

Anger and Declining Trust in Government in the American Electorate

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Abstract

Partisanship in the United States in the contemporary era is largely characterized by feelings of anger and negativity. While the behavioral consequences of this new style of partisanship have been explored at some length, less is known about how the anger that is at the root of this growing partisan antipathy affects Americans' views of the national government. In this paper, I utilize data from the 2012 American National Election Studies (ANES) to show that higher levels of anger is associated with a greater level of distrust in government across a variety of metrics. I then present evidence from a survey experiment on a national sample of registered voters to show that higher levels of anger has a causal effect in reducing citizens' trust in government. Importantly, I find that anger is able to affect an individual's views of the national government even when it is aroused through apolitical means. In total, the results suggest that anger plays a broad and powerful role in shaping how Americans view their governing institutions.

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At both the elite- and mass-level, American politics is becoming increasingly polarized (Fiorina and Abrams, 2012; Hetherington, 2001; Theriault, 2008; Abramowitz, 2010; Abramowitz and Saunders, 2008). This polarization has led to a more biased, hostile, confrontational, and angry style of politics. This new anger-fueled partisanship has caused a rise in antipathy and hostility toward the out-party (Iyengar and Westwood, 2015; Sood and Iyengar, 2015; Mason, 2013, 2015), an increase in straight-ticket voting (Jacobson, 2015) with an associated “nationalization” of election outcomes (Abramowitz and Webster, 2016), and heightened levels of political participation through the mechanism of increased in-group threat and anger toward the out-party (Huddy, Mason and Aarøe, 2015).

Yet, outside of such behavioral outcomes, little is known about how anger within the electorate shapes individuals’ views of the political system and governmental processes. Indeed, while the anger that is so prevalent within contemporary American politics may bring positive benefits (e.g., increased participation and clarified choices at the ballot box), it is likely that this anger-fueled partisan antipathy has the negative consequence of diminishing individuals’ evaluations of American government.

In this paper, I seek to fill this gap in our understanding by showing how anger lowers Americans’ evaluations of the national government. I do this by first presenting evidence from the 2012 American National Election Studies (ANES) that shows that higher levels of anger are associated with a greater belief that people have no say about what the government does, that public officials do not care what people think, and that government is run by crooked individuals. I then present evidence from a survey experiment derived from a unique dataset on a national sample of registered voters, fielded nearly four years after the final wave of the 2012 ANES panel was completed, that shows that inducing higher levels of anger in individuals has a causal effect on

lowering Americans' views toward government.

Importantly, while these causal effects are obtained by directing individuals' anger toward the national government, they are robust to anger that is aroused through apolitical means. This suggests that being angry specifically about politics or political issues is not necessary to cause a diminution in individuals' evaluations of American government. On the contrary, merely provoking higher levels of incidental anger is sufficient to alter individuals' perceptions of political issues. In total, the observational and experimental results I present here suggest that anger has a broad and powerful role in shaping patterns of political behavior and public opinion within the American electorate, especially in regards to evaluations of the national government.

This paper proceeds as follows: first, I outline recent work on how anger affects political behavior, as well as research examining the factors that shape an individual's levels of political efficacy and evaluations of government. I then draw on psychological theories of Affective Intelligence (AI) and "mood-congruity" (see, e.g., Bower, 1991) to develop a theory as to how and why anger should cause individuals to lower their evaluations of the national government. I then present a series of results – both observational and causal – consistent with my expectations. Finally, I conclude by discussing the implications of these findings and discussing avenues for future research.

1 Anger, Behavior, and Political Efficacy

Though canonical models of political behavior suggest that individuals are purely rational actors who are unaffected by emotions (see, e.g., Downs, 1957), recent work has cogently shown that anger can and does play an important role in shaping political behavior and public opinion across a wide range of issue areas. Banks and Valentino (2012), for instance, show that anger causes

a reduction in support for affirmative action policies and that this anger is at the root of symbolic racism and racial resentment. Relatedly, Banks (2014) shows that heightened levels of anger causes shifts in opinions on health care reform. Specifically, Banks's (2014) study shows that anger causes a reduction in support for health care reform among racial conservatives by triggering symbolic racism. Conversely, higher levels of anger serves to increase support for health care reform among those who are racially liberal. The mechanism through which these findings occur can largely be explained by MacKuen et al.'s (2010) argument that anger causes people to fall back on familiar information and pre-conceived ideas.

Additional studies have illustrated how anger serves to reduce levels of trust. For instance, Dunn and Schweitzer (2005) utilize an experimental design to show how higher levels of anger plays a causal role in reducing an individual's level of interpersonal trust. Importantly, this effect is found through arousing an individual's level of "incidental anger." This implies that experiencing anger in one situation can affect a person's reactions in an unrelated setting. Applying their model to business dealings, Dunn and Schweitzer (2005) show how experiencing anger in one meeting may cause a manager to also be angry "with a client in an unrelated setting."

Relatedly, Gino and Schweitzer (2008) find that angry individuals are less willing to accept advice from others. Similar to the mechanism found by Dunn and Schweitzer (2005), Gino and Schweitzer (2008) note that the reason that angry individuals are less willing to accept advice from others is because higher levels of anger lowers an individual's level of interpersonal trust. Much like the findings provided by Dunn and Schweitzer (2005), the results that Gino and Schweitzer (2008) present are also obtained by heightening levels of "incidental anger." Anger, then, has been shown to affect trust in broad and meaningful ways across multiple studies.

If these findings about anger and trust exist at the individual level, then it makes sense to

expect that we would see them at an institutional level as well. However, the existing body of scholarship is devoid of any studies examining the link between anger and trust in (or evaluations of) governing institutions. Indeed, recent work on political trust has suggested that an individual's partisan affiliation plays the largest role in determining how she views governmental performance. According to Hetherington and Rudolph (2015), the increasing polarization of partisans along an affective dimension has caused individuals whose party is *not* in power to have consistently lower levels of trust in government. This is problematic, say Hetherington and Rudolph (2015), because "trust can serve as a reservoir that policy makers draw on to cause those not ideologically predisposed to follow them to give their ideas a shot," and "[t]hat reservoir has run dry." In sum, Hetherington and Rudolph's (2015) argument is that polarization has diminished citizens' trust in the very institutions that are designed to both represent and provide for their needs.

Hetherington and Rudolph's (2015) study largely builds on the work of Citrin (1974), who found that whether an individual trusts the government is largely a function of whether her partisan affiliation matches that of the president. Thus, Democrats in the electorate trust the government more when the president is a Democrat; similarly, Republicans exhibit higher levels of trust in government when a Republican holds the office. It is likely that such trends are exacerbated in the contemporary era, given that the rise of partisan news outlets has allowed Americans to self-select into the TV stations and news websites that best fit their own partisan and ideological leanings (Prior, 2007; Mutz, 2006). Indeed, previous work has shown that the ways in which news outlets cover politics plays a large role in determining citizens' cynicism toward government (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997).

Though anger within the electorate is increasing as trust in government is declining, little has been done to integrate these two trends. While Hetherington and Rudolph (2015) lay a foundation

for such a research agenda, more work remains to be done. Indeed, it is important to understand how the growth in anger – as a trend related to, but distinct from polarization – affects trust in, and evaluations of, government. In the next section, I draw on two related theories from psychological literatures to develop a theory as to how and why anger should lower Americans’ evaluations of the national government.

2 Anger, Negativity, and Evaluations of Government

While anger is a prominent emotional aspect of negative partisan affect in the American electorate, it is not immediately clear how anger should alter individuals’ evaluations of the national government. Indeed, most studies of political behavior focus on how partisanship, ideology, or some other sociodemographic characteristic is predictive of political efficacy and evaluations of government. However, the psychological literature on emotions is rich with studies suggesting a linkage between anger and lower political efficacy and lower evaluations of the national government.

That anger is able to shape individuals’ evaluations of the national government is due, in part, to the process of Affective Intelligence (AI). Pioneered by Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen (2000), AI “conceptualize[s] affect and reason not as oppositional but as complementary, as two functional mental faculties in a delicate, interactive, highly functional dynamic balance.” The complementary and interactive nature of emotion and reason operates such that one’s emotional reaction to a particular stimulus shapes whether an individual will react to that stimulus by relying on old habits or by seeking new information. Moreover, AI claims that “affect also influences when and how we *think* about . . . things” (Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen, 2000, emphasis in original).

Schwarz and Clore (1983) put forth a similar argument, claiming that emotion and reason

are interconnected processes. Specifically, their argument is that affect plays a large role in how individuals process and comprehend information. In their seminal study, Schwarz and Clore (1983) experimentally induced either happy or sad emotions in subjects and then asked individuals to give subjective evaluations about their quality of life. The results they found suggest that happy individuals and sad individuals tend to have positive and negative evaluations about their quality of life, respectively. Much like Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen's (2000) theory of AI, this implies that emotions and reason are intertwined in a manner where the former play a large role in influencing the latter. In other words, "one cannot think without feeling" (Marcus, 2002).

How, then, should anger be expected to lower individuals' views of the national government? Insights from AI and the psychological theory of "mood-congruity" (Bower, 1991) suggest that an individual's felt emotion shapes the way in which she renders a judgment on any given thing. Extant research also suggests that anger is an emotion with a negative valence (Lerner and Keltner, 2001; Moons, Eisenberger and Taylor, 2010). Accordingly, individuals who are primed to exhibit higher levels of anger – either at a specific target, or incidentally – will view the target of their anger in a negative light. Put more succinctly, because anger is an emotion with a negative valence, the judgment that an angry individual makes toward another person, situation, or institution will also be negative.

This expectation was cogently illustrated by Forgas and Moylan (1987), who surveyed moviegoers about various items (e.g., political judgments, expectations about the future) after they had seen a movie with a particular overall valence. They found that individuals who saw a movie that, overall, had a happy valence, tended to give optimistic judgments on survey batteries. By contrast, those individuals who saw movies that had an aggregate sad or aggressive valence were more pes-

simistic in their judgments.¹ In terms of political affairs, for instance, Forgas and Moylan (1987) found that individuals gave lower evaluations of national and local Australian politicians after seeing a sad or aggressive film. Additionally, movie goers who saw a sad or aggressive film were less likely to believe that a nuclear war could be avoided, and were more likely to believe that the state of the economy was poor. These findings lend credence to the theory of mood-congruity, and suggest that anger should “be expected to activate negative concepts, and . . . negative judgments” (Bodenhausen, Sheppard and Kramer, 1994) across a wide range of possible judgments.

Applying the expectations of AI and mood-congruity to political behavior appears to be a fruitful endeavor. Because negative partisan affect in the electorate has grown considerably over the past few decades (Abramowitz and Webster, 2016; Mason, 2013, 2015; Iyengar and Westwood, 2015), Americans are increasingly exposed to stimuli seeking to induce anger toward the opposing political party, its governing elite, and its supporters in the electorate. Whether these stimuli come from elite rhetoric (Layman and Carsey, 2002), fellow partisans (Klar, 2014), or partisan-friendly media outlets (Prior, 2007), political discourse in the contemporary era is decisively negative in tone. Moreover, because these anger-inducing stimuli often encourage individuals to gauge the governmental performance of a particular party (see, e.g., Citrin, 1974; Hetherington and Rudolph, 2015), theories of mood-congruity dictate that this anger, and its associated negative evaluations, will be directed at government itself. If this is correct, then individuals who have higher levels of anger will have lower evaluations of the national government.

¹Forgas and Moylan’s (1987) movies with a happy valence were *Beverly Hills Cop*, *Policy Academy 2*, *Back to the Future*, and *Bewster’s Millions*. Their movies with a sad valence were *Dance with a Stranger*, *Mask*, *Birdy*, and *Killing Fields*. Their movies with an aggressive valence were *First Blood*, *Rambo*, *Mad Max 2*, and *Mad Max 3*.

3 Design & Results

In order to illustrate how anger shapes individuals' views of the national government, I first utilize data from the 2012 American National Election Studies (ANES) panel survey. Using the ANES data for this analysis is beneficial for a variety of reasons. First, the ANES has been fielded for over 60 years and is widely used within the field of political behavior. More importantly, the 2012 installment of the ANES included questions about individuals' emotional responses to the two major parties' presidential candidates. This allows for a relatively straightforward examination of the relationship between anger and trust in government.

Summary statistics on partisanship and demographics are presented in Table 1. Here, I have dichotomized an individual's gender and racial affiliation. I have also created a three-item measure of education: a value of one indicates that an individual possesses a high school education or less, a value of two indicates that an individual possesses up to a Bachelors degree, and a value of three indicates that a respondent has a graduate or professional degree.

[Table 1 about here.]

As shown in Table 1, 52% of the 2012 ANES sample is female and 40.6% are non-white. The mean level of education is 1.78, a number that indicates that the average level of education in the sample is just below a Bachelors degree. Moreover, nearly 53% of the sample identifies as a Democrat, approximately 34% identify as a Republican, and the remaining 13% identify as an independent.² These demographics are close to the percentages from the U.S. Census Bureau, which found that the U.S. population was 50.8% female and 25% non-white.³

²In these calculations, respondents identifying as an independent who leans toward one of the two major parties was classified as a partisan.

³See <https://www.census.gov/2010census/data/> for more demographic information from the 2010 U.S. Census.

Key for the analysis here are questions that asked about individuals' emotional feelings toward the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates, and a series of questions designed to measure individuals' level of trust in government. In order to construct the main independent variables used in these analyses, I relied on individuals' responses to questions asking how often they felt angry at the Democratic presidential candidate and the Republican presidential candidate. These questions have five possible responses, ranging from "never" to "always."⁴ I used these variables to create a measure of anger toward the opposing party's presidential candidate, where Republican respondents' values are those reported on the measure tapping anger toward the Democratic presidential candidate, and Democratic respondents' values are those reported on the measure of anger toward the Republican presidential candidate. This measure is scored such that higher values indicate more frequently feeling angry about the opposing party's presidential candidate.

There are three dependent variables in this analysis, each of which taps a different measure of citizens' trust in government. The first question asks individuals how many people in government they believe to be crooked. There are three possible responses to this question: "hardly any," "not very many," and "quite a few." The second question asks respondents to indicate whether they agree with the notion that public officials do not care what people think. Potential responses for this question range from "disagree strongly" to "agree strongly." The last dependent variable measures how much individuals believe that they have no say in what government does. Responses to this question range from "not at all" to "a great deal." In each case, higher values on these variables indicate lower levels of trust in government.

In order to minimize any confounding effects in my model estimates, I include in each model controls for partisanship, self-reported ideology (along a seven-point scale), gender, race, educa-

⁴The full range of possible responses are "never," "some of the time," "about half the time," "most of the time," and "always."

tion, and a scale measuring an individual's level of activism. The education control is the trichotomous measure discussed above, while the activism scale measures how many of 11 different participatory acts an individual engaged in. These acts are attending a rally, talking to others about politics, displaying a yard sign or a bumper sticker, working for a political party, donating money to a candidate, donating money to a party, donating to a third-party political organization, attending a march or rally, attending a school board meeting, signing a political petition, or contacting a Member of Congress about an issue. Additionally, in order to address concerns about answers to the post-election dependent variables measuring trust in government being affected by the outcome of the election, I also include a pre-election measure of how much individuals trust the government as a control variable in each model. This allows for a de-facto "baseline" level of trust in government to be built into the model estimates.

To estimate these models, I utilize ordinary-least squares (OLS) regression. However, because each of the dependent variables has just a few possible categorical responses, I also estimated these models via a series of ordered logistic regressions. In each case, the findings are robust to the use of an ordered logit. Accordingly, I present OLS results here for ease of interpretation. Results of the models calculated using ordered logit are available in the Appendix.

[Table 2 about here.]

Across each of the three measures of trust in government, the results of Table 2 suggest that higher levels of anger toward the opposing party's presidential candidate is associated with a lower level of trust in government. The predictive power of anger toward the opposing party's presidential candidate is quite impressive. Indeed, in two of the three models, the coefficient estimate of anger toward the opposing party's presidential candidate is larger, in terms of absolute value, than the dummy variables for gender and race. The coefficient estimate for the anger variable is larger than

that of the activism variable across all three model specifications and is consistently on par with an individual's level of education in terms of its predictive ability.

Because the majority of the literature on political efficacy and trust in government focuses on the role of partisanship, comparing the standardized coefficient estimates between the anger variable and the partisan dummy is particularly important. Outside of the measure of an individual's baseline level of pre-election trust in government, no variable plays a larger role in predicting how much an individual trusts the national government than partisanship. However, a simple comparison shows that anger is also a strong predictor of trust in government. Indeed, the coefficient estimate for the anger variable ranges from 61% to 93% of the size of the partisanship coefficient.⁵ This suggests that, while partisanship continues to powerfully shape the ways in which Americans view the political world, having higher levels of anger can also play a substantively important role in altering levels of trust in government.

One potential concern about these design choices and results is that they omit variables measuring trust in government that could be used as dependent variables. Among other items, these potential dependent variables include questions about how often respondents trust the government to do what is right, and whether the government wastes taxpayers' money. However, these trust in government questions were asked *only* in the pre-election wave of the 2012 ANES. Because the current empirical specification of the models contains dependent variables that were measured in the post-election wave and independent variables that were measured in the pre-election wave, utilizing these additional questions that measure individuals' trust in government would not produce directly comparable results. Additionally, estimating empirical models with contemporaneously measured independent and dependent variables is sure to introduce endogeneity problems. Never-

⁵In column one, the anger coefficient is 61% of the size of the partisanship coefficient; in the second column, it is 93% of the size; in the third, it is 62%.

theless, regressing these additional trust in government questions on the measure of anger and the series of control variables described above produces results consistent with the theoretical expectations. Results of these regressions are available in the Appendix.

3.1 Anger, Evaluations of Government, and Causality

While the proceeding analyses have shown that anger is predictive of negative evaluations of the national government across different metrics, it is important to note that these results should be viewed with a degree of caution. Indeed, though the variable measuring anger came in the pre-election wave of the ANES survey and the dependent variable was measured in the post-election wave, it is still not possible to conclude that anger *causes* a reduction in Americans' evaluations of the national government. In general, correlational analyses based off of large scale datasets, such as the ANES or the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES), cannot definitively say whether higher levels of anger leads to a diminished level of trust in government, or if having low levels of trust in government leads one to adopt a more angry persona.

Moreover, longer-running panel datasets are also inadequate to study the causal relationship between anger and citizens' trust in government. If negative partisan affect is driven by anger and anger is higher when the opposing party controls the levers of government, then panel data is unable to adjudicate whether changes in trust in government is due to anger or a change in the relationship between one's own party identification and the party that controls the government. Indeed, when the out-party gains control of the government after an election, both of the purported mechanisms that reduce trust in government – anger and the partisan relationship between an individual and the governing party (Hetherington and Rudolph, 2015; Citrin, 1974) – change simultaneously. These simultaneous changes preclude the use of panel data to test whether anger has a causal effect in

reducing individuals' levels of trust in government. Therefore, in order to sidestep these issues and supplement the findings derived from the 2012 ANES data, I employ an experimental design to exogenously vary individuals' level of anger before measuring levels of trust in government.

The data for this experiment come from a survey fielded in Fall 2016 via Survey Sampling International (SSI). The survey is a national – though not representative – sample of registered voters with a total sample size of 3,262 respondents. Approximately 57% of the respondents are female, 82% are white, and 85.4% have at least some college education. More complete summary statistics are shown in Table 3.

[Table 3 about here.]

In order to alter individuals' levels of anger, I utilize a technique known as emotional recall.⁶ This technique, which has been used widely in psychology (see, e.g., Lerner and Keltner, 2001; Lerner et al., 2003), asks individuals to write a short paragraph about a time they felt a particular emotion. The idea of such a technique is that by recalling a specific time that they felt a given emotion, that individual will temporarily experience a heightened sense of that same emotion. For the purposes of this study, individuals were asked to recall a time that they felt “very angry about politics.” They were then instructed to describe as precisely as possible how this experience made them feel. Individuals in the control group were asked to recall what they had for breakfast in the morning. This question provides a useful control group because it is benign in nature and is tangential to any emotional state.

One important aspect of this design is that it, like others, asks individuals to write about a time

⁶Such an approach is not the only way to alter individuals' emotional states. Lab experiments facilitate a wider range of experimental manipulations – such as games or human interactions – but are impractical within the context of a survey experiment. For an excellent overview of “how to push someone's buttons,” see Lobbestael, Arntz and Wiers (2008).

they felt a given emotion (here, anger) *about politics*. Because such a design pairs an emotional stimulus with a prompt that causes an individual to think *specifically* about politics or political events, it is difficult to disentangle whether anger is causing a shift in attitudes toward the national government or if merely thinking about politics alters individuals' evaluations of governmental performance. Therefore, as a robustness check on the traditional emotional recall design, I also randomized individuals into two additional treatment groups. One treatment group asked participants to "write about a time they were very angry." The other treatment group asked individuals to "write about a time they thought about politics." By separating the emotion (anger) from the target (politics) in this way, I am able to more precisely adjudicate the causal mechanism being manipulated.

Finally, after survey participants were randomized into one of the treatment groups described above, they were asked to rate their level of agreement with the following statement: "The national government is unresponsive to the concerns and interests of the public." Agreement with this statement was measured on a zero to ten scale, where zero indicates that an individual "completely disagrees" with the statement and ten indicates that an individual "completely agrees" with the statement.

Recall that the expectation is that higher levels of anger should cause individuals to view the national government as unresponsive to the concerns and interest of the public. In order to test this hypothesis, I simply regress the measure of confidence in government described above on indicators for treatment status. The expectation is that the coefficient for treatment status should be positively signed. The results of the experimental manipulations are shown in Table 4.

[Table 4 about here.]

The first column of Table 4 presents the experimental results without any control variables

included. Those who were randomized into both the anger and the anger-about-politics treatment groups were more likely to agree that the national government is unresponsive to the concerns and interests of the public. Merely thinking about politics had no effect on belief in government responsiveness. The second column adds a series of control variables – ideology, partisanship, level of education, income, and dummy variables for non-whites and females – to the original model specification.⁷ With these control variables included, the coefficients remain quite similar to those in the unconditional regression: those who were randomized into the anger condition and those were randomized into the anger-about-politics condition both exhibited a greater belief that the national government is unresponsive to the concerns and interests of the public. Thus, regardless of the exact wording of the experimental prime, heightened levels of anger causes individuals to have lower evaluations of American government.⁸

4 Conclusion & Discussion

Partisanship in the American electorate has changed in dramatic ways over the past few decades. While Americans used to feel indifferent toward the opposing political party, the contemporary era is defined by intense dislike of the out-party, its supporters, and its preferred policies. This new partisan orientation has caused Americans to be more biased against the opposing party (Mason, 2015; Sood and Iyengar, 2015), and, along with the decline of the incumbency advantage in favor of partisan identification (Jacobson, 2015), to vote increasingly straight-ticket (Abramowitz and

⁷Adding a series of control variables to a model that is estimated on experimental data accomplishes two things: first, given that the coefficients change very little between the unconditional and the conditional models, we can have a high degree of confidence that the randomization process worked as intended; and, second, it helps alleviate any infelicities that might have occurred during randomization.

⁸While different treatment wordings were both able to successfully induce anger in survey participants, there is no statistically significant difference between the “anger” coefficient and the “anger about politics” coefficient.

Webster, 2016).

Yet, outside of these behavioral outcomes, little has been done to understand how and why this anger-fueled negative partisan affect shapes Americans' views of the national government. In this paper, I have helped to fill this gap by showing how anger is associated with lower levels of trust in government. Specifically, higher levels of anger is associated with the belief that people in government are crooked, that public officials do not care what people think, and that citizens have no say in what government does. I have also shown through a survey experiment on a national sample of registered voters that anger has a causal effect in reducing citizens' trust in government. This diminution in trust in the national government is due to the fact that people tend to evaluate objects in ways that are in line with their emotions: because anger is an emotion with a negative valence, and because this anger is directed at the government and those who run it, individuals who are angry have poor evaluations of the national government.

Moreover, this finding does not appear to be limited to one specific period of time. The correlational analyses presented in Section 3 utilized the 2012 ANES panel data. The data for the experimental analysis presented in Section 3.1 was fielded in October 2016. Thus, the experimental results were obtained nearly four years after the final wave of the 2012 ANES panel was completed. That these findings are produced in two different datasets, fielded almost four years apart from each other, suggests that anger has a robust role in altering citizens' level of trust in the national government.

Importantly, the experimental results I have shown here were obtained by arousing individuals' levels of incidental anger. That is, experiment participants had their evaluations of the national government altered downward even though the anger that they expressed was aroused through apolitical means. From the standpoint of campaign strategy, this implies that the ways in which

members of the electorate view politics and political affairs can be shaped in subtle ways. Indeed, rather than seeking to stir anger specifically about government or opposition candidates within the electorate, political parties and candidates merely need to incite generic anger in order to alter patterns of voter behavior and public opinion. Future work, then, should build on this finding to examine other ways in which incidental anger causes shifts in mass political behavior.

Normatively, the results presented here have troubling implications. With the rise of negative partisan affect and a contentious style of governing, Americans are more frequently exposed to anger-inducing stimuli. With politics increasingly being defined by feelings of anger toward the opposing party and its governing elite, trust in government is bound to decline. Absent some exogenous shock to the political system that reverses this trend, it is possible that trust in government will decline to a level so low that the national government will lose its sense of legitimacy in the eyes of those to whom it is accountable. If trust in governing institutions reaches such a level, the health of American democracy is threatened.

Future research, then, should examine how the harmful effects of anger in modern-day politics can be mitigated. Moreover, it is possible that certain types of anger-inducing stimuli are more damaging to citizens' trust in government and political institutions than others. If this is the case, then future research should explore what sorts of angry appeals are more or less pernicious in their ability to weaken the bonds of trust between Americans and their government. One potentially fruitful avenue for future research is to examine whether the source of the anger-inducing stimulus has an effect on exacerbating or attenuating anger's ability to reduce trust in government.

Relatedly, future work should examine how long the effects of anger on reducing trust in government persist. Is anger an emotion that brings negative evaluations of governmental institutions, but only temporarily? Or, do the effects of anger on reducing citizens' trust in government last long

after anger has subsided? Understanding the duration of these effects will help to clarify our understanding about the linkage between the hostile nature of contemporary politics and Americans' trust in their own government. With trust in government continuing to decline (The Economist, 2017; Pew Research Center, 2015), understanding these processes is essential to strengthening American democracy.

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Table 1: Summary Statistics of 2012 ANES Data

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Democrat	5,890	0.527	0.499	0	1
Republican	5,890	0.339	0.473	0	1
Independent	5,890	0.134	0.341	0	1
Female	5,914	0.519	0.500	0	1
Non-white	5,885	0.406	0.491	0	1
Education	5,906	1.780	0.656	1	3

	Govt. Crooked	Govt. Cares	Have Say in Govt.
Anger	0.035*** (0.013)	0.127*** (0.029)	0.113*** (0.033)
Democrat	-0.126*** (0.031)	-0.297*** (0.064)	-0.395*** (0.074)
Ideology	0.006 (0.013)	-0.063** (0.029)	-0.118*** (0.033)
Female	0.053* (0.028)	0.022 (0.059)	0.076 (0.068)
Non-White	0.091*** (0.032)	0.094 (0.069)	-0.066 (0.080)
Education	-0.111*** (0.022)	-0.138*** (0.045)	-0.179*** (0.052)
Activism	-0.006 (0.007)	-0.039*** (0.014)	-0.087*** (0.016)
Pre-election trust	-0.227*** (0.031)	-0.437*** (0.071)	-0.343*** (0.082)
Constant	3.196*** (0.110)	5.066*** (0.250)	4.975*** (0.286)
N	1,577	1,162	1,162
R ²	0.073	0.091	0.112

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Table 2: Regression Estimates of Trust in Government. This table shows how higher levels of anger increases citizens' distrust of government. Being angry toward the opposing party's presidential candidate is associated with a higher belief that the government is crooked, that the government does not care about ordinary people, and that individuals have no say in what the government does.

Table 3: Summary Statistics of Experimental Data

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
White	3,252	0.820	0.384	0	1
Black	3,252	0.066	0.249	0	1
Asian	3,252	0.038	0.190	0	1
Native American	3,252	0.009	0.094	0	1
Hispanic	3,252	0.055	0.229	0	1
Other Race	3,252	0.012	0.110	0	1
High School Only	3,248	0.146	0.353	0	1
Some College	3,248	0.854	0.353	0	1
Male	3,255	0.428	0.495	0	1
Female	3,255	0.572	0.495	0	1
Democrat	3,247	0.521	0.500	0	1
Independent	3,247	0.108	0.310	0	1
Republican	3,247	0.371	0.483	0	1
Liberal	3,244	0.386	0.487	0	1
Conservative	3,244	0.331	0.471	0	1

	Govt. Unresponsiveness	
Anger	0.277** (0.122)	0.256** (0.119)
Anger about politics	0.195* (0.118)	0.204* (0.116)
Think about politics	0.182 (0.120)	0.193 (0.117)
Controls:	No	Yes
N	3,188	3,141
R ²	0.002	0.057

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Table 4: *Effect of Anger on Political Efficacy.* These experimental results show that inducing higher levels of anger causes individuals to have lower levels of political efficacy. Specifically, priming individuals to become angrier makes them more likely to believe that the national government is unresponsive to the concerns and interests of the public.

Appendix

	Govt. Crooked	Govt. Cares	Have Say in Govt.
Anger	0.151*** (0.052)	0.260*** (0.054)	0.190*** (0.053)
Controls:	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	1,577	1,162	1,162

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Table 5: *Regression Estimates of Trust in Government (Ordered Logit)*. This table shows that the results derived from using models estimated via OLS are robust to using a series of ordered logits. Models are calculated with the same control variables used in the primary estimation.

	Govt. Does What is Right	Govt. Wastes Money	Govt. Run by Big Interests
	OLS	OLS	Logit
Anger	0.087*** (0.019)	0.013 (0.008)	0.052 (0.046)
Democrat	-0.374*** (0.045)	-0.302*** (0.019)	-0.486*** (0.113)
Ideology	-0.022 (0.018)	-0.004 (0.008)	0.033 (0.043)
Female	-0.078* (0.041)	-0.032* (0.018)	-0.404*** (0.101)
Non-White	-0.126*** (0.047)	-0.051** (0.020)	-0.490*** (0.108)
Education	0.024 (0.032)	-0.074*** (0.014)	-0.017 (0.078)
Activism	-0.019* (0.010)	0.003 (0.004)	0.034 (0.025)
Pre-election trust	3.718*** (0.122)	3.003*** (0.053)	1.951*** (0.297)
N	1,529	3,114	3,083

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Table 6: *Regression Estimates of Trust in Government, Additional Dependent Variables.* This table shows the relationship between anger and trust in government across three additional metrics.