

## Differentiating Discrete Emotions: Contempt and Anger

By a net addition of four questions (shown in **boldface** on p. 8) to questions used on prior ANES surveys, we propose to differentiate between *contempt* and *anger* felt toward presidential candidates in the 2016 Pilot and Time Series studies. Recent developments in theory and research argue for the existence and universality of the emotion of contempt, its differentiation from anger, and its increasing presence in negative campaigning. Addressing current controversies about affective intelligence, the role of dimensional vs. discrete emotions in electoral behavior, and negative advertising, adding these items will allow researchers to test whether anger and contempt have distinct relationships to perceptions of candidate traits (such as competence and leadership), feeling thermometer ratings, turnout, and choice.

### Problem Relevance and Suitability to ANES

There has been enormous interest in the influence of emotions on voting. 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 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). Iyengar and Westwood (2015) find partisan negative affect has increased dramatically, with affective polarization promoting confrontation rather than cooperation. Anger appears to be central to the Tea Party movement, opposition to health care reform (Banks, 2014), and partisanship generally (Huddy, Mason, & Aaroe, 2015).

But leading models of the role of emotions in voting disagree on the major question of dimensional vs. discrete emotion influence (Redlawsk & Pierce, 2015). 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, MacKuen, & Neuman, 2000) holds that specific emotions differentially influence political information processing and subsequent behaviors such as voting.

Advocates of the discrete perspective point to data that suggest there are multiple emotions, with

distinct effects. For example, using the 1995 ANES pilot study, Marcus et al. (2000) find a three-factor solution for emotions toward Bill Clinton, labeled as enthusiasm, anxiety, and aversion. In 1980-2004 ANES data, Miller (2011) finds fear is a stronger predictor of voting against Republicans, while anger is a stronger predictor of voting against Democrats. Valentino et al. (2011) find that anger is associated with "costly" political participation in all presidential elections from 1980-2004, while anxiety is not significantly related.

But Brader et al. (2008) find that anger and anxiety load onto a common factor in their analyses and have similar statistical effects on the dependent variable. Marcus et al. (2000) report similar results for emotions toward Bob Dole. Valentino et al. (2011) find that both anger and anxiety increase the probability of engaging in "low cost" acts of electoral participation.

These inconsistent findings may result from complexities in conceptualizing and measuring the emotion variables. Brader and Marcus (2013) say aversion is "a cluster of feelings that includes anger, disgust, contempt, and hatred" (p. 213). Ryan (2012) points to "terminological inconsistencies" in AIT maintaining that 'aversive' emotions motivate confrontation, when aversion is typically regarded as involving avoidance. Moreover, despite AIT's prediction that anger will decrease information-seeking, Ryan finds anger doubles clicks on online ads to get more information. Brader and Marcus (2013, p. 180) write 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." We suggest that new and more consistent findings may emerge if these two emotions that appear regularly in the context of politics—anger and contempt—are differentiated.

### **Theoretical Foundations and Breadth of Relevance**

Evidence indicates contempt is a universal emotion differing systematically from anger. For example, while anger is elicited by appraisals that other people are to blame for *unfair outcomes* (Kuppens et al., 2003) contempt results from appraisals that others are *incompetent* (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011) or have *bad character* (Fischer & Roseman, 2007). The two emotions have different cross-culturally recognizable

## ANES Proposal – Differentiating Discrete Emotions: Contempt and Anger

facial expressions (frown with bared teeth or pressed-together lips vs. sneer; e.g., Ekman & Friesen, 1975, 1986), action tendencies (short-term attack vs. long-term rejection; Fischer & Roseman, 2004) and goals (revenge vs. social exclusion; Berkowitz, 1993; Underwood, 2004).

In a discrete emotion view, anger is an “attack” emotion (e.g., Frijda, 1986) that *moves against* other people, e.g., via confrontation or aggression (Averill, 1982), seeking deterrence or revenge (Roseman et al., 1994). In contrast, contempt is a “rejection” emotion (Oatley & Johnson-Laird, 1996), “moving away” the target from the self (Roseman, 2011) or the self from the target (Mackie et al., 2000), e.g., via social distancing (Miller, 1997) or exclusion (Fischer, 2011). A key goal in sharing expressions of contempt may be to have the object of contempt rejected by one’s social group (Roseman, 2013).

Anger and contempt occur together as well as separately. But their distinctive causes, responses, and effects have different implications for voter choice and electoral participation. For example, if appraisal determinants of contempt (incompetence, bad character) are more global and stable than those of anger (unfair outcomes), then contempt felt toward a candidate may be more powerful, and harder for that candidate to reverse. Contempt is especially potent when aimed at candidates, as competence is a key evaluative criterion for voters (e.g., Todorov et al., 2005).

ANES measurement of contempt and anger may also help researchers better understand effects of negative campaigning. Despite its ubiquity, the empirical literature finds that negative campaigning fails as often as it succeeds, and much remains unknown about factors that determine this (Lau & Rovner, 2009). Fridkin and Kenney (2011) found the tone of negative ads (civil vs. uncivil, ranging from “diplomatically, without derision” to “overly strident, rude, discourteous”) affected candidate evaluations across 21 U.S. Senate campaigns in 2006. Uncivil ads provoked backlash among voters who had low tolerance for incivility. Emotion-specific questions may reveal these are people who are particularly discomforted by feeling contempt (Crowley & Knowles, 2014), or feel it rarely (Roseman et al., 1986).

In Table 1 we list these and other theory-based predictions testable by measuring contempt vs. anger.

Table 1. *Some Theory-Based Predictions Testable by Measuring Contempt and Anger on the ANES*

Characteristic of Contempt vs. Anger (and Related Predictors)	Sample Predictions Testable by Measuring Contempt in Addition to Anger
<p>Research shows that Anger and Contempt are elicited by different appraisals, and have distinct universally recognizable facial expressions, feeling qualities, action tendencies, goals, and effects (e.g., Ekman &amp; Friesen, 1975, 1986; Fisher &amp; Roseman, 2007; Hutcherson &amp; Gross, 2011; Romani, et al., 2014; Rozin et al., 1999).</p>	<p>- Anger and Contempt will vary independently, and have different relationships to <b>partisan polarization, negative advertising, information seeking, turnout, and voting</b>.                      -If so, this would support <b>discrete emotion models</b> of political affect and behavior (supplementing insights offered by the dimensional view) .</p>
<p>-Anger is elicited by appraisals of unfair negative outcomes caused by others; Contempt by appraisals of others’ inferior traits. (Fisher &amp; Roseman, 2007; Hutcherson &amp; Gross, 2011).                      -Trait ascriptions are more stable and global than outcomes.                      -Negative outcomes experienced by oneself or one’s group are likely seen as more immediate and relevant than negative traits possessed by other people.</p>	<p>-Speeches, ads, and elections higher in expressions of contempt will result in more <b>partisan polarization</b> than speeches, ads, and elections that are higher in Anger.                      -Felt contempt will be associated with <b>old-fashioned racism</b>; anger with <b>modern (symbolic) racism</b>.                      -Felt anger will be associated with greater <b>political participation</b> (e.g. voter turnout) than felt contempt.                      -Speeches, ads, and elections higher in anger will be associated with greater <b>political participation</b> (including turnout) than those higher in contempt.                      -High contempt elections may decrease <b>political participation</b> (including turnout).</p>
<p>-Contempt is seen as a more extreme negative emotion than Anger (Hutcherson &amp; Gross, 2011).                      -There are individual and group differences in experience of and tolerance for particular emotions. For example, men report experiencing more Contempt than women do (Stapley &amp; Haviland, 1989). Men are also higher in Social Dominance Orientation (Pratto, Sidanius, &amp; Levin, 2006). Diary studies indicate that men and women experience Anger with equal frequency.</p>	<p>-Like uncivil ads, Contemptuous negative ads, if seen as relevant, will be more effective than Angry ads in lowering <b>evaluations of target candidates</b> among voters who report frequently experiencing contempt; Contemptuous ads <b>will be less effective</b> than Angry ads among voters who rarely experience contempt.                      -Contemptuous ads <b>may be more effective</b> (as compared to Angry ads) among strong partisans than weak partisans, independents, and swing voters; voters higher in social dominance; men as compared to women; conservatives as compared to liberals; and Republicans as compared to Democrats.</p>
<p>Anger is characterized by action tendencies of confrontation and attack, and goals of retribution and deterrence; Contempt by action tendencies of condescension and social exclusion, and the goal of getting others to reject the object of contempt (Fischer &amp; Roseman, 2007; Miller, 1997; Roseman, Wiest, &amp; Swartz, 1994).</p>	<p>Felt anger will be more associated with <b>information-seeking</b> relevant to confrontation (e.g., about injustices) and retribution (e.g., its implementation). Contempt will be associated with seeking information about traits of target individuals and groups, and <b>political communication</b> involving sharing such information with like-minded in-group members.</p>
<p>Anger is associated with short-term attack but long-term reconciliation, Contempt with long-term rejection and relationship termination (Fischer &amp; Roseman, 2007). Contempt is seen as lengthier and less remediable (Hutcherson &amp; Gross, 2011)</p>	<p>-Felt Contempt toward a candidate will be <b>less reversible</b> than Anger over the course of a campaign or between campaigns (if a candidate runs again).                      -Felt contempt will predict stability of <b>voter choice</b>.</p>

Thus, questions differentiating contempt from anger are needed to advance our understanding of candidate evaluation, party polarization, negative campaigning, political information-processing and communication, and voter choice.

### **Reliability and Validity of Proposed Items, Empirical Performance, Comparison to Alternatives**

ANES studies have asked respondents about emotions toward presidential candidates since 1980. The first set included seven terms (angry, hopeful, afraid, proud, disgusted, sympathetic, uneasy) and respondents indicated only whether or not they had ever felt each emotion toward each candidate. Early analyses (Abelson et al., 1982) showed that two factors could be extracted from such data. For the most part, all negative emotion terms loaded on one factor; all positive emotion terms loaded on the other.

Based partly on these results, later ANES assessed only positive and negative affect, each measured by two terms (hopeful, proud; afraid, angry). In the 1995 ANES pilot, the list emotions was expanded to include anxious, worried, bitter, resentful, disgusted, hatred, contempt, and enthusiastic. For each emotion felt, a follow-up question measured frequency: “How often would you say you felt [emotion]—very often, fairly often, occasionally, or rarely?” This yielded a 5-point scale, with ‘never felt’ as the end point.

In analyzing this expanded, richer data set, Marcus, Neuman, and McKuen (2000) found that the negative emotions now formed two factors. One, on which afraid, anxious, and worried loaded highly, they named Anxiety. The other, on which hatred, contempt, bitter, resentful, angry, and disgusted loaded, they named Aversion. As Marcus et al. (2000) emphasize, if just the shorter set of emotion questions had been asked, the aversion factor would not have been detected. After the 1995 Pilot, the ANES reverted to asking about the standard four emotion terms, though the two-part question that allowed construction of frequency scales was used in subsequent surveys.

But what happens when researchers examine data from single-item scales, testing whether they have significant and interpretable relationships to other variables? Analyzing the 1995 ANES pilot data, Johnston et al. (2014) find that anger and contempt (but not fear) *both* partially mediate the relationship between

ratings of Bill Clinton's leadership and feeling thermometer favorability to Clinton. In contrast, anger and fear (but not contempt) partially mediate the relationship between ratings of Bob Dole's leadership and favorability to Dole. A similar pattern emerges in a study of undergraduates viewing excerpts from the 2008 debates between Barack Obama and John McCain (Roseman et al., 2013). Contempt, *in addition to anger*, partially mediate the relationship between rated undesirable qualities of Obama and favorability; while only anger partially mediates the relationship between undesirable qualities of McCain and favorability.

These data suggest that single-item measures can yield significant and interpretable findings about political emotions. Rather than showing that the specific emotion terms were redundant, they are consistent with viewing anger and contempt as distinct emotions, each contributing unique variance in accounting for the relationship between perceptions of (Democratic party) presidential candidates and favorability to those candidates. The observed patterns also raise intriguing questions. Is contempt more important to Republican voters than to Democratic voters? Is it more relevant to Democratic candidates than Republican candidates? Or did the campaigns pursue different emotion strategies in their messaging and advertising? Perhaps Democratic strategists refrained from employing contempt in running against former war heroes Dole and McCain because it was not likely to be successful and could provoke a backlash?

In a recent study of the Iowa and New Jersey 2014 U.S. Senate elections, Redlawsk et al. (2015) tested relationships of six felt emotions (anger, contempt, anxiety, enthusiasm, hope, and admiration)—measured with single-item ANES-format questions—to respondents' vote intentions. Multinomial logistic regressions found contempt predicted vote intentions (against) both Democrat Bruce Braley and Republican Joni Ernst in Iowa. Contempt was the *most* significant negative emotion in both models—more so than anger (which also predicted Braley vote intentions) or anxiety (which also predicted Ernst vote intentions). Contempt had comparatively little impact on vote intentions for either New Jersey candidate. These findings support the utility of distinguishing contempt from anger, and speak to the significance of contempt in electoral politics. They also suggest that the importance of contempt is not party-specific, but

rather campaign-, candidate-, or election-specific. Contempt mattered greatly for candidates from both parties in the hotly contested Iowa race, where airwaves were saturated for many months with negative ads. But in the relatively uncontested New Jersey race, where Republican Jeff Bell aired no TV ads and his Democratic opponent Corey Booker sponsored very few, contempt was fairly unimportant.

Though these findings indicate that single-item measures of discrete emotions can yield meaningful and interpretable data, we nonetheless propose three-item scales to more reliably assess both contempt and anger. This is consistent with Brader and Marcus (2013, p. 188), who advise including “two cognate terms and preferably three or more for each emotion (dimension) the researchers seek to tap.” To measure contempt, we propose a scale comprising the terms *contemptuous*, *disdainful*, and *scornful*. This scale was originally developed by Zevon and Tellegen (1982), and has been used successfully in prior research. Melwani and Barsade (2011) report Cronbach’s alphas between .72 and .83 across three rounds of data collection with a sample of 127 undergraduates. Romani et al. (2014) ran a confirmatory factor analysis on the items, along with items measuring anger and disgust, constructive and destructive punitive behavior, and a control variable. With a sample size of 236 respondents, factor loadings for contemptuous, scornful, and disdainful were .86, .89, and .79, respectively, and Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was .88.

To measure anger, we propose a three-item scale comprising *angry* (an item used on the ANES since 1980), *mad*, and *outraged*. Romani et al. (2014) measured anger with the items *angry*, *mad*, and *very annoyed*; loadings were .95, .90, and .97, respectively, with Cronbach’s alpha of .90. However, we are hesitant to use “very annoyed” because it has a quantifier (*very*) in the item as well as the response scale, which might be confusing (e.g., respondents saying they felt *very angry* “fairly often” or “most of the time”). We propose instead to use the cognate term *outraged*. Valentino, et al. (2011) used *outraged* along with *angry* and *disgusted* to measure anger felt about “the way things are going in the country these days.” They report a factor analysis of 12 emotion terms found *angry*, *disgusted*, and *outraged* comprising the first factor (item loadings were not given). However, we are hesitant to use the term *disgusted*, as it names a different

discrete emotion (according to Ekman & Friesen, 1975; Rozin et al., 1999; Vandenbroek, 2011; and others), and the analysis conducted by Romani et al. (2014) found that term loaded highly on a factor other than anger (the factor measuring the emotion of disgust). But *outraged*, which loaded highly on the same factor as *angry*, is a good alternative to use in place of *very annoyed* from the Romani et al. (2014) scale.

For all emotion measures, we propose retaining the two-part item wording used on ANES in 2012:

**“Now we would like to know something about the feelings you have toward the candidates for President. I am going to name a candidate, and I want you to tell me whether something about that person, or something he or she has done, has made you have certain feelings like anger or pride. Has [candidate] -- because of the kind of person [he/she] is or because of something [he/she] has done, ever made you feel [angry, mad, outraged, contemptuous, disdainful, scornful]?”** If the response is yes, the frequency follow-up is asked: **“How often would you say you’ve felt [emotion]— [ALWAYS, MOST OF THE TIME, ABOUT HALF THE TIME, SOME OF THE TIME, or NEVER / NEVER, SOME OF THE TIME, ABOUT HALF THE TIME, MOST OF THE TIME, or ALWAYS]?”**

ANES items *afraid, proud, enthusiastic, hopeful* would remain. We also propose one modification in the instructions for emotion items. A number of investigators report that some American respondents don't know the meaning of “contempt” (Matsumoto & Ekman, 2004) or leave items on the contempt scale blank (Zevon & Tellegen, 1982). To deal with this eventuality and improve the emotion measures generally, we propose respondents be instructed to indicate if they don't know the meaning of a particular emotion term. Our wording follows that used in feeling thermometer instructions [ANES Time Series 2012 codebook, p. 27], adding at the end of the introduction to the emotion measures section: **“If we come to a question about a feeling word whose meaning you don't recognize, you don't need to answer that question.”**

ANES emotion questions have a proven track record, having been asked in increasingly sophisticated question formats since 1980. We propose only a modest expansion in the number of emotion terms within the question set (smaller than the number in the 1995 ANES pilot). Respondents would not need additional



time mastering a new question type. In numerous studies, ANES emotion questions have been related to important variables, including voter choice and electoral participation. Recent research (e.g., Johnston et al., 2014; Marcus et al., 2000; Redlawsk et al., 2015; Valentino et al., 2011) shows that expanding the set of emotion terms can reveal significant new relationships to these election-relevant variables.

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