

Reprehensible, Laughable: The Role of Contempt in Negative Campaigning

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Abstract

Negativity is common in political rhetoric and advertising, but its effects are variable. One important moderator may be the specific emotions communicated by the messages and potentially in recipients. Contempt may be the emotion often conveyed by uncivil ads, which have attracted considerable interest, particularly in light of increased partisan polarization. Using data from web-based surveys in New Jersey and Iowa, we examine the role contempt played in two U.S. Senate races in 2014. We find respondents perceived contempt—more than anxiety or anger—in four televised negative campaign ads and in candidates' statements about opponents. Moreover, respondents' feelings of contempt toward candidates, though less intense than feelings of anger, were of equal or greater significance than anger or anxiety in predicting voting intentions regarding three of the four Senate candidates across the two elections.

Keywords

contempt, elections, emotions, negative campaign, voting behavior

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Is Joni Ernst too extreme for Iowa?

—Opening statement from ad for Democrat Bruce Braley, running against Republican Joni Ernst in the 2014 Iowa Senate race.¹

He's like a kid in a candy store.

—Republican Jeff Bell, on Cory Booker, his Democratic opponent in the 2014 New Jersey Senate race, in a TV news interview.²

Political campaign communications in the United States are most often negative (attacking an electoral opponent). For example, Motta and Fowler (2016) estimated that 65% to 75% of televised congressional campaign ads since 2006 were negative in content. Campaign consultants tend to believe that negative ads are effective (Iyengar, 2011), and studies have found that they tend to be more memorable than positive ads (Lau, Sigelman, & Rovner, 2007). However, meta-analyses and reviews of the literature have failed to find consistent effects of negative campaigning in persuading audiences to vote for an attacker or against a targeted candidate (e.g., Lau et al., 2007; Motta & Fowler, 2016).

The effects of negativity may be moderated by message and audience variables (e.g., Fridkin & Kenney, 2011). One feature that distinguishes types of negative messages is their particular emotional content (e.g., does a negative campaign ad convey anger, fear, or sadness; Fowler & Ridout, 2013). Ridout and Franz (2011) suggest that “to understand the influence of political advertising, one may need to move beyond the traditional categorization of ads as positive or negative to consider the specific emotions that they elicit” (p. 80).

In this article, we review relevant theories of emotions and voting, examine how the emotion of contempt has been distinguished from anger by basic research over the past three decades, and investigate what role, if any, contempt played in two recent U.S. Senate races. We find that contempt was perceived to a greater extent than other more typically studied negative emotions (anger and anxiety) in negative campaign ads and other candidate statements about opponents. Moreover, voters' feelings of contempt toward candidates, though reported as being less intense than feelings of anger, were of equal or greater significance in predicting voting intentions regarding three of the four Senate candidates in these elections. After presenting our findings, we discuss the importance of understanding the role of contempt in influencing responses to negative advertising and voter decision-making, and we argue for more research by political scientists on this understudied emotion.

Emotions in Voting

After many years of thinking about political decision-making in a cognitively oriented paradigm, political psychologists have more recently given a good deal of thought to the role of emotions (see, for example, Brader & Marcus, 2013; Marcus, Neuman, & MacKuen, 2000). Brader and Marcus (2013) cite “rapidly accumulating evidence that emotions shape attention, decision-making, attitudes, and action in the realm of politics” (p. 166). Emotions appear to have particular impact on voting behavior (see Redlawsk & Pierce, 2017). Emotions toward candidates have been found to be more important determinants of voting than perceptions of the candidates’ traits (e.g., Abelson, Kinder, Peters, & Fiske, 1982) and are seen as “key to the power of campaign ads” (Brader, 2006, p. 179) as well as significant predictors of candidate evaluations, turnout, and voting choices in numerous elections (e.g., Marcus, MacKuen, Wolak, & Keele, 2006; Valentino, Brader, Groenendyk, Gregorowicz, & Hutchings, 2011).

However, mirroring a debate among emotion researchers (e.g., Barrett, 2006; Izard, 2007), leading theories about the role of emotions in voting disagree on dimensional versus discrete emotion influence. For example, Lodge and Taber’s (2013) John Q. Public (JQP) model maintains that voting is influenced primarily by the dimensions of positive and negative affect. In contrast, affective intelligence theory (AIT; e.g., Marcus et al., 2000) holds that specific emotions differentially influence political information processing and subsequent behaviors (see also Halperin, Canetti, & Kimhi, 2012). Advocates of the discrete perspective cite data indicating there are multiple emotions (e.g., enthusiasm, anxiety or fear, anger or aversion) with distinct effects on voting and other forms of political participation (e.g., Marcus et al., 2006; Marcus et al., 2000; P. R. Miller, 2011). However, other analyses find anxiety and aversion emotions loading onto a common factor or having similar effects on dependent variables (Brader, Valentino, & Suhay, 2008; Wirth, Matthes, & Schemer, 2011). Ryan (2012) sees “terminological inconsistencies” in AIT maintaining that “aversive” emotions motivate confrontation, even though psychologists typically regard aversion as an emotion involving avoidance; he finds—despite AIT’s prediction that anger, as an aversion emotion, will decrease information seeking—that anger doubles the number of clicks on online ads to obtain more information.

These inconsistent findings may result from complexities in conceptualizing and measuring the emotion variables. According to Brader and Marcus (2013), aversion is defined as “a cluster of feelings that includes anger, disgust, contempt, and hatred” (p. 179). Yet, many theorists view at least the first three of these as distinct emotions (e.g., Ekman & Cordaro, 2011; Haidt,

2003; Izard, 1991), and researchers find they have distinct determinants, characteristics, and effects (e.g., Fischer & Roseman, 2007; Hutcherson & Gross, 2011; Rozin, Lowery, Imada, & Haidt, 1999). Brader and Marcus (2013) urge “conducting further research to isolate the causes of anger as distinct from other ‘negative’ emotions” (p. 180).

Research on the political impact of different affective states supports the utility of distinguishing among negative emotions.³ Fowler and Ridout (2013) report that 74% of ads in the 2012 presidential election included appeals to anger, 34% appealed to fear, and 27% to sadness. *Anger* has been central to the Tea Party movement (Sparks, 2015), opposition to health care reform (Banks, 2014), and partisanship generally (Huddy, Mason, & Aarøe, 2015). Finn and Glaser (2010) found that anger was a stronger predictor than *fear* of voting either against Obama or against McCain in the 2008 U.S. presidential election.

However, just distinguishing anger from fear may not be sufficient, as Halperin et al. (2012) demonstrate in finding a specific role for *hatred* in politics. Inbar, Pizarro, and Bloom (2009) report that conservatives are more likely than liberals to feel *disgust* related to a number of political issues, such as gay marriage and abortion. Similarly, we suggest that new and important findings may emerge if anger and *contempt*—two emotions often manifest in political contexts—are differentiated by political scientists, as they increasingly have been in basic research outside political science.

Distinguishing contempt from anger could also help reconcile conflicting findings on the impact of particular emotional appeals. For example, Ridout and Franz (2011) reported that in 2004, exposure to anger in Democratic party presidential ads predicted voting for Kerry against Bush, but anger in Democratic party senatorial contest ads predicted voting *against* Democratic candidates. In considering why this pattern occurred, the authors noted that the presidential race ads were coded as focusing mainly on issues, whereas a larger percentage of Democratic senatorial ads focused on opponents’ traits. As we shall see in the next section, appraisals of negative outcomes are associated more with anger, and negative trait appraisals with contempt.

Differentiating Contempt, Anger, and Disgust

Whereas some contemporary emotion theorists have emphasized the explanatory power of general positive versus negative affect (e.g., Barrett, 2006; Russell, 2003), others maintain that particular (“discrete”) emotions, in addition to emotion dimensions, make important contributions to explaining patterns of cognition, motivation, and behavior (e.g., Frijda, 1986; Izard, 2007; Lerner & Keltner, 2000; Plutchik, 2003).

	Anger (moving against other people)	Contempt (moving other people away)
Feelings	ready to explode	revulsion
Thoughts	other person acted unjustly	other person is unworthy
Expression	brows down, together, squarish mouth 	unilateral lip raise 
Action Tendencies	verbal attack (e.g., criticize), physical attack (e.g., hit)	look down on other person, reject other person
Emotivational goal	want to hurt other person in some way	want other person to be rejected by your group

Figure 1. Two patterns of negative emotional response toward other people. *Source.* Photographs of anger and contempt expressions from Rozin, Lowery, Imada, and Haidt (1999).

Since the 1980s, evidence has been mounting that contempt is a universal emotion differing systematically from anger. Anger is characteristically elicited by appraisals of injustice (Averill, 1982), unfair outcomes (Kuppens, Van Mechelen, Smits, & De Boeck, 2003), or the blockage of one's goals (e.g., Carver & Harmon-Jones, 2009). In contrast, contempt is elicited by appraisals that a person has an undesirable trait, such as bad character or incompetence (e.g., Hutcherson & Gross, 2011; Roseman, 2018). These two emotions have different cross-culturally recognizable expressions. Contempt is shown by derisive or ridiculing vocalizations (Hawk et al., 2009; Schröder, 2003) and a facial smirk or sneer (raising and tightening one corner of the lips; Ekman & Heider, 1988; Izard & Haynes, 1988; though see Wagner, 2000), whereas anger is shown by growling vocalizations (Schröder, 2003) or yelling (Roseman, Wiest, & Swartz, 1994) and a face with brows drawn down and together, with bared teeth or pressed-together lips (e.g., Ekman & Friesen, 1975; Izard, 1991; see Figure 1).

Behaviorally, anger is a short-term "attack" emotion (e.g., Frijda, 1986) associated with an increased tendency to confront another person, for example with verbal or physical aggression (Averill, 1982; Potegal & Qiu, 2010). In contrast, contempt is a long-term "rejection" emotion (e.g., Oatley &

Johnson-Laird, 1996) associated with a tendency to derogate and show a lack of respect for the target (e.g., Fischer & Roseman, 2007).

There are also distinctive goals that people pursue when experiencing anger versus contempt. Whereas in anger, people report (more so than in other emotions) wanting to force another person to change behavior (e.g., Sell, Tooby, & Cosmides, 2009), or to hurt or get back at the target person in some way (e.g., Roseman et al., 1994), people feeling contempt want to have nothing to do with the target person, socially exclude the person, and have the person rejected by their group (e.g., Fischer, 2011). Contempt, more than anger, predicts lack of reconciliatory intentions (Fischer & Roseman, 2007) and actual relationship deterioration (Gottman & Levenson, 1992).

Drawing upon this burgeoning literature on contempt, Schriber, Chung, Sorensen, and Robins (2017) developed a 10-item Dispositional Contempt Scale, which taps its antecedents (e.g., thinking others are inferior), subjective feelings (e.g., disdain), and behaviors (e.g., disregarding others). Confirmatory factor analyses on data from two different samples (*N*s of 347 and 390) showed this measure of dispositional contempt to be correlated with, but distinct from, dispositional anger.

Contempt, in which other people are regarded as beneath some standard (W. I. Miller, 1997), is related to but clearly distinguishable from disgust (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2018), in which objects or behaviors are considered substandard, and from shame, in which aspects of the self are seen as substandard (S. Miller, 1985; Roseman, 2013). Although disgust can be felt toward persons and behaviors (e.g., for poor hygiene or inappropriate sexual acts), it is ontogenetically and prototypically more a response to impersonal objects (oral incorporation of offensive substances, such as rotten food and body waste products; Rozin, Haidt, & McCauley, 2016) or violations of the ethics of purity (Rozin et al., 1999). In politics, disgust is especially relevant for issues involving putatively offensive behaviors and violations of purity norms (such as gay marriage; Inbar et al., 2009). Contempt, in contrast, is an emotion centrally focused on people and their character and traits, such as incompetence, stupidity, or corruption (e.g., Hutcherson & Gross, 2011).

Contempt in Politics

As with other emotions, the distinctive causes, responses, and effects of contempt may have important implications for candidate evaluations and voting. For example, if appraisal determinants or correlates of contempt (a person's incompetence or bad character) are more global and stable than those of anger (unfair outcomes), then contempt for a candidate may be more damaging than anger and harder to reverse. Indeed, insofar as the specific actions

prompted by contempt include making negative remarks to other people that discredit the object of contempt (Romani, Grappi, & Bagozzi, 2013), campaigns that engender contempt toward a candidate can have ramifying, exponential effects upon its target's reputation and support among a wider public. Romani et al. (2013) found that whereas anger felt in response to perceived corporate wrongdoing predicted actions to penalize but maintain a relationship with a company, contempt predicted actions designed to discredit or hurt the company and ultimately disengage from it.

The literature on intergroup relations, like the basic science research on contempt, already shows a significant connection between perceptions of low competence and contempt. Research on the stereotype content model (e.g., Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2007) indicates that contempt is felt toward groups perceived as low in both competence and warmth, where warmth refers to a dimension of goal conflict (the target group is categorized as less warm, in that it competes against one's own group, e.g., for resources). Groups perceived as both incompetent and cold elicit contempt and disgust (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002) and these groups are perceived to be targets of both actively harmful behavior (e.g., fighting and attacking) and passive harm (e.g., demeaning and excluding).

People seem aware that being the object of contempt can be quite damaging. For example, Hutcherson and Gross (2011) found that research participants said they would prefer to be recipients of another person's anger rather than recipients of contempt.

Contempt is often found in negative campaign ads and rhetoric. For example, a 1968 ad for Hubert Humphrey's presidential campaign featured the on-screen text "Angry for Vice-President?" amid the sound of uncontrollable laughter.⁴ In a 1980 ad for Jimmy Carter, one of the interviewed "people of California" said of challenger Ronald Reagan "I can't imagine him being President. It's too complex a job."⁵ During the 2008 presidential campaign, Hillary Clinton made remarks that observers interpreted as mocking then rival Barack Obama (for his hopeful campaign theme):

Now, I could stand up here and say, "Let's just get everybody together. Let's get unified." The skies will open, the light will come down, celestial choirs will be singing, and everyone will know we should do the right thing and the world will be perfect.⁶

Attempts to elicit contempt in the voting public may well be increasing, and perhaps achieving their objective (Stohr, 2017). For example, Iyengar and Westwood (2015) find that partisan negative affect has

increased dramatically in recent years and note that affective polarization may contribute to a refusal of opposing parties to cooperate or compromise. They cite Grimmer and King's (2011) finding that 27% of U.S. Senators' press releases from 2005 to 2007 involve "partisan taunting" of the opposition party or its members, which uses "exaggerated language to put them down or devalue their ideas" (Grimmer & King, 2011, p. 2649). Analyzing national survey data from 2000 to 2008, Sood and Iyengar (2016) report that partisans are increasingly willing to ascribe negative traits to members of the opposing party, and that the degree of negative affect varies as a function of the amount of negative advertising in respondents' media markets at the time that they were interviewed.

In the 2016 presidential campaign, candidate Donald Trump referred to Jeb Bush as "... this poor, pathetic, low energy guy,"⁷ Lindsey Graham as "a total lightweight,"⁸ and said of Carly Fiorina, "Look at that face. Would anyone vote for that?"⁹ Marco Rubio averred that Trump was "a con artist."¹⁰ A Ted Cruz ad disparaged Rubio as "just another pretty face."¹¹ Replying to a Rubio charge that he did not want to interrupt campaigning to deal with a New Jersey snowstorm, Chris Christie asked sarcastically, "Is that one of the skills you get as a United States senator: ESP also?"¹² And, of course, Hillary Clinton famously said that half of Trump's supporters could be put into a "basket of deplorables."¹³

Each of these communications aimed to lower people's opinion of a political opponent, and they appeal to the emotion of contempt, which Fischer (2011) identifies as "the feeling when one judges another person as an inferior human being" (p. 77). Contempt toward a candidate may be especially influential because its implication of low competence impugns a central trait on which those who seek elective office are evaluated (e.g., Kinder, Peters, Abelson, & Fiske, 1980). Thus, evoking feelings of contempt toward an opposing candidate could considerably diminish the candidate's support among potential voters, and felt or expressed contempt may be particularly relevant to candidate evaluations, negative advertising, and electoral outcomes.

Despite the evidence that contempt shows itself regularly in campaign rhetoric and negativity, and despite considerable interest in negative campaigning, until recently contempt—unlike anger—has rarely been mentioned in the literature on voting, and is not among the emotions regularly assessed in major election surveys (e.g., the American National Election Studies [ANES] or Cooperative Congressional Election Study [CCES] from 2000 to 2016). However, political scientists may have been studying contempt indirectly in the growing literature on incivility. For example, Fridkin and Kenney (2011) found that the tone of negative ads (civil vs. uncivil, ranging from "diplomatically, without derision" to "overly strident, rude, discourteous," p.

311) affected candidate evaluations across 21 U.S. Senate campaigns in 2006. Uncivil ads provoked backlash among voters who had low tolerance for incivility. Incivility, defined in terms of derision or discourteousness, seems related to our conception of contempt, and the individual differences identified by Fridkin and Kenney (2011) may reflect differential tolerance for the emotion of contempt (see Roseman, Abelson, & Ewing, 1986, on individual differences in response to political appeals with particular emotional content). So, it is possible that the angry versus contemptuous content of negative ads might be one factor that accounts for their success or failure (or their differential success with different individuals or groups).

We suggest that a key purpose of many negative campaign ads may be to hold an opponent in contempt—not just to make voters feel anxious or angry, but to make them dismissive of the opponent. If so, then viewers of negative ads should perceive contempt as being expressed in those ads, and if voters' feelings of contempt are politically significant, then felt contempt should predict candidate evaluations and voting.

We test these hypotheses using surveys measuring responses to negative ads and videos in the Iowa and New Jersey U.S. Senate elections in 2014. These contests were chosen in light of the substantial difference in competitiveness between them, as well as the authors' experience and expertise in measuring public opinion and voting behavior in these particular states. Mattes and Redlawsk (2014) note that negative campaigning is more likely in competitive races. Contemptuous messages, in turn, may be more or less effective depending on whether frequent exposure leads voters to find them commonplace or especially aggravating (and, thus, more or less acceptable compared with noncompetitive contests). The Iowa Senate race, between Democratic Congressman Bruce Braley and Republican State Senator Joni Ernst, was one of the most contested in the country, as indicated by the level of outside interest group spending on behalf of the candidates (more than US\$60 million according to *Opensecrets.org*, third highest in the nation in 2014). Although Ernst ultimately won by nearly 9 points, for much of the race, polling had it as too close to call.¹⁴ As a result, many negative ads were run by both sides and by outside groups.¹⁵

The New Jersey race, in contrast, was not considered competitive. Incumbent Democratic Senator Cory Booker was running for a full term against Republican Jeff Bell, a little-known challenger. Unlike in Iowa, outside spending in New Jersey was extremely limited by national standards. *Opensecrets.org* reported just US\$2 million in outside group spending, and there was little political advertising of any kind. Voters responded accordingly, with turnout at a record low 36%, and Booker went on to win by more than 13 points.

Again, our expectations were that (a) the way that candidates talk about each other in negative ads, speeches, and interviews would be *perceived* by voters to specifically reflect contempt, so we measure the extent to which contempt is perceived in several actual campaign ads and other candidate communications, and (b) citizens' contempt *felt* toward candidates—whether or not elicited by campaign ads—would influence their voting intentions. We also expected that this might depend to some extent on the nature of the campaign. An intensely competitive campaign is likely to result in more contemptuous ads and comments by candidates. In a noncompetitive campaign, the leading candidate may rarely even take note of the trailing opponent, and negative ads may be at a minimum. Voters in noncompetitive campaigns may feel less contempt for either candidate, and contempt may have less impact on vote intentions.

Method

Participants

We obtained diverse samples of adult U.S. citizens in both states through Survey Sampling International (SSI), a reputable panel provision company whose prerecruited adults do surveys in return for incentives such as cash, redeemable points, or sweepstakes entry. Data were gathered in anonymous online surveys from October 23 through November 3, 2014. The initial 70% of the sample was recruited to match each state's gender, age, and racial demographics. To increase sample size, these sampling constraints were lifted in the 4 days immediately preceding the November 4 election.

We analyzed completed survey responses from 401 respondents in Iowa and 488 in New Jersey.¹⁶ New Jersey respondents were 49% male, 82% White, 14% Black, 39% Democrat, 20% Republican, and 41% Independent. Eighteen percent were 65 years old or older, 30% were 50 to 64 years, 35% were 30 to 49 years, and 17% were 18 to 30 years. Gender, age, and the percentage of Black respondents reasonably match the New Jersey population, but the sample is more White and more Democratic, compared with the 64% White and 33% registered Democrat population in New Jersey. Respondents in Iowa were 45% male, 95% White, 3% Black, 30% Democrat, 26% Republican, and 44% Independent. Twenty percent were 65 or older, 33% were 50 to 64 years, 31% were 30 to 49 years, and 16% were 18 to 30 years. The Iowa sample is more female than the state's 50% female population, more middle aged (57% vs. 49% aged 35-64 years), and less Republican (26% vs. 31%), but otherwise tracks well with the state's demographics (see Supplemental Appendix A).

Procedures

Respondents accepting the invitation to participate received a link to the study website. Age above 18 was verified and pretest measures of vote intentions and feeling thermometer ratings of the candidates, parties, and prominent political figures (the President and the state's governor) were assessed. They then viewed two videos, in counterbalanced order. After each video, they answered closed-ended questions about emotions expressed in the video, favorability toward the two major party candidates in the election, and their (postvideo) voting intentions and feeling thermometer ratings. Following the second video, they also answered ANES-based questions about emotions they had ever felt toward each candidate. After some questions beyond the scope of this article, they answered questions about their political party identification, political ideology, voting registration, and demographics (the full survey is in Supplemental Appendix B)

Materials

Ads and other videos. Each respondent was shown one approximately 30-s video attacking the Democrat running for the U.S. Senate seat in his or her state, and one attacking the Republican (with order randomly determined). The analyses below combine data across ad order.

Videos were selected based on unfavorable content about a candidate and estimated representativeness in terms of issues raised. Each Iowa respondent saw (at random) one of two negative ads about Republican Ernst and one of two about Democrat Braley. "Minimum," paid for by Braley for Iowa, accused Ernst of being too extreme—for opposing a federal minimum wage and believing that Iowans could survive on US\$7.25 (an hour) or US\$15,000 a year. "Peep," paid for by the same group, said "we didn't hear a peep" from Ernst on cutting pork spending and accused her of actually backing measures to increase spending. "Missed Votes," funded by the National Republican Senatorial Committee, attacked Braley for missing many votes and important hearings in Congress. "Braley's War on Chicks," produced by American Crossroads, attacked him for (airing the "Peep" ad) comparing his female opponent to a "chick," and for threatening to sue his neighbors when a chicken crossed into Braley's property.

New Jersey's campaign was so low key that an online search for video material located no negative ads aired by the Booker or Bell campaigns in time to include in our study, which was fielded in the 12 days preceding the election (unlike in Iowa where ads were legion). So, we used the only two videos we had found in which each candidate talked about his opponent (from

NJTV's news programming). The *Booker Video* was an excerpt from his campaign launch speech, in which he attacked his Republican opponent for being an ideologue, unwilling to compromise to get things done. The *Bell Video* was an excerpt from a TV interview in which Bell attacked Booker for being superficial (taking selfies with other Senators) and for supporting President Obama. All respondents in the New Jersey survey saw both videos.¹⁷

Predictors

To compare the prevalence and impact of contempt with other potentially relevant political affects, respondents answered questions about three negative and three positive emotions. One set of questions asked about the emotions that respondents perceived in the videos, and another set asked about the (same) emotions felt by respondents toward the candidates.

Perceived emotions in the videos (video emotions). Immediately after each video, each respondent was asked "How much [anger, contempt, anxiety, enthusiasm, hope, admiration] was expressed about/toward [target candidate] in this video?" (a large amount = 4, a moderate amount = 3, a small amount = 2, and none at all = 1). Emotion order was randomized.

To provide an assessment of the extent to which respondents were accurately perceiving emotions in the videos, two members of our research team coded each video, informed by theoretically and empirically derived criteria from the literature (see, for example, Coan & Gottman, 2007; Kunneman, Liebrecht, Van Mulken, & Van den Bosch, 2015), such as brow and head movements (e.g., brows down for anger; head back, which raises the nose, for contempt), linguistic and paralinguistic cues (e.g., loud voice for anger; drawn out vowels for contempt), and appraisal content (e.g., target is unjustly blocking our goals, for anger; target has bad traits, for contempt). Coders answered the same questions as respondents about how much anger and contempt were expressed in each video. Correlations between coders' consensus ratings of anger and contempt and mean respondent ratings of these emotions are .86 for anger and .72 for contempt (for coding criteria and ratings, see Supplemental Appendices D and E). These data fit with prior evidence that bases for coding anger and contempt can be specified (e.g., Matsumoto & Ekman, 2004) and suggest that our respondents were perceiving the extent to which these emotions were actually expressed in the videos watched, rather than projected onto the videos based on partisan prejudices.

Felt emotions elicited by the candidates (ever-felt emotions). After answering questions about the second video, emotions ever felt by respondents toward

the candidates were measured. We used the format of the affect battery questions in the 2014 ANES: “Has [Candidate], because of the kind of person (s) he is or because of something (s)he has done, ever made you feel [angry, contemptuous, anxious, hopeful, enthusiastic, admiring]?” Again, order of the emotions was randomized. Respondents who said *yes* to an emotion were then asked “How [angry, etc.] would you say [Candidate] makes you feel?” with response options *extremely angry* (5), *very angry* (4), *somewhat angry* (3), *not too angry* (2), or *not at all angry* (1). Those saying *no* were also scored as 1. Analyses below use this scale for each emotion. Frequencies of felt emotions elicited by each candidate are given in Supplemental Appendix F.

Prior studies (Matsumoto & Ekman, 2004; Wagner, 2000) have found that some English speakers do not know the meaning of the word “contempt” (sometimes confusing it with the similar-sounding emotion word “content”)—though they know the emotion of contempt and can match contempt-eliciting situations with contemptuous facial expressions (Matsumoto & Ekman, 2004). To make sure that respondents understood our questions, we included a definition of contempt, based on the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (2014). At the beginning of the first question that used the word “contempt,” respondents read “In this survey, ‘contempt’ and ‘contemptuous’ refer to feelings of scorn that people may have toward someone when they have a very low opinion of that person.” To avoid singling out contempt from all other emotions, we also gave a definition of anger (again based on the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2014). At the beginning of the first question that used the word “anger,” respondents read “In this survey, ‘anger’ and ‘angry’ refer to feelings of hostility that people may have toward someone.”

Outcome variable: Voting intentions. These were measured by asking “If the U.S. Senate election were being held right now, would you vote for [Candidate A], [Candidate B], someone else, or would you not vote” (cf. ANES, 2014)? The analyses in this article use responses to the final vote intention questions (following the second video and its video-emotion ratings, but before the final feeling thermometers and measures of the ever-felt emotions.)

Results

Perceptions of Contempt and Other Emotions in Campaign Videos

We first examine whether respondents perceived each negative emotion as expressed toward the opposing candidates in the videos they saw. Figure 2

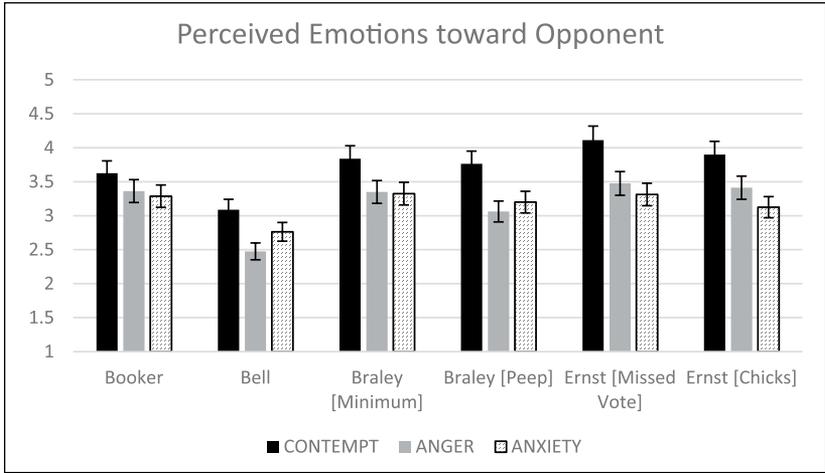


Figure 2. Mean levels of perceived emotions in videos.
 Note. Error bars show 95% confidence intervals.

displays the mean level of each negative emotion, rescaled from perceiving *none at all* (1) to *a large amount* (5).¹⁸

In New Jersey, respondents perceived significantly more contempt expressed by Booker toward Bell (3.63) than by Bell toward Booker (3.09, $p < .01$). But for all videos (for both candidates), respondents saw more contempt expressed than anger or anxiety. This is particularly striking as the New Jersey videos were not carefully constructed and professionally produced campaign ads, but rather excerpts from one candidate’s speech and the other’s remarks to an interviewer. Note also that levels of perceived contempt are lower for the New Jersey U.S. Senate candidates than for the Iowa candidates, for each of the videos examined.

For both Iowa candidates, mean levels of perceived contempt toward the opposing candidate were between *a moderate amount* and *a large amount* for each ad. As in New Jersey, contempt for the opposing candidate was perceived significantly more than either anger or anxiety (all with $p < .01$), with some variation in extent by ad.

Contempt Toward Candidates: Ever-Felt Emotions

The previous section presented data on the emotions respondents perceived in the videos. We turn next to respondents’ ratings of emotions *they had ever felt* toward the candidates.

Table 1. Mean Levels (and Standard Deviations) of Ever-Felt Emotions Toward Candidates.

Candidate	Ever-felt emotions					
	Anger	Contempt	Anxiety	Enthusiasm	Hope	Admiration
Booker	1.54 (0.05)	1.44 (0.05)	1.48 (0.05)	2.05 (0.06)	2.23 (0.06)	2.16 (0.06)
Bell	1.47 (0.05)	1.42 (0.05)	1.50 (0.05)	1.41 (0.05)	1.50 (0.05)	1.39 (0.04)
Braleley	2.02 (0.07)	1.83 (0.07)	1.76 (0.06)	1.51 (0.05)	1.73 (0.06)	1.52 (0.05)
Ernst	2.24 (0.08)	2.02 (0.07)	2.05 (0.07)	1.61 (0.06)	1.77 (0.06)	1.72 (0.06)

Note. Entries are means, with standard errors in parentheses. Questions: Has [CANDIDATE], because of the kind of person [she/he] is or because of something [she/he] has done, ever made you feel [ANGRY/ CONTEMPTUOUS/ANXIOUS/ENTHUSIASTIC/HOPEFUL/ ADMIRING] (yes/no)? (If yes): How [ANGRY/ CONTEMPTUOUS/ANXIOUS/ENTHUSIASTIC/HOPEFUL/ADMIRING] would you say [CANDIDATE] makes you feel? 1 = not at all (or never made me feel), 2 = not too [ANGRY/. . .], 3 = somewhat [ANGRY/. . .], 4 = very [ANGRY/. . .], 5 = extremely [ANGRY/. . .].

Table 1 summarizes these results by emotion and candidate.¹⁹ It is notable that in the competitive Iowa Senate race, negative emotions are stronger than positive emotions toward both Ernst and Braleley. For Braleley, the means of all three negative emotions—anger (2.02 on a 1-5 scale), contempt (1.83), and anxiety (1.76)—are higher than the means of any of the ever-felt positive emotions—hope (1.73), admiration (1.52), and enthusiasm (1.51). With the exception of the anxiety–hope and contempt–hope comparisons, all the other negative–positive emotion comparisons are significant ($p < .01$). A similar, and somewhat stronger, dynamic occurs for Ernst. Across all respondents, negative emotions toward her dominate the positive ones (anger, 2.24; contempt, 2.02; anxiety, 2.05 vs. hope, 1.77; admiration, 1.72; and enthusiasm, 1.61); all the negative–positive comparisons are significant ($p < .01$).

The key point here is that while contempt is felt less intensely than anger ($p < .01$), it is clearly important. Indeed, contempt toward candidates is felt about as much as the far more often studied emotion of anxiety. Thus, not only do Iowa respondents see contempt expressed toward opposing candidates in these ads, but they themselves also *feel* contempt toward the candidates.

The less competitive New Jersey race is different—here, respondents were less likely to feel strong negative emotions toward either candidate. In the case of Booker, this may reflect his significant statewide popularity; in the case of Bell, it may simply be that many voters knew little or nothing about him. For Booker, positive emotions (hope, 2.23; admiration, 2.16; and enthusiasm, 2.05) are all significantly higher than any negative ever-felt emotions: anger (1.54), contempt (1.44), and anxiety (1.48). Respondents had much weaker emotional responses to Bell overall, with positive emotions

ranging from 1.39 to 1.50 and negative from 1.42 to 1.50. There are no significant differences across any of the ever-felt emotions toward Bell.

Effects of Contempt on Vote Intentions

To provide the most comprehensive test of the influence of contempt on electoral outcomes, we use our broad ever-felt measures of emotions (which are focused on the candidates, rather than the specific ads shown) and our vote intention measure. In examining the effects of ever-felt emotions on vote intentions, we develop multinomial logistic regression models predicting the vote as a choice between the Republican, the Democrat, and voting for neither (the latter combined the answer choices “I would vote for someone else,” “I would not vote,” and “Don’t know”), as measured after respondents had viewed and answered questions about the videos. Voting for neither is the baseline in our models, which we include to represent the possibility of negative emotions driving a voter away from one candidate but not necessarily toward the opponent. We estimate the vote in each state using all 12 of our ever-felt emotions measures (six for each of the opposing candidates), as well as party identification, gender, and (in New Jersey, where our sample was more racially diverse) an indicator for White respondents.

New Jersey model. The model for New Jersey is presented in the left-hand columns of Table 2. The model predicts the probability of a vote for Republican Jeff Bell versus the baseline, and a vote for Democrat Cory Booker versus the baseline. There are two measures assessing each of the six emotions that we relate to vote choice. For example, feelings of contempt toward Bell and feelings of contempt toward Booker could each affect the vote for Bell and the vote for Booker, so there could be up to four effects for each emotion. In general, we would expect that negative emotions ever felt toward a candidate would lower the probability of voting for that candidate and increase the probability of voting for the opposing candidate. Likewise, ever-felt positive emotions should increase the odds of voting for that candidate and decrease the odds of voting for his or her opponent.

Before we turn to the ever-felt emotions measures, we look at the control variables to check the plausibility of our models. Exactly as one would expect, being a Republican increases the likelihood of a vote for Bell over the baseline of voting for neither ($b = 2.19^{**}$, $SE = 0.54$), whereas being a Democrat increases the odds of voting for Booker, again versus the baseline ($b = 0.95^*$, $SE = 0.39$). In addition, women in our sample are more likely than men to register the baseline of not voting for either: $b_{\text{Bell}} = -0.95^*$, $SE = 0.47$; b_{Booker} , $r = -0.88^*$, $SE = 0.37$. But White respondents in our sample

Table 2. Predicting Vote Intentions From Felt Emotions and Control Variables in 2014 Senate Races.

Predictor	New Jersey			Iowa		
	Vote for Bell (Republican)		Vote for Booker (Democrat)	Vote for Ernst (Republican)		Vote for Braley (Democrat)
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Felt emotions toward Republicans						
Bell (New Jersey)/Ernst (Iowa)						
Enthusiasm	-0.13	0.43	-0.15	0.48	5.97†	-3.44
Hope	1.14**	0.37	0.05	0.44	0.49	0.47
Admiration	0.78*	0.39	-0.66	0.51	1.19*	0.52
Contempt	-1.16*	0.57	0.15	0.30	-3.09**	0.88
Anger	0.73	0.52	-0.06	0.28	0.29	0.44
Anxiety	0.09	0.56	0.54†	0.32	-1.11†	0.63
Felt emotions toward Democrats						
Booker (New Jersey)/Braley (Iowa)						
Enthusiasm	-0.52	0.40	0.18	0.21	-0.44	1.45
Hope	0.45	0.32	0.63**	0.20	0.75	0.64
Admiration	-0.18	0.30	0.59**	0.19	-1.58	1.62
Contempt	0.27	0.29	-0.20	0.37	1.32*	0.49
Anger	0.45†	0.26	-1.37**	0.43	-0.11	0.38
Anxiety	0.15	0.27	0.33	0.33	0.64	0.54
Republican	2.19**	0.54	-0.11	0.56	2.60**	0.81
Democrat	-0.09	0.59	0.95*	0.39	-7.88	6.04
Female	-0.95*	0.47	-0.88*	0.37	-0.34	0.75
White	0.26	0.75	0.09	0.49	—	—
Constant	-2.27*	0.95	-0.61	0.75	-6.40**	2.37
					0.87	1.42

Note. New Jersey baseline: Vote for neither Bell nor Booker; $N = 414$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = .562$. Iowa baseline: Vote for neither Ernst nor Braley; $N = 353$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = .748$. $B =$ unstandardized regression coefficient; in log-odds units.
† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

are no more or less likely to vote for either candidate over the baseline, controlling for emotional responses.

Table 2 shows that the positive emotions of hope and admiration predict significantly increased likelihood of voting for Bell over baseline and for Booker over baseline (without decreasing likelihood of voting for the opposing candidate). There is no effect of enthusiasm ever felt for Bell or Booker, so these seem to be emotion-specific influences rather than a general effect of positive emotion. Among negative emotions, contempt toward Bell is the only negative emotion that reduces the chances for voting for him (without increasing the chances of voting for Booker). In contrast, anger toward Booker is the only negative emotion that reduces the probability of voting for Booker (and it marginally increases the chances of voting for Bell).²⁰

Figure 3 displays the predicted probabilities of a vote for Bell or Booker (vs. the baseline) at varying levels of contempt for either candidate.²¹ The solid lines represent the probability estimate for the effect of contempt holding all other predictors at their means and varying contempt from its lowest to highest level. Dotted lines represent the 95% confidence intervals of the estimates. As shown by the slopes of each line, in all cases, as contempt ever felt toward a candidate increases, the probability of voting for that candidate decreases and the probability of voting for the opposing candidate increases. However, this effect is statistically significant for only one candidate in the New Jersey election: As shown in the top left panel, as ever-felt contempt for Bell increases, the probability of voting for him is reduced from just below 30% at the lowest level of contempt, to 10% at the highest level. As the bottom left panel shows, the probability of a vote for Booker does not show a corresponding significant increase, rising from 51% to 61% as contempt for Bell increases, a change that cannot be distinguished from zero. Thus, although greater ever-felt contempt predicts decreased support for Bell, not all those voters go to Booker, perhaps suggesting some demobilizing effect of feeling contempt for Bell.

Turning to the Democrat Booker, as contempt toward him increases, the predicted probability of voting for Booker decreases from 52% to 42%, whereas the probability of voting for Bell increases from 26% to 36%. This suggests a direct connection between the two, but given the width of the confidence intervals, these 10% differences are not significant.

Summarizing the models, on average, the marginal effect of ever-felt contempt toward Bell on voting for Bell is -0.07 ($SE = 0.03$), whereas its effect on the vote for Booker is $+0.04$ (0.03). The average marginal effect of ever-felt contempt toward Booker on voting for Both is -0.02 (0.03), whereas its effect on the vote for Bell is $+0.02$ (0.02).

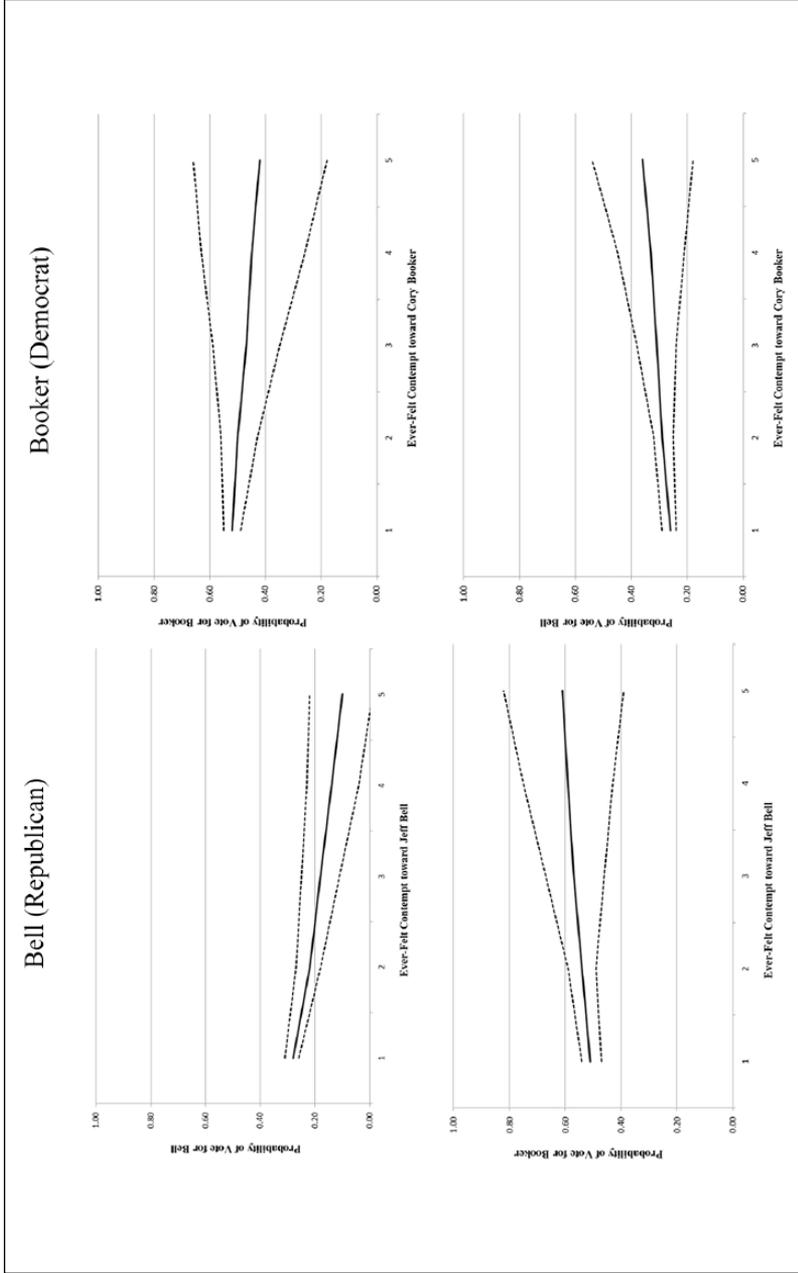


Figure 3. Predicted probabilities of vote by ever-felt contempt for New Jersey Senate candidates.

Iowa model. The Iowa model is shown in the right-hand columns of Table 2. It predicts the probability of a vote for Ernst versus the baseline and a vote for Braley versus the baseline, with a Nagelkerke pseudo $R^2 = .748$, significantly better than the model for New Jersey, and driven, we suspect, by the more competitive nature of the race. As with the New Jersey model, we include two measures of contempt (as well as the other five emotions): feelings of contempt toward Ernst and toward Braley, with each predicting both a vote for Ernst (vs. baseline) and a vote for Braley (vs. baseline).

Examining the control variables to check the model's plausibility, as in New Jersey we find that partisanship plays a significant role in the vote, with Republican respondents much more likely to vote for Ernst over the baseline ($b = 2.60^{**}$, $SE = 0.81$), as well as over Braley, with the opposite being true for Democrats (vote for Braley, $b = 1.77^{**}$, $SE = 0.51$). This is obviously the expected result. Gender is our other control variable, and in this particular race it does not appear to condition the results.

In Iowa, the positive emotions of enthusiasm and admiration predict increased voting for Ernst over the baseline, whereas enthusiasm and hope predict increased voting for Braley over the baseline (without decreasing likelihood of voting for the opposing candidate). Thus, the particular positive emotions related to voting appear to be candidate specific, and they differ from the hope and admiration pattern seen in New Jersey. But the patterns of (a) positive emotions felt toward a candidate not diminishing votes for the opponent and (b) emotion specificity (rather than a general effect of positive emotion) were observed again in Iowa.

However, negative emotions play a more important role in Iowa than in New Jersey, and (as was the case with New Jersey candidate Jeff Bell) the most important negative emotion was contempt. Contempt felt toward Ernst significantly reduces her vote probability and marginally increases the probability of a vote for Braley. Contempt felt toward Braley significantly reduces his vote probability and increases the likelihood of voting for Ernst. Other negative emotions had less consistent effects. Anger felt toward Braley predicted a lower probability of voting for him, and anxiety about Ernst predicted marginally lower probability of voting for her. Neither anger nor anxiety felt about a candidate was related to the probability of voting for the candidate's opponent. Compared with New Jersey, where we see only one significant effect for contempt across both candidates, in the highly competitive campaign for Senate in Iowa, all four contempt coefficients are significant or marginally significant in the expected directions. As shown in Supplemental Appendix I, these effects were not dependent on the particular ads or ad combinations shown. Interestingly, Supplemental Appendix I also suggests that Ernst's *Missed Votes* ad was more effective than her *Chicks* ad

($p < .05$); and, *Chicks* with Braley's *Peep* ad was marginally less effective than the other combinations ($p < .10$; we discuss the ad effects below).

Figure 4 displays the predicted probabilities of a vote for Ernst or Braley (vs. the baseline) at varying levels of contempt for each candidate. The solid lines represent the probability estimate for the effects of contempt holding all other predictors at their means and varying contempt from its lowest to highest level. Dotted lines represent the 95% confidence intervals of the estimates. As in New Jersey, the slopes of each line show that in all cases, as contempt toward a candidate increases, the probability of voting for that candidate decreases and the probability of voting for the opposing candidate increases. But in Iowa, in contrast to New Jersey, each of these relationships is significant. Increasing contempt toward Republican Ernst drives down the probability of a vote for her, all else equal, from 41% to 21%, cutting the odds in half as it increases from the lowest to highest levels. At the same time, increasing contempt toward Ernst increases Braley's vote probability from 37% to 53%, a 16-point increase that is close in size to the negative effect on Ernst's vote. Contempt in this case appears to be not demobilizing but rather mostly directing support away from the candidate about whom contempt is expressed (and toward that candidate's opponent).

Similarly, increasing contempt toward Democrat Braley is associated with a 29-point drop in the likelihood of voting for him (from 43%-14%). All else equal, as contempt toward Braley increases, the probability of an Ernst vote rises from 34% to 54%, up 20 points.

Summarizing the Iowa models, the average marginal effect of ever-felt contempt toward Ernst on voting for her is -0.08 ($SE = 0.02$), whereas its effect on the vote for Braley is $+0.05$ (0.02). The average marginal effect of ever-felt contempt toward Braley on voting for him is -0.09 (0.03), whereas its effect on the vote for Ernst is $+0.04$ (0.01). All these effects are statistically significant and substantively important.

Discussion

The Importance of Contempt

Contempt matters at least as much as more often studied emotions. In this study, our video-emotion data showed that contempt was *perceived* as much or more than any other emotion in every ad, speech, or candidate interview respondents viewed in New Jersey and Iowa, two fairly different U.S. states. Our ever-felt emotion data showed that contempt *felt* by respondents toward candidates predicted unique variance in vote intentions, and it predicted vote intentions as well as or better than anger and anxiety. Contempt was the emotion most predictive of decreased intention to vote for each candidate in the

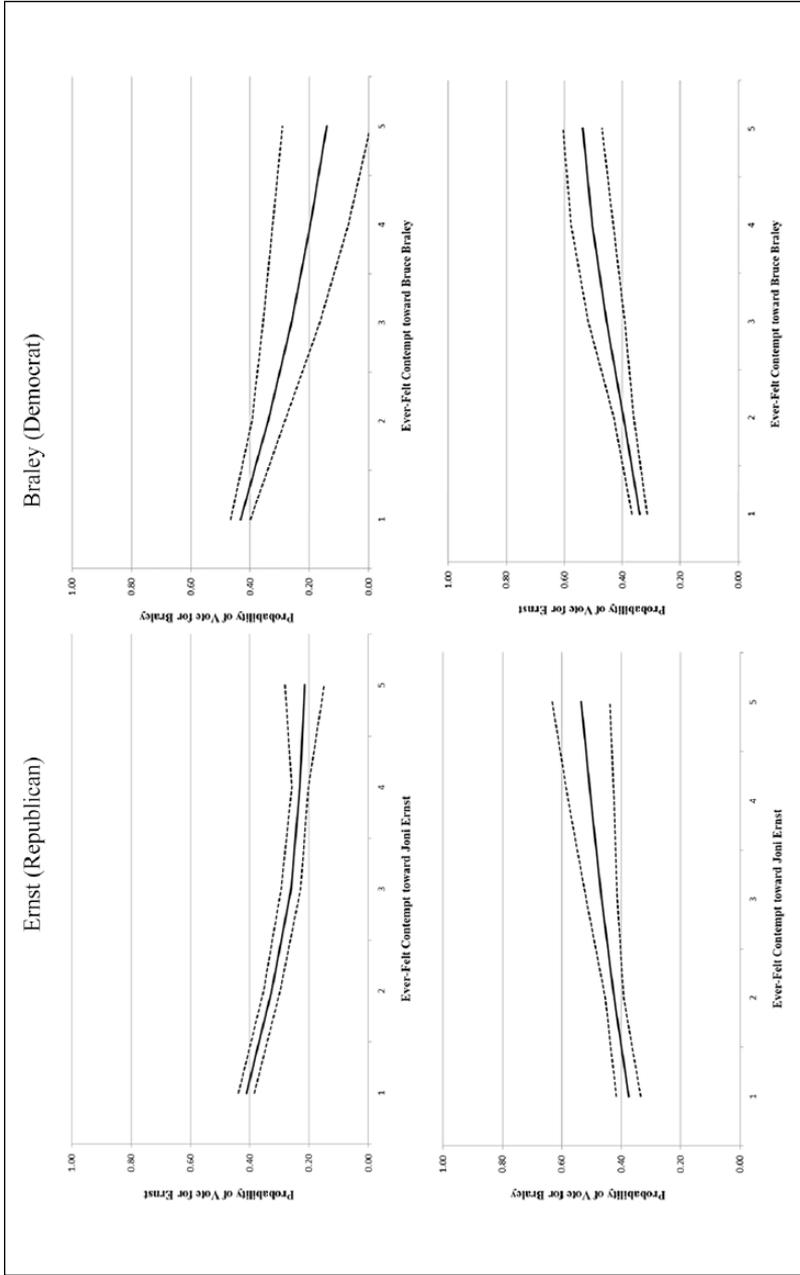


Figure 4. Predicted probabilities of vote by ever-felt contempt for Iowa Senate candidates.

2014 Iowa Senate election and diminished likelihood of voting for the Republican in New Jersey. Thus, although respondents reported feeling anger more than contempt or anxiety toward every candidate, when they felt contempt it was a stronger predictor of vote choice, especially in the more competitive race. These results provide compelling *prima facie* evidence for the importance of the understudied emotion of contempt. Measuring only negative affect, or only anger and anxiety, can leave us blind to an important influence on political cognition and behavior.

Contempt matters for Republicans and Democrats. Although Mann and Ornstein (2012) maintain it is particularly the Republican Party that has become contemptuous of political opponents, we found that contempt predicted voting against the Republican as well as the Democratic candidate in the 2014 Iowa Senate election. This is consistent with the intensity of negative campaigning on both sides in 2014 in Iowa. In New Jersey, contempt predicted lowered vote probability for Republican Jeff Bell, but not Democrat Cory Booker. Thus, our findings indicate that, as with other discrete emotions, the importance of contempt is election specific or candidate specific, rather than important only to voters in one political party or the other (though we cannot conclude from this that contempt is *equally* important to voters of both parties).

Beyond candidate evaluations, contempt predicts vote intentions. A recent analysis of data from the 1995 ANES pilot study (Johnston, Roseman, & Katz, 2014) found that felt contempt mediated relationships between perceptions of Bill Clinton's leadership and thermometer evaluations of Clinton. Results from the present study extend those findings by providing evidence that vote intentions (not just candidate evaluations) are predicted by felt contempt toward candidates.

Evidence for Discrete Emotion Theories in Political Science

Our results also have implications for the controversy between dimensional versus discrete emotion theories of political behavior, discussed above. Respondents differentiated among emotions of the same valence expressed in each of the six videos and saw contempt expressed more than anger or anxiety. They were also able to distinguish the extent to which they felt contempt, anger, and fear toward candidates, and these differentially predicted their vote intentions. Emotion-specific effects were also observed for positive emotions. Hope was felt somewhat more than enthusiasm or admiration for each candidate and significantly predicted increased vote probability for both

New Jersey candidates and Braley in Iowa. Felt admiration—but not enthusiasm—predicted increased vote intentions for both New Jersey candidates, along with hope; enthusiasm—but not admiration—predicted increased intention to vote for Braley.

Thus, we repeatedly found distinct effects of particular emotions, rather than dimensional effects (which would increase or decrease perceived positive or negative emotions as a group and predict vote intentions equally well from *any* positive or negative emotion). These results are consistent with emotion-specific effects identified by other investigators. For example, Finn and Glaser (2010), using single-item emotion measures from the ANES (similar to those used in our study) found that in the 2008 presidential election, hope was a stronger predictor of voting for Obama, and pride a stronger predictor of voting for McCain. With similar measures, Valentino et al. (2011) found anger a stronger predictor than fear of relatively “costly” political participation (e.g., working for a campaign or donating money) in all presidential elections from 1980 to 2004.

Each of these findings provides support for discrete emotion theories (e.g., Marcus et al., 2000) and their application to political behavior—though with the set of election-relevant emotions expanded to include at least contempt, and perhaps also admiration and enthusiasm.

Research Directions Suggested by Findings of This Study

Studying contempt, in addition to fear and anger, in election surveys. The most developed discrete emotions theory in political psychology is Marcus and colleagues’ (2000, 2006) AIT. It posits three classes of emotions: enthusiasm, anxiety, and aversion. In a recent paper, Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen (2017) examine measurement issues related to how emotion questions are asked, and, in doing so, reaffirm their earlier contention about these three. They use a set of 10 semantic emotional marker words, which factor into three classes. But none of their words assess contempt, as “contempt,” “scorn,” or “disdain” would (Romani et al., 2013). Thus, AIT, as currently conceived, is silent on a role for contempt, something future research could address. Our findings, with Schriber et al.’s (2017) validation of a contempt scale distinct from anger, and the work of the many researchers who have found distinct causes, responses, and effects of contempt, suggest a need for such research. Indeed, our work supports and extends the discrete emotion approach to understanding voting pioneered by Marcus et al. (2000), consistent with large literatures of basic and applied research in psychology (which have shown the influence of emotions beyond enthusiasm, anxiety, and aversion).

Consistent with our finding of the preeminence of contempt in viewer perceptions of Senate campaign ads, recently published data from the 2016 Iowa Republican caucuses show that (a) caucus participants *perceived* Republican presidential candidates expressing contempt distinct from anger and fear and (b) their *felt* contempt (beyond their anger and fear) predicted their vote choice among the leading Republican candidates (Redlawsk, Roseman, Mattes, & Katz, 2018). Other data gathered in a 2016 CCES module show that contempt was the emotion most perceived in two televised campaign ads attacking Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton (Mattes, Roseman, Redlawsk, & Katz, 2018).

Together with research on responses to incivility in campaign ads (Fridkin & Kenney, 2011), findings of the present study speak to the importance of measuring contempt along with other emotions felt toward candidates in surveys aimed at predicting voting, such as the ANES and CCES. Indeed, when contempt was measured in the 1995 ANES pilot study, and disaggregated from other negative emotions (Johnston et al., 2014), it significantly mediated respondents' evaluations of President Clinton, above and beyond effects of anger and fear. In the 2018 ANES pilot study, one question on felt contempt, and one item each on feeling disgusted, sickened, worried, bitter, happy, and relieved, were added to ANES affect battery items afraid, angry, hopeful, and proud. If these questions are retained in the 2020 Time Series study, it could provide the opportunity to study the impact of contempt at a time when it is especially relevant.

As President, Donald Trump has continued to express a steady stream of contempt in speeches, tweets, and comments to the media. The *New York Times*' running tally of the people, places, and things Trump has insulted, including many since taking office—just on Twitter—totaled 567 as of February 20, 2019.²² Although Trump may be unique in the extent to which he expresses contempt toward opponents, he is far from alone in making use of this emotion. For example, in 2017, Democratic Congressman Luis Gutiérrez called White House Chief of Staff John Kelly a “hypocrite” and a “disgrace to the uniform he used to wear” for backing out of a commitment to protect Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients.²³ Kelly later said some DACA-eligible immigrants were “too lazy to get off their asses” to sign up for the program.²⁴

Studying the effectiveness of contemptuous appeals. Although some careful academic studies have found that incivility lowers evaluations of the speaker rather than the target (e.g., Frimer & Skitka, 2018), Trump's electoral success despite extremely contemptuous attacks on rival candidates, and the crowds cheering similar attacks at Trump rallies (Reicher & Haslam, 2017), suggest

a need for additional research on the conditions under which incivility elicits contempt, and the extent to which contempt positively or negatively affects candidates who use it and the targets of their attacks.

Are there circumstances in which expressing contempt is counterproductive? If some voters have low tolerance for incivility (Fridkin & Kenney, 2011) or for contempt, then a contemptuous attack may sometimes decrease favorability toward the *attacker* as well as decreasing favorability toward the target. Indeed, both effects could take place simultaneously. If so, even with some backlash against the attacker, “ever-felt” contempt may turn voters away from the target candidate. Perhaps, then, candidates can risk some backlash in expressing contempt toward an opponent (or having surrogates do so) as long as this succeeds in making voters feel contempt toward the target. Further research on the effects of expressing contempt on voting for the attacker as well as the target is needed to test this idea.

Elucidating and disentangling these effects, and systematically distinguishing the influence of contempt from that of anger and fear in negative ads, could advance understanding of the conditions under which negative campaigning succeeds or fails (Ridout & Franz, 2011). Experimental studies would be particularly helpful in determining whether contempt and other emotions are merely correlated with voting behavior or actually have a causal impact.

Studying potential moderators of contempt’s effectiveness. We mentioned earlier that seeing Ernst’s *Missed Votes* ad (which portrayed opponent Braley in a harsh tone as a Washington politician and a shirker who missed important hearings because he “doesn’t like to work”) predicted greater probability of voting for her than seeing her *Chicks* ad (which, with background circus music, depicted him more comically as cartoonish figure running back and forth in a ridiculous repetitive manner). Seeing *Chicks* combined with seeing *Peep* also marginally predicted lower vote probability for Ernst. Both *Missed Votes* and *Chicks* were rated and coded as more contemptuous than angry, but the former may have, in its harsher tone, portrayed Braley as more reprehensible, whereas the latter, with its relatively comical content, depicted him as more laughable (though as shown in Supplemental Appendix E, both ads contained some of each type of representation). These two approaches, referred to in the title of this article, may convey different “flavors” of contempt, which correspond to behaviors of denigrating (a variety perhaps closer to Donald Trump’s style) versus ridiculing (perhaps more akin to late night comedians like Stephen Colbert), and might be called “nasty contempt” (mixing contempt with anger?) versus “gleeful contempt” (perhaps mixing

contempt with amusement?). Does the differential effectiveness of these ads suggest that the nasty flavor of contempt is more damaging to targets or provokes less backlash than the gleeful variety?

It is also possible that nasty versus gleeful contempt (or contempt vs. anger) would be differentially effective with different audiences (e.g., conservatives vs. liberals, Republicans vs. Democrats, more vs. less strongly partisan audiences, those with greater vs. lesser tolerance for incivility, or those who in their daily lives feel contempt more vs. less often).

Yet, another possibility is that context is crucial. Perhaps nasty contempt (or alternatively, contempt in general) is particularly damaging to targets (rather than attackers) when the presence of approving others makes grossly devaluing or dehumanizing individuals or groups seem normatively acceptable or even morally justified (cf. Bandura, 1999). Approving others are physically present at hyperpartisan rallies (see Reicher & Haslam, 2017), and they may be virtually present in campaign ads or partisan media stories that show cheering crowds, or legitimizing authorities, or just affirming or agreeing others in Internet groups. Mattes and Redlawsk (2014) find that when negative ads are seen as acceptable, backlash is less likely.

Studying contempt and other emotions earlier in election cycles. One limitation of the present study is that it, like the ANES and CCES, measures contempt (and candidate evaluations and vote intentions) only in the weeks immediately prior to the election, when feelings, attitudes, and behavior tendencies likely were, at least for many voters, already well formed. To adequately understand the impact of contempt and its potential interplay with other determinants of voting, it would be desirable to assess these variables earlier, when perceptions of and reactions to the candidates are forming or may be more malleable.

Summary. Overall, our data show that contempt may play a critical role in how voters perceive, evaluate, and react to candidates. Even as a great deal of research on other emotions has moved forward, a serious effort to examine how contempt influences politics seems overdue.

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nEtpLZuNCvs&authuser=0>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9IwCP6SYbw&feature=youtu.be>
3. Research also supports the importance of distinguishing different positive emotions. For example, Finn and Glaser (2010) found that *hope* was a stronger predictor than pride of voting for Obama in 2008, whereas *pride* was a stronger predictor than hope of voting for McCain.
4. <http://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/memorable-campaign-ads/6/>
5. <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1980/streetgov>
6. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89ia8I2jtfI>
7. https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/politics/trump-bush-is-poor-pathetic-low-energy-guy/2016/01/21/efd1347c-c090-11e5-98c8-7fab78677d51_video.html
8. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/jul/21/donald-trump-lindsey-graham-total-lightweight/?page=all>
9. <http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/253178-trump-insults-fiorinas-physical-appearance-look-at-that-face>
10. <http://www.cnn.com/2016/02/26/politics/marco-rubio-donald-trump-morning-show-attacks/>
11. <http://thehill.com/blogs/ballot-box/presidential-races/269136-cruz-ad-on-rubio-vote-for-more-than-pretty-face>
12. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/02/06/transcript-of-the-feb-6-gop-debate-annotated/>
13. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/11/us/politics/hillary-clinton-basket-of-deplorables.html>
14. On Election Day, Ernst had a polling lead of just 2.3%. For details, see http://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2014/senate/ia/iowa_senate_ernst_vs_bralej-3990.html
15. As noted by an anonymous reviewer, the Iowa contest was not the nation's most negative. The Wesleyan Media Project reported it had only the third highest percentage of negative TV ads of 2014 Senate races.
16. This omits respondents who failed to watch both videos in their entirety (79 in New Jersey, 51 in Iowa), and cases removed for failure to recognize candidate names or parties in the feeling thermometer questions (23 in New Jersey, nine in Iowa), or for giving a rating above 100 on a feeling thermometer (two Iowa cases), or for missing data for a candidate on a thermometer (eight in New Jersey, nine in Iowa).

17. Bell had aired a 30-s radio ad in late August, but no TV ads. Links to and transcripts of all ads and videos are in Supplemental Appendix C. Videos are available from the first author.
18. Not surprisingly, viewers perceived very little of any positive emotions expressed toward the opponent in the videos. Means for enthusiasm, hope, and admiration are close to 1 (*none at all*) in most cases. Supplemental Appendix G gives exact means and standard deviations for Figure 2.
19. Supplemental Appendix H shows correlations of perceived and felt emotions toward candidates.
20. It is possible that anger toward Booker, an African American, might be related to his race. Banks (2014) has presented evidence that anger is an emotional driver of racial resentment.
21. Predicted probabilities for all emotions in both states' analyses are available from the authors.
22. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/01/28/upshot/donald-trump-twitter-insults.html>
23. <http://thehill.com/homenews/house/349291-dem-calls-trump-chief-of-staff-a-disgrace-to-uniform>
24. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2018/02/07/lazy-john-kelly-simply-misses-the-mark-say-daca-advocates>

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