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Emotion and Politics: Noncognitive Psychological Biases in Public Opinion

Steven W. Webster[1] and Bethany Albertson[2]

[1]Department of Political Science, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, USA; email: swwebste@iu.edu

[2]Department of Political Science, University of Texas, Austin, Texas, USA; email: balberts@austin.utexas.edu

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Abstract

Contemporary politics is noteworthy for its emotional character. Emotions shape and, in turn, are elicited by partisan polarization, public opinion, and political attitudes. In this article, we outline recent work in the field of emotion and politics with an emphasis on the relationship between emotion and polarization, issue attitudes, information processing, and views on democratic governance. We also highlight a growing body of scholarship that examines the racial and gender differences in emotion's ability to affect political behavior. We conclude with a discussion of unaddressed questions and suggestions for future directions for scholars working in this area of growing importance.

INTRODUCTION

A cursory observation of events in contemporary world politics indicates that people increasingly interact with political leaders, institutions, and each other through an emotional state. Journalistic reports reveal that people are angry. In the United States, for example, anger manifests over Supreme Court nominations (Davis 2017), the political "establishment" (Dann 2019), and supporters of the opposing party (Peters 2018); in Europe, voters are angry about globalization and trade deals (*Economist* 2016), as well as rising levels of migration (Tharoor 2018). So, too, are today's political participants gripped with fear—about the novel coronavirus (Hurlburt 2020), gun violence (Am. Psychol. Assoc. 2019), and myriad other issues.

At the same time, political leaders are increasingly using violent and populism-fueled rhetoric in an attempt to connect with citizens on an emotional level (Gerstlé & Nai 2019, Piazza 2020, Masch 2020). Widmann (2021), for instance, finds that European populist parties use significantly more appeals to negative emotions than their less populist counterparts. Such rhetoric, coupled with a growing understanding of the role of emotion in shaping political behavior and public opinion, has facilitated a combustible environment marked by aggressive partisanship, factionalism, protests, receptivity to misinformation, and the acceptance of various forms of democratic backsliding.

In this review, we outline political scientists' treatment of the role of emotion in understanding mass political behavior and public opinion. In doing so, we highlight both canonical and recent work in the field of political psychology. We pay particular attention to the role of emotion in shaping and ossifying partisan identities, as well as emotion's ability to influence attitudes across a range of issue areas. We also assess the recent developments in the literature on race and gender, as well as the body of scholarship studying the gendered dynamics of emotional expression. We then touch on the literature on emotion and information processing. Next, we outline the state of the field pertaining to emotion, populism, and democratic backsliding. We conclude with a discussion of open questions and future directions for research in the field.

EMOTION, PARTISANSHIP, AND POLITICAL EVALUATIONS

Partisanship has long been seen as the primary lens through which citizens view the political world. Whether conceptualized as a socio-psychological construct that is inherited from one's parents (Campbell et al. 1960), a result of peer influence (Berelson et al. 1954), or as a rational orientation toward the political world (Downs 1957), one's partisan identity is paramount for determining how one thinks about politics. And, while it is true that partisanship remains an essential predictor of political behavior and attitudes, recent work in the field of emotion and politics has shown that Americans increasingly experience negative affect when thinking about supporters of the opposing political party. Such negativity, referred to as "affective polarization" (Iyengar et al. 2012, Druckman et al. 2021) or "negative partisanship" (Abramowitz & Webster 2016), both causes and reinforces a group-based view of partisan competition (Mason 2018).

This rise of "political sectarianism" (Finkel et al. 2020) both contributes to and is caused by strong emotional reactions to out-partisans. For instance, recent work has shown that anger has the power to weaken individuals' commitment to democratic values—particularly those values that pertain to how citizens view those with whom they disagree politically (Webster 2020). Such antipathy has also been shown to lead to high rates of party loyalty at the ballot box (Abramowitz & Webster 2018).

The anger- and anxiety-fueled nature of contemporary American politics has dramatic implications, many of which have been identified by political psychologists working in the field of emotion and politics. Recent work has shown that Americans tend to dehumanize supporters of

the opposing party. Though the sources of dehumanization may vary, an emerging consensus argues that Americans typically dehumanize supporters of the out-party along two dimensions: a mechanistic dimension and an animalistic dimension. The first dimension—mechanistic dehumanization—occurs when individuals view out-partisans as robotic or unemotional; the second dimension—animalistic dehumanization—entails viewing out-partisans as subhuman (see, e.g., Loughnan et al. 2009). This dehumanization has been linked directly to affective polarization and partisan motivated reasoning (Martherus et al. 2021), as well as a desire for moral and social distance between oneself and out-party supporters (Cassesse 2019). While these studies were conducted on American samples, related studies indicate that similar dynamics exist throughout the world: Halperin et al. (2009), for instance, find that group-based hatred mediates the effects of anger and anxiety on political intolerance in Israel.

Though troubling in its own right, this partisan dehumanization and partisan antipathy in the mass public is likely a contributor to the growth in the percentage of Americans who are open to the use of violence against those on the opposing side of the political divide. Mason & Kalmoe (2021) present evidence from novel surveys suggesting that 15% of Americans are willing to tolerate partisan violence and that these attitudes are most commonly expressed by those with high levels of trait-aggressiveness and a strong partisan social identity. While these percentages may appear small, the fact that Americans are willing to express any tolerance for partisan violence suggests that partisanship has, indeed, morphed beyond a "running tally" (Bartels 2002) and into an emotionally laden identity capable of engendering significant bias and hostility.

Relatedly, the emotional nature of contemporary American partisanship has facilitated a climate in which partisans enjoy seeing misfortune befall those with whom they disagree politically. Studying the concepts of empathic concern and emotional regulation—traits that measure a person's ability to both perceive others' emotions and connect with them accordingly—political psychologists have begun to demonstrate that Americans do not share an equal concern when others suffer. On the contrary, a growing body of work suggests that Americans enjoy seeing political "others" suffer. In fact, when individuals possess a high amount of empathic concern, they may feel *less* sympathetic when bad things happen to out-partisans. As Allamong & Peterson (2020, p. 365) note, "[m]ore empathic ability can actually produce [less sympathy and altruistic behavior] when emotionally provocative situations conflict with our loyalty to party." These results are consistent with those of Simas et al. (2019), who found that higher levels of empathic concern exacerbate affective polarization in the mass public. By being more attuned to their own emotional states and others', Americans "tend to display more empathy toward ingroup members and are more sensitive to perceived harmful behaviors committed by outgroup members" (Simas et al. 2019, p. 267).

Political psychologists have shown that emotion, in addition to its effect on interparty competition and affect, plays a large role in shaping individual-level attitudes toward various issues. In particular, emotion powerfully affects how individuals view issues pertaining to immigration and race. One study, for instance, found that anxiety causes Americans to be less supportive of immigration—especially when the immigrants under consideration are Latino. Crucially, it is anxiety, and "not. . .changing beliefs about the severity of" immigration as a problem, that triggers this backlash (Brader et al. 2008). Thus, anxiety exerts a strong effect on individuals' attitudes toward migration to the United States (Albertson & Gadarian 2015). Anxiety has also been shown to be a consistent predictor of anti-immigrant sentiment more generally, with evidence from—among other countries—Spain, Israel (Stephan et al. 1998), and Italy (Voci & Hewstone 2003).

Relatedly, scholars have shown how emotion affects attitudes toward defense policy. Fielding a series of experiments in the years following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Lerner et al. (2003) found that both anger and fear were important emotions governing individuals' attitudes. Angry individuals were more optimistic about preventing a future terrorist attack; at the

same time, anger caused individuals to be more supportive of vengeful policies and less supportive of conciliatory policies. In contrast, while fear caused individuals to support investment in precautionary defense measures, it also caused people to be less optimistic about preventing future terrorist attacks. Such work complements other studies that highlight a relationship between fear, distress, and support for retaliatory military action (Hirsch-Hoefler et al. 2016).

Beyond traditional issues spanning both domestic and foreign policy (such as the economy or war and peace), emotion factors into people's attitudes about issues as diverse as climate change and food politics (Clifford 2018). Nevertheless, there do appear to be issues that are more likely than others to incite emotional reactions. Highlighting one particular area where this is the case, Albertson & Gadarian (2015) distinguish between unframed and framed threats. Unframed threats incite anxiety broadly because they might produce imminent bodily harm; framed threats are those that might generate anxiety depending on an individual's characteristics, such as race and partisanship. Moreover, framed threats are associated with numerous elite cues as to how citizens should feel about an issue. These distinctions imply that, while immigration and climate change may trigger anxiety for some people, terrorist attacks and public health crises—due to their widespread impacts—are prone to eliciting anxiety more broadly.

Whether, and the extent to which, the distinction between framed and unframed threats remains in our era of heightened polarization is an open question. For instance, the partisan reactions to COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) in the United States and beyond suggest that the realm of unframed threats is narrower than previously thought. Indeed, one might wonder whether the potential remains for an issue to avoid partisan framing. Given the high degree of partisan sorting in American society (Mason 2018) and the propensity of individuals to see the world of politics through their own partisan lens (Kunda 1990, Lodge & Taber 2013), it is possible that opinions on any issue will receive some sort of partisan or ideological framing. If this is the case, then we should expect to see a continuation of the trend of partisan differences in terms of emotional expression.

Individual-level emotions, then, are powerful predictors of how citizens view supporters of other parties and how they view both domestic and foreign issues. However, the existing body of scholarship suggests that elite-level emotions also shape citizens' attitudes and views. Masch & Gabriel (2020), for instance, demonstrate that German voters were more likely to offer negative assessments of Chancellor Angela Merkel after being exposed to video clips of Merkel expressing either anger or outrage. By contrast, assessments of Merkel were higher after seeing clips in which Merkel expressed positive emotions. Collectively, these studies suggest that emotion—whether expressed at the mass or elite level—is a powerful force shaping public opinion.

EMOTION, RACE, AND GENDER

Political psychologists have convincingly demonstrated that emotion, in addition to its ability to affect partisanship and issue attitudes, is inextricably tied together with racial identity. Indeed, Banks (2014) argues that one cannot separate emotion from thoughts about race. In particular, because "anger and thoughts about race are tightly linked in memory" (Banks 2014, p. 493), anger has the unique ability to cause racially conservative White Americans to lower their support for healthcare reform in the United States. In contrast, Banks's (2014) work suggests that anger pushes racially liberal White Americans to be *more* supportive of healthcare reform. By activating racial attitudes, which in turn shape views on healthcare reform, anger has been shown to affect Americans' attitudes on policy issues of national importance.

Yet, emotions are linked to race through more than their ability to simply activate racial attitudes. Indeed, emotions have been shown to have differential effects based on one's racial identity. Recent work by Phoenix (2019) shows that anger, traditionally seen as a catalyst for participating

in politics, operates differently for African Americans. According to his work, African Americans consistently express lower levels of anger about politics than their White counterparts. Importantly, when African Americans do experience anger about politics, they are less likely to channel this anger into higher rates of participation. This "anger gap," according to Phoenix (2019), is attributable to both stereotypes and societal unease about Blacks' anger and African Americans' sense of resignation in the wake of historical injustice.

Additionally, Blacks who are motivated to participate in politics via increased anger tend to do so in ways that are distinct from those of Whites. Utilizing a series of experiments, Banks et al. (2018) show that racial anger has specific behavioral implications. When experiencing racial anger, Blacks "are motivated to engage in racial group affirming acts" (Banks et al. 2018, p. 927). In particular, these authors' experimental analyses suggest that racial anger causes Blacks to donate money—and donate larger amounts of money—to Black organizations (such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). Thus, while anger may not generally be an operative emotion for Black political behavior in electoral politics, the anger that Black Americans do experience causes them to participate in ways that are unique to their racial identity.

While anger might cause Black Americans to act outside of electoral politics, anger among White Americans has found plenty of operative space within the two-party political system. Drawing on a series of interviews, Skocpol & Williamson (2012) show how the rise of the Tea Party movement gave voice to conservatives who were disgruntled with societal changes that were anathema to their idealized version of American life. Indeed, the negative emotions engendered by both a liberalizing society and the presidency of Barack Obama (Parker & Barreto 2014) began to move American conservatism in a more nativist direction. Such emotional reactions to a changing society shed light on why Tea Party supporters simultaneously identified as conservative and did not oppose government-run social welfare programs. Among Tea Party supporters, government programs were acceptable—so long as they helped the "right" type of people: the "workers" who had "contributed" into the system, and not the "nonworkers" who were "freeriders" on the government's largesse (Williamson et al. 2011).

Such a sentiment was cogently illustrated by Rohlinger & Klein's (2014) study of the emotional content of a Tallahassee, Florida, Tea Party Facebook page. Comparing the rhetoric of the Tea Party group's page pre- and postelection, Rohlinger & Klein (2014) found that the nature of the content changed after the stunning Tea Party success in the 2010 midterm elections. Whereas the page had originally focused on patriotism and pride (strategically cultivated by group leaders), its content shifted to focus more on enemies and fear. Specifically, the page sought to elicit fear of liberals—seen as "enemies of America who were destroying the country from the inside out" (Rohlinger & Klein 2014, p. 126)—and a changing social order, both of which were threats to Tea Party supporters' vision of the country.

Such a change is unsurprising, as political threats are known to generate emotional responses. These emotional responses then cause people to change their behavior. In American politics, political threats often are implicitly or explicitly about race (a dynamic that was certainly evident throughout the life cycle of the Tea Party movement). While this racial dynamic is often studied in the context of a White–Black dichotomy, it is by no means limited to these races. For example, Latino immigrants in California reacted to the threat of an anti-immigrant measure (Proposition 187) by becoming more informed about politics and attaching greater importance to racial issues (Pantoja & Segura 2003). While learning outcomes are likely due to heightened levels of anxiety, political threats also tend to elicit anger. Valentino & Neuner (2016), for example, find that angry reactions to voter identification laws mobilized some voters to counteract the demobilization brought about by the effect of these laws.

Much as race and emotion can interact to produce differing political outcomes, so, too, can gender and emotion. Traister (2018), for instance, documents the complicated relationship between anger and women's political power. Traister's study argues that despite societal pressures to avoid emotional outbursts of any kind, women's anger—a decades-old political phenomenon—has ultimately led to greater political inclusivity. Though such anger and progress on greater inclusion have been marked with ebbs and flows, Traister's (2018, p. xxii) argument is that "the particular dissatisfactions and resentments of America's women have often ignited movements for social change and progress."

More scientifically grounded studies corroborate many of Traister's (2018) claims. For instance, research on workplace behavior shows that women are disproportionately punished (in terms of salary and perceived status) for expressions of anger, while their male counterparts are rewarded for their expressions of anger (Brescoll & Uhlmann 2008). In contrast, Brooks (2011) finds that female candidates are not disproportionately punished for showing emotion (specifically, crying). More recently, Mechkova & Wilson (2021) found that female candidates for elected office who engage in angry rhetoric on Twitter are more likely than more restrained female candidates to win; however, angry rhetoric from female candidates is also likely to produce large amounts of negative feedback. Though these findings fit with the broader literature on anger and political behavior, the mechanism behind them is less clear. Is it the case that angry expressions on social media help female candidates win their elections? Or is this relationship driven by the fact that winning candidates are simply afforded the luxury of being able to express their anger in ways that losing candidates are not? Addressing this causal ordering is likely to be a fruitful—and important—avenue for future study.

Additionally, future work should continue to probe the extent to which these emotional differences have a substantive effect on political evaluations. Recent work suggests that politicians' use of negatively and positively valenced emotions are not uniformly covered by the news media. Female politicians are shown displaying emotion more often than their male counterparts and, when political elites' emotions are covered by the media, female politicians are more often shown expressing positive emotions. Men, conversely, are more frequently shown expressing negative emotions (Renner & Masch 2019). Such a dynamic suggests that the gendered dynamics of emotional expression may be moderated, at least in part, by the news media.

From a broader point of view, the burgeoning literature on the relationship between race, gender, and emotion reveals a crucial insight: Group identity can, and does, shape emotional experiences and the political consequences of those experiences. As the United States, and the world, grapples with the uneven treatment of civilians by police and a host of systemic problems working against racial minorities and women, understanding these interactive relationships is likely to become an even more pressing topic for future research.

EMOTION AND INFORMATION PROCESSING

Emotion powerfully shapes the role of partisanship in contemporary politics. So, too, does emotion affect the stances that one holds on various issues. Yet, the impact of emotion on political behavior extends beyond the realm of partisanship and opinions on discrete issues. Indeed, emotion has been shown to affect both the types of information that individuals seek and the ways in which they process that information. Scholars have identified important roles for both anxiety and anger in terms of information processing.

Within the framework of affective intelligence theory (Marcus et al. 2000), anxiety causes people to seek out new information. Thus, anxiety, an "unpleasant and aversive state" (Eysenck 1992, p. 4), triggers learning. Gadarian & Albertson (2014) find that when anxious people learn, their

attention is biased toward negative, threatening information. Anxiety has also been shown to increase trust in the source of information, especially when the source is an expert who can offer some sort of protection from that which is causing an individual's anxiety (Albertson & Gadarian 2015).

While emotion may push individuals to seek out information, it is possible—if not likely—that it also causes people to misinterpret that information, seek out information that fits with their preconceived ideas about politics, or make counterarguments against those claims that are incongruent with their beliefs. Such an expectation is rooted in Lodge & Taber's (2013) work on "hot cognition" and "affective contagion," which suggests that political stimuli (whether people or places or pieces of legislation) have either a positive or negative affective component. When a political stimulus is presented to individuals, the affective reaction is triggered, and this affect shapes downstream judgments and attitudes. Thus, stimuli that elicit negative affect produce negative judgments; stimuli that elicit positive affect lead to positive judgments.

In particular, negative affect appears to be the most important determinant of how an individual reacts to news and information. For example, Erisen & Suhay (2018) show that anger plays an important role in mediating the link between one's issue attitudes or preferences and subjective evaluations of a political argument. Specifically, these authors show that anger is the mechanism through which the biased assimilation of information occurs. Accordingly, anger mediates the relationship between prior issue attitudes and evaluations pertaining to the quality of arguments against one's point of view. Thus, by "[closing] citizens' minds to new information," emotional outbursts of anger "play a key role in the biased evaluation of political arguments" (Erisen & Suhay 2018, p. 807).

The link between emotion and the "biased evaluation of political arguments" is perhaps most pronounced in the area of misinformation and conspiracy theories. Work by Oliver & Wood (2018) cogently illustrates the role of emotion in shaping political attitudes. These authors bifurcate the mass public into "rationalists" and "intuitionists": The former are guided by logic and reasoning, and the latter engage with politics largely through their instinctive feelings. Rationalists view politics and ideas "through dispassionate systems of knowledge that are subject to empirical verification," while for the members of the mass public who are more prone to following their intuitions, the world is "not a place of facts and cold rationality but one of symbols and emotion" (Oliver & Wood 2018, p. 3). By not bending "their emotions to more dispassionate explanations" (p. 5), claim Oliver & Wood (2018), those who rely on their intuitions are apt to believe various mistruths and conspiracy theories.

Specifically, the endorsement of conspiracy theories appears to be driven by negatively valenced emotions. Writing on the emotional substrates of conspiratorial beliefs, van Prooijen & Douglas (2018, p. 901) point to studies suggesting a link between "anxiety, uncertainty, or the feeling that one lacks control" and a belief in conspiracy theories. Indeed, a series of experiments conducted by Grzesiak-Feldman (2013) suggest that both state- and trait-anxiety (meaning, respectively, situational and dispositional anxiety) predict a greater belief in conspiracy theories; thus, anxiety is an important component of conspiracy endorsement and, according to Grzesiak-Feldman's (2013, p. 114) analysis, is a "psychological variable that should be considered while examining mechanisms that underlie belief in conspiracies." Relatedly, conspiracy theories appear to be most commonly held when individuals believe that a threat to the social system is present. Thus, conspiracy theories are emotion-driven, "system-justifying processes" that "divert people from questioning inherent limitations of their society" (Jolley et al. 2018, p. 475; see also Federico et al. 2018).

Conspiratorial news about an election may be particularly upsetting as well. Albertson & Guiler (2020) find that news about vote rigging conspiracies makes Democrats and Republicans angry, disgusted, and sad regardless of whether a conspiracy disadvantaged their favored candidate or

the other party. In contrast, more cognitive effects were entirely conditioned by partisanship. As the scholarly literature on conspiracy theories grows, and as conspiracy theories become more relevant to contemporary political behavior, we encourage researchers to engage more fully with the emotional side of conspiratorial endorsement.

These findings pertaining to emotion and information processing take on considerable importance when placed within the context of the broader political media environment. While prior decades saw a relatively constricted media environment and more conventional news programs (Prior 2007), those searching for political information in the contemporary era have more choices; moreover, the set of possible choices for news and information about government today tends to present politics as a zero-sum, antagonistic struggle. As Mutz (2015) shows, the "in your face" style of politics portrayed by the news media has severe consequences for how citizens interact with their elected officials. While the media's portrayal of politics as antagonistic and debate-fueled may increase attention and recollection of information (see, e.g., Newhagen 1998), these emotion-infused portrayals attenuate citizens' commitment to norms of tolerance and respect. This style of news coverage also reduces citizens' trust in the political process. Because citizens "[o]verwhelmingly. . .experience politics and politicians through television" (Mutz 2015, p. 3), the media's portrayals of politics—and the emotions those portrayals arouse—are of great consequence for the democratic process.

To the extent that media portrayals of politics are deleterious for citizens' views of political and governmental processes, the outlook for media-driven reforms is bleak. In fact, the incentives facing media companies suggest that the corrosive effects of emotional arousal via television news are set to continue. When booking political guests for their shows, the media have demonstrated a bias for ideologically extreme members of Congress (Wagner & Gruszczynski 2018), many of whom appeal to anger for their own electoral purposes (Webster 2020). While these appeals and this type of rhetoric may increase television ratings, they are likely to further erode citizens' trust and confidence in the political process.

Nevertheless, it is possible that these anger-fueled "in your face" (Mutz 2015) presentations of political debates might have differential effects based on one's partisan identification. In particular, recent research has cogently argued that "outrage" television and an antagonistic presentation of the news might be most attractive to those on the political right (Young 2020). Such a claim is based, in part, on conservatives possessing a stronger need for order and desire for cognitive closure than do liberals (Jost et al. 2007). Such psychological profiles match well with combustive television news reports because "outrage says what it means and means what it says" (Young 2020, p. 141). Future research should continue to explore the partisan differences in receptivity to outrage television. In particular, examining the types of outrage programming that exacerbate or reduce these partisan differences—such as host characteristics, show format, or show length—is likely to be a fruitful area for additional research.

In addition to being an ever-present feature on television newscasts, emotion plays a large role on social media. Drawing on a comparative data set of over two million Facebook posts from 690 political parties in 79 democratic states, Muraoka et al. (2021) find that individuals who are active on the social media platform are prone to using the newly released "love" and "angry" reactions when engaging with political posts. More specifically, these authors show that political parties' posts are more or less likely to receive "love" or "angry" reactions based on their ideological leanings and populist orientations. In particular, political parties at the extremes of the ideological spectrum are more likely to receive "angry" reactions on Facebook; so, too, are those parties who espouse populist views. Though the meaning behind these reactions is difficult to interpret (as the authors properly note), these results nevertheless provide further evidence of the increasingly tight link between emotion and politics.

EMOTION AND DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP

With antidemocratic attitudes rising throughout the United States and Western Europe (Serhan 2020), an emerging—and increasingly important—area of research pertaining to emotion and politics involves the examination of the emotional underpinnings of populism and populist attitudes (von Hohenberg & Bauer 2021). Scholars have found that anger plays a large role in predicting whether an individual is attracted to populist and charismatic leaders. Indeed, populism itself is often conceptualized as a philosophy or worldview that pits commoners, or "the people," against manipulating and malevolent political elites (Mudde 2004).

Anger's ability to push individuals toward populist leaders and parties lies in its behavioral implications. As an approach-oriented emotion (Marcus et al. 2000), anger causes individuals to seek retribution for some perceived wrongdoing (Frijda 1986, Elster 1999, Carver & Harmon-Jones 2009). The nature of the mass–elite relationship driving populism is one in which the mass public perceives its sovereignty to have been stolen by political officials, and the natural reaction to such usurpation is the expression of anger. This logic was cogently explicated by Vasilopoulos et al. (2019), whose examination of French politics found that anger drove voters' decision to cast a ballot for the National Front. Such a dynamic was more likely to occur when anger was paired with authoritarian views.

This work largely corroborates earlier analyses by Rico et al. (2017), whose panel study of Spanish citizens finds that anger predicts populist attitudes. In particular, anger about economic crises is associated with a greater level of support for populist attitudes. Though these authors note that their empirical tests do not allow for credible causal claims, the results nevertheless suggest that "angry citizens appear to be more receptive to populist discourse" (Rico et al. 2017, p. 455).

More recent work suggests that anger plays a particularly important role in resolving a paradox of populism: that populist attitudes appear to spike in the wake of economic crises, but cultural variables (see, e.g., Vorländer et al. 2018) are better predictors of individual-level populism in econometric models. Interrogating this puzzle further, Rhodes-Purdy et al. (2021) argue that negative affect—in particular, anger—serves as the link between economic distress and cultural grievances. Drawing on experimental data from the United States and observational data from Spain, these authors show two important results: first, that affect mediates the relationship between economic woes and cultural dismay; and, second, that "anger [is] especially potent" in this mediating role (Rhodes-Purdy et al. 2021, p. 1570). Thus, the paradox that they point to can be "resolved" by the influential role of emotions and, in particular, anger.

Despite its importance, anger does not universally predict the adoption of populist attitudes. On the contrary, work by Magni (2017) suggests that the relationship between anger and populist attitudes is contingent on one's level of political efficacy. Drawing on data from the 2010 British Election Panel Study, Magni (2017) finds that, for those who have high levels of political efficacy, anger about politics translates to greater levels of support for traditional parties (e.g., the Conservative Party). However, for those who are low in political efficacy, anger is linked to increased support for populist and nativist parties (e.g., the United Kingdom Independence Party). Thus, the link between anger and populist attitudes may depend on other characteristics or political traits that voters possess.

Additionally, scholars have found that fear and anxiety are strong predictors of whether an individual adopts right-wing and/or populist attitudes. In particular, steady increases in globalization and migration have created an environment in which status threat and insecurity-based anxieties are high. In turn, this anxiety and threat to one's status produces greater sympathy for populist ideas and populist politicians (Béland 2020). That fear and anxiety (whether due to status threat or some other insecurity) are predictive of populist attitudes is likely due, in part, to the nature

of populist candidates' campaigns. Marshaling comparative data on elites' ratings of campaign rhetoric, Nai (2018) found that populist candidates are more likely than nonpopulist candidates to rely on fear-based appeals throughout their candidacies. As Nai (2018, p. 237) argues, "populists know the mud they roll in." Because populism has roots in mass-level fear and anxiety, populist candidates have a strong incentive to make these types of emotional appeals.

Relatedly, the presence of a threat appears to drive support for far right parties. Schüller (2015), for instance, employed a difference-in-differences analysis that treated the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks as a natural experiment. Comparing individual-level differences in ideological leanings pre- and post-9/11, Schüller found notable effects of the threat of terrorism on individual attitudes. Indeed, her results suggest that "left-wing supporters. . . [decreased] support intensity" for left-wing policies, "while right-wing supporters react[ed] by increasing [their] strength of support" for right-wing policies (Schüller 2015, p. 83).

Though many potential explanations for such a finding exist, one particularly compelling mechanism lies in a threat's ability to induce the need for cognitive closure. With increased levels of the need to obtain cognitive closure, those who are experiencing some threat are prone to reducing their search for information. Similarly, threats cause individuals to seek certainty and control—both of which are tenets of conservative political parties (Thórisdóttir & Jost 2011). Thus, a threat—or multiple threats—can trigger psychological biases that push individuals toward right-wing populist political parties. Such a mechanism is consistent with Schüller's (2015) work, which argues that threats increase individual-level conservatism by activating a defense mechanism, and Getmansky & Zeitzoff's (2014) work, which shows that localities in southern Israel that were in range of rocket attacks had greater right-wing vote share between 2001 and 2009.

Emotion can shape people's orientations not only toward parties and ideologies but also toward politics and their fellow citizens. In authoritarian regimes, where repression and imprisonment are common, emotion affects whether people protest or acquiesce. In Zimbabwe, Young (2018) argues that fear makes individuals less likely to engage in dissent, showing that it makes people more risk averse and increases pessimism. The effects of emotions also depend on whether countries are engaged in military aggression and on people's vulnerability. Zeitzoff's (2014) research in Israel shows that anger makes people more punitive toward in-group members depending on the group's exposure to violence: In an area with low exposure to rocket fire, anger increases the desire for punishment. The anger induction has the opposite effect in an area with high exposure to rocket fire, a finding attributable to those areas having higher levels of in-group cohesion (Zeitzoff 2014).

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Despite the impressive breadth of topics covered and approaches used by political psychologists studying emotion and politics, plenty of unanswered questions remain. To begin, the field would be well served to investigate the interactions between emotions. In daily life, individuals experience a wide range of emotions—often simultaneously. For example, a negative political advertisement can elicit both anger and anxiety. A life-changing event, like moving or graduating, might make people feel both happy and sad (Larsen et al. 2001, but see Larsen 2017). Because emotions tend to co-occur in experimental manipulations (Albertson & Gadarian 2016), scholars often elicit more than just their targeted emotion, but most of the literature on emotion and politics tends to focus on one discrete emotion at a time. Understanding how the simultaneous expression of multiple emotions affects political attitudes and public opinion, therefore, appears to be a fruitful agenda for future research.

Future work should pay particular attention to interactions between positively and negatively valenced emotions. As Bower's (1991) work has shown, the valence of an emotion plays an

important role in shaping how individuals evaluate the people, objects, or institutions around them (see also Bennett 1997, Silvia 2009, Kim & Cameron 2011). When individuals are experiencing positively valenced emotions—such as happiness or contentment—they tend to offer optimistic and positive evaluations; by contrast, negatively valenced emotions tend to produce pessimism and harsh evaluations (Forgas & Moylan 1987, Gino & Schweitzer 2008).

Though negative emotions tend to receive a disproportionate amount of scholarly attention, it nevertheless remains true that campaigns strategically seek to elicit both positively and negatively valenced emotions. For instance, Barack Obama's 2008 campaign for the presidency sought to elicit positive emotions with his famous "hope and change" campaign theme; so, too, did his campaign seek to elicit anger and frustration with Republicans' additions to the budget deficit through two wars, tax cuts, and Medicare expansion. How, then, did these two emotional strategies jointly affect voters' attitudes about Obama and his opponent, John McCain? How do simultaneous appeals to positively and negatively valenced emotions work today, particularly in the realm of online advertising?

In terms of negatively valenced emotions, future work should examine how emotions with different behavioral implications operate in tandem. For instance, scholars of emotion and politics argue that anxiety and anger have opposite effects in terms of individuals' likelihood of seeking out new information. When both emotions are experienced, which behavioral implication wins out: information seeking (consistent with feeling anxious) or the use of simple cues and heuristics (consistent with feeling angry)? Does the behavioral implication of one's emotional state depend on the relative strength of each emotion? Or is the most recently experienced emotion the one that has the strongest causal effect on a person's behavior?

Such questions can be easily studied using common emotion-induction techniques. For instance, if one is studying the effect of simultaneously experiencing anger and anxiety on information-seeking behavior, all survey respondents could be presented with an "emotional recall" (Lerner et al. 2003) exercise designed to elicit one of these emotions before a randomization process presented some subset of respondents with a subsequent emotional recall task designed to elicit the other emotion. Post-treatment measures of information consumption or simulated informational environments (Lau & Redlawsk 2001) would then allow scholars to assess how these commonly studied emotions work with—or against—each other to affect an important aspect of political behavior.

Additionally, future work in the field of emotion and politics should consider the interdependence of emotions and personality. While emotional states are typically conceptualized as short lived, personality traits measure an individual's general disposition. Thus, while emotion is ephemeral by nature, personality is comparatively stable. Despite the difference in duration, an individual's political behavior is governed by both their personality traits (see, e.g., Mondak 2010) and their emotional states. Curiously, however, the literature on emotion and politics and the literature on personality and politics have progressed in a somewhat independent fashion.

The lack of synergy between these two literatures has inhibited scholars' ability to more fully understand the nature of noncognitive psychological biases in public opinion and political behavior. In particular, this lack of synthesis between these two literatures has prohibited scholars from asking questions about how the effects of emotions depend on one's personality profile. For instance, scholars have shown that experiencing anxiety causes (among other things) information seeking and increases general pessimism. While these average treatment effects are revealing, it is possible—if not likely—that these emotional effects are moderated by one's disposition toward experiencing anxiety. For instance, emotional inductions of anxiety might matter most for those individuals whose personality profile predisposes them toward experiencing anxiety. Then again, habitually experiencing anxiety might make exogenous introductions of anxiety a quotidian

experience. In this case, having a personality profile that tends toward anxiousness might make emotional manipulations of anxiety *less* effective in causing changes in one's political behavior or opinions.

Such a dynamic is likely to exist with other emotions, as well. Anger, for instance, has been shown to increase political participation (Valentino et al. 2011). Though the psychological processes driving this increased participation are well understood, less is known about the factors—such as personality—that moderate this effect. If an individual's personality predisposes her toward being angry, how do emotional manipulations affect political behavior? Does having an angry personality make emotional appeals more effective at engendering turnout? Or does an angry personality crowd out any mobilizing effect that might arise from such an emotional induction? By pursuing these questions, scholars of political psychology will begin to more fully understand the complex interplay between emotions, personality, political behavior, and public opinion.

Additionally, researchers should consider the role of emotion in contexts that are not explicitly electoral in character. For example, in recent years, the United States has seen anger-fueled protests over police violence; at the same time, many communities have been gripped by fear as COVID-19 has upended daily life. The emotions that these events—and others like them—elicit are likely far stronger than what we feel when watching political advertisements or a debate; this is particularly true for those who are the most directly affected by trauma. By studying the role of emotions that are elicited in nonelectoral contexts, scholars can further develop the literature on emotion and politics in two important ways. First, by examining nonelectoral sources of emotions, we can learn more about when, how, and why emotions "spill over" to affect behavior in areas that are orthogonal to that in which they were elicited (a possibility that has long been documented; see, e.g., Forgas & Moylan 1987). Second, by drawing on these nonelectoral sources of anger (which, again, might elicit stronger emotional reactions than a typical election), researchers can contribute to our understanding of the relationship between the *magnitude* of emotional expressions and behaviors or attitudes. Do strongly felt versions of anger, anxiety, or some other emotion simply generate more of the same behavioral implications that have been previously studied? Or do strongly felt emotions produce patterns of behavior and public opinion that are qualitatively different from their milder counterparts?

The study of emotion and politics would also benefit from longitudinal analyses of emotional experiences and political development. For example, Greenstein's (1960) study of the political socialization of children revealed a generation raised to appreciate "benevolent leaders," a finding attributable either to children's psychological need to see leaders as good and trustworthy or to the fact that parents monitored their political talk around children. Replicating Greenstein's study in more recent eras is likely to be a particularly fruitful area of research. While it is possible that childhood socialization processes in the contemporary era produce a similar type of appreciation for benevolent leaders, there is reason to believe that children today receive a type of political socialization that is quite different from that which occurred six decades ago. Indeed, with the rise of negative partisanship (Abramowitz & Webster 2016) and affective polarization (Iyengar et al. 2012, 2019), it is plausible that children today are exposed to more negatively valenced political emotions than those in earlier years. How does this possibility affect political socialization? Are children who come of age during a time of hyperpartisanship and emotion-fueled political television programming different from others? If so, do these differences manifest themselves in a greater tolerance for political conflict? Oxley et al. (2020) provide initial findings in this line of inquiry, reporting that children in 2017–2018 had more negative attitudes toward the presidency than those in Greenstein's (1960) study. However, additional research is needed to uncover the emotional mechanisms driving this diminution in views of the American presidency.

Another area of future research that appears to be particularly fruitful is examining the duration of emotions. Scholars know far too little about how long politically related emotions last. How long does enthusiasm about seeing one's preferred candidate win an election last? How long does anger over one's preferred candidate losing an election last? One potential avenue for future research would be to examine how the specific source of the emotion is related to the emotion's (or emotions') duration. For instance, do campaign-related emotions persist longer than those that are elicited from legislative activities? If so, what is the mechanism for that persistence? Another potential line of inquiry could draw on the differences between positively and negatively valenced emotions. Which of these types of political emotions persists the longest? Though we suspect it is the negatively valenced emotions that have the longest duration, future work is needed to more definitively answer this question—and related questions.

Closely related to these questions are those pertaining to the durability of emotional effects. Anxiety, for example, can cause individuals to search for new information. Yet, it is likely that such an effect is not linear in nature. At what point does the information-seeking effect of anxiety begin to diminish? Does this behavioral implication of anxiety fade away once an individual has satisfied their desire for new information, or when they have reached the limit of their ability to comprehend and synthesize new information? If so, this suggests that cognitive resources might interact with emotional states in important ways. Similarly, we wonder about the sustainability of the effects of anger-fueled campaigns (electoral or otherwise). While it is true that anger has a mobilizing effect in terms of political participation (see, e.g., Valentino et al. 2011), the field knows far too little about how long the mobilizing effect lasts. Does anger consistently lead to increased political participation, or is there a point at which emotional fatigue begins to set in? In the former case, political elites have a continual incentive to elicit anger among the mass public. In contrast, if emotional fatigue can suppress anger's effects among the mass public, then political elites must be strategic about when they elicit anger. Accordingly, answering questions related to the durability of emotional effects has important implications for political behavior at both the mass and elite levels.

Finally, the field of emotion and politics would be well served by continuing to focus on questions pertaining to measurement. In our view, scholars must move beyond simple manipulation checks that ask respondents to rate how much they are experiencing any particular emotion (e.g., asking "how optimistic are you?" after priming optimism in survey participants). Such measures are, at best, coarse, and, at worst, could potentially be biased. We recommend that scholars adopt alternative measurement strategies or, at least, measurements that are used in tandem with explicit (ideally, multiple) manipulation checks. Of course, the measurement strategy one adopts is dependent on the research design employed. Accordingly, there is no one-size-fits-all approach that we can recommend. Nevertheless, there do appear to be certain measurement techniques that are well suited to particular research designs.

For text-based emotional manipulations (e.g., emotional recall designs), we recommend that scholars examine the emotional content of respondents' essays in order to assess the degree to which the emotion of interest was elicited. This measurement technique has its roots in the "lexical hypothesis," which posits that an individual's personality or emotional state should be apparent in their speech (Allport & Odbert 1936, Allport 1937). Accordingly, those who are angry should use words and phrases indicative of anger; analogously, those who are happy should employ rhetoric suggesting that they are happy. For scholars of emotion and politics, then, text analyses of emotional recall prompts have the ability to reveal whether their emotion-induction experiment worked as intended. If the manipulation was successful in eliciting a particular emotion, there should be a greater percentage of words and phrases indicative of that emotional state among the treated units' essays. Among other available lexicons, researchers working in the field of emotion and politics could rely on the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count to measure emotional reactions.

Lab-based studies of emotion and affect lend themselves to a wide range of possible measurement strategies. Though survey questions or a sentiment analysis are certainly possible in such a context, the nature of in-person examinations allows researchers to draw on physiological measures of affective reactions. Recent work by Bakker et al. (2021) illustrates the possibility of such a measurement strategy. These authors exposed approximately 400 people—each of whom was connected to a device that measures skin conductance, heart rate, facial reactions, etc.—to varying types of political rhetoric. Using physiological data as their measure of affective response, Bakker et al. (2021) find that those individuals with extreme positions on issues tend to exhibit a more intense affective response to political rhetoric than those who are more moderate in their attitudes. While the substance of these findings is noteworthy, we emphasize the methodological contribution of this paper: It is "the first to capture valence in response to political rhetoric using facial [electromyography]" (Bakker et al. 2021, p. 161).

We believe that physiological measures of affective responses to political stimuli open up a wide range of possible research avenues. Indeed, there is promising research on the correlations between physiological measures and self reports of affective states (Ciuk et al. 2015), but more research is needed in this area. However, despite the promise of these physiological measures, we recognize that, due to cost, this measurement strategy may not be accessible to everyone. Moreover, this measurement strategy may not be the most appropriate approach given the researcher's question of interest. We reiterate our earlier call that scholars adopt the measurement strategy that best suits their study design and empirical question.

Though there is room for improvement in terms of both theorizing and measurement, our assessment of the field of emotion and politics is that it is filled with studies that are both well designed and relevant to questions of contemporary importance. Indeed, the studies conducted in this area of the discipline have done much to advance our understanding of the dynamics that underpin political competition and governance in the United States and throughout the world. Moreover, because there is little to indicate that politicians and political affairs will cease to elicit emotional reactions from the mass public, we believe that this field is likely to grow in importance and relevance over the next few years. For scholars of emotion, public opinion, and political behavior, these are exciting times.

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