that participants evaluated in the earlier studies took a conservative position on 9 out of 12 issues. In such a case, politically sophisticated participants were presumably better able to identify the candidate’s ideology than unsophisticated ones and, therefore, may have found the impression formation task easier to perform. In contrast, the candidate evaluated in the present study ostensibly endorsed an equal number of liberal and conservative positions, and so, the candidate’s political orientation could not easily be assessed by either sophisticated or unsophisticated participants. Consequently, differences in ability were less likely to play a role in this study than in the earlier one.

Other possible interpretations of our results have already been discounted by Ottati and Isbell (1996). For example, the effect of mood on judgment has sometimes been attributed to its mediating influence on the accessibility of mood-congruent concepts in memory (Bower, 1981; Forgas, 1995; Isem, Shalker, Clark, & Karp, 1978). The accessibility of these concepts may lead to the selective attention and encoding of mood-congruent information into memory (Bower, Gilligan, & Montiero, 1981; Forgas & Bower, 1987). However, if judgments are based on this information, they should increase in favorableness with participants’ mood. Consequently, this conceptualization is insufficient to account for the reverse effects observed in the present research. Moreover, even in the condition in which a positive influence of mood was detected, there was no evidence that mood affected the type of information that participants recalled. In this regard, Forgas (1995) has argued that mood-congruent judgment or recall may be motivated by a selective information search for contrasting rather than congruent information. However, the absence of a relation between mood and recall in the present research suggests that the contrast effects we observed were not the result of such processes.

A second possible interpretation is that the concepts and knowledge activated by a mood manipulation provide a comparative standard against which the target is judged (Strack et al., 1985; see also Schwarz & Bless, 1992). Thus, for example, participants may evaluate their recent life less favorably after recalling a positive life event that occurred to them in the distant past than after recalling a negative one (Strack et al., 1985). However, these standard-of-comparison effects have only been found under conditions in which affect is not elicited by the recalled experience; when affect is elic-
limited, informational influences of mood occur instead (Strack et al., 1985, Experiment 2). Moreover, the priming of a cognitive standard has its primary influence on judgments of objects that are closely related to it (Schwarz, Strack, Kommer, & Wagner, 1987). In the present research, the content of the mood manipulation was unrelated to the political information that participants received. Therefore, it seems unlikely that the specific concepts and knowledge activated by the manipulation provided a relevant standard against which participants judged the candidate.

The corrections that persons make for the influence of mood-induced biases may not necessarily be symmetric. That is, people’s perceptions of the biasing influence of a good mood may not be the same as their perceptions of the biasing influence of a bad mood. Consequently, the amount of corrections that occur may not be similar in the two cases. Because the effectiveness of positive and negative mood induction procedures is difficult to equate, this asymmetry is difficult to evaluate empirically. In a different context, however, Wyer and Budesheim (1997) found that persons correct less for the biasing influence of favorable information about a person than for the biasing influence of unfavorable information. Differences in the correction for positive and negative affect might conceivably be analogous.

Conclusions and Practical Implications

In summary, the present research confirms the evidence obtained by Ottati and Isbell (1996) that individuals often correct for the biasing influence of judgment-irrelevant affect they are experiencing when they evaluate a political candidate. However, it demonstrates that motivational factors as well as ability can influence the extent to which individuals engage in these correction processes. The evidence that strong political partisans are more intrinsically motivated to process information about a political candidate and, therefore, are more likely than weak partisans to correct for affect-related biases has implications for political information processing in nonlaboratory situations. For example, strong and weak partisans may be equally motivated to evaluate politicians in the course of a political campaign, when there is extrinsic motivation for thinking about the information about them (i.e., the need to make a voting decision). However, weak partisans may be less motivated than strong partisans to think about information about candidates who are not campaigning for office. Thus, weak partisans’ evaluations of politicians in non-election years may be more biased than strong partisans’ evaluations by the affect they are experiencing at the time they receive information about them.

More generally, our results make salient that positive affect does not always lead individuals to render more positive judgments. In some cases, it can lead to more negative judgments. This possibility may be worth considering by political candidates, campaign managers, market researchers, and consumer ad developers who use mood-inducing appeals in an attempt to promote their “products.”

NOTES

1. Highly sophisticated participants are presumably better able to identify the ideology implied by different issue positions than are less sophisticated individuals, and thus, they can infer a candidate’s ideology from his issue stance more easily (Hamill, Lodge, & Blake, 1986).

2. The motivation to evaluate political candidates should be distinguished from more general interest in political and social issues. Interest in specific issues, such as abortion or the ecology, might often be independent of interest in politics per se in evaluating candidates for public office. Partisan strength, on the other hand, is likely to reflect both an interest and involvement in politics. We therefore expected that partisans would be a particularly good indicator of the motivation to evaluate political candidates and to correct for biases in making these judgments.

3. The use of partisanship rather than self-report of interest in politics as a measure of intrinsic motivation seemed justified for two reasons. First, self-reports of partisanship are less likely to be influenced by participants’ perceptions of their performance on a political task than is self-reported interest in politics. In our data, this is suggested by the very similar percentages of participants who reported themselves to be strong partisans in the preliminary study (32%) and in the main study (35%). Similarly, McAllister and Wattenberg (1992) found that partisanship was unaffected by whether respondents had just reported their vote choices. Second, partisanship is considered to be an important determinant of political behavior in nonlaboratory situations and, therefore, has some ecological validity.

4. General article information consisted of items such as the fact that the article was written by Claudia White, that the League of Women’s Voters compiled the candidate’s issue positions, and that the candidate was running for a seat in the 18th Legislative District.

5. The mood manipulation was administered at the end of the experiment to avoid drawing participants’ attention to their moods prior to the collection of the dependent measures. Making participants aware of their moods before having them complete measures that mood is expected to influence can alter the effects of mood on these measures (see Schwarz & Clore, 1983, for the role of mood attributions on judgment).

6. Data obtained from an independent group of participants support this possibility. Specifically, 76 participants who were exposed to a mood manipulation identical to the one used in the present experiment evaluated the same set of 15 issues used here, evaluated the candidate, and reported their current moods. In this case, the time between the mood manipulation and the mood manipulation check was only about 15 minutes. As expected, participants in the happy mood condition reported greater happiness than those in the sad condition, F(1, 70) = 3.63, p < .05. This confirms the general reliability of the mood manipulation we employed.

7. In this and other covariance analyses to be reported, the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes was satisfied (i.e., none of the covariates interacted with the effects contained in the main model, all ps > .30). Excluding partisanship as a covariate does not significantly alter the results. This suggests that no marked differences in the effects of mood on judgment existed between Democratic and Republican participants.

8. Because the questionnaire in which participants reported their issue agreement was administered near the end of the experimental session, in which mood was manipulated and measured, it is conceivable that the effects of the mood manipulations had worn off by this time. To this extent, the fact that induced affect influenced agreement with the issues endorsed by the candidate but not agreement with candidate-irrelevant issues’ strengths suggests that the ef-
Effects of induced affect occurred at the time the candidate information was received and not afterward.

9. Ottati and Isbell (1996, Experiments 1 and 2) also used amount of recall of candidate information as a measure of processing efficiency. In a candidate-evaluation task in which the candidate is predominantly liberal or conservative, sophisticated may possess ideological schemas that aid in their encoding, organization, and retrieval of candidate information (see Hamill, Lodge, & Blake, 1986).

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