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Touching the base: heart-warming ads from the 2016 U.S. election moved viewers to partisan tears

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ABSTRACT

Some political ads used in the 2016 U.S. election evoked feelings colloquially known as *being moved to tears*. We conceptualise this phenomenon as a positive social emotion that appraises and motivates communal relations, is accompanied by physical sensations (including lachrymation, piloerection, chest warmth), and often labelled metaphorically. We surveyed U.S. voters in the fortnight before the 2016 U.S. election. Selected ads evoked the emotion completely and reliably, but in a partisan fashion: Clinton voters were moved to tears by three selected Clinton ads, and Trump voters were moved to tears by two Trump ads. Viewers were much less moved by ads of the candidate they did not support. Being moved to tears predicted intention to vote for the candidate depicted. We conclude that some contemporary political advertising is able to move its audience to tears, and thereby motivates support.

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Political ads; voting; being moved; kama muta; crying; 2016 presidential election

> "As we write the history of the 2016 election, part of the story should be the way some ads inspired people to feel happy and hopeful about the country and the choices before them. … In rare moments, candidates from both parties gave voters something to feel that wasn't dissatisfaction." Vavreck (2016)

Political ads often aim to elicit emotional responses motivating viewers to vote for a party or candidate (or demotivating them to vote for the other side). Ads may also aim to persuading them with information about the candidate or the candidate's goals. Ad-makers may use negative emotions such as anger, contempt, disgust, and fear (Fridkin & Kenney, 2012). Often, however, political ads aim to evoke positive emotions. One particularly positive emotion used in political ads (as in other advertisment; Strick, de Bruin, de Ruiter, & Jonkers, 2015) is colloquially called *feeling moved to tears*. Feeling moved is frequently mentioned in the media, including social media, but has only recently received systematic theoretical and empirical attention (Fiske, Seibt, & Schubert, 2017; Seibt, Schubert, Zickfeld, & Fiske, 2017). In the present paper, we explore how political commercials for Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump moved US voters in the two weeks before the election, and how that influenced their intention to vote.

Emotions in political advertisement

The important role emotions play for the impact of political campaigns is well-recognised (Brader, 2006; Marcus, 2000). One influential model is Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen's (2000) theory of affective intelligence. It is a two-dimensional model delineating threat resulting in *anxiety,* and success resulting in *enthusiasm* (vs. depression when familiar routines fail). Anxiety and enthusiasm are more or less persistent *moods*. Marcus and MacKuen (1993) reported that indicators of the two dimensions predicted different reactions to political campaigns. They operationalised the second dimensions (of more interest here) with two items on which participants rated their feelings

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†All authors contributed to the design of the studies. JZ programmed and ran the studies. TS, JZ and BS analyzed the data. BS and TS wrote the first draft, and all authors revised the manuscript.

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as "enthusiastic" vs. "unenthusiastic", and "interested" vs. "indifferent". The moods in their model endure much longer than the momentary affects that psychologists call emotions.

As one instrument of campaigns, political ads capitalise on affect in general, and emotions in particular, to influence attitudes towards the messages and towards the candidates (Chang, 2001). Campaigns employ such ads strategically (Ridout & Searles, 2011). However, research on this topic is rare (Crigler & Just, 2012). One exception is work by Brader (2006), who built on the theory by Marcus et al. (2000). He had 1425 political ads from the 1999 to 2000 campaigns rated according to which emotions, if any, they appealed to. He found that 72% of the ads focussed on emotions rather than logic (which he defined as emphasis on reason and drawing conclusions from evidence). In addition to *enthusiasm* and *fear*, he distinguished *anger* and *compassion;* a given ad could be coded as appealing to more than one emotion. Appeals to enthusiasm and fear were staples, being present in three out of four ads; about half of the ads also contained appeals to anger. Twenty-one percent were rated as appealing to compassion. This may be close to feeling moved, but needs further exploration. Ridout and Searles (2011) also had coders rate for *compassion* evocation in ads, but dropped the factor due to low agreement among raters, indicating probable conceptualisation problems. The recent waves of the American National Election Studies (2017) measured five emotions or feelings towards presidential candidates: angry, hopeful, afraid, proud, disgusted.

In sum, it seems that feelings of being moved and touched may have surfaced in some work on campaigns under the umbrellas of enthusiasm, compassion, or hope, but there is no systematic research on the role these feelings in particular play for political ads. Furthermore, it is important to distinguish between more stable moods and short-lived emotions that foster or undermine them. Emotions are based on appraisal of a particular scene or episode. They are sensed as brief bodily sensations. We propose that the emotion typically called "feeling moved" contributes to the effects of positive political advertisement on potential voters.

In the 2016 U.S. election campaigns, several moving ads were used. The Sanders campaign published one spot titled "America" that was viewed on YouTube over one million times within 24 h, and three million times within two weeks (Dobrin, 2016; Gold, 2016). In a self-selected sample of more than 8000 raters, "nearly 80 percent of viewers said the ad made them at least a little bit happy and hopeful in the week it debuted—including over half of the Republicans who saw it" (Vavreck, 2016). A moving ad for Hillary Clinton featuring Obama, titled "Progress is on the ballot", was viewed over 30,000,000 times and shared over 300,000 times on Facebook. But what is that emotion that English speakers often call, colloquially, *feeling moved*?

Models of *feeling moved to tears*

The emotion that people label "feeling moved" has long been noted by scholars, starting with Darwin (1890), James (1890), Claparède (1930), and Frijda (1988); but until recently it has only rarely been studied empirically. Most languages we investigated (but not all) have terms that approximately denote this state, many of them based on metaphors of *moving*, *stirring*, *touching*, or *warming* (*the heart*). In English, it is often referred to as *being moved* or *being touched,* and the elicitors may be called *heart-warming* (Fiske, Seibt, et al., 2017).

The evidence on this emotion suggests that it (1) is of, or at least contains, *positive affect;* (2) may be accompanied by a triad of sensations: *tearing up*, *goosebumps* or chills, and feelings of *warmth* or other pleasant sensations in the chest; and (3) motivates helping, altruistic, or prosocial behaviour (Cova & Deonna, 2014; Fiske, Seibt, et al., 2017; Menninghaus et al., 2015; Seibt, Schubert, Zickfeld, & Fiske, 2017; Strick et al., 2015). Self-report items asking about being or feeling "moved" or "touched" are often used as measures of closely related states conceptualised as empathic concern (Batson et al., 1997; Zickfeld, Schubert, Seibt, & Fiske, 2017) or elevation (Schnall, Roper, & Fessler, 2010), which are likewise found to predict pro-sociality.

Previous scholars recognised that evocations of solidarity, communion, attachment, and generosity evoke this emotional state (e.g. Tan & Frijda, 1999). Early on, Claparède (1930) noted that a prototypical example of being moved (*être ému*), was an audience's response to a solemn patriotic ceremony when the flag is displayed (as it is in Sanders' *America* spot). Current models differ in what they see as the primary cause of the emotion. Proponents of elevation theory (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Haidt, 2003) argued that witnessing moral acts (or "moral beauty") elicits the emotion they termed *elevation*, and which Haidt and

colleagues equated with what people label "being moved" (see also Janicke & Oliver, 2017). Cova and Deonna (2014) proposed that affirmations of core values (Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000) elicit the emotion. In our own work, we have proposed and confirmed in a number of studies that this emotion has evolved (biologically and culturally) to regulate communal sharing relations (Schubert, Zickfeld, Seibt, & Fiske, 2016; Seibt, Schubert, Zickfeld, & Fiske, 2017). Communal sharing is the foundation of relationships in which people feel a shared identity, are motivated by unity, share resources according to need and ability, and signal and commit to being one by assimilating each other's bodies (e.g. through cuddling or commensalism, Fiske, 2004). We argue that the main appraisal involved in feeling moved is experiencing a sudden intensification of communal sharing.

There is evidence that feeling moved and touched is caused by episodes that are rated as containing both intensifications of communal sharing and moral acts (Seibt, Schubert, Zickfeld, & Fiske, 2017). Analyses of continuous reports of various states show that ratings of increased communal sharing cross-correlate with experiences of being moved over time (Schubert et al., 2016). In reality, a moving episode may often contain aspects of all three processes: social behaviour that intensifies a communal relation, is judged as morally right, and/or affirms core values. This may happen especially when the communal relation is particularly valued and considered moral, or when morality judgments are based on principles of *unity*, which are derived from communal sharing (Rai & Fiske, 2011). In the current work, we focus on measuring perceived intensifications of communal sharing, rather than trying to distinguish between the different models.

In sum, appraisal, labelling, physiology, and motivation of this state integrate to make up a biologically and culturally determined emotion that is recognisably similar across cultures, but that is evoked by different practices, is experienced differently, and has different meanings in different cultures (Fiske, Schubert, & Seibt, 2017a; Fiske, Seibt, et al., 2017; Seibt, Schubert, Zickfeld, Zhu, et al., 2017). We term this emotion *kama muta,* borrowing from the Sanskrit ("moved by love") to emphasise that we are denoting a theoretical construct, not the varying and fuzzy denotations of any particular vernacular term in any one language.

Feeling moved by political ads

We posit that kama muta motivates people to devote and commit to communal sharing relationships, so it would be a powerful mechanism that political campaigns could use to garner support. A political ad evoking this emotion should work similarly to one of the general blueprints for moving episodes: first describing a communal relation that is in peril, and then showing its confirmation, renewal, or triumph (Fiske, Schubert, & Seibt, 2017b; Frijda, 1988). This blueprint can be seen in many of the moving narratives for which Schubert et al. (2016) collected time series data. It also seems to be at work in political ads. Sanders' "America", using Simon and Garfunkel's song of the same title,

> "starts out slowly … [showing] individual images of small towns, urban landscapes, ordinary people, farmers, and families … As the song builds, the people are brought together. By the end of the ad and the song, the viewer hears and sees the crescendo of huge, cheering, unified crowds." (Jasperson, cited in Dobrin, 2016).

We hypothesise that to the extent that a political ad is able to evoke kama muta, this should increase the motivation to support the candidate that the ad presents, mobilising people to devote and commit themselves to support the candidate's cause.

The reason for this prediction lies in kama muta theory (Fiske, Seibt, et al., 2017; Schubert et al., 2016; Seibt, Schubert, Zickfeld, & Fiske, 2017), which states that kama muta motivates persons to devote themselves to those communal sharing relationships that were intensified in the emotion-eliciting episode. In the political realm, devotion means supporting a candidate through actually voting, and convincing others to vote for the same candidate.

However, the question is whether everybody is equally likely to be moved by the same ads. Previous models of being moved, including our own work, tended to focus on inter-individual differences (e.g. identifying personality traits of easily moved individuals, such as empathic concern, Zickfeld et al., 2017), and characteristics of the stimuli (what features are most moving). Spots for different political campaigns are going to differ regarding what they emphasise most. Indeed, today's ads are targeted very specifically, with the expectation that they are actively and intentionally sought after, consumed, and distributed by the audience (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008). In terms of the models introduced earlier, such ads are going

to differ regarding the particular politically oriented communal relations, core values, and moral issues they present. Whether a spot moves a viewer will thus depend on the viewer's existing worldview. In parallel, we suggest that the nature of viewers' social relations with the candidates will determine what moves them: The extent to which a political ad is able to elicit the emotion should depend on prior association with a preference for a candidate. Not everybody who votes for or otherwise supports a candidate actually identifies with her or him, but to the extent one does, whether or not one embraces intensifications of communal relations depicted in the ad will depend on that identification, because communal ties are transitive (Fiske, 1992). In sum, we should find that feeling moved in the context of political ads arises in intensifications of partisan communal sharing.

The current studies

In the current studies, we tested a set of hypotheses derived from this model. We assessed US citizens' reactions to selected political ads for the presidential campaigns of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump in the two weeks before the 8 November 2016 election. Before participants viewed the ads, we asked them about their candidate preference. Participants then viewed ads for both candidates and answered questions about their feelings about the ad, their physical sensations, appraisals of what occurred in the ad, and finally, whether this changed their motivation to support the candidate whose ad they just saw. Rather than presenting a broad range of ads, we purposefully selected ads that seemed moving and touching to us and were described as such in (social) media. Similarly, our measures focussed on variables derived from the kama muta model, but in addition, for exploratory purposes, we collected data on a few other responses to the ads (e.g. feelings of awe and anger). The goal of the studies is thus not a comprehensive investigation of emotions elicited by campaign advertising, but a focussed test of our theoretical model as applied to the naturalistic and unedited stimuli that appeared in the 2016 U.S. campaigns.

Our first predictions were that candidate preference would moderate whether a spot caused (a) feelings that the participant labelled "moved, touched, and heartwarming"; (b) appraisals of increased communal sharing among the characters in the commercial; and (c) self-reported physical sensations of tearing up, goosebumps, and warmth in the chest. We hypothesised that all of these aspects of the kama muta-inducing impact of the advertisement should be stronger when its source corresponded to the candidate preference of the participant (H1a-c). Second, we expected that labelling an emotion as feeling moved, touched, or heart-warmed should predict increased motivation to support the candidate presented in the ad (H2a). Communal sharing (CS) appraisals and physical sensations should also predict increased motivation to support the candidate in the ad (H2b, c). Third, we predicted three mediations: (a) Appraising communal sharing among the characters in the ads should mediate the impact of the interaction between video type and candidate preference on feeling labels. In addition, (b) Feeling labels and (c) physical sensations should both mediate the effect of the interaction between video type and candidate preference on motivation to support the candidate in the ad.

Hypotheses 1a-c and H2a were preregistered for Study 1, and then the remaining hypotheses were preregistered for Study 2 (see Supplemental Material). Study 1 was run on 28 October 2016, Study 2 on 5 November 2016, three days before the election.

Study 1

Method

Participants

We sampled $N = 255$ participants at MTurk, paying 70¢ and requesting only workers from the U.S. with a 95% approval rate. For one participant, most data were missing; 44 indicated that they intended to vote for neither Clinton nor Trump (but intended to vote for Johnson, Stein, or "other").[1] Those participants were excluded from the primary analyses, as preregistered. Of the remaining $N = 210$, 136 intended to vote for Clinton, and 74 for Trump; 93 indicated that they were female. Most lived in suburban neighbourhoods (107) rather than urban (60) or rural (43). The majority categorised themselves as White/Caucasian (166), 14 as African American, 10 as Hispanic, 17 as Asian, 1 as Arab, and 2 as "other". Age varied from 18 to 69, $M = 37$, $SD = 12$ (one missing).

Materials and procedure

Each participant first answered initial questions on candidate preference, and then watched and reported

on four videos, before completing demographic information.

To assess candidate preference, we asked: "If the 2016 presidential election were held today, who would you vote for?" listing the four main candidates in random order with their party affiliations, and "other".

Study 1 presented four political ads in random order: For Clinton, "Progress is on the ballot" (140 s) and "Equal" (146 s); and for Trump, "Listening" (30 s), and "Rebuilding America Now: America Soaring" (60 s; links in Supplemental Material). Time spent on the page with the ad was recorded. We selected those ads because we felt they were the most moving ones we could identify at the time, and accepted the confound that Trump's ads were shorter.

All four spots present a problem and propose a solution that has a unifying aspect: "Progress … " emphasises rallying around Obama's imperilled legacy; "Equal" emphasises overcoming discrimination against lesbians and gays; "Listening" emphasises easing the plights of working mothers; "Rebuilding" promises higher employment for working class people. (For a discussion of the relations depicted, see the General Discussion).

After each ad, participants first rated eight statements presented in random order on scales from 0 "not at all" to 6 "very much". Three items indexed feeling moved: "I was moved", "I was touched", and "The clip was heartwarming". Three indexed relevant physical sensations: "I had moist eyes or cried", "I had goosebumps or chills", and "I felt warmth in my body or heart". Two further items assessed "I felt angry" and "The clip was awe-inspiring," for exploratory purposes (results in the Supplemental Material).

Next, in order to measure the appraisal of intensification of communal sharing among the characters in the ad, participants were asked to rate four items "with regard to the video" on 7-point scales from "not at all" to "very much": "I observed an incredible bond", "I observed an exceptional sense of closeness appear", "I observed a unique kind of love spring up", and "I observed a phenomenal feeling of being welcomed".

To assess the ad's impact on motivation, we asked: "Does this ad make you less or more inclined to vote for [the advertised candidate]?" (on a 5-point scale from "less inclined" to "even more inclined") and "How much, if at all, did what you saw change your motivation to work to help elect [the advertised candidate]?" (on a 5-point scale from "not at all" to "very much"). However, at the analysis stage we decided to drop the second item because its formulation was unfortunately ambiguous and a high score could be interpreted as either an increase or a decline (a scale formed by the two items had only a moderate reliability of .62). We report the results on this item in the Supplemental Material.

Finally, we asked, "Have you seen the video before?" (affirmed for only 2.4% of video impressions) and "Did you encounter technical problems with regard to video playback?" (affirmed for only 0.4%).[2]

Results

We excluded data for video impressions if time auditing showed that participants stayed on the page for a period of time less than 90% of the duration of the complete video, or longer than duration plus 60 s. (This was in accordance with our practice in our previous studies, but not preregistered for Study 1.) This removed 14.9% of the video impressions, and affected the two longer Clinton ads more strongly (17.6% and 23.3%) than the shorter Trump ads (8.1% and 10.5%). A total of 715 video impressions constituted the final dataset.

We created three average scores: (1) from the three feeling moved items, (2) the three physical sensations items, and (3) the four items appraising the communal relationship intensification among the characters. Internal consistency of these three short scales was tested using multilevel models: Following the recommendations of Nezlek (2017), we estimated unconditional three-level hierarchical models in HLM (Raudenbush, Bryk, & Congdon, 2013) with the individual items as measurements at the first level, a variable coding the video at the second level, and participant at the third level. Estimated item-level reliabilities were .96 for feeling moved, .82 for physical sensations, and .96 for the communal appraisal. These are functional equivalents of Cronbach's Alpha, but take the nested structure of the data into account. Nezlek (2017) deemed reliabilities between .61 and .80 "moderate" and between .81 and 1.0 "substantial."

For the post-ad motivation, we were left with only one item, which we scaled to a range from 0 to 6 to ease interpretation of regression weights. On the scales from 0 to 6, we observed the following averages: feeling moved $M = 2.5$, $SD = 2.2$; physical sensations $M = 2.4$, $SD = 2.1$; CS appraisal $M = 1.7$, $SD = 1.9$. All three variables showed bi-modal rather than normal distributions, with one maximum at 0

and a smaller maximum at 6. For post-ad motivation, *M* was 3.33, *SD* = 2.04, and the mode was also 3.

Moderation Hypothesis 1

We fitted three mixed models to test H1a-c, with feeling moved, physical sensations, and appraisals as dependent variables. The models were tested in SPSS 24, with candidate preference, video type (Clinton vs. Trump) and video ID (1–4, nested within video type) added as factors, along with the two-way interactions candidate preference × video type and candidate preference × video ID (nested within video type). The intercept and the slope of the focal interaction (candidate preference × video type) were always allowed to vary randomly across participants, with variance composition for their covariance structure (see syntax in Supplemental Material). Note that we added video ID as a fixed factor instead of as a random factor because it had only two levels.

For all three dependent variables, candidate preference interacted significantly with video type: for feeling moved, $F(1, 196.8) = 212.63$, for CS appraisals, $F(1, 197.0) = 173.27$, and for physical sensations, $F(1, 194.1) = 133.67$; all $ps < .001$. As predicted, participants reported all three components of kama muta more strongly when they saw an ad from the candidate they intended to vote for: they felt more strongly moved, reported more physical sensations, and appraised the characters as higher in communal sharing (see Table 1 and Figure 1 for the means). The tests of the remaining effects are reported in Supplemental Table 1. Note that the main effects are uninterpretable because the ads were not equivalent.

Table 1. Feeling moved, communal appraisals, and physical sensations depending on candidate preference and video seen. Data show estimated means and confidence intervals in Study 1.

Video Type	Political Identification	Mean	Difference
Feeling moved			
Clinton video	Trump voter	1.41 [1.01, 1.80]	2.68 [2.19, 3.17]
	Clinton voter	4.08 [3.80, 4.37]	
Trump video	Trump voter	3.21 [2.84, 3.58]	1.98 [1.51, 2.44]
	Clinton voter	1.23 [0.96, 1.51]	
Communal Sharing Appraisal			
Clinton video	Trump voter	1.55 [1.15, 1.96]	2.30 [1.80, 2.80]
	Clinton voter	3.85 [3.56, 4.15]	
Trump video	Trump voter	3.04 [2.66, 3.43]	1.88 [1.41, 2.36]
	Clinton voter	1.16 [0.88, 1.44]	
Physical Sensations			
Clinton video	Trump voter	.94 [0.59, 1.30]	2.08 [1.63, 2.52]
	Clinton voter	3.02 [2.76, 3.28]	
Trump video	Trump voter	1.93 [1.59, 2.27]	1.30 [.88, 1.72]
	Clinton voter	0.63 [0.38, 0.88]	

Note: Scales range from 0 to 6 for all variables.

Regression Hypothesis 2

Next, we tested whether feeling moved predicted post-ad motivation. We formulated a mixed model with motivation as dependent variable, while the factors were candidate preference, video type, and video ID nested within video type, and the continuous predictor feeling moved (grand mean centred). We added all possible interactions, including candidate preference × video type and the three-way candidate preference × video type × feeling moved. Intercepts, slope of feeling moved, and slope of preference × video type were allowed to vary randomly across participants; the covariance matrix was set to identity in order for the model to converge (see Supplemental Material for syntax and further details on analysis).

In this analysis, the main effect of video type, $F(1, 691.5) = 64.49$, $p < .001$, and the interaction of candidate preference and video type, $F(1, 691.5) = 306.34$, $p < .001$, were significant. In addition, feeling moved was a significant predictor of motivation, $F(1, 218.1) = 196.05$, $p < .001$. From a model without any interactions involving feeling moved, we obtained the unstandardised slope of feeling moved, $B = .44$ [.38, .50], and, after standardising motivation and feeling moved, the standardised $\beta = .47$ [.41, .53]. Its influence was moderated only by video type, $F(1, 696) = 14.45$, $p < .001$, with the slope being steeper for Clinton ads ($B = .54$) than for Trump ads ($B = .34$), i.e. for Clinton ads, kama muta influenced post-ad motivation more strongly than for Trump ads. Figure 2 shows the details of these regressions, with scatterplots separately for video type and candidate preference, and distribution graphs that visualise the mean differences for feeling moved as well.

The same model was tested once with (centred) CS appraisals and once with physical sensations instead of feeling moved as predictors. Both variables showed the same prediction of post-ad motivation: for CS appraisal, $F(1,169) = 139.19$, $p < .001$ ($B = .38$ [.31, .44], $\beta = .41$ [.34, .47]), and for physical sensations, $F(1,155.7) = 106.24$, $p < .001$ ($B = .43$ [.36, .50], $\beta = .40$ [.34, .47]). Both variables also interacted with video type such that CS appraisal and physical sensations had larger slopes for Clinton than for Trump commercials. In neither analysis was there evidence for a three-way interaction. The absence of three-way interactions in these models implies that feeling moved by an ad increased motivation to support the candidate

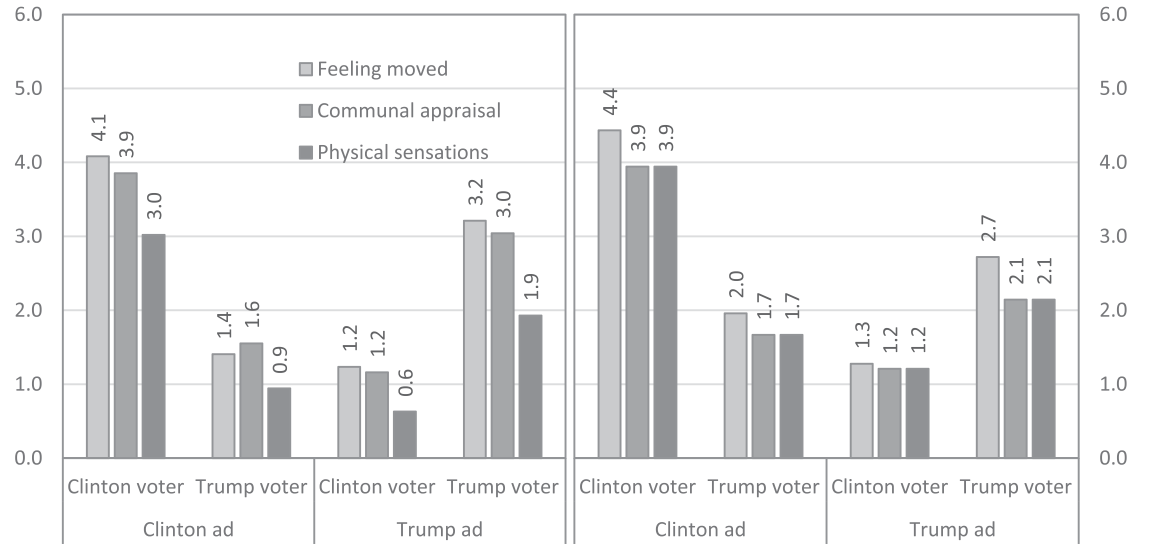

Figure 1. Elicitation of feeling moved, communal appraisal, and physical sensation by each side's ads was moderated by candidate preference of the viewers in both studies (Study 1 left, Study 2 right panel). Scales range from 0 to 6 for all three dependent variables.

largely *independently* of whether the ad featured one's preferred candidate. Supplemental Tables 2a-c show all models.

Mediation Hypotheses 3

Finally, we performed analyses to see what mediated these effects on post-ad motivation. Mediation approaches for mixed models follow approaches familiar from linear regression, but require different tests (e.g. Bauer, Preacher, & Gil, 2006). We tested for mediation by fitting a number of mixed models: First regressing the mediator on the independent variable in order to obtain path *a*, then regressing the dependent variable on the mediator and the independent variable to estimate paths *b* and *c′*. Finally, the dependent variable was regressed on the independent variable in order to obtain path *c*. We calculated a confidence interval for the indirect effect using a Monte Carlo procedure (Falk & Biesanz, 20162016). In all models, we included the main effects for video type and preference, but dropped the nested factor for the sake of simplicity.

First, we tested whether the CS appraisal mediated the relationship between the Candidate Preference × Video Type interaction and feeling moved (H3a). We found an overall indirect effect of the CS appraisal, $\beta = .38$, $B = 1.62$ [1.40, 1.84]: Seeing a moving ad by one's own candidate caused feelings of being moved by eliciting appraisals of communal sharing intensification. Yet the interaction between candidate preference and video type still predicted feeling moved (path *c′*) when controlling for the mediator, $F(1,623.6) = 75.41$, $p < .001$, $B = .73$ [1.13, 1.79], suggesting that the mediation was partial.

Second, we tested whether the influence of the interaction between candidate preference and video type on post-ad motivation was mediated by either feeling moved or physical sensations (H3b, c). In two separate models, we observed an indirect effect for both feeling moved, $\beta = .25$, $B = 1.02$ [.89, 1.15], and physical sensations, $\beta = .17$, $B = .71$ [.60, .82]. Both were partial mediation effects (see Figure 3 for all paths).

Discussion

We introduced kama muta as an emotion marked by *labelling* one's feelings as moved and touched and events as heartwarming, *appraising* increased communal sharing among the characters in the commercial, and reports of *experiencing* tears, goosebumps, and warmth in the centre of the chest. We observed that all three components were reliably evoked when U.S. participants viewed specific political ads in the two weeks before the 2016 presidential election. However, they emerged much more strongly when the viewed spots advertised the candidate that participants preferred.

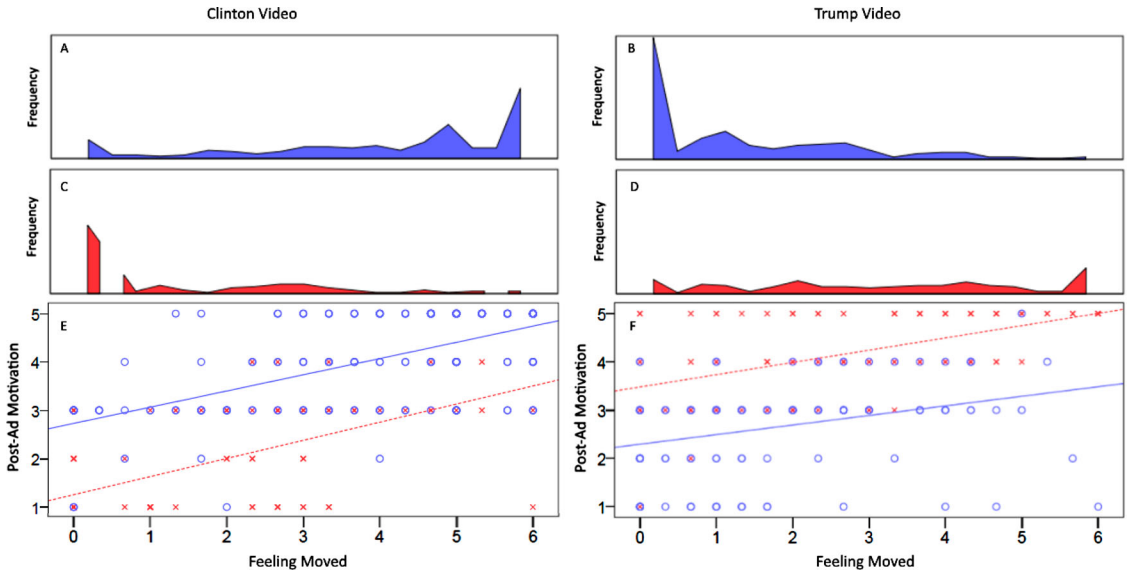

Figure 2. Feeling moved and post-ad motivation depending on video type and pre-ad candidate preference, Study 1. Horizontal axis in all panels is feeling moved. Left column shows data for Clinton videos, right column shows data for Trump videos. **Top two** rows show distributions of feeling moved separately for Clinton voters (first row, blue, insets A and B) and Trump voters (second row, red, insets C and D). Vertical axis shows frequency count, scaled from 0 to 105. **Bottom row** (insets E, F) shows scatterplots for association of feeling moved (horizontal axis) to post-ad motivation to vote for the candidate shown in the video (vertical axis). Points and regression lines are shown separately for Trump voters (red dashed line and crosses ×) and Clinton voters (solid blue line and circles ○). Regressions show positive associations for all subgroups.

Both feeling and physical sensations of kama muta predicted whether participants reported increased motivation to support the candidate after seeing the ad. Importantly, the increase of motivation by feeling moved was not moderated by whether one saw one's preferred candidate. It seems that feeling moved was not discounted if the ad promoted the non-preferred candidate.

Study 2

We replicated the Study on 5 November 2016, three days before the election, with the goals of replicating the interaction effect, and convergently validating with another motivation measure. Study 2 is a replication of Study 1 in most aspects.

For the regression hypotheses, we did not have the same dependent variable in the replication. The second motivation question used in Study 1 was present in the survey, but we decided that this item was too ambiguous, and did not include it in the analyses (see above; results are described in the Supplemental Material). The Study 1 item "Does this ad make you less or more inclined to vote for [advertised candidate]" was replaced in Study 2 by two separate items, asked regardless of the video the participant had just seen: **"**Does this ad change your opinion of the candidates? Please indicate below: Do you plan to vote for Hillary Clinton, or not?", answered on a 7-point scale ("0 Will definitely not vote for Hillary Clinton", "2 May vote for Hillary Clinton", "4 Will probably vote for Hillary Clinton", "6 Am certain I will vote for Hillary Clinton". The equivalent item was asked for Trump. We predicted that we would replicate the finding from Study 1 on the item of the candidate whose ad they just saw, or, in other words, that probability of voting for the candidate is predicted by feeling moved. We note, however, that the item formulation is different, tapping into probability of vote rather than self-reported change in motivation. This increased item strength. It was therefore likely that the effect would be smaller than in Study 1. In addition, we planned to run exploratory analyses on the item assessing intention to vote for the principal opposing candidate who was not shown in the video. We did not expect effects there. If we found effects of feeling moved and/or physical sensations in the regression hypotheses tests, we planned to follow up with the respective mediation analyses as we did in Study 1.

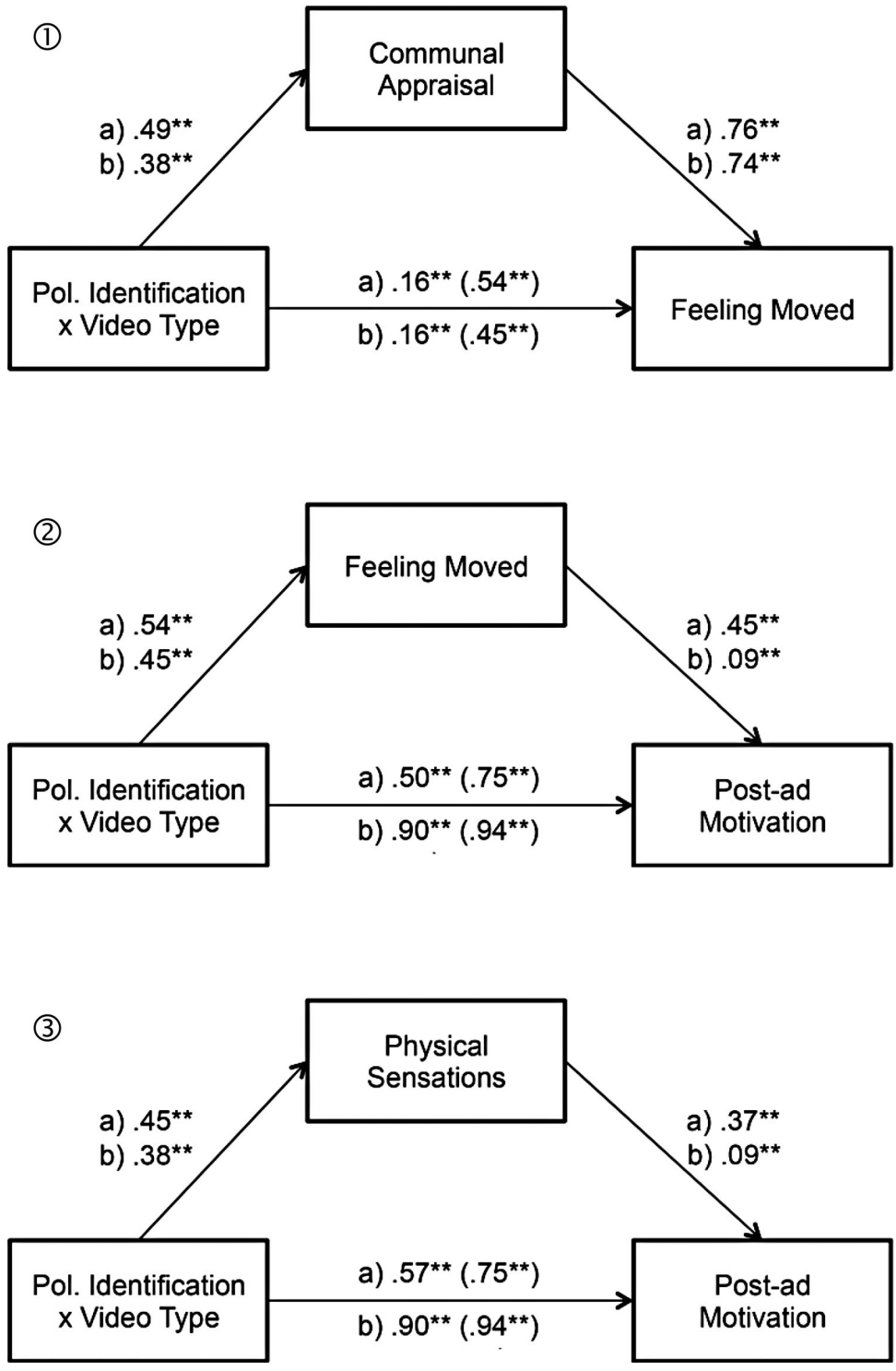

Figure 3. Mediation analyses. Standardised estimates are shown in a) for Study 1 and in b) for Study 2. Inset ① shows path between the candidate preference × video type interaction and feeling moved is partially mediated by communal appraisals. Inset ② shows that the path between the candidate preference × video type interaction and post-ad motivation is partially mediated by feeling moved. Inset ③ shows that the path between the candidate preference × video type interaction and post-ad motivation is partially mediated by physical sensations. Note that the post-ad motivation item is different between studies. ** marks $p < .001$.

Method

Participants

We sampled 240 participants from Amazon MTurk. Two participants were excluded due to multiple missing values. Seventy reported they planned to vote for Trump, 132 for Clinton, 16 for Johnson, 8 for Stein, and 12 for "other". Only the first two groups were retained. Of the remaining $N = 202$, 106 were female, one indicated "other", the rest were male. Eighty lived in urban, 93 in suburban, and 29 in rural areas. The majority (149) said they were White/Caucasian, 19 African American, 14 Hispanic, 13 Asian, 3 Native American, 2 Arab, and 2 "Other". Age ranged from 18 to 68, $M = 36.6$, $SD = 11.5$.

Materials and procedure

Materials and procedure were the same as in Study 1 with a few exceptions. The ad featuring Obama in Study 1 was replaced by the ad "Shane" (165 s), featuring an African-American supporter of Clinton. The item on warmth was slightly changed to "I felt warmth in my chest". Furthermore, there were two additional items on judged honesty of the ad and importance of its topic; these served exploratory purposes not reported here.[3]

Results

We applied the same (now preregistered) exclusion criteria as in Study 1, which left us with 683 video impressions, ranging from 157 impressions (for "Shane") to 180 (for "Listening"). Internal consistencies of the three scales for feeling moved, physical sensations, and communal sharing appraisals were computed in the same manner as before, and equalled .97, .79, and .97, respectively. Distributions of the variables were similar to Study 1 (i.e. bi-modal, with larger maxima on 0), and means were $M = 2.63$ ($SD = 2.20$) for feeling moved, $M = 2.29$ ($SD = 2.11$) for communal sharing appraisals, and $M = 1.58$ ($SD = 1.78$) for physical sensations.

Table 2. Feeling moved, communal appraisals, and physical sensations depending on candidate preference and video seen. Data show estimated means and confidence intervals in Study 2.

Video Type	Candidate preference	Mean	Difference
Feeling Moved			
Clinton video	Trump voter	1.96 [1.55, 2.36]	2.47 [1.98, 2.97]
	Clinton voter	4.43 [4.15, 4.71]	
Trump video	Trump voter	2.72 [2.35, 3.10]	1.45 [0.98, 1.91]
	Clinton voter	1.28 [1.01, 1.55]	
Communal Sharing Appraisal			
Clinton video	Trump voter	1.67 [1.24, 2.09]	2.28 [1.76, 2.79]
	Clinton voter	3.94 [3.65, 4.24]	
Trump video	Trump voter	2.14 [1.75, 2.54]	0.94 [0.45, 1.42]
	Clinton voter	1.21 [0.93, 1.49]	
Physical Sensations			
Clinton video	Trump voter	0.96 [0.60, 1.32]	2.05 [1.61, 2.48]
	Clinton voter	3.01 [2.76, 3.25]	
Trump video	Trump voter	1.40 [1.07, 1.73]	0.64 [0.23, 1.05]
	Clinton voter	0.76 [0.52, 1.00]	

Note: Scales range from 0 to 6 for all variables.

Moderation Hypothesis 1

For all three dependent variables, consistent with Study 1 and predictions, candidate preference interacted significantly with video type: for feeling moved, $F(1, 177.3) = 164.60$; for CS appraisals, $F(1,176.8) = 108.8$; and for physical sensations, $F(1, 172.4) = 109.312$; all $ps < .001$. Participants reported all three components of kama muta more strongly when they saw an ad from the candidate they intended to vote for compared to when they saw an ad from the other candidate (see Table 2 and Figure 1 for means, and Supp. Table 3 for the complete model).

Regression Hypothesis 2

We set up models equivalent to Study 1, testing the influence of three predictors (feeling moved, communal appraisal, physical sensations), video type, and candidate preference on voting for the candidate whose video was just presented (scaled to range from 0 to 6; 2 fewer cases because of missing values).

The interaction of candidate preference and video type was significant in all models with large F values (>3600), mirroring the initial voting preference. Feeling moved was not a significant predictor of intention to vote, $F(1, 214.4 = 2.09$, $p = .15)$, the slope (from a model without interactions involving feeling moved) was $B = .071$ [−.017, .16], but there were small effects of communal appraisals and physical sensations in the other two models. Communal appraisal had a small main effect, $F(1, 72.7) = 4.30$, $p = .042$, $B = .09$ [.01, .17] from the simplified model, which, however, was moderated by video type, $F(1, 615.3) = 7.52$, $p = .006$. Similarly, physical sensations predicted post-ad voting intention, $F(1, 249.7) = 6.96$, $p = .009$, $B = .11$ [.03, .20] from the simplified model, and this was also moderated by video type, $F(1, 595.8) = 10.16$, $p = .002$. In both cases, regression weights were higher for Trump videos. Supplemental Tables 4a-c show complete models.

Mediation Hypothesis 3

We repeated the same mediation analyses as in Study 1. First, we tested whether the appraisal of the CS relationships among the characters in the video mediated the relationship between the Candidate Preference × Video Type interaction and feeling moved. We found an overall indirect effect of the CS appraisal, $\beta = .29$, $B = 1.27$ [1.05, 1.47], which was smaller than in Study 1. Yet the interaction between candidate preference and video type still predicted feeling moved when controlling for the appraisal mediator, $F(1,598.8) = 61.72$, $p < .001$, $B = .72$ [.54, .90], indicating a partial mediation (see Figure 3 for all paths).

Second, we tested whether the influence of the interaction between candidate preference and video type on post-ad voting motivation was mediated by either feeling moved or physical sensations. In two separate models, we observed an indirect effect for both feeling moved, $\beta = .04$, $B = .24$ [.17, .31], and physical sensations, $\beta = .04$, $B = .20$ [.14, .26]. Both were partial mediation effects (see Figure 3). These effects were much smaller than in Study 1. In contrast to the regression analyses, we observed a small effect of feeling moved on the post-ad item, because of removing some terms from the model, $F(1,668.1) = 37.00$, $p < .001$, $B = .12$ [.08, .16].

Discussion

Study 2 replicated most findings of Study 1, now in pre-registered analyses. The moderation hypotheses show nearly identical patterns. One difference emerged for post-ad motivation, where we changed the measure from a self-reported *change* item to an item merely asking again for intention to vote for the candidate. We did find an effect of viewing one's own candidate's ad on that item (when controlling for initial voting intention), but the effects of all three aspects of kama muta on this item were much weaker than in Study 1, and the influence of feeling moved was not significant (note, however, that the scaling was different compared to Study 1). Likewise, the mediation analyses showed much smaller effects, although the effects were again significant and consistent with our hypotheses. The effect of feeling moved was significant there, because we had simplified the model. Apart from the changed wording of the item, ceiling effects are a possible explanation: The distribution was bi-modally clustered at the two extremes. Furthermore, it is quite possible that voters were committed to their choice of candidate at this point, just three days before the election (and we can assume that some participants had already voted by mail, which we did not assess).

Additional analyses

In the previous analyses, we reported averages of the physical sensations, which participants indicated on 7-point scales from "not at all" to "very much." To interpret the responses, it is helpful to look at the frequencies. For this purpose, we combined data from both studies and tabled the frequencies of each answer scale point for the three sensations crying, goosebumps, and warmth separately for both categories of voters and both types of ads (Supp. Table 5). The most salient outcome is that the "not at all" answer is used in 50% of the cases or more for all conditions except Clinton voters watching Clinton ads (on all three sensations), and for Trump Voters watching Trump ads for bodily warmth, only. In addition, warmth was the sensation that was most frequently reported—87.1% of Clinton voters watching Clinton ads reported at least a 1 on the warmth scale, and even 47.5% of Trump voters reported at least a 1 when watching Clinton ads. Crying was the rarest sensation, but still 59.8% of Clinton voters reported at least a 1 on this scale when watching her ads.

Using this combined dataset, we also confirmed that the interaction of candidate preference and video type was present for all three physical sensations. Simple comparison confirmed that both Clinton and Trump voters reported more crying, more goosebumps, and more warmth after watching ads of their candidate rather than the other candidate.

General discussion

In two studies conducted in the fortnight before the US presidential election on 8 November 2016, we showed a selection of real political ads to US participants. The studies had three aims: (1) To confirm that contemporary political ads evoke feelings and sensations of being moved, (2) to test whether the same spot evokes the emotion differently depending on candidate preference—a type of moderation not previously reported in the literature on feeling moved, and (3) to test our kama muta model on the relation among components of the emotion.

We indeed found that the ads we selected evoked the emotion in all its components: labelling it as

feeling moved and touched; reporting sensations of tearing up, warmth, and goosebumps; communal sharing intensification appraisals; and supportive motives. We tested five ads, three from the Clinton campaign and two from the Trump campaign. They were selected because they received social media comments and news coverage that described them as heartwarming and inspiring. However, we also observed that the ads for Clinton moved to tears voters who intended to vote for her, and that selected ads for Trump did the same for his voters, much more so than either ad was able to move the base of the other candidates to tears—a classic stimulus × person interaction.

In our kama muta model of being-moved-to-tears experiences, we integrate four components of this emotion: conscious feeling labels, physical sensations, social relational appraisals, and motivation. All were present here and all were affected by the ads: When viewing moving ads for their candidate, participants *felt* more moved and touched; reported more *physical* sensations (tears, goosebumps, warmth in the chest); and *appraised* the characters in the ads as having a suddenly intensified communal sharing relationship. In regression and mediation analyses, we traced the paths between these components and on to motivation to vote, testing hypotheses common in emotion theories: The appraisals mediated between the stimulus × person interaction and feelings, and feelings and physical sensations mediated between the interaction and motivation. However, all three mediations were partial. Ads by one's preferred candidate increased self-reported change in voting intentions (Study 1) and difference in voting intention (Study 2) partly (and to a smaller degree in Study 2) through causing feeling moved and physical sensations of weeping, goosebumps, and warmth.

These results may seem plausible from a common sense understanding of *being moved*, but we believe they are not trivial. The folk understanding of being moved is vague and includes more than just the concept we define by kama muta; people may say they are *moved* when something makes them sad or angry. The psychological literature has only recently seen earnest attempts to conceptualise *being moved*, and to our knowledge the political science literature does not include *being moved* in its canon of feelings people feel in reaction to campaigns. Furthermore, the observed concordance of appraisal, bodily sensation and self-reported feeling states is a strong indication that participants indeed experienced being moved as an emotion as conceptualised by our kama muta model.

We want to point out that the data in Tables 1 and 2 also allow one to conclude that ads for both sides were able to, on average, move likely voters of the other side at least a little—all confidence intervals exclude 0. However, those values are very small, while the moderation of experiencing kama muta by candidate preference was substantial. We also emphasise that once kama muta was evoked, its effects are largely unmoderated by candidate preference, and result in increased support for the advertised candidate. One could have imagined that feeling moved to tears would be discounted if it was evoked by the opposed candidate's ads, but in fact opposing viewers' did not entirely discount their kama muta. This is a testament to both the ads' artistry and the power of kama muta: Once it is successfully evoked, it motivates support, as our theory predicts.

Limitations

Our studies have limitations that should be kept in mind when interpreting the data. Most importantly, our data are entirely self-report. We acknowledge that our motivational outcome is just that: a question about (change of) motivation. It does not tell us anything about actual voting behaviour. Note also that our theory, in line with major models of emotion, assumes that the major function and outcome of emotion is to generate motivation, but that *asking* about both feelings and motivation may set in motion additional psychological processes that can lead to consistency between the two. People may want to rationalise the feelings they felt and reported by indicating changed motivation, or they may want to appear consistent by stating changed motivation if they also indicated strong feelings. For all those reasons, behavioural measures of motivation are desirable. Also, it was unfortunate that we had to drop one item on motivation from our analyses of Study 1 when we belatedly realised that it was formulated ambiguously.

Assessing feelings can only be done by asking people to label their state, but the words "touched" and "moved" do have somewhat wider connotations than the kama muta construct in vernacular English, and could be subject to both halo and desirability effects. Our confidence that we indeed captured kama muta is bolstered by the fact that we found increased reports of both tears and goosebumps, where it would be harder to see why participants should indicate

them out of social desirability or a positive halo. Nevertheless, for these reports, physiological measures of the bodily components would have been useful adjuncts (for an objective measure of goosebumps, see Benedek & Kaernbach, 2011; Wassiliwizky, Jacobsen, Heinrich, Schneiderbauer, & Menninghaus, 2017).

Our design could have profited from adding non-moving ads for each candidate, which would have allowed an experimentally controlled test to verify that variability in being moved by one's own candidate predicts voting intentions (similar to designs we have used in past work; see Seibt, Schubert, Zickfeld, & Fiske, 2017). The test in the current work instead relies completely on the interaction of preference and advertised candidate. Adding ads that elicit other emotions would have allowed comparison with the motivating force of videos inducing, for example, anger or fear.

We measured candidate preference, but lack a more comprehensive measurement of partisan identity, communal relations to the issue presented, or core values. While we can trace the processes among the components of the emotion, we thus lack evidence on what drives the moderation by candidate preference that we observed. Because we used only a narrow range of stimuli (e.g. no attack ads designed to evoke fear or anger regarding the opponent's policies), we did not include a broad battery to measure a wide range of emotions.[4] Future work should do that, and also take a longitudinal approach to investigate how partisan identity, enthusiasm and support develop overtime and possibly grow out of kama muta. Marcus and MacKuen (1993) wrote that "in states of enthusiasm, [citizens] engage their hearts in political affairs" (p. 681). They understood enthusiasm to grow out of a person's commitment to goals and motivation to act or stay involved. It seems possible that emotions such as being moved, by strengthening bonds to social relations and the goals attached to them, result in precisely such increased enthusiasm.

Furthermore, by measuring candidate preference prior to showing the ads, we reminded participants of this preference issue. This may have influenced the results. However, given that the study was very close to the elections, we assume that issue was already on everybody's mind.

Implications

Our findings have implications for understanding both political advertising and emotions. Regarding the first, it seems obvious that the political effects of being moved to tears—kama muta—are both theoretically and practically significant. It seems difficult to simply integrate kama muta in the simple dimensional account that dominates current research on political ads (Brader, 2006; Marcus, 2000).

Second, our results advance understanding of kama muta by showing the coherence among its four components. Perhaps most importantly, we show that stimulus features or structure *per se* do not determine whether people experience kama muta. Whether people experience the emotion or not depends on the individual appraisal of the stimulus. In our case, this was created by prior candidate preference and the different content of the spots.

Current models of being-moved-to-tears experiences offer different concepts to understand the appraisal, varying from observation of morally beautiful acts (Algoe & Haidt, 2009) to confirmation of core values (Cova & Deonna, 2014) to prosocial behaviour (Menninghaus et al., 2015) and sudden intensification of communal sharing (our kama muta model). We focussed our measurement on only the intensification of communality. Clinton's spots emphasised social inclusion of straight and queer couples by giving them equal rights to marriage and thereby allowing them to celebrate their close communal relations; inclusion of ethnic minorities in an inclusive group with communal standards, and the close relation and identification many may have felt to Barack Obama. Trump's ads emphasised compassion for working class people and families. Note that a strengthened communal bond shared by participants is probably often also linked to a *core value* that the person holds, and supporting or strengthening it may be perceived as a moral act. The current studies were not designed to distinguish between these models, and can be interpreted as supporting any one of these appraisal hypotheses. In future work, a stronger test should trace candidate preference back to the importance of communal sharing relations in people's lives, index the vitality of and perceived threats to these communal relationship, and show how campaign ads and speeches promising to restore these essential relationships elicit kama muta that may affect how people vote and whom they work to support.

The most practical significance of our studies may be this: We document that both 2016 U.S. presidential election campaigns employed ads that moved voters to tears. That was clearly a deliberate campaign tool, and it worked. So being moved to tears is an emotion to watch for when you want to understand

campaigns. Given the public image of Donald Trump and the main tenor of most of his political ads, it may come as a surprise that some of his ads actually moved his voters to tears. The impacts of the ads were comparable but not quite symmetrical on their respective voter bases. The somewhat smaller effect of Trump's ads on his voters is best attributed to those ads simply being shorter. The difference is more pronounced in the second study, just a few days before the election (when the general expectation was that he would lose, and many had already voted by mail). Media reports have provided converging anecdotes for Trump voters reporting states we would label kama muta. For instance, in an episode of the podcast "United States of Anxiety," a Trump supporter recalls crying and choking up at one of his rallies because she perceives him as "wanting to make a difference here."[5]

Our present data do not reveal anything about how exactly Trump's campaign in general and the ads we used here in particular achieved an increase in communal sharing, but we can speculate. There is reason to believe that large parts of Trump's electorate voted for him because they felt unfairly deprived, excluded, worried about the future of their communities because of economic and health issues, and felt that their own social groups' status was threatened. Note that this may imply actual deprivation (Irwin & Katz, 2016), but does not require it. Instead, it may be relative deprivation (Pettigrew, 2017) and driven by processes such as competitive victimhood (Young & Sullivan, 2016). Also note that Trump's campaign itself contributed to the construction of this worldview (Reicher & Haslam, 2017). Together, these concerns provide a background of loss and threat from which the kama muta emotion can emerge when people suddenly feel included and cared for. As Reicher and Haslam (2017) summarise, "Trump's campaign was all about creating a particular sense of 'us' … and then establishing how he himself is representative of the group in both a symbolic and a practical way." However, note that we make no claim about Trump's campaign in total, nor about his remaining ads. It is our impression that other ads focussed on other emotions such as anger, but those were outside of the present focus.

Notes

1. One could be interested in how such voters were swayed by the ads for Clinton and Trump, but we were not for the present set of hypotheses. Note also that there were only few such participants. The data are available for others to analyze.
2. At the end, participants could leave comments; those ranged from "Oh my goodness that Obama clip had me SOBBING! Best president EVER!" to "There should have been a trigger warning on that disgusting sodomite video."
3. We used the same Trump ads as in Study 1 because we could not find new ads that seemed to evoke strong kama muta. The ad "Donald Trump's Argument for America" would have been a suitable candidate, but it was published only after we conducted Study 2.
4. However, we included one item on anger and found independent effects of anger and feeling moved on motivation to support the advertised candidate in Study 1, see Supplemental Material.
5. The Nation, WNYCStudios (2016). United States of Anxiety, Episode 2. 29 September 2016. http://www.wnyc.org/story/united-states-of-anxiety-podcast-episode-2. In fact, this episode inspired the current work.

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