



May 2015

Dollars and Sense: Does Economic Self-Interest or Emotional Attachment Better Explain Vote Choice?

Daniel M. Truesdale '15

Illinois Wesleyan University, dtruesda@iwu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/respublica>



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Truesdale, Daniel M. '15 (2015) "Dollars and Sense: Does Economic Self-Interest or Emotional Attachment Better Explain Vote Choice?," *Res Publica - Journal of Undergraduate Research*: Vol. 20

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/respublica/vol20/iss1/9>

This Article is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by editorial board of Res Publica and the Political Science Department at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@iwu.edu.

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

Dollars and Sense: Does Economic Self-Interest or Emotional Attachment Better Explain Vote Choice?

Abstract

This paper seeks to understand voter choice using a dichotomous model differentiating between economic self-interest and emotional attachment. Using survey data from the American National Election Studies (ANES) database, this paper first utilizes a unique scaling technique and then a pseudo R-Square method to determine which independent variable, economic self-interest or emotional attachment (affect), contains more explanatory power in predicting voter choice. The findings support the hypothesis that economic self-interest contains the most explanatory power in predicting voter choice, though the degree of difference varies across elections.

DOLLARS AND SENSE: DOES ECONOMIC SELF-INTEREST OR EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT BETTER EXPLAIN VOTER CHOICE?

Daniel Truesdale

Abstract: *This paper seeks to understand voter choice using a dichotomous model differentiating between economic self-interest and emotional attachment. Using survey data from the American National Election Studies (ANES) database, this paper first utilizes a unique scaling technique and then a pseudo R-Square method to determine which independent variable, economic self-interest or emotional attachment (affect), contains more explanatory power in predicting voter choice. The findings support the hypothesis that economic self-interest contains the most explanatory power in predicting voter choice, though the degree of difference varies across elections.*

INTRODUCTION

“It’s the economy, stupid!” These words uttered by James Carville were meant to serve as a reminder to Bill Clinton’s presidential team in 1992 to focus the campaign message on the economy and its wretched performance under President George H.W. Bush. Although elementary, the saying depicts citizens as myopic voters concerned solely with monetary well-being. Of course, no campaign would forgo other interests, such as social issues, emotion, and loyalty solely for economics. The slogan was meant to pinpoint the significance of the economy as one of the most, if not the most, important matter facing voters.

Interestingly enough, according to the Huffington Post,⁸⁹ President Obama became the first president since Ronald Reagan to win re-election with an unemployment rate above 6 percent, and became the only President since Franklin D. Roosevelt to win re-election with an unemployment rate above 7 percent. This phenomenon serves as a gateway to revisit the “known” assumptions of voter choice. Perhaps it is not “stupid” to believe other factors take precedence over economics in understanding voter choice. This research intends to investigate voter choice and better understand the conceptual framework of the individual voter.

The paper is divided into the following format; a literature review of voter choice is presented, which assists in developing the hypothesis and theory that individuals are

⁸⁹ Bradford 2012

more likely to vote for the candidate within their economic self-interest utilized in the paper. I then provide an overview of the data and methods, and discuss the results of the paper with avenues for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is imperative to understand the conceptual difference between voter turnout and voter choice. Berry and Gersen⁹⁰ concluded different timing regimes produce different turnout rates across local governments, thereby impacting policy outcomes. Another study by Childers and Binder⁹¹ from the University of Utah sought to examine the impact of direct democracy on voter participation. The authors concluded direct democracy does not inherently increase voter turnout, but it is instead competitive ballot races that mobilize voters.

Though exploring avenues to increase voter turnout is important to the discipline, this study analyzes an individual voter's choice. The question poses unique challenges, specifically due to the normative tilt of the research. However, this paper designs a dichotomous model for voter choice between *economic self-interest* and *emotional attachment* in an attempt to understand voter choice.

Economic Self-Interest

Anthony Downs was the first prominent scholar to define what constitutes a *rational* vote. In his work, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Downs develops the concept of a rational voter based primarily on the *self-interest axiom* which asserts a voter is beholden to selfish ends. "Thus, whenever we speak of rational behavior, we always mean rational behavior directed towards selfish ends."⁹² The "ends" the individual seeks are *benefits*, which can be described as streams of *utility* received from the government. Downs lists several examples of utility including; policing of streets, purified water, defended shores, etc. Even though Downs acknowledges rational individuals can receive utility from "events that are only remotely connected to their own material income,"⁹³ there is an emphasis in his writing to assimilate utility with economic gain.

⁹⁰ Berry and Gersen 2010

⁹¹ Childers and Binder 2012

⁹² Downs 1957, 27

⁹³ Ibid., 36

Downs transitions from the rational individual to the rational voter stating, “As we have shown, every voter makes his voting decisions by comparing various real and hypothetical streams of utility.”⁹⁴ In essence, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* conditions economic self-interest as a provision of voter choice.

Bryan Caplan’s work, *The Myth of the Rational Voter* takes a pessimistic view of rationality among American voters. It is Caplan’s persistence to integrate the notion of rationality with economic self-interest that assists in priming the concept as a condition of voter choice. “The reason why I emphasize economics is that it is at the heart of most modern policy disputes. Regulation, taxes, subsidies-they all hinge on beliefs about how policy affects economic outcomes.”⁹⁵ Caplan believes American’s ignorance of economics allows them to be swayed by irrational beliefs.

The central idea is that voters are worse than ignorant, they are, in a word, *irrational* and vote accordingly...Yet common sense tells us that emotion and ideology-not just the facts or their processing-powerfully sway human judgment⁹⁶

In many ways, Caplan is in conversation with Downs regarding the importance of economic self-interest and its foundation for voter choice.

Bartels scorns the irrationality of voters for supporting the Bush tax-cuts. Noting most Americans express strong egalitarian values, American support for the tax-cuts was irrational. “I have argued that public support for the Bush-tax cuts derived in considerable part from unenlightened considerations of self-interest among people who did not recognize the implications of President Bush’s policies for their own economic well-being or their broader political values.”⁹⁷ Echoing Downs in defining rational behavior in the context of economic self-interest, Bartels also voices Caplan’s concern in regard to the unenlightened American.

Additional works have discussed the role of economic self-interest and its prevalence in voter choice. An article by Conover and Feldman recognizes the dichotomy

⁹⁴ Downs 1957, 46

⁹⁵ Caplan 2007, 21

⁹⁶ Ibid., 2

⁹⁷ Bartels 2009; 181

of voter choice and conditions economic self-interest as a staple. Conover and Feldman identify economic reason as a condition of voter choice explaining,

In keeping with Downs' classic analysis in *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, current researchers depict the individual as a "rational" information processor who carefully reviews the available information about the economy, and then uses it in the most logical and efficient way possible to make political evaluations and decisions.⁹⁸

Emotional Attachment

The second pillar of voter choice is *emotional attachment*. The presence of emotion in voter choice can best be summarized by Conover and Feldman who discuss the presence of emotional responses to the state of the economy.

Political scientists picture the American public as one populated by individuals who deal with economic information in a sterile manner devoid of feelings. Yet, the accuracy of this description is belied daily by those people we encounter both in our own personal lives and through the media; people who are depressed over unemployment, worried about being laid off, angry over inflation.⁹⁹

As Brader acknowledges, "Politicians routinely appeal to the emotions of voters."¹⁰⁰ It is therefore reasonable to assume voters are not isolated "statisticians" as suggested by Popkin, but are living beings, conflicted with emotion. Scholars such as Sears, Mutz, Conover, Feldman, Huddy, Gunnthorsdottir, and Marcus have also deliberated the important role emotion plays in voter choice.

As previously discussed by Downs, reason is a result of gathering information and constructing a "rational vote" based on *economic self-interest*. This implies the voter utilizes *thought (cognition)* invoking *reason*. Since Down's theory already assumes individuals are rational voters this inherently implies cognitive voters. Thus, whenever cognition is discussed, assume cognition in Downs's sense, which implies use of reason,

⁹⁸ Conover and Feldman 1986; 51

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Brader 2005; 388

thereby assimilating reason with economic self-interest. In an attempt to distinguish emotion from reason (cognition) Conover and Feldman provide further clarification.

In the most general sense, affect refers to a subjective state which involves arousal of the autonomic nervous system of the interruption of attention. In comparison, cognition is “knowing”; it involves the representation of knowledge and the processes involved in acquiring such information.¹⁰¹

Thus, emotion is experienced prior to cognition. Another way to relate the two concepts is to consider emotion as a state without cognition. This fact inherently creates a methodological problem. As noted by Mutz, “Unfortunately, the traditional survey method has made it difficult to disentangle the experience of emotional arousal from the cognitive assessment of the object and the labeling of the specific emotion.”¹⁰² In other words, critics argue respondents verbalizing emotion have allowed cognition to adulterate *pure* emotion. Many in the discipline debate the nuance between emotion and like concepts. For instance, Mutz discusses the difference between political attitudes and political emotion. Conover and Feldman identify the confusion within the discipline in distinguishing between emotion and terms such as mood, attitude, and feeling. Although the concepts are in many ways similar, their discrete differences cause pitfalls during operationalization.

Conflict Between Emotion and Reason

For this research, clarification is offered between emotion and attitude. Emotion, as described by Marcus, is enticed by a specific stimulus. “There is some consensus that, for example, moods can be differentiated from emotions because emotions have an explicit source.”¹⁰³ As a result, emotion is tied to political symbols. “Political symbols often evoke and mobilize human emotions.”¹⁰⁴ On the contrary, attitudes are an accumulation of emotion, unlinked to a specific stimulus. Sears elaborates,

Any given attitude object is composed of one or more symbolic elements, and each element conveys some meaning to the

¹⁰¹ Conover and Feldman 1986, 51

¹⁰² Mutz 2005, 348

¹⁰³ Marcus 2000, 224

¹⁰⁴ Sears 1983, 14, 16, 23

individual. Attitudes toward the object as a whole reflect some combination of the affects previously conditioned to the specific symbols included in it.”¹⁰⁵

Another way to compare the two concepts is to consider attitudes as an accumulation of emotion. A voter’s *attitude* towards a political candidate is a consequence of *emotional* responses towards symbols, which aggregate into attitude.

In the context of this research, emotion is tied to political symbols, and attitudes are predispositions towards individual candidates. Popkin describes the important role symbols play in campaigns. As he states, “To communicate their opinions rapidly, candidates and their strategies search for concrete symbols that serve as information shortcuts, as cognitive placeholders and focal points, to their position on larger abstract problems.”¹⁰⁶ Examples of symbols tied to the candidate include gender, religion, ethnicity, race, height, weight, personal wealth, and other demographic traits. Overall, the accumulation of symbols corresponds into attitudinal positions towards candidates. “The prototypical example of a politician's excessive emotional display is contained in the image of Democratic presidential primary frontrunner Edmund Muskie weeping in response to slurs about his wife by a conservative newspaper publisher.”¹⁰⁷

The relationship between cognition and affect has been noted in many studies across the discipline. Sears and Citrin see the passage of Proposition 13 as a display of voters exercising reason in the context of economic self-interest, while Rabuska and Ryan see the event in a symbolic context. Historically, reason (cognition) and affect (emotion) have often been seen as counterparts in the context of voter choice. As Sears notes in his research, “Which of them plays the more important role in mass politics is an old debate, originally framed by James Madison in the Federalist Papers as pitting passion against reason.”¹⁰⁸

Not all scholars have worked to pin reason against emotion. The best example is the development of *affective intelligence*. The theory developed by Marcus, Neuman, and

¹⁰⁵ Sears 1983, 14, 16, 23

¹⁰⁶ Popkin 1984, 63

¹⁰⁷ Glaser and Salovey 1998, 164

¹⁰⁸ Sears 1983, 23

MacKuen argues that affect causes voters to become sophisticated about politics. “When anxious about how things are going in the political world, this generalized anxiety drives a search for more information, and for better use of existing information resources. Thus greater political intelligence is induced by emotion.”¹⁰⁹ In this model, emotion precedes cognition. As Ladd and Lenz note, those expressing anxiety may already be more engaged in an election or may hold intense preference that thereby produced anxiety. Thus, affective intelligence assumes emotion precedes cognition, but no validation has been offered.

Across the discipline there is a growing trend suggesting affect has a stronger impact on voter choice, relative to economic reason. *The American Voter Revisited* recognizes the division between the two, economic self-interest and emotional attachment, and gives more weight towards the latter. Sears explicitly states affect has greater impact in understanding voter choice over cognition. “Fourth, affect often dominates cognition.”¹¹⁰ Most notably, Popkin argues voters have no choice but to rely on emotion and political symbols to exercise a vote. Additionally, Kuklinski concludes voters have low personal costs in the context of economic self-interest when it comes to elections and therefore rely on symbols to assist their decision making process.

THEORY, QUESTION, AND HYPOTHESIS

The model used in this paper encompasses *economic self-interest* and *emotional attachment*, analyzing their impact on voter choice. Theorizing voter choice can be understood within an economic and emotional context in which voters display only two voids, *economic self-interest* and *emotional attachment* with candidates filling any combination of voids.

An interesting phenomenon occurs when a candidate fills one void, while leaving the other vacant. For instance, Candidate X fills Voter Y’s economic self-interest void, but neglects his emotional, symbolic needs. Likewise, Candidate A fills Voter B’s emotional, symbolic needs, but neglects her economic self-interest. The previously mentioned scenarios create a dilemma in predicting voter choice. Which void, *economic-self-interest* or *emotional attachment*, takes precedence in comprehending voter’s choice?

¹⁰⁹ Mutz 2005, 348

¹¹⁰ Sears 1983, 23

Put differently, which independent measure is superior in explaining voter choice? This original question is the primary focus of this paper and expands on previous research that has displayed economic self-interest and emotional attachment as prominent features of voter choice. The research presented in this paper is unique in attempting to discover which of these variables holds the greatest explanatory power for the dependent variable. Answering this inquiry will undoubtedly lead to an enriched understanding of voter choice.

This paper's hypothesis is that, *ceteris paribus*, a variable that measures *economic self-interest*, will offer a better prediction of voter choice compared to a variable that measures *emotional attachment*.

As discussed in *The Voter Decides*, it is often difficult to separate personal attributes (symbols) from intervening cognition. For instance, an individual expressing a statement such as, "I like Dwight Eisenhower" would be displaying an attitude towards the candidate that is the accumulation of symbols. However, if a different individual states, "I like Dwight Eisenhower, I approve of his decision regarding Korea," the measurement entertains a paradox. In this specific case, it is difficult to separate personal attributes from policy positions. For the second individual, it is unclear if the attitude towards Eisenhower is a result of emotionally charged symbols or a reflection of his policies. That is, does the individual *like* Dwight Eisenhower or does he approve of the war in Korea? This specific nuance has the potential to create methodological fallacies.

METHOD AND RESULTS

Survey data was gathered from the American National Election Studies (ANES) database, specifically for the 1992, 1996, 2004, and 2012 presidential elections. For each respective year, questions regarding a respondent's *age* and *gender* were extracted from the data set, along with *party identification*. Variables that emphasized *emotional attachment* and *economic self-interest* were also removed from the data set. *Emotional attachment* was operationalized from a series of questions asking a respondent if they had ever felt *angry*, *proud*, *hopeful*, or *afraid* in regards to a presidential candidate.¹¹¹ *Economic self-interest* was operationalized from questions specific to each election year.

¹¹¹In 1996, 2004, and 2012 the survey asked *how often* the respondent felt the affected variables when considering the candidate – this allows for more detailed response.

In 1992, respondents were asked which candidate would do a better job handling the economy. In 1996 and 2004, the respondents were asked if they approve of the President's handling of the economy. In 2012, the survey asked if the respondent believed the economy would *get better*, *stay about the same*, or *get worse* if either of the two candidates were elected to office. Tables in the Appendix have been dedicated to illustrating the slight differences between the questions for each election year and for each candidate.

Scaling Method

A scaling system was created for the 1992 and 2012 elections. Recall the theoretical construct for this paper attempts to condition voter choice as a conflict between *economic self-interest* and *emotional attachment*. In order to gain a deeper understanding of voter choice, the two variables can be analyzed in alternate compositions.

As previously mentioned, interesting cases arise when candidates fill one distinct void of a voter while leaving the other vacant. For instance, Candidate X fills Voter Y's economic self-interest void but is unable to fill the void of emotional attachment. Likewise, Candidate A fills Voter B's emotional needs but neglects her economic self-interest. Which void, economic self-interest or emotional attachment, takes precedence in comprehending voter's choice? Producing a scaling system attempts to answer this inquiry. Table 1 provides the rules for the scaling system for the 1992 election.

Table 1: *Scaling System Procedures for the 1992 Election.*

Numerical Score	Definition
1	Respondent indicated a sentiment of "anger" & "afraid" towards the candidate and did not indicate the candidate would be better at handling the economy
2	Respondent indicated sentiment of "anger" & "afraid" towards the candidate but did indicate the candidate would be better at handling the economy
3	Respondent indicated sentiment of "hopeful" & "proud" but did not indicate the candidate would be better at handling the economy
4	Respondent indicated strong sentiment of "hopeful" & "proud" and did indicate the candidate would be better at handling the economy

Table 2 provides the findings from the scaling system for both the 1992 and 2012 election. In order to understand the table, a few clarifications are made. First, the scaling system collected data for *all* respondents and sorted the individuals respectively into each category. The data was then filtered for voter support, meaning only voters indicating support for Bush or Clinton remained in the sample and were categorized respectfully. In an attempt to distinguish which category contained the most explanatory power in predicting voter choice, a measurement entitled “Prediction Accuracy” was computed. Simple arithmetic is utilized to construct this measurement, illustrated in *Equation 1*. Utilizing this statistic allows comparison of the four, distinct categories across different candidates and elections. Whichever category contains the highest score of “Prediction Accuracy” implies it is a better predictor of voter choice.

Table 2: *Scaling System Results for the 1992 and 2012 Elections.*

Percent Votes				
Category	Bush 1992	Clinton 1992	Obama 2012	Romney 2012
1	1%	2%	.16%	.16%
2	23%	35%	0%	0%
3	25%	47%	71%	78%
4	80%	84%	85%	84%

Equation 1:

$$\text{Prediction Accuracy} = (\text{Intended Support} \div \text{Total Number of Respondents}) * 100$$

As expected, in 1992 both candidates received the greatest support from *Category 4* and the least from *Category 1*. It appears *Category 3* contains a higher predictive value relative to *Category 2*, implying affect variables are a better predictor of voter choice, compared to the economic variable. Thus concluding *emotional attachment* is a greater predictor of voter choice compared to *economic self-interest*. However, there are

shortcomings in utilizing this method. Only a trivial number of respondents scored into *Category 2*, even before the data was filtered for candidate support. The low number of individuals occupying *Category 2* is concerning, possibly implying methodological shortcomings. For this reason, the procedure was re-administered for the 2012 election.

To check for robustness, the same procedure was utilized to scale the 2012 election. There are minute differences in the affect variables and economic variables. The Appendix offers clarification of the differences.

Both candidates received the greatest amount of support from *Category 4*, which is expected. The interesting phenomenon is *Category 2*. When observing all voters, the number of voters between *Category 2* and 3 were nearly identical for Romney. However, Romney received 0% of voter support from *Category 2* and 78% from *Category 3*. Obama displayed a miniscule number of respondents in *Category 2* even before the data were filtered for support. Overall, it appears positive; affect variables contain more explanatory power in predicting voter choice relative to *economic self-interest*. The surprising finding is the low percentage of voter support from *Category 2* for both candidates. When only examining the 1992 election, it appears *Category 2* entailed some explanatory power for voter choice, but was statistically 0% in the 2012 election.

The findings from the scaling technique are surprising and concerning. The 0% of “Prediction Accuracy” from *Category 2* in 2012 implies methodological shortcomings. Therefore, the paper turns to an alternate method in addressing the research question and hypothesis.

Pseudo R-Square Method

For each election, the affect variables were added together and then averaged to calculate a new variable entitled “Average Affect Index”. This new measurement was instituted in a binary logistic regression, along with an *economic self-interest* variable and other control variables. Four tables illustrating the calculation of the “Average Affect Index” can be located in the Appendix. For the sake of this paper, note the “Average Affect Index” is on a different scale for each election. The higher a respondent scores, the warmer they feel towards the candidate. The lowest score a respondent could receive was “0” representing extreme dislike for the candidate. A voter’s average feeling towards the candidate could fall anywhere between the lowest and highest score. The affect scale runs

from 0 to 1 for the 1992 election, 0-3 for the 1996 elections, and 0-4 for the 2012 elections.

A Pseudo R-Square technique was utilized to determine which independent variable, *economic self-interest* or *emotional attachment*, is a better predictor for voter choice. First, an initial regression estimating voter support for a particular candidate is presented, with all variables significant at the .01 level. From this regression, the initial Pseudo R-Square was calculated. Then, from the initial regression, the economic self-interest variable was extracted and the Pseudo R-Square was recalculated. The restricted R-Square value was then subtracted from the initial value. The previous step was repeated for the affect variable. Whichever difference is greater indicates the associated independent variable that contains the most explanatory power in predicting voter choice.

Results

Note each independent variable in the binary logistic regression is significant at the .01 level for all the regressions studied in this paper. Tables in the Appendix are provided illustrating the significance along with a definition for the independent variables. In addition, select tables in the Appendix illustrate calculations.

Table 3: *Reduction in Cox and Snell R Square.*

Regression	Bush 1992	Clinton 1992	Clinton 1996	Bush 2004	Obama 2012	Romney 2012
Economic variable omitted	.092	.084	.088	.112	.167	.14
Affect variable omitted	.047	.061	.009	.027	.018	.035

Both the Cox & Snell and the Nagelkerke R Square test indicate the most explanatory power was lost when the economic variable was removed from the regression. For instance in the 1992 election (Bush), the Cox & Snell reports 0.092 of explanatory power for the regression was lost when the economic variable was removed. Likewise, 0.047 of explanatory power was lost when the average affect variable was removed. This implies the economic variable contains more explanatory power, relative

to the affect variable. Thus, the first regression studied supports the original hypothesis; *economic self-interest* is a better predictor of voter choice, relative to *emotional attachment*.

The results from the Clinton regressions also support the original hypothesis. The most amount of explanatory power was lost when the economic variable was removed from the regression, relative to the affect variable. Therefore, the 1992 election overall supports the hypothesis. The same analysis is presented for the 1996, 2004, and 2012 election. Recall, the 1996 and 2004 elections could only examine the incumbent president.

The 1996 data supports the hypothesis; *economic self-interest* contains more explanatory power for voter choice over *emotional attachment*. As is evident from Table 3 most of the explanatory power was lost when the economic variable was removed from the regression. Relative to the 1992 election, the economic variable in 1996 appeared even more significant. For example, the Cox and Snell reports that 0.088 of explanatory power was lost when the economic variable was removed, but only 0.009 of explanatory power was lost when the average affect variable was omitted from the regression. Therefore, the data from the 1996 election also supports the original hypothesis.

The 2004 results are consistent with the 1992 and 1996 election cycles. When the economic variable is removed from the binary logistic regression, the Pseudo R-Square loses the most amount of explanatory power, relative to when the affect variable is removed. The final results presented in this paper are for the 2012 election cycle. Identical to the 1992 cycle, both candidates (the incumbent and the challenger) are observed.

The results from the 2012 election solidify the findings of this paper. Both President Obama and Governor Romney experienced the highest loss in explanatory power when the economic variable was removed from the regression, relative to emotional attachment.

In each election year and for each candidate there was a greater reduction in explanatory power in voter support when the *economic self-interest* variable was removed from the regression, relative to the *emotional attachment variable*. What gives even more strength to the findings is that the survey question used to operationalize *economic self-*

interest was unique for each election, suggesting the results are not due to specific survey phrasing.

Table 4: *Difference in Reduction Between Pseudo R-Square (Reduction When Economic Variable Was Omitted – Reduction when Affect Variable was Omitted)*

Year	Difference Between the Reductions (Cox and Snell)
1992 (H.W. Bush)	.045
1992 (Clinton)	.023
1996 (Clinton)	.079
2004 (Bush)	.085
2012 (Romney)	.105
2012 (Obama)	.149

Each election experienced different reductions in Pseudo R-Square when omitting the variables. For instance, the economic variable and the average affect variable were closest in explaining the binary logistic regression for the 1992 elections. In 1992 for Clinton, the difference between the reduction in Pseudo R-Square between these two variables was a miniscule 0.023. In this regard the variables were essentially equal in explaining voter choice. However, the 2012 Obama regressions illustrated the greatest difference in explanatory power between the economic and affect variable with a difference of 0.149. As is presented in Table 4, the differences became more significant in the later elections, specifically in 2012. This may be a result of the economic question becoming more detailed, allowing respondents to further embrace which candidate is in their economic self-interest, giving support to the hypothesis that economic self-interest is truly a stronger predictor of voter choice.

CONCLUSION

This research is limited in some regards. First, the paper only investigated voter choice for presidential elections. It may be that voters exhibit different preferences for local elections as well as for congressional elections. In addition, the research was limited

to the timeline of the past two decades. In earlier decades voters may have decided differently; individuals more concerned with issue, personality, and affect variables. This paper recognizes a potential pitfall with the operationalization of the economic self-interest and emotional attachment variables, namely, the failure of survey data to delve deeper into the reasoning of voter choice. In addition, this paper recognizes the difficulty in parsing affect (emotion) from economic reason. Although the variables used in this research were tested for multicollinearity, the two concepts have yet to be effectively disentangled, which may impact the results. Future research might wish to explore if the economic self-interest remains the prominent independent variable relative to emotional attachment for different elections. It may be local elections are more subject to affect, relative to federal elections. Future endeavors should also investigate alternate techniques in capturing affect from a voter. This paper began discussing the methodological fallacies in using survey data to collect affect, so improving the tools of research will certainly advance analysis and interpretation.

This paper began with a simple inquiry. Which can better explain voter choice: *emotional attachment* or *economic self-interest*? After utilizing many different techniques, it's clear that economic self-interest best explains voter choice, relative to emotional attachment. It appears James Carville was right after all, "It's the economy stupid!"

REFERENCES

- Bartels, Larry M. 2009. *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Berry, Christopher R., and Jacob E. Gersen. 2010. "The Timing of Elections." *The University of Chicago Law Review* 77 (1): 37-64.
- Brader, Ted. 2005. "Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions." *American Journal of Political Science* 49 (2): 388-405.
- Bradford, Harry. 2012. "Obama Wins Reelection With Highest Unemployment Rate Of Any President Since FDR." *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved November 30, 2014, from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/07/obama-unemployment-rate-fdr_n_2088102.html
- Campbell, Angus, Gerald Gurin, and Warren E. Miller. 1954. *The Voter Decides*. Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson and Company.
- Caplan, Bryan. 2007. *The Myth of the Rational Voter: Why Democracies Choose Bad Policies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Childers, Matthew A., and Michael Binder. 2012. "Engaged by the Initiative? How the Use of Citizen Initiatives Increases Voter Turnout." *Political Research Quarterly* 65 (1): 93-103.
- Conover, Pamela Johnston, and Stanley Feldman. 1986. "Emotional Reactions to the Economy: I'm Mad as Hell and I'm Not Going to Take It Anymore." *American Journal of Political Science* 30 (1): 50-78.
- Dalton, Russell J., and Hans-Dieter Klingemann, eds. 2007. *Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Glaser, Jack, and Peter Salovey. 1998. "Affect in Electoral Politics." *Personality & Social Psychology Review (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates)* 2 (3):156.
- Huddy, Leonie, and Anna H. Gunnthorsdottir. 2000. "The Persuasive Effects of Emotive Visual Imagery: Superficial Manipulation or the Product of Passionate Reason?" *Political Psychology* 21 (4): 745-778.

- Kelley, Harold H. 1950. "The Warm-Cold Variable in First- Impressions of Persons." *Journal of Personality* 18 (4): 431.
- Klein, Jill. 1991. "Negativity Effects in Impression-Formation – A Test in the Political Arena." *Personality And Social Psychology Bulletin* 17 (4): 412-418.
- Kuklinski, James H. 2001. *Citizens and Politics: Perspectives from Political Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kuklinski, James H., Ellen Riggie, Victor Ottati, Norbert Schwarz, and Robert S. Wyer. 1991. "The Cognitive and Affective Bases of Political Tolerance Judgments." *American Journal of Political Science* 35 (1): 1-27.
- Lau, Richard R. 1982. "Negativity in Political Perception." *Political Behavior* 4 (4): 353-377.
- Lewis-Beck, Michael S., Helmut Norpoth, William G. Jacoby, and Herbert F. Weisberg. 2008. *The American Voter Revisited*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Marcus, G. E. 2000. "Emotions in Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 3 (1): 221.
- Popkin, Samuel L. 1994. *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Saltzstein, Alan. "Tax Revolt: Something For Nothing In California - Sears, David and Jack Citrin." *American Political Science Review* 77 (2): 455-457.

RES PUBLICA XX
ILLINOIS WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY
2015

