Campaigning Against Populism
Emotions and Information in Real Election Campaigns *

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Abstract

Populist politicians have leveraged direct connections with voters to win elections worldwide, often using emotional rather than policy appeals. Do these forms of campaigning work for programmatic politicians as well? We partner with a mainstream opposition political party to implement a field experiment during the 2019 Philippine Senatorial election to test the effectiveness of: (i) direct in-person appeals providing policy information; (ii) the addition of an activity designed to engender positive emotion. We show that direct engagement providing policy information increases vote share for the party, even in a clientelistic context. Additionally, while the emotional activity increases engagement with the campaign in the short term, the information-only treatment was more effective. Last, we present evidence that the treatments operated through learning and persuasion channels: treated voters were more likely to know the party, more certain about their knowledge, and gave higher ratings to the party's quality and proposed policies.

1 Introduction

In recent years, established political parties have faced a steep decline in popularity and electoral performance amidst the rise of populist politics (Grzymala-Busse, 2019). By contrast, populist politicians have successfully leveraged an "us-versus-them" approach to politics (Rooduijn et al., 2021; Dipoppa et al., 2021; Galasso et al., 2022) that has been difficult for parties accustomed to campaigning on policy platforms to forestall or counter (Guriev, 2018; Grzymala-Busse, 2019). Instead of engaging in policy debates, populist politicians have effectively used emotional appeals to either eschew articulating policy platforms or to oversimplify complex policy issues in favor of emotional connections with voters (Guriev, 2018; Norris and Inglehart, 2019; Spruyt et al., 2016). Populist politicians also leverage their ability to engage with voters directly–either online or through in-person rallies and other events–to cast established parties as elitist and unresponsive to voters (Rooduijn et al., 2021; Dipoppa et al., 2021). The challenges for established parties are especially relevant in less established democracies, where these types of behaviors — vote buying, patronage and other forms of clientelistic political exchange — occur frequently and at the expense of potential policy-based campainging (Hicken, 2011; Cruz et al., 2018).

In this context, how can mainstream parties successfully reach out to voters? Can policy-based in-person appeals counter the populist narrative that established parties are "elitist" or "out of touch" with voters? Can the emotional responses that populists are adept at inducing through their messaging be used to support policy-based campaigns as well?

We use a field experiment during the 2019 Senatorial elections in the Philippines to assess voter responses to these two approaches to campaign messaging: policy-focused door-to-door visits and emotional appeals. The Senate is elected at-large and voters can select up to twelve candidates, allowing us to conduct the experiment in a limited geographic area without affecting the overall election results. Furthermore, the lack of a concurrent presidential election helps minimizes the possibility of broader political effects.

We partnered with the Liberal Party of the Philippines, a mainstream national political organization and the main opposition party in the 2019 elections against a coalition supported by the populist president Rodrigo Duterte, to explore both the effect of their door-to-door policy campaigning and the addition of emotional appeals to the policy

messaging.[1] The 2019 Senatorial elections were widely perceived to be a referendum on Duterte's first three years in office and the campaign featured strategies common in populist campaigns: an anti-elite narrative and strong emotional connections to voters, maintained through shrewd use of social media as well as mass rallies and in-person events (Teehankee and Kasuya, 2020). Voters could select up to 12 candidates on their ballots. The Liberal Party put together a slate of eight candidates under the banner *Otso Diretso*. None of them were elected in 2019, with the highest performing *Otso Diretso* candidate finishing in thirteenth place.

First, we test whether policy-focused door-to-door visits can be effective to counter against the populist narrative that established parties are elitist or out of touch with voters. The base treatment consisted of an in-person, door-to-door campaign introducing the party's candidates and communicating details about their platforms. Voters were also provided with a calendar listing the candidates and their proposed policies. While there is strong evidence of the effectiveness of door-to-door canvassing for turnout in U.S. elections (Green et al., 2003), citizens' preferences (Broockman and Kalla, 2016) and voting in consolidated democracies (Pons, 2018), the evidence from consolidating democracies is more scarce. Understanding the effect of door-to-door policy campaigning is especially important in clientelistic countries, given that policy content is not a common feature of campaigns, and may be less effective in a context where voters are more accustomed to vote buying and patronage.

Second, we explore the interaction between policy information and emotional appeals by estimating the effects of adding a short interaction designed to trigger positive emotions prior to the party door-to-door visits. Emotions in elections involve a variety of physiological, behavioral, and cognitive factors, with implications for the way that individuals engage in politics (Brader, 2006; Brader and Marcus, 2013). While research has shown a variety of effects of different types of emotions on political behavior, there is less consensus on *how* emotions matter;[2] in particular, how emotions interact with political learning

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[1]While both the literature and the party operatives suggest that negative emotions may provide stronger treatment effects, for ethical reasons our intervention was designed to induce only positive emotions, and to be as similar to actual campaign materials as possible. The design was registered on the AEA RCT Registry on April 26, 2019. https://www.socialscienceregistry.org/trials/4137

[2]For example, in much of the economic literature on emotions and decision making, it is not obvious whether the effect of emotions operates through a change in preferences or whether subjects project emotions onto learning about economic fundamentals (DellaVigna, 2009).

and decision-making processes. We explore not only the effects of emotional messaging in political campaigns, but also how they interact with other dimensions of political behavior in the context of a real world campaign.

Our field experiment shows that door-to-door campaigns to inform voters about policies and platforms are highly effective, even in a largely clientelistic context like the Philippines where policy content in campaigns is rare (Cruz et al., 2018). Voters targeted by the door-to-door campaign are 7 percentage-points more likely to vote for at least one *Otso Diretso* candidate, increasing their baseline willingness from 65 percent to 72 percent. They also voted for 0.26 additional *Otso Diretso* candidates, for a total of 1.56 candidates, an increase of about 20 percent from the control group mean of 1.30.

We further show that the effects on vote choice operate through learning and persuasion: treated voters are more knowledgeable about the political party, rate the party candidates as being of higher quality and are more likely to believe that the party candidates will support laws on things that matter to them and their family. Voters targeted by the door-to-door campaign are 8 percentage-points more likely to know the *Otso Diretso* slate and know 0.3 additional candidate, from an average of 3.1 candidates in the control group. Treated voters also positively update their beliefs about the party and the candidate's quality and policy platforms. Even though the intervention involved only a short visit by party volunteers, our results show that the treatments were effective at countering the populist narrative that mainstream parties are disconnected from voters' concerns.

Our research design also allows us to explore the effectiveness of adding emotional appeals to information campaigns. While both treatments are significantly more effective than the control condition, the added emotional appeals increase engagement in the short term and outperforms the information-only treatment in terms of increasing vote intention at the point of the intervention. However, over the course of the campaign and by the time of the elections, information-only messaging is more effective. Furthermore, we show that emotional messaging neither supports nor hinders policy learning, suggesting that policy learning can occur even in the context of emotional appeals in campaigns.

The polarized nature of Philippine politics under Duterte allows us to explore heterogeneity along baseline political preferences. We classify voters into three mutually exclusive groups determined pre-treatment: low information or uncertain voters, voters negatively

inclined towards candidates aligned with Duterte and, voters positively inclined towards pro-Duterte candidates. The first group of voters responds equally to both treatments: the door-to-door visits increased the number of votes for *Otso Diretso* by 0.39 additional candidates. Anti-Duterte voters responded strongly to the simple door-to-door visits, but do not respond to the treatments including the emotional appeals. Pro-Duterte voters respond positively to both treatments and update about the party's quality and policy platforms, but from a much lower baseline that does not translate into additional votes for the party's candidates. Overall, these results suggest an important role for providing information about opposition candidates, as even pro-Duterte voters were responsive to information. Furthermore, the results for the Pro-Duterte and Anti-Duterte voters are consistent with a general moderation of views, suggesting a role for these interventions in potentially reducing polarization.

Our work addresses several strands of the literature looking at the effects of campaigning on vote choice. First, we extend the literature on door-to-door campaigning to a context characterized by clientelistic practices where policy appeals might be expected to be less effective. While door-to-door campaign activities are common, field experiments involving actual political parties during elections are infrequent. Additionally, in contrast to the literature on door-to-door campaigns in more established democracies, in our context we find effects on vote choice and preferences, and not just measures of engagement, interest, or turnout. Second, we contribute to the literature on the role of emotions in politics by assessing the effectiveness of emotional appeals in the context of an actual campaign. We are also able to measure the effects of those appeals both shortly after the stimuli and after the elections. Third, our paper complements the literature on the causes of populism (Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022) by providing evidence on campaign strategies that established parties can use when running against populist incumbents.

The paper proceeds as follows: the second section discusses the related literature. The third section outlines the context, including a description of Philippine Senate elections, the intervention we conducted, and the subsequent data collection. The fourth section discusses our main results on door-to-door campaign, while the fifth section explores the effects of the additional emotional messages. Section six discusses heterogeneity in the treatment effects and the final section concludes.

2 Contributions and Related Literature

Our paper contributes to the broader literature on the effects of campaigning on vote choice, and how programmatic parties can articulate policy platforms in campaigns characterized by emotional appeals and populist rhetoric. First, we extend the literature on door-to-door campaigning by testing the effectiveness of delivering in-person policy information in a clientelistic setting. Second, we contribute to the literature on information processing and psychological responses to campaign messaging by exploring the interactions between policy information and emotional content in the context of a real world campaign.

Populist candidates and parties have especially thrived under modes of political communication that allow for direct engagement with voters. This includes the rise of social media as a way to connect to voters, as well as the resurgence of in-person campaigning, such as rallies (Jha, 2023). The direct communication allows them to deliver their messaging without traditional media filtering or fact-checking their claims. These direct forms of communication are also compatible with populist candidates' use of negative emotions such as anger, fear, or resentment, often to exploit existing social cleavages by emphasizing grievances (Rico et al., 2017; Magni, 2017; Salmela and Von Scheve, 2017; Widmann, 2021). This "us-versus-them" orientation to politics can mobilize supporters in solidarity, at the expense of the perceived "other" in opposition (Rooduijn et al., 2021; Dipoppa et al., 2021). Emotional appeals have also allowed populist candidates and parties to simplify complex social and political problems in order to present accessible and straightforward policy solutions (Guriev, 2018; Norris and Inglehart, 2019). This resulted in politicians framing political issues in simpler terms and in creating stronger emotional connections with voters (Spruyt et al., 2016).

By contrast, established parties have been less able to adapt their policy messaging to these new direct forms of campaigning. The format of social media and in-person rallies are not as conducive to policy platforms: incentivizing shorter and simpler electoral messaging, and leveraging emotional appeals and clever sound bites over nuanced policy discussion. Our paper provides new evidence on how traditional parties can adjust their campaign strategy in this context.

Direct in-person appeals The evidence on the effectiveness of direct in-person appeals, and particularly door-to-door canvassing, is fairly established in the context of turnout in consolidated democracies (Hillygus and Shields, 2008; Issenberg, 2012). Systematic RCT evidence accumulated suggests that get-out-the-vote in person messages delivered through door-to-door canvassing have large effects on voter turnout in the United States (Gerber and Green, 2000; Green et al., 2003; Bergan et al., 2005; Green et al., 2013; Green and Gerber, 2019). There is some debate on the external validity of the magnitudes, for instance with respect to non first-past-the-post electoral systems inducing different levels of on-equilibrium participation. Looking at Western Europe, Bhatti et al. (2019) for instance remarks that "*the effect is substantially smaller in Europe than in the United States,*" and finds precise zeros in two experiments in Denmark.

Relative to turnout, the evidence on effects of in-person interaction and vote shares or vote choice is much more in dispute. In the US, the evidence appears much weaker for vote shares than turnout (Kalla and Broockman, 2018), possibly because the high saturation of U.S. electoral campaigns and fairly tight prior beliefs close to the election date. By contrast, there is evidence of the effectiveness of door-to-canvassing contact for national elections in France (Pons, 2018) and of direct phone interaction in Italian municipal elections (Kendall et al., 2015). The evidence for the Philippines that we report in this article is consistent with this latter set of findings.

Emotional appeals. The paper is also related to a strand of literature on information processing and psychological responses to campaign messaging. Different frameworks link emotions to political behavior through a number of channels, such as : (i) affecting cognition and decisionmaking (Lerner and Keltner, 2000; Schwarz, 2000; Lazarus, 1991; Moors et al., 2013) (ii) operating through valence reactions and assessments (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993); or (iii) serving specific functions for decisionmaking, such as a heuristic or coordination device (Barrett and Campos, 1987; Barrett, 1998) or triggering certain behaviors (Marcus et al., 2000).

Negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, and anger are generally considered to be the most studied emotions in political psychology (Huddy et al., 2013). Fear has been found to increase pessimism when assessing risk, as well as general risk aversion. Anger has been linked to voter mobilization (Valentino et al., 2011; Weber, 2008). Similarly, Freedman

and Goldstein (1999) find that negative ads increase mobilization, contrary to claims that negative messaging depresses participation and engagement. Sabucedo and Vilas (2014) find that, while anger can spark a desire for change, it is positive emotions that contribute to the process for deciding that mobilization is worthwhile. Although many of these studies are conducted in the United States and other consolidated democracies, there is also some evidence coming from other contexts. Erisen (2013) experimentally manipulates both positive and negative emotions in a laboratory setting in Turkey to show that the former are correlated with risk aversion and support for the incumbent Prime Minister, while the latter are correlated with risk-seeking policy support and information-seeking behavior. Similarly, Young (2019) field experiment in Zimbabwe demonstrates that inducing fear reduces dissent and increases pessimism in voters. There is also evidence of that stronger participants react more strongly to emotional messages (Groenendyk and Banks, 2014).

Most studies of positive emotion focus on enthusiasm –generally measured as a scale that combines happiness with similar emotions, such as hope and pride. Enthusiasm has been linked to increased political interest, motivation, participation, and certainty in making political choices (Brader, 2006; Valentino et al., 2011; Marcus et al., 2000). Another set of studies on happiness use large-scale polling data to link overall life satisfaction with political behavior (Ward, 2019), or associate politically-relevant factors with differences in baseline levels of happiness (Di Tella and MacCulloch, 2005; Napier and Jost, 2008; Bixter, 2015). Using a laboratory experiment exposing subjects to happy facial displays of presidential candidates, Sullivan and Masters (1988) show that happiness mediates candidate support and suggests that emotions generated by these visual cues play a larger role than party identification, policy issues, or assessments of candidate ability. Brader (2005) shows that emotional appeals are important features of political campaigns, by changing fundamental features of the decision-making process: enthusiasm motivates reliance on existing beliefs, while fear motivates increased vigilance based on current evaluations (Brader, 2005).

Taken together, while there is widespread acknowledgement that both direct outreach and emotional messaging are important for understanding politics, how they matter and how they interact with each other as well as other dimensions of vote choice are still open questions. This is even more important in less established democracies, where direct outreach is often associated with vote buying and other clientelistic practices.

Last, given partisan attachments and strong prior beliefs in many developed country settings, it is often difficult to disentangle persuasion effects from mobilization. Much of the literature suggests that persuasive effects –emotional or otherwise– are limited. Recent work by Coppock et al. (2020) uses results from 59 experiments in the U.S. to show that these generally small effects are not masking large heterogeneous effects by sender (candidate or groups), receiver (partisanship), content (attack vs. promotional) or context (battleground states vs. non-battleground; primary vs. general election; early vs. late). Similarly, in much of the economic literature on mood manipulations and decision-making it cannot be clearly established whether the effect of emotions is operating through a change in risk aversion or whether subjects are projecting the emotions onto beliefs about economic fundamentals (DellaVigna, 2009). Our work addresses this gap by combining an experimental test of policy information and emotional content in a real-world campaign, allowing us to assess not only the effect of policy messaging and emotional appeals, but to better understand how emotions interact with learning and operate through different dimensions of vote choice.

3   Context, Experiment and Data

This field experiment tests the effect of informational and emotional messaging in the context of a real-world political campaign in the Philippines. In particular, we test the effectiveness of (i) delivering policy content in an actual door-to-door campaign by a traditional political party and of (ii) triggering positive emotions at the beginning of those interactions.[3] To do this, we partnered with the Liberal Party of the Philippines, a well-established national political party and the primary opposition party in the 2019 Senatorial elections. The party randomized both the targeting and the content of their signature door-to-door campaign for the Senatorial elections, allowing us to test the effect of emotions in political messaging. Indeed, their door-to-door campaign was designed as a potential response to Duterte's populist campaign.

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[3]The design was registered on the AEA RCT Registry on April 26, 2019. https://www.socialscienceregistry.org/trials/4137

3.1 Senatorial Elections and the 2019 Campaign

Senatorial races in the Philippines tend to be closely contested and 2019 was no exception. The Senate is often perceived to be an important stepping stone to the presidency in the Philippines: since 1998, four out of five presidents had been senator before holding presidential office. Additionally, the 2019 Senatorial election was widely perceived to be a referendum on the first three years of the populist Duterte presidency (Atienza, 2020; Teehankee and Kasuya, 2020).

The Senate is the upper house of the Philippine legislature and Senators are elected at-large, in a single national district. This allowed us to conduct the experiment in a limited geographic area and to establish causal effects of our treatments, while minimizing the possibility of influencing the overall election results.[4]

Under the 1987 Constitution, elections are staggered with twelve Senators elected every three years for six year-terms. Voters can select up to twelve candidates. Importantly, while candidates often form pre-election alliances, there is no straight-ticket voting option on the ballot and voters need to vote for each candidate individually (cf. sample ballot in Figure A.3). To help their supporters, parties often distribute what they term a "*kodigo*" (literally, "code," but in this context is understood as a "key" or "guideline") with the list of names of the candidates on their slate. These *kodigos* are permitted inside the voting precincts and are distributed by parties on election day and in the days leading up to the vote to help citizens remember the names of the slate's candidates once inside the polling station (cf. Figure A.4).

Sixty-two candidates, including seven incumbents, competed for the 12 available seats in the May 13, 2019 elections. The main alliances were the Hugpong ng Pagbabago/PDP-Laban, *Otso Diretso*, and the United Nationalist Alliance. The Hugpong ng Pagbabago/PDP-Laban alliance was started by Sara Duterte, Rodrigo Duterte's daughter, to support her father's government. From now on we refer to it as the administration slate.

The administration slate included two successful candidates closely linked to Rodrigo Duterte: Bato dela Rosa and Bong Go. Dela Rosa was the head of the Davao city police

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[4]In the 2016 senatorial elections, 1.3 million votes separated the candidates ranked 12 and 13 (the relevant cutoff between successful and unsuccessful candidates). In comparison, the experiment treated fewer than 20,000 voters (about 100-150 voters in 130 villages).

when Duterte was mayor. He was appointed head of the Philippine National Police on Duterte's first day in office and was in charge of implementing a contentious zero-tolerance anti-drug policy, referred to as "the drug war". On the day of filling his candidacy, dela Rosa reported that he had been instructed by president Duterte to run for Senate. Displaying a similar loyalist profile, Bong Go was Duterte's personal assistant in the period between 1998 and 2018.

The main opposition slate, *Otso Diretso*, was made up of six Liberal Party (LP) candidates and two independent candidates, including former presidential candidate Mar Roxas and incumbent Senator Bam Aquino. The other candidates were less well known. In a noticeable break with traditional, more clientelistic, campaigning methods in the Philippines, the *Otso Diretso* alliance launched *Project Makinig* at the end of 2018. The project was a nationwide door-to-door campaign to listen to what voters had to say about the state of the country and what they expected from politicians. Almost 10,000 volunteers generated about 120,000 conversations with voters. Information collected from the campaign was then used to identify, shape, and communicate the party platforms ahead of the May 2019 elections. In addition, shortly before the elections, party volunteers went on an extensive door-to-door campaign across the country to introduce the party's candidates and platforms in detail.

3.2   The Experiment

The field experiment was designed to coincide with *Otso Diretso*'s nationwide door-to-door campaign ahead of the May 2019 elections. *Otso Diretso*'s existing door-to-door campaign consisted of delivering a detailed script introducing their slate of candidates and communicating information about their party platforms. Trained volunteers also provided voters with a list of candidates called a *kodigo* with the eight candidates along with their numbers on the ballot (cf. Figure A.4). The party implemented no similar door-to-door visits in the control group, although we expect that they would still be exposed to posters and ads throughout the campaign to the same extent as other voters, including those in the treatment group.

We requested that the party volunteers also provide a calendar (cf. Figure A.5) as a giveaway that would be given to voters in both treatment groups to keep. These types

of giveaways (often called "leave-behinds" in the Philippines) are common practice in Filipino electoral campaigning. Calendars are particularly common. Other examples of similar giveaways include posters, buttons, paper fans, bracelets, stickers, and other paraphernalia featuring the party branding. Higher value items include t-shirts and hats, which are usually reserved for volunteers or important local supporters.

The first treatment arm consists of the original door-to-door policy message and the calendar. Each of the eight *Otso Diretso* candidates are associated with a policy issue area, and the party volunteers were instructed to briefly introduced each candidate and their policy area or programs. For example, Bam Aquino's policy area was education and he advocated for free college tuition, Mar Roxas focused on economic policies, Samira Gutoc focused on conflict resolution and peace processes in Mindanao, etc. A brief version of their biography and their policies and programs are displayed on the calendar (cf. Figure A.5).

The second treatment arm is intended to provide the identical information with an additional activity to foster positive emotions. To do this, we integrate a non-intrusive treatment with the calendar to seamlessly complement the existing standard *Otso Diretso* policy campaign script. This treatment protocol builds on the literature in psychology on inducing positive emotion for the purpose of laboratory experiments, which vary between visual stimuli, situational procedures, autobiographical recall, and even imagery or music (Siedlecka and Denson, 2018). Specifically, the activity to induce positive emotions consisted of an additional module before the standard policy information treatment in which volunteers presented the respondents with the calendar vividly depicting the *Otso Diretso* candidates and multiple heart-shaped stickers. Voters were invited to personalize the calendar by marking important dates using the stickers. This process involved asking the respondents to recount happy events, such as (i) something they were looking forward to in the future (a party, a holiday, a reunion, or a vacation), or (ii) something that they wished to commemorate, like a wedding anniversary. Voters were then encouraged to place a heart sticker on each relevant date. They did it for up to five events, populating the *Otso Diretso* calendar with positive emotional reminders. After this activity, they were asked to similarly place a heart sticker on election day, and encouraged to choose candidates whose policies and programs will lead to more happy moments for them and their families.

Note that while hearts and similar imagery might not be a common feature of campaigns

in the U.S. or Europe (albeit with exceptions, as shown in Figure A.1 in the appendix), the use of stylized hearts in campaign logos or posters is common in the Philippines and in many other consolidating democracies. In particular, there are many similar examples of positive imagery unrelated to our experiment were specifically used during the 2019 election that we study. A subset of them, sampled from the field, is reported in Figure A.2 in the appendix.

We chose a combined treatment because visual stimuli and other methods have been shown to increase the effectiveness of autobiographical recall for inducing happiness (Siedlecka and Denson, 2018). Furthermore, because the experiments in psychology are typically carried out in a lab where effects of inducing positive emotions are tested at short horizons, we designed our treatment to allow for the possibility of these effects to be measured in the short term, but also to persist much longer than the initial interaction. The design had two main features.

First, the treatment was designed to produce an immediate positive emotional response, stimulated by the subject's recollection of happy memories at the time of the door-to-door interview. This first element of the treatment is similar to priming interventions in psychological lab settings, where targeted recall is designed to assess the short-term response to affective priming (Klauer and Musch, 2003). In their review paper, Siedlecka and Denson (2018) summarize the literature on the effectiveness of recalling happy experiences on increasing feelings of happiness. Additionally, the intervention was pilot tested for effectiveness in generating positive emotional response.

Second, the treatment was designed to generate a persistent positive reinforcement through the recurrent use of the calendar in the context of daily activities. This second reinforcement arose from the daily exposure to the calendar in the period preceding the elections, as the calendar would present both the *Otso Diretso* message and the heart stickers around salient dates. In fact, the reinforced positive emotional association with *Otso Diretso* was designed to simulate as closely as possible repeated exposure to emotional appeals. Indeed, in the context of real electoral campaigns emotional advertisements are repeated with frequency, to enhance their effect (Cacioppo and Petty, 1979). This element introduced a more persistent feature designed to reinforce the positive emotional state over a time horizon beyond the immediate response. Both the activity to induce positive emotions and the calendar were designed to reinforce each other, as well as to be unobtrusive

to voters.

While working with a political party provides the advantage of understanding how direct engagement and emotional messaging affects voter behavior in a real election, it also imposes some constraints. First, given that our interventions were part of their actual campaign, it was unfortunately not possible to measure emotional response precisely at the point of the intervention (not only did we lack the advantages of a laboratory setting to measure physiological changes associated with emotional response, but even a battery of survey questions would be very unusual in a campaign interaction). At the same time, our intervention builds on a large literature on psychology on how to induce positive emotions, and we piloted our intervention extensively to ensure that it translated well to our context. Furthermore, our results on engagement (discussed in Section 5.3) from data collected by campaign volunteers also suggest positive emotional response to the treatment.

Second, while other studies have explored the impact of inducing negative emotions such as anger or fear, given the overall political climate in the Philippines, for ethical reasons we limited the study to positive emotions. Similarly, it was also important to design a treatment that would be in line with the existing positive campaign materials of the *Otso Diretso* and would fit the cultural and political context of the Philippines.

Operationally, the sample of 195 villages was divided into three equally-sized groups using a pairwise matching algorithm:[5] 65 T1 (information about Otso policy platforms only), 65 T2 (information + emotions) and 65 control villages in thirteen municipalities. (cf. Table A.1). The groups are well balanced (Tables A.2 and A.3).

The experiment was implemented by *Otso Diresto* volunteers in 130 villages (barangay) in the province of Laguna (located south of Metro Manila). The door-to-door visits took place between Monday April 29 and Monday May 6, 2019. Typically, the field team was able to treat about 100-150 households per barangay and targeted all baseline respondents.

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[5]First, for all potential triplets of villages (within municipalities), the Mahalanobis distance was computed using 2010 village (barangay) population, an urban/rural dummy, LP vote share in 2010 and LP vote share in 2016. Second, the partition that minimized the total sum of Mahalanobis distance between villages in the same triplets was selected. Third, within each triplet, a village was randomly selected to be allocated to T1, a village was randomly selected to be allocated to T2; the other one serving as control.

3.3 Data and Measurement

Our analysis relies on three main sources of data. We implemented two detailed individual-level surveys, the first baseline in early April 2019 before the intervention and an endline survey a few weeks after the elections in late May/early June. In addition, the *Otso Diretso* campaign collected additional data for their campaign at the time of treatment in between the baseline and the endline survey.

The baseline survey was carried out within a month from the election, during April 2019, on a sample of 1,950 individuals in 195 villages. The data include: knowledge of 20 Senatorial candidates (including the 8 *Otso Diretso*), voting intentions, first and second moments of beliefs about candidate quality and policies and first and second moments of beliefs about party quality and policies. The questions capturing policy beliefs measured whether the respondent thought that the candidate will support making laws and spending the government budget on things that matter to the respondent and their family.

We elicited first and second moments of beliefs through the use of specifically designed sliding rulers of different sizes, intended to display a range of values. Trained enumerators explained the different rulers and that individual respondents could select the ruler that they wanted to use, depending on how certain they were of their answers. Rulers could have either a larger (i.e. more dispersed beliefs) or smaller (i.e. tighter beliefs) opening, which respondents could slide to indicate the possible scores, and centered around the mean of the beliefs distribution. Specifically, for each candidate and quality/policy dimension, respondents were provided with a sheet listing values 1 to 10 and three sliding rulers (one of length 1, one of the length 3, and one of length 5). Respondents were asked to pick the grade they wanted to give. Voters who felt they were certain were asked to also pick the short ruler and position on their elicited mean. If voters were somewhat uncertain, they were asked to pick the medium ruler and, if they were even more uncertain, they were asked to pick the large ruler. Voters who did not know the candidate had the option of not responding to further questions and were allocated a ruler of length 10 to reflect their complete uncertainty and uninformative priors. The ruler picked by the voter helped visualize the variance of beliefs for the respondent and thus it is a measure of uncertainty of beliefs. An increase in this variable is associated with an increase in uncertainty (i.e. a longer ruler).

The endline survey was carried out in May/June 2019 and attempted to re-interview the 1,950 individuals included in our baseline. The data include vote choice in the May 13 elections and the same belief measures as those collected at baseline. As vote choice is a particularly sensitive outcome and in order to reduce the tendency of respondents to claim they voted for the winning candidates when they did not, we follow Cruz et al. (2018, 2021) and use a secret ballot protocol.[6] The vote choice data collected using this module appear reliable and unaffected by the treatments. The correlation between official candidate vote share at the village level and vote share computed from our sample is 0.80 and it is stable across our control and treatment groups (between .78 and .82). In addition, the likelihood of answering the secret ballot question is high - about 90 percent - and it is also unaffected by either treatment.

In addition, the endline survey collected data on (i) home visits by party volunteers in the month prior to the elections; (ii) whether respondents received materials from political parties; (iii) whether they received a calendar. Enumerators were also asked to check if they could see the calendar in the house and check if there were heart-shaped stickers on it.

Finally, we employ campaigning information obtained through *Otso Diretso* that allows us to assess immediate (short-term) voter response. As part of the door-to-door campaign activities, the volunteers asked and recorded the respondent phone number (if they agreed to be contacted by the campaign, an indicator of engagement), and voting intentions for each of the eight *Otso Diretso* candidates. We can thus compare the two treatments in terms of engagement and voting intention right after the treatment for about 14,000 voters in the information-only T1 and information+emotion T2 arms. For the T2 group we also collected data on how many stickers voters agreed to place on their calendars, as an additional indicator of the degree of engagement with the campaign.

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[6]As in Cruz et al. (2018), the protocol was implemented as follows. Respondents were given ballots with only ID codes corresponding to their survey instrument. The ballots contained the names of 20 Senatorial candidates as they appeared on the actual ballot. The respondents were instructed to select the candidates that they voted for, place the ballot in the envelope, and seal the envelope. Enumerators could not see the contents of these envelopes at any point and respondents were told that the envelopes remained sealed until they were brought to the survey firm to be encoded with the rest of the survey.

4 Effects of the door-to-door visits

We start by evaluating the pooled effects of the door-to-door visits by estimating equations of the form:

$$Y_{ivl} = \beta T_{vl} + \eta_l + \epsilon_{ivl} \tag{1}$$

where Y_{ivl} is the relevant outcome for respondent i in village v in triplet l, T is a dummy capturing whether the village was treated with door-to-door visits (either T1 or T2). η_l are a full set of triplet fixed effects. As the treatment was allocated at the village level, standard errors are clustered at that level. We use data from the endline survey where we can compare the effects of door-to-door visits to the control group. We also restrict the sample to the treatment villages and estimate the additional effects of the emotional treatment.

The main results are robust to alternative specifications and ways of computing the standard errors. In particular, we obtain similar results if we estimate versions of equation (1) where we control for the baseline value of the outcome variables. We also follow Young (2018)'s approach and show that our results are consistent with randomization inference.[7]

4.1 Door-to-door policy messaging increases the number of votes for *Otso Diretso*

Our results show that the door-to-door campaign increased the number of votes for *Otso Diretso*, even in a political context where direct engagement is generally associated with vote buying and other clientelistic practices. Voters receiving an in-person visit are more likely to report: (i) voting for at least one *Otso Diretso* candidate; and (ii) voting for more *Otso Diretso* candidates in total.

On the intensive margin, the door-to-door visit increases the likelihood of voting for at least one *Otso Diretso* candidate by 7 percentage-points from a baseline of 65 percent. On

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[7]We generate 1,000 potential random allocations, estimate equation (1) and compare our results with the true allocation to the distribution of point estimates obtained with the 1,000 allocations.

the extensive margin, treated voters reported voting for an additional .26 *Otso Diretso* candidates over the control group mean of 1.30 (Table 1).

Table 1: Door-to-door visits increase the party vote share.

| | Vote for Otso Candidates: | |
	At least one	Number
Door-to-door visits	0.07***	0.26***
	(0.02)	(0.09)
Control Mean	0.65	1.30
Control Std. Dev.	0.48	1.57
Observations	1,473	1,473
R-squared	0.048	0.069

Notes: The table reports results from individual-level regressions with triplet fixed effects. Each Column corresponds to a different outcome variable. Standard errors (in parentheses) clustered by village. * $p < .10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < .01$

These effect sizes are substantial. Back-of-the-envelope calculations show that the door-to-door visits could have materially changed the electoral results. Even if implemented at a relatively modest scale of reaching 10 percent of the electorate,[8] it would have been enough to elect one of the *Otso* candidates. Bam Aquino, who was the best performing *Otso* candidate, finished just 360,000 votes away from being elected to the Senate. Candidate-by-candidate results (Table A.5) suggest that each additional visit yielded 0.08 additional votes for Aquino and so, given a turnout of 47.3 million people, reaching 10 percent of the electorate would have been enough for him to be elected.

We can exclude that our treatment has an additional unintended effects, by showing that the door-to-door visits do not increase the number of votes for administration candidates. Recall that while voters in our setting vote for 8 candidates on average, the electoral rules allow them to vote for up to 12 candidates. As a result, more votes for *Otso Diretso* candidates do not necessarily translate into better electoral performance for the opposition slate compared to the administration candidates. At minimum, the treatment effects could be driven by an increase in the total number of candidates voters support, while

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[8]For reference, the experiment reported in Pons (2018) reached 15 percent of French dwellings.

at maximum, the treatments could have mobilized administration voters in response to the opposition's campaign activity. Results in Table A.4 do not support this view, however. The treatments had no effects on the number of votes for non-Otso candidates and administration candidates. They also did not affect votes for the two candidates most closely associated with Duterte, Bato dela Rosa and Bong Go. It is important to note that those results are precisely estimated zeroes.

Furthermore, the analysis of the administration slate candidates also reduces concerns about experimenter demand effects. Indeed, if our main results on vote for *Otso Diretso* candidates were driven by experimenter demand effects, we would also expect respondents to declare fewer votes for the administration slate.

4.2   Mechanisms: Learning and Persuasion Effects

First, consistent with learning effects, our results in columns 1 and 2 of Table 2 show that door-to-door policy messaging improves voter awareness of the party and the party's candidates. On average, 58 percent of control voters are aware of the *Otso Diretso* slate, and the door-to-door visit increases awareness by 8 percentage-points. Similarly, while voters in the control group can identify 3.10 *Otso Diretso* candidates on average, treated voters can identify an additional .30 candidates.[9]

Second, consistent with persuasion effects, our results in columns 3 and 4 of Table 2 show that the treatment improves voters' rating of the party's quality and whether they think the party will support laws and budget spending on things that matter for the voters' family. In addition to the changes in beliefs, we also observe a tightening of beliefs: columns 5 and 6 of Table 2 are also more certain of their beliefs about the party (as elicited through the choice of a less wide sliding ruler by voters in evaluating quality and policy position of *Otso* candidates). Taken together, these results suggest that door-to-door policy messaging can be effective for countering a common populist narrative that mainstream parties are disconnected from voters' concerns.

Additionally, there is some evidence that the treatments reduce self-reported voter reliance on outside influences as a determinant of vote choice (Table A.7). In particular, reduc-

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[9]Candidate-by-candidate results are available in Table A.6.

Table 2: Treatments increase voter knowledge and candidate ratings on policy and quality

| | Knowledge: | | Beliefs : | | Uncertainty: | |
	Otso	No. Candidates	Quality	Policy	Quality	Policy
Door-to-door visits	0.08***	0.30**	0.29***	0.30***	-0.70***	-0.74***
	(0.02)	(0.14)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.22)	(0.22)
Control Mean	0.58	3.10	6.08	5.99	5.14	5.24
Control Std. Dev.	0.49	2.25	1.93	1.87	4.32	4.31
Observations	1,625	1,634	1,572	1,554	1,572	1,554
R-squared	0.053	0.053	0.066	0.057	0.059	0.059

Notes: The table reports results from individual-level regressions with triplet fixed effects. Each Column corresponds to a different outcome variable. Standard errors (in parentheses) clustered by village. * $p < .10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < .01$

tions in the importance of the opinions of family and friends. But there is no effect in the importance of vote-buying. These outcome variables were taken from a module on the determinants of vote choice, where respondents were able to select flashcards corresponding to various potential outside influences on their vote.

4.3 Addressing Alternative Mechanisms

In addition to demonstrating potential mechanisms for the treatment effects, it is similarly important to explore and rule out alternative explanations that may be driving or mediating our results. First, the estimated effects could be mediated by an increase in political engagement, either in terms of discussions with friends and relatives or in terms of further participation in the campaign. We collected data on a series of measures of engagement during the campaign and none of them are affected by the door-to-door visits (Table A.8).

Another potential concern is that the effects are mediated by subsequent political discussions spurred by the visits. To address this possibility, we show that treated voters are no more likely to engage in political discussions than voters in the control areas (Table A.9).

Third, another alternative explanation is that treatments were changing voters' underlying preferences for candidate or party traits. To assuage these concerns, we show that there are no differential effects on the stated importance of various candidate traits when deciding who to vote for (Table A.10).

Last, given that we conduct our experiment in the context of an actual electoral campaign where both *Otso Diretso* and opposition politicians are engaged in other campaign activities, we rule out differential politician response to our door-to-door visits. There is no evidence that other candidates revised their campaign strategy in response to our treatments. Treated voters were no more likely to receive handouts or from the campaigns, with the exception of the calendar that we provide as part of the door-to-door visits (Table A.11). Treated voters are also not more likely to be targeted for vote buying (Table A.12).

To recap, the door-to-door visits conducted by the party led to an increase in the number of votes for the party candidates, an effect that operates through a learning and persuasion channel. Treated voters are both more knowledgeable about the party and its candidates and have more positive opinions about the party and its proposed policies. We can rule out that the effects operate through an increase in political engagement and discussions on the part of treated voters or that administration candidates reacted by campaigning more in treated villages.

5 Effects of the Additional Positive Emotional Content

5.1 Emotions are more powerful immediately. In the long-run, information is more effective

Our research design also allows us to test the effect of positive emotions in campaign messaging, by comparing the standard door-to-door treatment with the door-to-door treatment including the additional activity to engage positive emotions. First, we find that the emotions treatment is more powerful immediately. Using the data from the intervention, we can show that while T1 voters report planned to vote for 2.58 Otso candidates, T2 information+emotion voters planned to vote for 0.12 additional Otso candidates (Table 3).

At the same time, once we look at the post-elections data, the information only treatment appears to dominate the emotions treatment, especially when we look at the number of *Otso Diretso* candidates they vote for. On the intensive margin, compared to T1, T2 decreases the likelihood of voting for at least one *Otso Diretso* candidate by 4 percentage-points from a base of 73 percent. On the extensive margin, voters in T1 villages reported voting for 1.68 *Otso Diretso* candidates and T2 has a treatment effect of -0.22.

Table 3: Emotions are more powerful immediately. In the long-run, information is more effective.

	Vote for Otso Candidates:			
	At least one	Number	At least one	Number
	Intervention Data		Post-Election Data	
Emotional treatment	0.00	0.12*	-0.04*	-0.22***
	(0.01)	(0.07)	(0.02)	(0.08)
T1 Mean	0.82	2.59	0.73	1.68
T1 Std. Dev.	0.39	2.42	0.44	1.81
Observations	14,310	14,310	973	973
R-squared	0.030	0.027	0.072	0.118

Notes: The table reports results from individual-level regressions with triplet fixed effects. Each Column corresponds to a different outcome variable. Standard errors (in parentheses) clustered by village. * $p < .10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < .01$

5.2 Emotions do not hinder policy learning

A possible explanation for the lower effectiveness of the emotional treatment in terms of vote is that the emotional messaging affected policy learning. Indeed, The effects of emotional appeals in learning could have been potentially distracting (lowering learning and maintaining relatively higher uncertainty) or complementary (increasing the propensity of voters to assimilate information and reducing uncertainty above and beyond what achievable with information alone).

Interestingly, we are unable to reject the null that the two treatments are equally effective in

terms of learning. This suggests that, in this context, using emotional appeals in addition to policy information neither supports nor hinders learning on the part of voters. We do not believe this was an established conclusion before this study. In Table 4, none of the experimental effects on political knowledge about *Otso Diretso* candidates and voter beliefs in their first and second moments of policy and platform quality are statistically different at standard significance levels.

Table 4: No differential effects on knowledge

	Knowledge:		Beliefs :		Uncertainty:	
	Otso	No. Candidates	Quality	Policy	Quality	Policy
Emotional treatment	-0.01	-0.07	-0.11	-0.10	0.21	0.19
	(0.03)	(0.13)	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.24)	(0.24)
T1 Mean	0.66	3.41	6.42	6.35	4.38	4.43
T1 Std. Dev.	0.47	2.39	1.96	1.92	4.18	4.17
Observations	1,071	1,077	1,036	1,027	1,036	1,027
R-squared	0.071	0.096	0.084	0.074	0.079	0.077

Notes: The table reports results from individual-level regressions with triplet fixed effects. Each Column corresponds to a different outcome variable. Standard errors (in parentheses) clustered by village. * p < .10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < .01

5.3   Emotions increase engagement with the campaign in the short-run

One clear effect of emotional messaging is in the increase in voter engagement with the *Otso Diretso* campaign, both at the point of the door-to-door interaction, but also persisting all the way to the election, as reported in Table 5. The table shows that during the campaign (short term effect), voters in T2 were more likely to provide their phone numbers to the volunteers. At endline, T2 voters were also more likely to remember being visited by *Otso Diretso* volunteers and to have received a calendar. We also asked enumerators to independently verify those reports and they were more likely to record seeing a calendar in the respondents' homes in T2 villages than in information-only T1 villages. The effects at endline are also all statistically different and larger for the information+emotion T2

treatment than for the information-alone treatment T1. A clear differential role of adding emotional appeals relative to pure information provision in door-to-door interventions is detectable from the data in driving all our measurements of voter engagement.

Table 5: Emotions increase engagement in both the short and medium term

	Provided Phone No.	No Hearts Used	Self-Report :		Enumerator Saw:	
			Visit	Calendar	Calendar	Stickers
	Intervention Data		Post-Election Data			
Emotional treatment	0.03**	3.64***	0.06**	0.06**	0.06***	0.09***
	(0.01)	(0.08)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.01)
T1 Mean	0.43	0.00	0.18	0.24	0.06	0.01
T1 Std. Dev.	0.49	0.00	0.39	0.43	0.25	0.10
Observations	14,310	14,276	1,071	1,048	1,077	1,077
R-squared	0.043	0.662	0.155	0.128	0.103	0.141

Notes: The table reports results from individual-level regressions with triplet fixed effects. Each Column corresponds to a different outcome variable. Standard errors (in parentheses) clustered by village. * $p < .10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < .01$

6 Polarization and Heterogeneity

While the overall treatment effects are important for understanding how voters react to the interventions, given the polarized nature of Filipino politics ahead of the elections, it is equally important to understand whether this polarization leads to heterogeneous effects along baseline political preferences.

6.1 Identifying the relevant groups

One challenge is identifying different groups of voters, given that asking directly about support for President Duterte would have been exceedingly sensitive in 2019, in addition to potential concerns about how answering questions about their support for Duterte

would interact with the variables of interest. Instead, we proxy for political alignment with Duterte using support for salient Senate candidates Bato dela Rosa and Bong Go, who were closely aligned with the president.

This allows us to split our sample into three mutually exclusive groups. First, we take the quality rating that respondents gave to Bato dela Rosa at baseline.[10] We then classify individuals who declare not to know or are uncertain about dela Rosa (and subsequently use a medium/large sliding ruler to report their rating for dela Rosa) as "Low Information". This set of voters represents 42 percent of our sample.

We then split the remaining individuals into two groups:

- Those who give dela Rosa a quality rating above 5 at baseline. We call these individuals "Pro-Duterte". They represent 35 percent of our sample.

- Those who give dela Rosa a quality rating below 5 at baseline. We call these individuals "Anti-Duterte". They represent 22 percent of our sample.

This allows us to compare the effect of the information-only and the information+emotion treatments on voters with a relatively low level of information about the election (for whom we expect the additional learning about Otso to be substantial), versus voters that are more informed, but with different partisan views regarding the administration. For these voters with stronger existing political alignments we generally expect information to play a smaller role, given the fairly tight priors that we can infer from their precise evaluation of dela Rosa or Go.

We estimate equations of the form:

$$Y_{ivl} = \sum \gamma_k Z^k_{ivl} + \sum \beta_{1k} Z^k_{ivl} T1_{vl} + \sum \beta_{2k} Z^k_{ivl} T2_{vl} + \eta_l + \epsilon_{ivl} \qquad (2)$$

where Z^k_{ivl} are the indicators for whether respondent i in village v in triplet l is Low Information, Pro-Duterte, and Anti-Duterte.

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[10]Results are substantively similar if we use the rating given to Bong Go, who was Duterte's personal assistant between 1998 and 2018.

Tables A.13 and A.14 compare the three groups along baseline characteristics. Low information individuals appear to be slightly older, less educated, and less knowledgeable about politics than the other two groups. Consistent with our main argument, pro-Duterte individuals are planning to vote for fewer *Otso Diretso* candidates and more administration candidates (especially dela Rosa and Go) than individuals classified as anti-Duterte.

6.2 Treatment effects vary by baseline political preferences

We find that treatment effects differ across the groups of voters. Table 6 reports the results concerning voter choice and electoral support both at the time of the Otso visits (short term effects) and at the endline (long term effects). Table 7 presents different evidence on learning by the three groups.

The interventions had unambiguously positive effects for low information voters (Table 6). They voted for .39 additional *Otso Diretso* candidates compared to those in the control group. For those voters, we cannot reject the null that the treatment effects for information-only and information+emotion are the same for both voting behavior and learning.

The information-only treatment was more effective for increasing support for Otso than the information+emotion treatment for voters classified as being Anti-Duterte (Table 6) both during the intervention and at endline. By contrast, we find no significant effects for voters classified as Pro-Duterte, either during the campaign or at endline.

The results in Table 7 also support the findings that both treatments were effective for low information voters, showing effects on both increased knowledge and reduced policy and quality uncertainty about *Otso* for this set of voters.

Similar changes in the beliefs of voters are also evident for Anti-Duterte voters, but only for T1. The explanation for the difference in voting effect between T1 and T2 for Anti-Duterte voters seems to be that T2 had no effect on the ratings given to *Otso Diretso* on policy and quality (Table 7). Indeed, T2 was not effective at persuading Anti-Duterte voters that the *Otso Diretso* slate and its candidates were of higher quality and will support laws and budget spending on things that matter for the voters' family.

Importantly, the results on the sample of Pro-Duterte voters are consistent with a general

moderation of views, suggesting a role for the emotions treatment in decreasing polarization. Pro-Duterte voters positively update about Otso candidates quality and about the party platform (Table 7). While the increase is not sufficient to translate into additional votes for Otso candidates, Pro-Duterte voter preferences nonetheless move towards the center.

Table 6: Treatment Effects by Political Alignment

| | Vote for Otso Candidates: | | |
	Intervention Data		Post-Election Data
T1*Low Information			0.39**
			(0.18)
T1*Pro-Duterte			-0.03
			(0.16)
T1*Anti-Duterte			0.69***
			(0.22)
T2*Low Information	0.34	0.03	0.39**
	(0.23)	(0.19)	(0.19)
T2*Pro-Duterte	0.42	0.16	0.09
	(0.26)	(0.18)	(0.16)
T2*Anti-Duterte	-0.99***	-0.79***	-0.08
	(0.35)	(0.26)	(0.21)
Observations	813	813	1,454
R-squared	0.15	0.16	0.098
Low Information: p-value (T1=T2)			0.99
Pro-Duterte: p-value (T1=T2)			0.44
Anti-Duterte: p-value (T1=T2)			0.00

Notes: The table reports results from individual-level regressions with triplet fixed effects. All regressions control for the pro-Duterte and the anti-Duterte dummies (not reported). Standard errors (in parentheses) clustered by village. * $p < .10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < .01$.

An important take-away from those findings is that the emotional treatment appears to have more heterogeneous effects, and in particular are less likely to be effective for some groups, a concern in polarized political settings such as the Philippines. For policy-oriented parties and campaigns, the use of emotional messaging requires careful testing and targeting to avoid backlash or other negative consequences. At the same time, our

results highlight an important possible use of such campaigns for moderating partisan views and fostering depolarization.

Table 7: Differential treatment effects on learning

	Knowledge:		Beliefs :		Uncertainty:	
	Otso	No. Candidates	Quality	Policy	Quality	Policy
T1*Low Information	0.07	0.57**	0.17	0.22	-0.78*	-0.69*
	(0.05)	(0.26)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.41)	(0.41)
T2*Low Information	0.04	0.30	0.32*	0.35*	-0.38	-0.31
	(0.05)	(0.26)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.41)	(0.42)
T1*Pro-Duterte	0.06	0.08	0.46**	0.30	-0.56	-0.56
	(0.05)	(0.25)	(0.23)	(0.24)	(0.48)	(0.48)
T2*Pro-Duterte	0.09*	0.13	0.51**	0.39*	-0.65	-0.71
	(0.05)	(0.23)	(0.20)	(0.21)	(0.43)	(0.43)
T1*Anti-Duterte	0.13**	0.15	0.65**	0.78***	-1.16**	-1.47***
	(0.06)	(0.30)	(0.25)	(0.21)	(0.55)	(0.55)
T2*Anti-Duterte	0.17***	0.46	0.06	0.27	-1.22**	-1.54***
	(0.06)	(0.35)	(0.26)	(0.25)	(0.55)	(0.55)
Observations	1,599	1,607	1,548	1,530	1,548	1,530
R-squared	0.056	0.061	0.081	0.073	0.061	0.062
Low Information: p-value (T1=T2)	0.47	0.34	0.39	0.48	0.36	0.37
Pro-Duterte: p-value (T1=T2)	0.68	0.82	0.80	0.68	0.84	0.75
Anti-Duterte: p-value (T1=T2)	0.49	0.34	0.02	0.04	0.91	0.90

Notes: The table reports results from individual-level regressions with triplet fixed effects. All regressions control for the pro-Duterte and the anti-Duterte dummies (not reported). Standard errors (in parentheses) clustered by village. * $p < .10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < .01$.

7 Conclusion

Established political parties face significant challenges when campaigning against populist politicians, who have been able to leverage direct connections with voters and emotional appeals to widespread electoral success (Guriev, 2018; Grzymala-Busse, 2019). In particular, established parties often struggle to articulate policy platforms in campaigns where populist political discourse centers on issues of social identity, cleavages, and grievances

(Rooduijn et al., 2021; Dipoppa et al., 2021; Galasso et al., 2022).

How can mainstream political parties effectively campaign in these challenging political contexts? We partner with a mainstream opposition political party in the Philippines to test the effectiveness of adapting direct outreach and emotional appeals for policy-based campaigns.

We find that direct outreach–in the form of door-to-door visits by campaign volunteers to introduce the party's platform and candidates–are very effective at increasing vote share for the party. In terms of the intensive margin, the visits increase the likelihood of voting for at least one Otso Diretso candidate by 7 percentage-points from a base of 65 percent. On the extensive margin, control group voters reported voting for 1.3 Otso Diretso candidates (out of 8) and the associated treatment effect of the visits is .26.

Importantly, we are able to show that these large effects operate through learning and persuasion: treated voters are more likely to report familiarity with the party and its candidates, and rate the party and its policies higher than non-treated voters. These mechanisms suggest a potential role for direct policy outreach in countering the populist characterization of traditional politicians as elitist and out-of-touch, even in a campaign against a dominant populist incumbent.

These effects are also substantively important: back-of-the-envelope calculations show that implementing the door-to-door visits even at a slightly larger scale could have changed the electoral results. Specifically, if party volunteers had conducted the door-to-door visits even in only 10% of the electorate, the best performing *Otso* candidate, Bam Aquino, would have been elected, giving the slate one representative in the Senate.[11] More broadly, these results also represent an important contribution to the literature on in-person policy appeals, which has mostly identified effects on turnout, but less often on vote shares.

Our field experiment also allows us to explore the interactions between policy information and emotional content. This is especially important in the context of new modes of political communication, such as social media and in-person rallies, which incentivize shorter and simpler political messaging that tends to be more conducive to emotional appeals than policy platforms. We show that while the additional emotional activity

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[11]Furthermore, we do not account for the potential spillovers through family and friends and through media coverage and, as a result, these calculations likely represent a lower bound.

increased excitement and engagement during the campaign, these effects did not translate to improved vote shares at the time of the election.

It is important to note that for ethical reasons, we chose to work only with positive emotional messaging. Much of the emotional messaging discussed in the literature and associated with populist parties and candidates are negative emotions such as anger, fear, and resentment. It is possible that a stronger treatment or one that leverages negative emotions would have different effects, and these are important caveats to this study.

Last, our work contributes to our understanding of the effects of direct outreach and emotional appeals in polarized political settings. Importantly, our results indicate significant heterogeneity by baseline political information and preferences. While low information voters respond equally to the two treatments in terms of both vote share and learning, opposition voters respond much more strongly to the simple door-to-door visits. Pro-Duterte voters update their view of the opposition party, even if that does not translate into increased votes for the party. Those results suggest that these approaches can be effective avenues for moderating views and fostering depolarization.

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**Campaigning Against Populism Emotions and Information in Real Election
Campaigns**

ONLINE APPENDIX NOT FOR PUBLICATION

A.1 Context

The use of hearts in campaigns, while perhaps not very usual in contexts like the United States or
Europe, is common not only in the Philippines, but across the developing world. For reference,
the following figures display examples from the U.S. Presidential campaign of 1988, from Bavarian
State Parliament elections in Munich in 2023, from the Partido Popular (PP) in Spanish elections
in 2023. The subsequent figure reports electoral manifests from the 2019 Senatorial elections in the
Philippines, the context of our analysis.

Figure A.1: Example Campaign Posters Featuring Hearts

Figure A.2: Example Campaign Posters Featuring Hearts

Figure A.3: Sample Ballot

Figure A.4: The Kodigo (printed in 4*5.5in or 10.5*14 cm)

A.4

Figure A.5: The Calendar (printed in 12*18in or about 30*45cm)

Table A.1: List of Intervention Municipalities

Municipality	# Villages
Alaminos	12
Bay	15
Calauan	15
Famy	15
Luisiana	21
Lumban	12
Mabitac	12
Magdalena	18
Pagsanjan	12
Pakil	9
Pila	15
Santa Cruz	21
Siniloan	18
Total	195

A.2 Additional Results

Table A.2: balance tests

	Standard (T1)	Emotional (T2)	Control	β_{T1}	β_{T2}
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Population	2,322.29	2,388.75	2,371.58	-49.29	17.17
	(1678.89)	(1885.09)	(2450.68)	[0.85]	[0.95]
Urban	0.42	0.42	0.40	0.02	0.02
	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.49)	[0.73]	[0.73]
LP vote 2016	14.32	14.23	14.10	0.22	0.13
	(5.03)	(5.37)	(5.39)	[0.76]	[0.86]
LP vote 2010	27.77	27.58	27.57	0.19	0.00
	(8.62)	(8.19)	(9.77)	[0.83]	[1.00]
Ethnic diversity	0.16	0.15	0.16	0.00	-0.01
	(0.14)	(0.11)	(0.15)	[0.87]	[0.65]
Religious diversity	0.27	0.27	0.28	-0.01	-0.01
	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.20)	[0.58]	[0.59]
Presence of facilities:					
Elementary school	0.69	0.65	0.63	0.06	0.02
	(0.47)	(0.48)	(0.49)	[0.40]	[0.83]
High school	0.20	0.20	0.26	-0.06	-0.06
	(0.40)	(0.40)	(0.44)	[0.38]	[0.38]
Market	0.09	0.09	0.03	0.06	0.06
	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.17)	[0.19]	[0.19]
Health Centre	0.91	0.74	0.71	0.20	0.03
	(0.29)	(0.44)	(0.46)	[0.00]	[0.59]
Water system	0.77	0.72	0.75	0.02	-0.03
	(0.42)	(0.45)	(0.43)	[0.81]	[0.63]
Bank	0.18	0.22	0.17	0.02	0.05
	(0.39)	(0.41)	(0.38)	[0.82]	[0.48]
Hotel	0.18	0.23	0.12	0.06	0.11
	(0.39)	(0.42)	(0.33)	[0.31]	[0.07]
Manufacturing	0.54	0.51	0.58	-0.05	-0.08
	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.50)	[0.58]	[0.36]
Recreational	0.54	0.51	0.58	-0.05	-0.08
	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.50)	[0.58]	[0.36]
Commercial	0.83	0.77	0.83	0.00	-0.06
	(0.38)	(0.42)	(0.38)	[1.00]	[0.37]

The standard deviations are in (parentheses) (Columns 1-3). Each cell in Columns 4-5 is either the coefficient on the dummy variable indicating whether treatment 1 (Column 4) or treatment 2 (Column 5) was implemented in the village from a different OLS regression with triplet fixed-effects or the associated p-value in [bracket].

A.7

Table A.3: balance tests

	Standard (T1)	Emotional (T2)	Control	β_{T1}	β_{T2}
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Female	0.73	0.73	0.71	0.02	0.03
	(0.44)	(0.44)	(0.45)	[0.34]	[0.27]
Age	47.97	47.27	47.87	-0.22	-0.78
	(16.56)	(16.00)	(14.74)	[0.78]	[0.33]
Education (years)	9.49	9.67	9.59	-0.08	0.06
	(3.63)	(3.61)	(3.45)	[0.72]	[0.76]
HH size	5.17	5.31	5.31	-0.15	-0.01
	(1.99)	(2.21)	(2.19)	[0.24]	[0.93]
No. kids (0-6)	0.30	0.37	0.31	0.00	0.07
	(0.60)	(0.78)	(0.63)	[0.90]	[0.03]
No. kids (6-18)	0.74	0.83	0.77	0.00	0.08
	(1.12)	(1.14)	(1.18)	[0.99]	[0.31]
Group member	0.47	0.44	0.46	0.00	-0.02
	(0.66)	(0.64)	(0.67)	[0.99]	[0.63]
Receive remittances overseas	0.24	0.17	0.19	0.04	-0.02
	(0.47)	(0.40)	(0.44)	[0.08]	[0.40]
Attend religion at least weekly	0.40	0.40	0.38	0.02	0.02
	(0.49)	(0.49)	(0.49)	[0.56]	[0.54]

The standard deviations are in (parentheses) (Columns 1-3). Each cell in Columns 4-5 is either the coefficient on the dummy variable indicating whether treatment 1 (Column 4) or treatment 2 (Column 5) was implemented in the village from a different OLS regression with triplet fixed-effects or the associated p-value in [bracket].

Table A.4: No effects of the visits on votes for other candidates.

	No. of Votes:		Vote For:	
	non-Otso	Hugpong	De La Rosa	Go
Door-to-door visits	0.01	-0.03	0.01	0.01
	(0.13)	(0.11)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Control Mean	6.38	4.37	0.50	0.46
Control Std. Dev.	2.76	2.22	0.50	0.50
Observations	1,473	1,473	1,473	1,473
R-squared	0.073	0.063	0.055	0.057

Notes: The table reports results from individual-level regressions with triplet fixed effects. Each Column corresponds to a different outcome variable. Standard errors (in parentheses) clustered by village. * $p < .10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < .01$

Table A.5: The door-to-door visits increase votes for Otso Diretso candidates

| | Vote For: | | | | | | | |
	Alejano	Aquino	Diokno	Gutoc	Hilbay	Macalintal	Roxas	Tanada
Door-to-door visits	0.03**	0.08***	0.02	0.01	0.02*	0.04**	0.04	0.03*
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Control Mean	0.07	0.44	0.10	0.08	0.05	0.09	0.39	0.08
Control Std. Dev.	0.25	0.50	0.30	0.27	0.21	0.29	0.49	0.28
Observations	1,473	1,473	1,473	1,473	1,473	1,473	1,473	1,473
R-squared	0.056	0.062	0.072	0.063	0.070	0.060	0.042	0.050

Notes: The table reports results from individual-level regressions with triplet fixed effects. Each Column corresponds to a different outcome variable. Standard errors (in parentheses) clustered by village. * $p < .10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < .01$

Table A.6: The door-to-door visits increase knowledge of Otso Diretso candidates.

| | Know: | | | | | | | |
	Alejano	Aquino	Diokno	Gutoc	Hilbay	Macalintal	Roxas	Tanada
Door-to-door visits	0.04*	0.03	0.05**	0.05**	0.05*	0.03	-0.01	0.06**
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.03)
Control Mean	0.21	0.81	0.30	0.17	0.15	0.30	0.91	0.28
Control Std. Dev.	0.41	0.39	0.46	0.37	0.36	0.46	0.29	0.45
Observations	1,622	1,622	1,622	1,622	1,622	1,622	1,622	1,622
R-squared	0.046	0.047	0.051	0.060	0.061	0.056	0.041	0.046

Notes: The table reports results from individual-level regressions with triplet fixed effects. Each Column corresponds to a different outcome variable. Standard errors (in parentheses) clustered by village. * $p < .10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < .01$

Table A.7: Treatments reduce voter reliance on outside influences for their vote choice

| | Sources of Voting Influence: | |
	Family	Vote-Buying
Door-to-door visits	-0.41*	-0.17
	(0.22)	(0.13)
Control Mean	6.29	2.53
Control Std. Dev.	3.38	2.41
Observations	1,620	1,619
R-squared	0.099	0.082

Notes: The table reports results from individual-level regressions with triplet fixed effects. Each Column corresponds to a different outcome variable. Standard errors (in parentheses) clustered by village. * $p < .10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < .01$

Table A.8: No effects of the visits on electoral engagement.

	Distributed Flyers	Put up Posters	Distribute Gifts	Poll Watcher	Volunteer PPCRV	Shared Posts on FB
Door-to-door visits	0.01	-0.01	-0.00	-0.02	0.00	0.01
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Control Mean	0.10	0.10	0.02	0.11	0.01	0.06
Control Std. Dev.	0.31	0.30	0.15	0.31	0.12	0.25
Observations	1,630	1,630	1,630	1,630	1,630	1,630
R-squared	0.046	0.040	0.055	0.057	0.050	0.037

Notes: The table reports results from individual-level regressions with triplet fixed effects. Each Column corresponds to a different outcome variable. Standard errors (in parentheses) clustered by village. * $p < .10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < .01$

Table A.9: No effects of the visits on political discussions.

| | Discussed Politics with: | | | | |
	Family	Friends	Politicians	Church	Family/Friends in other villages
Door-to-door visits	-0.02	-0.00	-0.04	-0.01	0.00
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)
Control Mean	0.71	0.68	0.41	0.20	0.38
Control Std. Dev.	0.45	0.47	0.49	0.40	0.49
Observations	1,634	1,634	1,634	1,634	1,634
R-squared	0.050	0.061	0.071	0.051	0.070

Notes: The table reports results from individual-level regressions with triplet fixed effects. Each Column corresponds to a different outcome variable. Standard errors (in parentheses) clustered by village. * $p < .10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < .01$

Table A.10: No effects of the visits on importance of candidate traits for vote choice.

| | How important are the following candidate traits when deciding who to vote for? | | | | | |
	Policies	Approachable	Connections	Integrity	Intelligence	God Fearing
Door-to-door visits	-0.07	0.02	0.02	-0.01	-0.09	0.02
	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.16)	(0.14)	(0.14)
Control Mean	8.48	8.15	6.59	8.33	8.56	8.89
Control Std. Dev.	2.11	2.35	2.59	2.26	2.08	2.01
Observations	1,617	1,615	1,609	1,611	1,616	1,612
R-squared	0.083	0.082	0.063	0.096	0.088	0.085

Notes: The table reports results from individual-level regressions with triplet fixed effects. Each Column corresponds to a different outcome variable. Standard errors (in parentheses) clustered by village. * $p < .10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < .01$

Table A.11: No effects of the visits on politician response or campaign intensity.

	Received a calendar	No. stuff received (exc. calendar)	Received something (exc. calendar)
Door-to-door visits	0.26***	0.00	-0.05
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.09)
Control Mean	0.21	0.81	1.97
Control Std. Dev.	0.41	0.39	1.49
Observations	1,626	1,571	1,571
R-squared	0.138	0.063	0.086

Notes: The table reports results from individual-level regressions with triplet fixed effects. Each Column corresponds to a different outcome variable. Standard errors (in parentheses) clustered by village. * $p < .10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < .01$

Table A.12: No effects of the visits on vote-buying.

	vote-buying
Door-to-door visits	-0.01
	(0.01)
Control Mean	0.06
Control Std. Dev.	0.23
Observations	1,613
R-squared	0.099

Notes: The table reports results from individual-level regressions with triplet fixed effects. Each Column corresponds to a different outcome variable. Standard errors (in parentheses) clustered by village. * $p < .10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < .01$

Table A.13: Comparing the 3 types of voters (Low Information, Pro-Duterte, Anti-Duterte)

Variable	$\bar{Y}_{LowInfo}$	β_{Pro}	β_{Anti}	$\beta_{Anti} = \beta_{Pro}$
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
age	48.74	-2.41***	-0.44	3.59
	(15.44)	(0.87)	(1.07)	[0.06]
female	0.72	0.02	-0.01	0.81
	(0.45)	(0.03)	(0.03)	[0.37]
length residence	38.06	-1.51	0.18	1.82
	(18.93)	(1.08)	(1.30)	[0.18]
Education (years)	9.20	0.69***	0.52**	0.52
	(3.40)	(0.20)	(0.24)	[0.47]
family size	5.22	-0.10	0.17	3.11
	(2.16)	(0.13)	(0.17)	[0.08]
No. kids (0-6)	0.34	0.00	-0.04	0.63
	(0.71)	(0.05)	(0.05)	[0.43]
No. kids (6-18)	0.87	-0.10	-0.07	0.17
	(1.23)	(0.06)	(0.07)	[0.68]
group member	0.40	0.09**	0.09**	0.00
	(0.62)	(0.04)	(0.04)	[0.98]
religion at least weekly	0.36	0.05*	0.05	0.00
	(0.48)	(0.03)	(0.04)	[0.98]

Column 1 reports the average and standard deviation of the relevant variable for individuals classified as uncertain. Each cell in Columns 2-3 is either the coefficient on the dummy variable indicating whether the individual was classified as pro-Duterte (Coulmn 2) or anti-Duterte (Column 3) from a different OLS regression with triplet fixed-effects or the associated standard errors. Column 4 reports tests of equality of the two coefficients.

Table A.14: Comparing the 3 types of voters (Low Information, Pro-Duterte, Anti-Duterte)

Variable	$\bar{Y}_{LowInfo}$	β_{Pro}	β_{Anti}	$\beta_{Anti} = \beta_{Pro}$
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Knowledge of Otso				
yes/no	0.56	0.05*	0.13***	5.42
	(0.50)	(0.03)	(0.03)	[0.02]
No. candidates	2.55	0.36***	0.95***	15.37
	(1.79)	(0.13)	(0.14)	[0.00]
Beliefs about Otso				
Quality	5.95	0.14	-0.04	1.84
	(1.71)	(0.11)	(0.14)	[0.18]
Policy	5.86	0.19*	-0.02	2.25
	(1.73)	(0.11)	(0.14)	[0.14]
Uncertainty of beliefs about Otso				
Quality	5.87	-0.93***	-1.62***	5.75
	(3.93)	(0.23)	(0.28)	[0.02]
Policy	5.85	-0.84***	-1.61***	7.22
	(3.96)	(0.23)	(0.28)	[0.01]
Voice Choice:				
Otso (nb candidates)	1.72	-0.19**	0.29**	15.29
	(1.52)	(0.09)	(0.13)	[0.00]
Hugpong (nb candidates)	4.19	1.26***	0.27*	49.51
	(2.25)	(0.14)	(0.16)	[0.00]
De La Rosa	0.29	0.52***	0.15***	116.95
	(0.45)	(0.03)	(0.04)	[0.00]
Go	0.31	0.22***	0.04	23.06
	(0.46)	(0.03)	(0.04)	[0.00]

Column 1 reports the average and standard deviation of the relevant variable for individuals classified as uncertain. Each cell in Columns 2-3 is either the coefficient on the dummy variable indicating whether the individual was classified as pro-Duterte (Coulmn 2) or anti-Duterte (Column 3) from a different OLS regression with triplet fixed-effects or the associated standard errors. Column 4 reports tests of equality of the two coefficients.