

Negative Partisan Affect, Anger, and Trust in Government

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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 negative partisan affect 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 negative partisan affect is driven by anger, and that higher levels of anger is associated with a greater level of distrust in the 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.

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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). With this rise in elite polarization, partisans in the electorate are becoming more receptive to elite cues about issue positions (Layman and Carsey, 2002) and have developed a new form of partisanship that is characterized by a “rigidity of attitudes and opinions” (Bafumi and Shapiro, 2009). With the rise of this “new partisan voter” (Bafumi and Shapiro, 2009) in the American electorate, scholars have begun to understand that the nature of partisan affiliation is changing. While both seminal and recent works within political science argue that partisanship stems from parental influence (Campbell et al., 1960), peer social networks (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee, 1954; Beck et al., 2002; Klar, 2014), or through rational economic calculations (Downs, 1957; Black, 1948), a new body of scholarship suggests that partisan affiliation is motivated by feelings of antipathy and hostility toward the out-party (Iyengar and Westwood, 2015; Sood and Iyengar, 2015; Mason, 2013, 2015). Thus, rather than affiliating *with* one party, Americans today are increasingly affiliating *against* the other (Abramowitz and Webster, 2016).

This rise in negative partisan affect, or “negative partisanship,” has been shown to have consequences for how individuals behave politically and how they view members of the opposing party. Among other things, this new politics of loyalty-by-negativity has led to an increase in straight-ticket voting (Jacobson, 2015) and a “nationalization” of election outcomes (Abramowitz and Webster, 2016), as well as a growing affective dislike (Mason, 2013, 2015) and bias toward the opposing political party and its supporters (Iyengar and Westwood, 2015). This negative partisan affect has also led to higher levels of participation through the mechanism of increased in-group threat and anger toward the out-party (Huddy,

Mason and Aarøe, 2015).

Yet, outside of these behavioral outcomes, little is known about how negative partisan affect within the electorate shapes individuals' views of the political system and governmental processes. Indeed, while this growing negative partisan affect may bring the positive benefits of polarization (e.g., increased participation and clarified choices at the ballot box), it is likely that the anger-fueled partisan antipathy that is so prevalent in contemporary politics leads to a diminution in individuals' evaluations of American government.

In this paper, I seek to fill this gap in our understanding by showing how negative partisan affect – specifically, the anger that stems from negative partisan affect – lowers Americans' evaluations of the national government. I do this by presenting evidence from the 2012 American National Election Studies (ANES) dataset that shows that higher levels of anger are associated with a higher 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. In total, the results suggest that the anger that stems from negative partisan affect within the electorate has deleterious consequences on Americans' feelings and evaluations toward the government as a whole.

This paper proceeds as follows: first, I outline recent work on negative partisan affect, as well as the factors that shape Americans' views toward government. I then argue that anger is the prominent emotion driving negative partisan affect. Next, I outline a theory as to why

anger should lower 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 Negative Partisan Affect & Trust in Government

With the rise of polarized politics, Americans have more frequently identified themselves as political independents. Yet, despite this apparent independence, Americans in the electorate are frequently loyal to one party over the other. This is due largely to the growing negativity through which members of the electorate view the out-party (Abramowitz and Webster, 2016). The exact nature of such negativity is debated. Some scholars argue that ideological disagreements are at the root of this affective dislike (see, e.g., Rogowski and Sutherland, 2015), while others argue that group-based notions of conflict (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Tajfel, 1981; Mackie, Devos and Smith, 2000) have crystallized partisan affiliations and led to a scenario in which Americans from opposing parties are “biased, active, and angry” but nevertheless agree on many issues (Mason, 2013, 2015; Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes, 2012).

Regardless of the exact nature of this rising partisan antipathy, scholars of voting behavior and public opinion now recognize that public support for any given candidate or issue can often times be viewed through the lens of which candidate or issue an individual dislikes *less*. While the ramifications of this growing negative partisan affect in terms of elections and public opinion over issues are clear, it is less obvious as to the ways in which this partisan hostility might affect individuals’ views of American government and the political system as a whole.

Recent work on political trust has suggested that an individual's partisan affiliation plays a large 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 negative partisan affect 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 negative partisan affect – as a trend related to, but distinct from polarization – affects trust in government. More specifically, scholars have yet to examine how the anger that is at the root of negative partisan affect serves to lower citizens’ trust in their governmental institutions. In Section 2, I argue that anger is the emotion largely responsible for negative partisan affect, and then in Section 3 I develop a theory as to how and why this anger should lower Americans’ evaluations of the national government.

2 Negative Partisan Affect and Anger

Negative partisan affect may be driven by a myriad of emotions. Individuals who dislike the opposing political party may do so out of fear, anxiety, disgust, anger, or some other negatively valenced emotion. While I do not dispute that negative partisan affect is likely to be driven by some sort of combination of these emotions, extant data suggests that anger is an emotion frequently elicited from those who have negative affective evaluations of the opposing party. To provide evidence that anger is at the root of negative partisan affect, I created a measure designed to replicate the Abramowitz and Webster (2016) notion of “negative partisanship.” This measure captures the relative degree of dislike and like of one’s own party and the opposing party. It is calculated by using the feeling thermometers ratings toward the Democratic and Republican parties included in the 2012 American National Election Studies (ANES). Frequently used in studies of political behavior, the ANES feeling thermometer ratings range from 0-100. A score of zero is the lowest evaluation that an individual can give a party, while a score of 100 is the highest.

To create the measure of “negative partisanship,” I first subtract an individual’s feeling

thermometer rating of the opposing party from 100. Next, I subtract that same individual's rating of their own party from this first calculation. Thus, the measure of negative partisanship is:

$$(100 - \text{Other party F.T.}) - \text{Own party F.T.} \tag{1}$$

This variable ranges from -100 to 100. By construction, negative values indicate that the respondent likes their own party more than they dislike the opposing party. On the other hand, positive values on this measure indicate that an individual dislikes the opposing party more than they like their own party. Any individual who scores a positive value on this metric is classified as a negative partisan.

Simple bivariate statistics suggest that anger is a commonly felt emotion among those individuals who are negative partisans. Indeed, among those who are classified as negative partisans by the metric shown in Equation 1, 75% reported that they felt angry toward the opposing party's presidential candidate "about half the time" or more. A majority – 57% – reported feeling angry at the opposing party's presidential candidate "most of the time" or "always." These relationships are shown graphically in Figure 1.

[Figure 1 about here.]

As shown in Figure 1, individuals who can be classified as negative partisans report feeling angry at the opposing party's presidential candidate more often than those who are not negative partisans. Across the three categories representing the highest frequencies of anger, a larger percentage of negative partisans report feeling angry at the opposing party's presidential candidate with that frequency than those who are not negative partisans. By

contrast, individuals who are *not* negative partisans are more likely to report that that they “never” felt angry at the opposing party’s presidential candidate or that they felt angry only “some of the time.”

While the data shown in Figure 1 is suggestive of a link between negative affect toward the opposing party and anger, it is only preliminary. To more definitively establish a link between negative partisanship and anger, I regress the measure of anger toward the opposing party’s candidate used in Figure 1 on a dummy variable indicating whether or not an individual is a negative partisan. This regression output is displayed in the first column in Table 1. In the second column, I include controls for an individual’s age, gender, race, and level of education. The third column includes additional controls for ideology and levels of political activism.

[Table 1 about here.]

Across all three model specifications, being a negative partisan is associated with more frequently feeling angry toward the opposing party’s presidential candidate. The coefficient becomes larger in magnitude when controls for demographics are included but diminishes when measures of ideology and political activism are added. In all three specifications, the coefficient estimate is statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level. While these models do not assess the direction of causality, they nevertheless suggest the existence of a strong connection between being a negative partisan and feeling angry at the opposing party’s presidential candidate.

3 Negativity, Anger, and Confidence in 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 trust in government. However, the psychological literature on emotions is rich with studies suggesting a linkage between anger and reduced levels of trust.

Two recent studies, in particular, illustrate how anger serves to reduce levels of trust. Utilizing an experimental design, Dunn and Schweitzer (2005) find that higher levels of anger reduces 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) suggest that 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. Crucially, the reason that individuals are less willing to accept advice from others is because their anger lowers their levels of interpersonal trust. Much like the findings provided by Dunn and Schweitzer (2005), the results that Gino and Schweitzer (2008) provide are also obtained by heightening levels of "incidental anger."

The reason that anger is able to reduce levels of trust is because it is an emotion that contains a negative valence. According to the psychological theory of "mood-congruity" (see, e.g., Bower, 1991), an individual's felt emotion shapes the way in which she renders a judgment on any given thing. Because anger is an emotion with a negative valence (Lerner

and Keltner, 2001; Moons, Eisenberger and Taylor, 2010), the judgment that an angry individual makes toward another person, situation, or institution will be negative.

This expectation was cogently illustrated by Forgas and Moylan (1987), who surveyed movie-goers 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 pessimistic 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 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 and its supporters. Whether these stimuli come from elite rhetoric (Layman and Carsey, 2002), fellow partisans (Klar, 2014), or partisan-friendly

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*.

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 be less trusting of the national government.

4 Anger and Confidence in Government

In order to illustrate how anger shapes individuals' views of the national government, I 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 2. 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 possess 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 about 2 here.]

As shown in Table 2, 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

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

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.

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

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, education, 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 of 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 3 about here.]

Across each of the three measures of trust in government, the results of Table 3 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 trust in government focuses on the role of partisanship, comparing the 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 is, on average, one-third the size of the partisanship coefficient estimate.⁵ This suggests that, while partisanship continues to powerfully shape the ways in

⁵In column one, the anger coefficient is 27.78% the size of the partisanship coefficient; in the second

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.

5 Anger, Trust in 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

column, it is 42.76% the size; in the third, it is 33.05%.

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 4.

[Table 4 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

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 Lobbetael, Arntz and Wiers (2008).

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 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 5.

[Table 5 about here.]

The first column of Table 5 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. 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 who 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 – a key component of negative partisan affect – causes individuals to have lower evaluations of American government.⁷

6 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

⁷While 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.

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 Webster, 2016).

Yet, outside of these behavioral outcomes, little has been done to understand how and why this anger-fueled negative partisan affect might shape Americans' views of the national government. In this paper, I have shown how anger is associated with lower 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 4 utilized the 2012 ANES panel data. The experimental analysis presented in Section 5 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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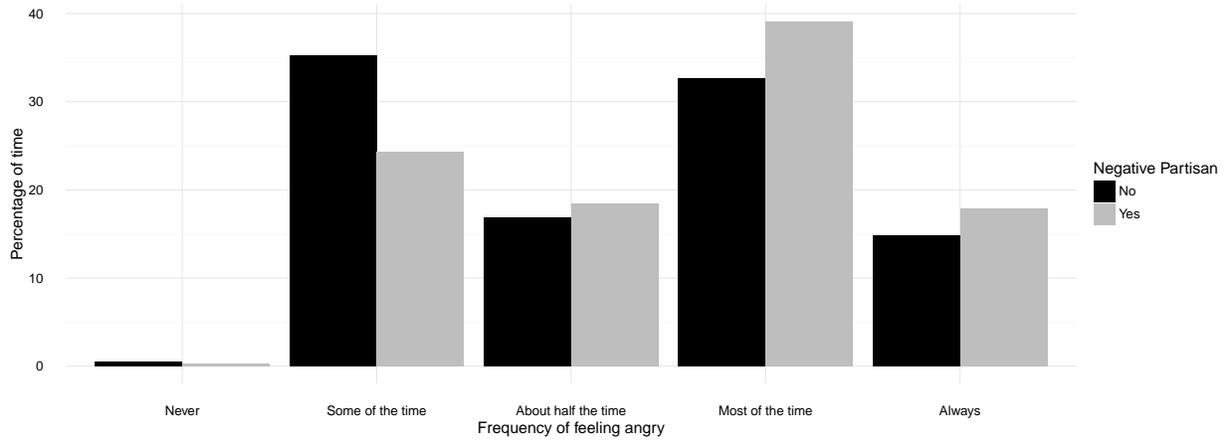


Figure 1: *Negative Partisans and Anger at Opposing Party Candidates*. This figure shows the percentage of time that individuals felt angry at the opposing party's presidential candidate by negative partisanship status.

	Anger Toward Out-Party Candidate		
Negative Partisan	0.239*** (0.037)	0.265*** (0.038)	0.196*** (0.039)
Demographics:	No	Yes	Yes
Ideology + Activism:	No	No	Yes
N	3,545	3,502	3,093
R ²	0.012	0.016	0.067

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

Table 1: *Negative Partisans Frequently Display Anger*. This table shows regression output that indicates that being a negative partisan is associated with a higher frequency of feeling angry toward the opposing party's presidential candidate. This relationship holds across various model specifications.

Table 2: 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 3: *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 4: 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
NativeAmerican	3,252	0.009	0.094	0	1
Hispanic	3,252	0.055	0.229	0	1
OtherRace	3,252	0.012	0.110	0	1
HighSchoolOnly	3,248	0.146	0.353	0	1
SomeCollege	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 5: *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.

7 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 6: *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.