Losers, Liars, and Low-energy Individuals:  
The Role of Contempt in Negative Campaigning

David P. Redlawsk  
Department of Political Science and International Relations  
University of Delaware  
Newark, DE 19716  
redlawsk@udel.edu

Ira J. Roseman  
Department of Psychology  
Rutgers University  
Camden, NJ 08102  
ira.roseman@rutgers.edu

Kyle Mattes  
Department of Political Science  
Florida International University  
Miami, FL 33199  
kmatthes.fiu.edu

Steven Katz  
Department of Psychology  
Rutgers University  
Camden, NJ 08102  
katsteven@gmail.com
Losers, Liars, and Low-energy Individuals:  
The Role of Contempt in Negative Campaigning

Abstract

While the emotion of contempt, prominent in the 2016 American presidential election, has been increasingly distinguished from anger, its importance to political cognition, communication, and political is just beginning to be understood. Here we examine the role contempt played in two U.S. Senate races. We find contempt was perceived (more than other negative emotions typically studied by political scientists) in four widely-aired negative campaign ads, and in candidate statements about opponents in a campaign speech and TV interview. We also find respondents’ feelings of contempt toward candidates, though less intense than feelings of anger, were of equal or greater significance than either anger or anxiety in predicting voting intentions regarding three of the four Senate candidates across the two elections. After describing our results, we discuss implications of our findings for understanding the role of contempt in determining responses to negative advertising and its influence on voter decision-making.
Losers, Liars, and Low-energy Individuals:

The Role of Contempt in Negative Campaigning

“Jeb’s a loser.”¹ “…this poor, pathetic, low energy guy…”²

“[Ted Cruz] is a lying guy. A really lying guy. Some people misrepresent. This guy is just a plain-out liar.”³

“You have this guy Lindsey Graham, a total lightweight — here’s a guy, in the private sector, he couldn’t get a job…”⁴

All three of these statements are from the 2016 Republican primary races. What they have in common (besides the messenger, Donald Trump) is that they were designed to lower people’s opinion of a political opponent. As such, they appeal to a particular emotion—contempt, which according to Fischer (2011, p. 77), is “the feeling when one judges another person as an inferior human being.”

Trump was not the only 2016 candidate expressing contempt. An ad for Jeb Bush called Trump “unhinged.” 5 Marco Rubio averred that Trump was “a con artist.” 6 A Ted Cruz ad disparaged Rubio as “just another pretty face.” 7 Replying to a Rubio charge that he didn’t 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?” 8

Although candidates may differ in the frequency with which they express contempt about their opponents, employing this strategy is far from unique to Donald Trump, Republican Party candidates, or the 2016 presidential race. For example, during the 2008 presidential campaign, Hillary Clinton made remarks which observers interpreted as mocking then rival Barack Obama: “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.” 9

Contempt is commonly found in negative campaign ads. In a 1980 re-election ad for Jimmy Carter, one of the interviewed “people of California” said of challenger Ronald Reagan “I

5 https://amp.twimg.com/v/11e59ebd-56b2-480d-a760-5392415df93d

6 http://www.cnn.com/2016/02/26/politics/marco-rubio-donald-trump-morning-show-attacks/

7 http://thehill.com/blogs/ballot-box/presidential-races/269136-cruz-ad-on-rubio-vote-for-more-than-pretty-face


9 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89ia8I2jtfI
can’t imagine him being President. It’s too complex a job.”\textsuperscript{10} Sometimes the contemptible qualities of opposing candidates are not directly stated in negative ads, but are expressed as questions, or implied by reputed actions or associations. For example, a 2004 Swift Vets campaign ad showed a veteran asking “Why do so many of us have serious questions [about what John Kerry’s made of]?”\textsuperscript{11} In 1968, an ad for the Humphrey campaign featured the on-screen text “Agnew for Vice-President?” amid the sound of uncontrollable laughter.\textsuperscript{12} A 1972 “Democrats for Nixon” ad parodied the “McGovern defense plan” by showing hands sweeping away toy soldiers, planes, and naval vessels, and then saying that “President Nixon doesn’t believe we should play games with our national security.”\textsuperscript{13}

Contempt seems to show itself regularly in campaign rhetoric and negativity. Yet, despite considerable interest in negative campaigning (e.g., Fridkin & Kenney 2011; Lau & Rovner 2009; Mattes & Redlawsk 2015), until recently contempt—unlike anger—has rarely been mentioned in the literature on voting, and is not among the emotions assessed in the current or recent American National Election Studies (e.g., ANES 2014).

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

\textsuperscript{10} http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1980/streetgov

\textsuperscript{11} http://www.swiftvets.com/index.php?topic=Ads

\textsuperscript{12} http://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/memorable-campaign-ads/6/

\textsuperscript{13} http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1972/mcGovern-defense
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 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 recently given a good deal of thought to the role of emotions (see, e.g., Brader & Marcus 2013; Marcus et al. 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 (e.g., Redlawsk & Pierce 2017; Westen 2007). Emotions toward candidates have been found to be more important determinants of voting than perceptions of the candidates’ traits (e.g., Abelson et al. 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 et al. 2006; Valentino et al. 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 the question of dimensional versus discrete emotion influence. For example, Lodge and Taber’s (2013) 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 such as voting (see also Halperin et al. 2012). Advocates of the discrete perspective cite data indicating there are multiple emotions (e.g., enthusiasm; anxiety or fear; anger/aversion) with distinct effects on voting and other forms of political participation (e.g., Marcus et al. 2000; Marcus et al. 2006; 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 et al. 2008; Wirth et al. 2011). Ryan (2012) sees “terminological inconsistencies” in AIT maintaining that ‘aversive’ emotions motivate confrontation when aversion is typically regarded as involving avoidance; and 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), and researchers have found they have distinct determinants, characteristics, and effects (e.g., Hutcherson & Gross 2011; Rozin et al. 1999). Brader and Marcus (2013, p. 180) observe that “by conducting further research to isolate the causes of anger as distinct from other ‘negative’ emotions, political psychologists can shed light on the origins of public outrage and contribute to a greater understanding of anger among psychologists generally.” Similarly, Kinder (2013) argues for more “direct measurement of emotional aspects of prejudice” (p. 822), which (insofar as racial attitudes influence voting) can also affect election outcomes.
Research on the political impact of different affective states supports the utility of distinguishing anger from other negative emotions. Anger appears to be central to the Tea Party movement (Sparks 2015), opposition to health care reform (Banks 2014), and partisanship generally (Huddy et al. 2015). But examining only anger may not be enough, as Halperin et al. (2012) argue 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 (though they did not compare disgust to anger in their study). 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. Valentino et al. (2011) report that anger was a stronger predictor than fear in relatively "costly" political participation (such as working for a campaign or donating money) in all presidential elections from 1980-2004. 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 have been increasingly in emotions research outside political science.

**Differentiating Contempt, Anger, and Disgust**

---

14 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, while pride was a stronger predictor than hope of voting for McCain. Redlawsk et al. (2010) examined the positive emotion of enthusiasm, and found that Obama’s 2008 victory was at least in part a result of intense enthusiasm generated by his campaign, which may have allowed some white voters to overcome latent concerns about his race.
While some contemporary emotion theorists have emphasized the explanatory power of general positive vs. negative affect (e.g., Barrett 2006; Russell 2003; Barrett & Russell 2015), others maintain that particular (“discrete”) emotions, in addition to emotion dimensions, make important contributions to explaining patterns of cognition, motivation, and behavior (e.g., Ekman & Cordaro 2011; Izard 2007; Lerner & Keltner 2000; Plutchik 2003). 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 et al. 2003), or the blockage of one’s goals (e.g., Carver & Harmon-Jones 2009). Contempt is elicited by appraisals that a person has an undesirable trait, such as bad character or incompetence (e.g., Hutcherson & Gross 2011). These two emotions have different cross-culturally recognizable facial expressions, with contempt shown by a sneer (raising and tightening one corner of the lips), and anger shown by brows drawn down and together with bared teeth or pressed-together lips (e.g., Ekman & Friesen 1975, 1986; Ekman & Heider 1988; Izard & Haynes 1988; Rozin et al. 1999; see Figure 1).

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

In terms of behavior, anger is a short-term “attack” emotion (e.g., Frijda 1986) associated with an increased tendency to confront another person, e.g., 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., Schriber et al. 2016), and engage in nonnormative action which challenges the target’s legitimacy (Tausch et al. 2011). There also appear to be 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 et
al. 2009), or to hurt or get back at the target person in some way (e.g., McCullogh et al. 2013; Roseman et al. 1994), people feeling contempt want to have nothing to do with the target person, to socially exclude the person, and to have the person rejected by their group (e.g., Fischer 2011; Fischer & Giner-Sorolla 2016). Contempt, more than anger, predicts a lack of reconciliatory intentions (Fisher & Roseman 2007) and actual relationship deterioration (e.g., Gottman & Levenson 1992).

Contempt, in which other people are considered to be beneath some standard (W. I. Miller 1997), is related to but clearly distinguishable from disgust, in which objects or behaviors are considered substandard, and shame, in which the aspects of the self are considered substandard (Roseman 2013; S. Miller 1985). Though disgust can be felt toward persons and behaviors (e.g., for poor hygiene and inappropriate sexual acts) it is prototypically more a response to impersonal objects (oral incorporation of offensive substances, such as rotten food and body waste products; Rozin et al. 2016) or violations of the ethics of purity (Rozin et al. 1999). In politics, disgust is especially relevant for political issues that involve offensive behaviors and perceived 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 (incompetence, 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 et al. 2013), campaigns that engender contempt toward a candidate can have ramifying, exponential effects upon its target’s reputation and support among a wider public.

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 et al. 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 seen as less warm in that it is competitive with one’s own group, e.g., for resources). Groups perceived as both incompetent and cold (competitive with one’s own group) elicit contempt and disgust (Fiske et al. 2002) and these groups are perceived to be the targets of behavioral responses of both active harm (e.g., fighting and attacking) and passive harm (e.g., demeaning and excluding). Similarly, Romani et al. (2013) found that whereas anger felt in response to perceived corporate wrongdoing predicted actions designed to penalize but maintain a relationship with a company, contempt predicted actions designed to discredit or hurt the company and ultimately disengage from it.

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. On the group level, Matsumoto et al. (2013) found that leaders’ speeches associated with subsequent political aggression contained a greater number of appraisals of inferiority (as well as appraisals of intolerability) and a greater amount of contempt (as well as disgust) than speeches not associated with subsequent group aggression.
The emotion of contempt toward a political candidate may be especially influential because of its implication of low competence. Competence is a central trait on which those who seek elective office are evaluated (e.g., Kinder et al. 1980; Todorov et al. 2005). Thus evoking feelings of contempt toward an opposing candidate could significantly 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.

Attempts to elicit contempt in the voting public may well be increasing, and perhaps achieving their objective (Stohr 2017). While not yet the subject of much published research, the tone and content of disparaging remarks toward rival candidates that were characteristic of Donald Trump’s 2016 campaign, and his ensuing triumph over each of them, suggest the potential importance of contempt in political discourse and persuasion. Indeed, 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 – 2007 involve “partisan taunting” of the opposition party or its members, which uses “exaggerated language to put them down or devalue their ideas” (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.

Despite the ubiquity of negative campaigning, the empirical literature indicates that it fails as often as it succeeds, and much remains unknown about the factors that determine this (Lau & Rovner 2009). 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 close 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 Bernstein et al. 2009, for research on differences in tolerance for various affective states, and Roseman et al. 1986, on individual differences in response to political appeals with particular emotional content). It is possible the angry vs. 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 possibilities with survey studies of responses to negative ads and videos in two U.S. Senate elections in 2014. These particular contests were chosen in light of the substantial difference in competitiveness between them. 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 $60 million according to Opensecrets.org, third highest in the nation in 2014). While Ernst ultimately won by nearly 9 points, for much of the race polling had
it as too close to call.\footnote{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_braley-3990.html} As a consequence, many negative ads were run by both sides and by outside groups.

The New Jersey race, in contrast, was not considered competitive. Incumbent Democratic Sen. 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.com reported just $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 percent, and Booker went on to win by more than 13 points.

Again, our expectations were that (1) the way that candidates talk about each other in negative ads, speeches, and interviews would be perceived by voters to include contempt; and (2) citizens’ contempt toward candidates would influence their voting intentions. However, we also expected that this would 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 non-competitive campaign, the leading candidate may rarely even take note of the trailing opponent, and negative ads may be at a minimum. Voters in non-competitive campaigns may feel less contempt for either candidate, and contempt may have less impact on vote intentions.

**Method**

**Participants:**

We obtained diverse samples of adults in each state through SSI, a reputable panel provision company whose pre-recruited adults do surveys in return for incentives such as cash,
redeemable points, or sweepstakes entry. Data were gathered in online surveys from October 23 through November 3, just prior to the election held on November 4, 2014. We received completed survey responses from 401 respondents in Iowa and 488 in New Jersey.16

Respondents in Iowa were 45% male, 95% white, 3% Black, 30% Democrat, 26% Republican, and 44% independent. Twenty percent were 65 years old or over, 33% were 50 to 64, 31% were 30 to 49, and 16% were 18-30. The Iowa sample is slightly more female and less elderly, but otherwise tracks well with the state’s population. New Jersey respondents were 49% male, 82% white, 14% Black, 39% Democrat, 20% Republican, and 41% independent. Eighteen per cent were 65 years old or over, 30% were 50 to 64, 35% were 30 to 49, and 17% were 18-30. Partisanship, gender, age, and the percentage of Black respondents reasonably match the New Jersey population, but the sample does skew significantly from the 72% white registered voter population in New Jersey.

Procedures:

Respondents who accepted the invitation to participate in the survey received a link to the study website. Age over 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. Respondents then viewed two videos, in counterbalanced

16 These numbers are net of respondents who failed to watch both videos in their entirety (79 in New Jersey, 51 in Iowa, assessed via response time checks), and a small number of cases removed for failure to recognize candidate names or parties in the feeling thermometer questions (23 in New Jersey, 9 in Iowa), a rating over 100 on the FT (a system error, accounting for 2 Iowa cases), and missing data for one candidate on a feeling thermometer (8 in NJ, 9 in Iowa).
order. After each video, they answered closed-ended questions about emotions expressed in the video, their opinion of the two major party candidates competing in the election, and their (post-video) voting intentions and feeling thermometer ratings. Following the second video they also answered questions about emotions they had ever felt toward each candidate, and some questions that are beyond the scope of the present paper. Finally they answered questions about their political party identification, political orientation, voting registration, and other demographics.

**Materials**

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

Videos were selected based on three criteria: unfavorable content about a candidate, frequency of airtime, and estimated representativeness in terms of issues raised. Each Iowa respondent saw (at random) one of two negative ads about Republican Joni Ernst and one of two about Democrat Bruce 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 $7.25 (an hour) or $15,000 a year. “Peep”, also paid for by Braley for Iowa, said “we didn’t hear a peep” from Ernst on cutting pork spending, and accused her of 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 (litigiously) threatening to sue his neighbors when a chicken crossed into Braley’s property.
New Jersey’s campaign was so low key that we were unable to identify any televised ads just weeks before the election (unlike in Iowa where ads were legion). So we used the only two videos we found in which each candidate talked about his opponent (from NJTV network’s news programming). The *Booker Video* was an excerpt from Democrat Cory Booker’s campaign launch speech, in which he attacked Republican Jeff Bell 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 photos of himself 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 to 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** (Ad-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 in these questions was randomized. 18

17 Links to and transcripts of all ads and videos are given in Online Appendix A. All videos are also available upon request from the first author.

18 To provide some assessment of the extent to which respondents were accurately perceiving emotions in the videos, two members of our research team independently coded each video,
**Felt emotions toward 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 emotion questions in the most recent version of the American National Election Studies (ANES 2014): “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, the 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.

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

informed by theoretically- and empirically-derived criteria from the literature, such as facial muscle movements, linguistic and paralinguistic cues, and appraisal content (e.g., Coan & Gottman, 2007; Kunneman et al. 2015). 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 assessments of these emotions are fairly high: .86 for anger and .72 for contempt. These data fit with prior evidence that it is possible to (somewhat objectively) specify the bases for coding anger and contempt (e.g., Matsumoto & Ekman, 2004) and suggest that our naïve respondents were perceiving the extent to which these emotions were actually expressed in the videos they watched, rather than projected onto the videos based on partisan prejudices.
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; Rozin et al., 1999). To make sure that respondents understood our questions, we included a definition of contempt, based on the definition in American Heritage Dictionary (2014b). 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 (based on the American Heritage Dictionary 2014a). 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 paper use responses to the final vote intention questions (following the second video and its ad-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 the candidates as expressing contempt, and the other emotions we assessed (in the videos they saw). Figure 2 displays the mean level of
each negative emotion, rescaled from perceiving “none at all” [1] to “a large amount” [5]. As shown in the figure, contempt toward the opposing candidate was the most perceived emotion in all six videos.

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 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 a TV interviewer. Note also that levels of perceived contempt are lower for the New Jersey U.S. Senate candidates than for the Iowa candidates for all of the videos examined.

For both Iowa candidates, mean levels of perceived contempt toward the other 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**

---

19 Not surprisingly, viewers perceived very little of any positive emotions expressed toward the opponent in these videos. Means for enthusiasm hope, and admiration are close to 1 (“none at all”) in most cases. Thus while positive emotions are included for completeness, we will focus on contempt in comparison to the other negative emotions for our analyses in this section.

20 Table B.1 in Online Appendix B provides exact means and standard deviations for Figure 2.
The preceding section presented data on emotions that respondents perceived in the videos. We turn next to respondents’ ratings of emotions they had ever felt toward the candidates.

Table 1 summarizes these results by emotion and candidate. It is notable that in the competitive Iowa senate race, negative emotions are stronger than positive emotions toward both Ernst and Braley. For Braley, the means of all three negative emotions—anger (2.02 on a 1 to 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 of 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 versus hope, 1.77; admiration, 1.72; and enthusiasm 1.61); all of 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—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

---

21 Table B.2 in Online Appendix B shows the correlations between perceived and “ever-felt” emotions for each candidate.
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. To examine 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 (6 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 the other side.

Before we turn to the ever-felt emotions measures, we look at the control variables to check the plausibility of our models. Exactly as we would expect, being a Republican increases the likelihood of a vote for Bell over the baseline of voting for neither (b=2.19** se=.54) while being a Democrat increases the odds of voting for Booker, again versus the baseline (b=.95** se=.39). In addition, women in our sample are more likely than men to register the baseline of not voting for either: bBell=−.95, se=.47; bBooker=−.88, se=.37. But white respondents in our sample 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 would 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).22

Figure 3 displays the predicted probabilities of a vote for Bell or Booker (versus the baseline) at varying levels of contempt for either candidate.23 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 under 30% at the lowest level of contempt, to 10% at the highest levels. 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 while greater ever-felt contempt predicts decreased support for Bell, not all of

---

22 It is interesting to speculate on whether anger toward Booker, an African-American candidate, might be related to his race. It is striking that anger is the negative emotion that appears both strongly against Booker and also weakly increases a vote for Bell, an underfunded and all-but-certain to lose candidate. Banks (2014) has presented evidence that anger is an emotional driver of racial resentment.

23 Predicted probabilities for the other emotions are available from the authors on request.
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% while 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 the Republican is -0.07 (SE=.03), while its effect on the vote for Booker is +0.04 (.03). The average marginal effect of ever-felt contempt toward Booker, on voting for the Democrat, is -0.02 (.03), while its effect on the vote for Bell is +0.02 (.02).

**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-square = .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 (versus baseline) and a vote for Braley (versus 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=.81), as well as over Braley, with the opposite being true for Democrats (vote for Braley, b=1.77, se=.51). This is obviously the
expected result. Gender is our other control variable, and in this particular race does not appear to condition the results.

In Iowa, the positive emotions of enthusiasm and admiration predict increased voting for Ernst over the baseline, while 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 significantly 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 to 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 and in the expected directions.

Figure 4 displays the predicted probabilities of a vote for Ernst or Braley (versus the baseline) at varying levels of contempt for each candidate. The solid lines represent the

24 Predicted probabilities for the other emotions are available from the authors on request.
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 as 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% to 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, on average, the marginal effect of ever-felt contempt toward Ernst on voting for her is -0.08 (SE=.02), while its effect on the vote for Braley is +0.05 (.02). The average marginal effect of ever-felt contempt toward Braley on voting for him is -0.09 (.03), while its effect on the vote for Ernst is +0.04 (.01). All of these effects are statistically significant and substantively important.

**Discussion**

**The Importance of Contempt**
In the introduction to this paper, we noted that recent data showing increasing partisan negative affect, along with the course of events in the 2016 presidential election (in which contempt seemed prominent in much of the rhetoric of Donald Trump’s successful campaign against his rivals), would seem to argue for a program of research to better understand the political implications of contempt. While Trump may represent something unique in American politics in the extent to which he expressed (and continues to express) contempt toward opponents, examples from other campaigns show that he is not alone in making use of this emotion. This paper is a first effort to develop an understanding of the role contempt can play in politics.

Our campaign video data indicate that contempt was perceived as much as or more than any other emotion in every ad, speech, or candidate interview that respondents viewed. Our vote intention data indicate that contempt felt by respondents toward candidates was as important or more important in predicting vote intentions, compared with the much more widely studied emotions of anger and anxiety. Although anger was reported more than contempt or anxiety toward every candidate, when contempt was felt it was more influential for the vote choice in the elections we examined. Contempt was the emotion most predictive of decreased intention to vote for each candidate in the 2014 Iowa Senate race, and diminished likelihood of voting for the Republican Senate candidate in New Jersey. Contempt predicted unique variance in voting intentions, in addition to the significant variance predicted by other emotions. These results provide compelling prima facie evidence for the importance of the understudied emotion of contempt in political communication. Studying only negative emotions in general, or only anger and anxiety, leaves out an important influence on political cognition and political behavior.
Contempt Matters for Republicans and Democrats. Contrary to previous findings that contempt predicted feeling thermometer evaluations only of Democratic party candidates (e.g., Bill Clinton; Johnston et al. 2014), it mattered for 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, we found that contempt predicted decreased vote probability for Republican Jeff Bell, but not Democrat Cory Booker. Thus, findings in this study 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).

Contempt Predicts Vote Intentions. Prior findings from the 1995 ANES pilot study (Johnston et al. 2014) indicated that felt contempt, independently from anger, mediated relationships between perceptions of presidential candidates and thermometer evaluations of those candidates. Results from the present study extend those findings by providing evidence that vote intentions (not just candidate evaluations) are predicted by felt contempt.

Evidence for Discrete Emotion Theories in Political Science

Our results also have implications for the controversy between dimensional affect theories versus discrete emotion theories of political behavior, which were discussed above. In this study, voters differentiated among emotions of the same valence expressed in campaign ads, a campaign speech, and a candidate interview, and perceived contempt as being expressed more than anger or anxiety. Felt contempt decreased intention to vote for white female Republican candidate Joni Ernst more than other felt emotions, while felt anger was most damaging toward black male Democratic candidate Cory Booker. For white male Democrat Bruce Braley, both
contempt and anger (but not anxiety) predicted lower vote intentions. Among positive emotions, hope was felt more than enthusiasm or admiration for each candidate, and significantly predicted increased vote probability for both New Jersey candidates and the Democrat 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 vote intentions for the Democrat in Iowa.

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 one felt positive or negative emotion as another). These results are consistent with emotion-specific patterns identified by other investigators. For example, Finn and Glaser (2010) 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. Valentino et al. (2011) report that anger was a stronger predictor than fear of relatively "costly" political participation (such as working for a campaign or donating money) in all presidential elections from 1980-2004.

Moreover, the particular effects we found are consistent with particular emotion-specific patterns identified by other investigators. For example, hope and anger have been identified as especially potent political emotions in research by Finn and Glaser (2010) and Valentino et al. (2011). The importance of contempt in predicting vote intentions is consistent with the evidence that this emotion significantly mediated relationships between perceptions of presidential candidates’ leadership and thermometer evaluations of those candidates in the 1996 and 2008 elections (e.g., Johnston et al 2014). Together, these findings provide consistent 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 These Findings

Together with research on partisan polarization (e.g., Iyengar & Westwood 2015) and
responses to incivility in campaign ads (Fridkin & Kenney 2011), our findings speak to the
importance of measuring contempt (along with other emotions felt toward candidates) in surveys
aimed at predicting voting, such as the American National Election Studies and Cooperative
Congressional Election Study. Indeed, when contempt was measured separately from other
emotions, as in the 1995 ANES pilot study, and disaggregated from other negative emotions
(Johnston et al. 2014), it significantly mediated candidate evaluations, above and beyond effects
of anger and fear. Beyond strong impressions of contempt’s prominence in the 2016 presidential
campaign, recently gathered data from the 2016 Iowa caucuses shows that (a) caucus participants
perceived that candidates expressed contempt (distinct from anger and from fear) and (b) the
contempt that caucus participants themselves felt (beyond their anger and their fear) predicted
their thermometer ratings of most of the leading Republican and Democratic candidates
(Redlawsk et al. 2016). Thus to adequately understand and model the effects of emotions on
voting, it seems important to assess contempt in other settings and on a broader scale. Our study
limited its focus to two states, and gathered data relatively close to the election.

Going forward, it also seems important to understand what happens when feelings of
contempt are produced by campaigns, whether purposefully or not. Is it generally advantageous
to one candidate to generate feelings of contempt for another? Are there circumstances in which
it is demobilizing, or even counterproductive? If some voters have low tolerance for incivility in
campaign ads (Fridkin & Kenney 2011), then contempt may play a role that is different from
other negative emotions: reducing favorability toward the attacker through a backlash when a candidate is seen to generate contempt, as well as decreasing favorability toward a candidate who is the target of contempt. Indeed, both effects could take place simultaneously. If so, even with some backlash against the attacker, when it comes time to vote, contempt “ever-felt” toward a target candidate may turn the voter away from him or her. Perhaps, then, candidates can risk some favorability backlash in being contemptuous to an opponent as long as they succeed in making voters themselves feel contempt. Further research on the effects of candidates expressing contempt on vote intentions toward the attacker as well as the target is needed to test this idea.

Elucidating and disentangling these effects, and systematically distinguishing the different influences of contempt from those of anger and fear aroused by negative campaign ads, could advance our understanding of the conditions under which negative campaigning succeeds or fails (Lau & Rovner 2009). In particular, experimental studies are needed to determine whether contempt in particular, as well as the other emotions we have tested, are merely correlated with voting behavior, or actually have a causal impact on voting.

Also still to be determined is the extent to which contemptuous ads have their desired effect. Do respondents who perceive contempt in ads then actually feel increased contempt toward the target candidates? This may depend in part on the party affiliation of the respondent, along with other individual difference variables. As evidence suggests greater exposure to campaign ads is associated with increases in partisan negative affect (Sood et al. 2015), the effects and effectiveness of contemptuous ads may also depend on their relative frequency and prevalence. Repetition of contemptuous political communications may create a climate in which contemptuous rhetoric, feelings of contempt toward political opponents, and contempt-related political behaviors—refusal to cooperate or work together, breaking off relations, discrimination,
and even violent, non-normative collective action (Tausch et al. 2011)—become more acceptable and powerful (see, e.g., Staub 1989).

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.
Table 1: Mean Levels of Ever-felt Emotions toward Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Anger</th>
<th>Contempt</th>
<th>Anxiety</th>
<th>Enthusiasm</th>
<th>Hope</th>
<th>Admiration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Booker</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braley</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernst</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Entries are means, with standard errors in parentheses.

Questions: 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/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 2: Effects of Ever Felt Emotions on 2014 Senate Races

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>New Jersey</th>
<th>Iowa</th>
<th></th>
<th>New Jersey</th>
<th>Iowa</th>
<th></th>
<th>New Jersey</th>
<th>Iowa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vote for Bell (Republican)</td>
<td>Vote for Booker (Democrat)</td>
<td>Vote for Ernst (Republican)</td>
<td>Vote for Braley (Democrat)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell (D-NJ)/Ernst (D-IA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>5.97†</td>
<td>-3.44</td>
<td>-.53</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>1.14**</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>-1.09</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admiration</td>
<td>.78*</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>-.66</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>1.19*</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contempt</td>
<td>-1.16*</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>-3.09**</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.53†</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.54†</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>-1.11†</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booker (R-NJ)/Braley (R-IA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
<td>-.52</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>-.44</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.28*</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.63**</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.82*</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admiration</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.59**</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>-1.58</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contempt</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>1.32*</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>-1.36*</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>.45†</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>-1.37**</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>-1.03*</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>-.24</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>2.19**</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>2.60**</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.95*</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>-7.88</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td>1.77**</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-.95*</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>-.88*</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>-.34</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>-.49</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-2.27*</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>-.61</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>-6.40**</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. NJ Baseline: Vote for neither Bell nor Booker; N=414; Nagelkerke r-square = .562; IA Baseline: Vote for neither Ernst nor Braley; N=353; Nagelkerke R-square = .748

† p<0.10  * p<0.05  ** p<0.01
Note. Photographs of anger and contempt expressions from Rozin, Lowery, Imada, and Haidt (1999).
Figure 2: Mean Levels of Perceived Emotions in Videos
Figure 3: Predicted Probabilities of Vote by Ever-Felt Contempt for NJ Senate Candidates

Bell (Republican)          Booker (Democrat)

The graphs depict the predicted probabilities of vote for Jeff Bell and Cory Booker based on the level of contempt felt towards each candidate. The x-axis represents the level of ever-felt contempt, ranging from 1 to 5, while the y-axis shows the probability of voting. The lines indicate different categories or groups within the data, with solid lines typically representing one category and dashed lines another.
Figure 4: Predicted Probabilities of Vote by Ever-Felt Contempt for IA Senate Candidates

Ernst (Republican)       Braley (Democrat)
References


https://ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=anger


https://ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=contempt


[http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000101](http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000101)


Online Appendix A – Ad/Video Text

New Jersey

Booker Video text attacking Bell: [https://youtu.be/Ao7sR_KRiF8](https://youtu.be/Ao7sR_KRiF8)

*(Newscaster:)* In a surprisingly pointed attack on the underdog, Booker accused Bell of abandoning New Jersey, and being an obstacle to progress. “He is not about creating bipartisan compromise. He is not about reaching across the aisle and getting things done. He literally wrote the book—I’m not exaggerating—making the case for party—for political polarization; making the case that we should be rigid in our ideology and not compromise to get things done.”

Bell Video text attacking Booker: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9IwCP6SYbw&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9IwCP6SYbw&feature=youtu.be)

“He’s like a kid in a candy store. The U.S. Senate is one of the most famous and respected institutions in our society or in any democratic society. And I think it’s kind of charming that he wants to kind of validate that by having a picture of himself with 99 other people who serve there. On the other hand, as charming as that is, I don’t think we’re at a time when just cosmetics and surface things are going to suffice. I think the American people want a choice—they sense that what President Obama and all of his supporters, including Mr. Booker, have been doing for five and a half years is not working.”

Iowa

Braley “minimum” ad attacking Ernst: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nEtpLZuNCvs&authuser=0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nEtpLZuNCvs&authuser=0)

*(Bruce Braley:)* I’m Bruce Braley and I approve this message. "Is Joni Ernst too extreme for Iowa? On the minimum wage." *(An audio clip of Ernst on Iowa Public Radio in June:)* "I do not support a federal minimum wage."

*(Narrator:)* "Joni Ernst doesn't think there should be a national minimum wage. And what does she think is right for Iowa?"

*(A video clip of Ernst at a GOP primary forum):* "I think $7.25 is appropriate for Iowa."

*(Narrator:)* "That's right. Ernst believes Iowans can survive on $15,000 a year. Joni Ernst. Extreme ideas, wrong for Iowa."

Braley “peep” ad attacking Ernst: [https://youtu.be/b3lwSSTEvNU](https://youtu.be/b3lwSSTEvNU)

*(Bruce Braley:)* I’m Bruce Braley and I approve this message. *(Female Voiceover):* We’ve all heard the one about pigs squealing but when Joni Ernst had the chance to do something in Iowa, we didn’t hear a peep. In the state senate Ernst never sponsored a bill to cut pork, never wrote one measure to slash spending. In fact the Iowa Republican says
she backed measures to actually increase spending. Joni Ernst’s ads are hard to forget, but her record just doesn’t cut it.

Ernst “Missed Votes” ad attacking Braley:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lAajSUcqMSU
Politician Bruce Braley loves Washington. He just doesn’t like to work there. In Congress, Braley has skipped twice as many votes as any other Iowa congressman. And when he sat on the Government Oversight Committee, Braley skipped 68 percent of the hearings—even missing important hearings on Obamacare, while supporting medicare cuts for Iowa seniors. Bruce Braley isn’t showing up for Iowa.

Ernst “Braley’s War on Chicks” ad attacking Braley: https://youtu.be/pLAvszudbq4
We all know how Washington politician Bruce Braley compared his female opponent to a chick. Now he’s taken his war on “chicks” too far. After a chicken crossed into his Iowa vacation property, Braley threatened to sue his neighborhood. A true Iowan would have just talked to his neighbors. But not trial lawyer Bruce Braley. (Braley in video:) You might have a farmer from Iowa, who never went to law school, serving as the next chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee.” Why did the chicken cross into Bruce Braley’s property? It might just be coming home
### Table B.1: Mean Levels of Perceived Emotions in Videos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Video</th>
<th>Perceived Emotions toward Other Candidate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booker</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braley Ad</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage</td>
<td>(.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braley Ad</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peep</td>
<td>(.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernst Ad</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missed Vote</td>
<td>(.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernst Ad</td>
<td>3.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicks</td>
<td>(.08)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes: Entries are means, with standard errors in parentheses.*

Question: How much [EMOTION] was expressed toward [OPPOSING CANDIDATE] in this video? [5] a large amount, [3.67] a moderate amount, [2.33] a small amount, [1] none at all. (values given here for answer categories and in Table B.1 are rescaled from original 4 point scale to facilitate analyses)
Table B.2: Correlations between perceived and ever-felt emotions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotion</th>
<th>Bell</th>
<th>Booker</th>
<th>Braley</th>
<th>Ernst</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.14*</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contempt</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.15*</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
<td>0.20*</td>
<td>0.20*</td>
<td>0.21*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
<td>0.11*</td>
<td>0.16*</td>
<td>0.21*</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>0.19*</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.24*</td>
<td>0.13*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admiration</td>
<td>0.18*</td>
<td>0.15*</td>
<td>0.23*</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.05

Note.