

National Institute for Civil Discourse Research Brief No. 5: Political Knowledge, Persuasion and Campaign Rhetoric¹

Key Issues:

What factors influence levels of political knowledge among the electorate?

How does variation in political knowledge affect susceptibility to persuasion from negative advertising and emotional appeals?

How does an awareness of variation in political knowledge influence campaign rhetoric?

Executive Summary

Political incivility is not the same thing as negative messaging or an emotional appeal, but incivility may become an element of negative advertising and of appeals to emotion. Research suggests that many Americans are ill-informed about politics and that, as the costs of gathering political information increase, political knowledge decreases. Variation in the level of interest in politics has a greater impact on political knowledge where traditional broadcast media are predominantly market-driven, as in the United States, than where they are predominantly public-service driven, as in Denmark and Finland.

Recent evidence suggests that political candidates find the use of negative campaign tactics and personal attacks on opposing candidates more acceptable if they think that their constituency is politically uninformed. Research suggests that this behavior is somewhat, but not entirely, strategic. More politically knowledgeable voters are more likely to have an accurate sense of which candidate best represents their interests. More politically knowledgeable voters also are more likely to have coherent internalized beliefs and *less* likely to be influenced by emotion-based forms of persuasion and by the types of negative campaigning that campaign managers perceive as “mudslinging,” than are their less knowledgeable counterparts. However, while those who are politically knowledgeable remain unaffected by mudslinging campaigns, voters who lack political knowledge have lesser evaluations of *both* the incumbents and challengers in the race after such a campaign. Voters who lack political knowledge also are more likely to be persuaded by “easy” arguments that state conclusions about policy effects without explaining how or why these policy effects will occur.

Argument and Findings

Negative campaigning and persuasive appeals based on emotion are common in American politics.² Research findings on the efficacy of negative campaigning are mixed,³ but campaign consultants advise political candidates to “go negative” when—and because—they presume negative campaigning works.⁴ Negative messages do capture the electorate’s attention,⁵ and emotionally resonant messages may redirect voters’ attention away from pocketbook issues to issues touching on cultural values and moral frameworks.⁶ Persuasion based on emotion likewise may alter the reasoning through which voters arrive at their political decisions.⁷ While political incivility is *not* the same thing as either negative messaging or an emotional appeal,⁸ elements of incivility – including purposive or careless deception, falsehood, exaggerated claims, verbal intimidation, *ad hominem* attacks and personal vitriol – find their way into both negative and emotionally resonant appeals.⁹

Despite an explosion of current research on cognition, emotion and persuasion,¹⁰ there has been little attention to the role that variability in political knowledge may have in influencing the effectiveness of emotional appeals, and perhaps by extension some types of negative campaigning and/or political incivility. Coupling contemporary research with elements of political scientist Anthony Downs’s classic arguments about politics suggests that low levels of political knowledge may enhance the persuasive power of at least some types of uncivil rhetorical appeals.¹¹

Anthony Downs

Downs, writing in the 1950s, thought that voters, political candidates, parties and governments would try to *maximize* their interests in politics using the *minimal* resources needed to do so. Both candidates and voters would act when perceived benefits associated with the action outweighed associated costs. Voters would cast votes for the candidate or party they thought would best represent their interests, while candidates and parties would try to maximize votes by proposing policies they thought would garner electoral support.

Downs's presumption of a purely rational politics does not stand up to current neurological, cognitive and social psychological research. But Downs was right to presume that: **1) levels of political knowledge influence political actors' capacity for rational action, including vote choice; and 2) the cost to a voter of acquiring political information influences political knowledge, which in turn affects politicians' campaign behavior.** Indeed, Downs argued that a defining characteristic of modern representative democracies is that voters have imperfect knowledge about policies proposed and undertaken by candidates, political parties and governments.

Worse, according to Downs, **voters have a strong *disincentive* to become politically educated.** Given that any single vote is unlikely to change an electoral outcome, the costs to a voter of becoming knowledgeable, including the amount of money and especially time that this would take, far outweigh the benefits to them of investing in political knowledge. This is why voters cast ballots relying on minimal knowledge. Downs thought that such relatively *uninformed* voters were more susceptible to persuasion by pundits, politicians and others that these voters viewed as more knowledgeable politically, especially when those thought to be more knowledgeable also were thought to share voters' interests. As well, relatively uninformed voters may be especially likely to vote along ideological or party lines.

Recent Voter Research

Recent empirical research suggests that many voters are in fact ill-informed about politics and that lack of political knowledge is associated with the costs of gathering such knowledge. Americans are less well-informed than are their counterparts in other post-industrial democracies.¹² Many Americans cannot even correctly name those who occupy key political positions.¹³ Average political knowledge has remained low and remarkably stable over the last forty years,¹⁴ although some evidence suggests that there have been shifts in the *types* of political knowledge different cohorts possess.¹⁵

Reported deficits of political knowledge are linked to individual-level factors and to the number of races on which voters are expected to vote at the same time.

- A 1996 analysis of data from a national panel survey of Americans who were twelfth graders in 1965 and their parents, with both the children's generation and parents' generation re-interviewed again in 1973, and a third time in 1982, found that reported knowledge about the American political system and current events was greater among those who were male, more educated, had taken a political science course, expressed interest in politics, had parents who were politically knowledgeable, and read more magazines focusing on public affairs and politics.¹⁶
- A 2006 study based on data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems found that formal education was the strongest predictor of political knowledge; those with more education had more knowledge than their less-educated peers. Males had greater knowledge than females, as did those who voted in the preceding election compared to those who had not, and those who identified with a political party compared to those who did not. Older voters and those who

believed voting made a difference exhibited greater political knowledge than those who were younger and believed voting made no difference.¹⁷

- A 2009 study based on data from the American National Election Studies, 1948-2004, found that political knowledge increased with the number of races on the ballot *up to three races*. But once the number of races exceeded three, political knowledge dropped off, **suggesting that voters have a threshold for how much information they will process at any given time.**¹⁸

Levels of political knowledge also seem to vary depending on the costs of information gathering.¹⁹ Because information costs are lower for those for whom acquiring and processing information is easier,²⁰ the positive relationship typically found between formal education and political knowledge can be interpreted to reflect variability in information costs depending on education.

- A 2010 experiment randomly assigned participants to experimental conditions differing in the monetary costs of gathering information. Researchers assigned participants to cost conditions in which information was not costly (it cost 0 cents per piece of information), moderately costly (it cost 5 cents per piece of information), or very costly (it cost 25 cents per piece of information). Participants then were asked to vote for a hypothetical candidate whose interests (defined using a 1-7 scale) were closest to the participant's own assigned interests. Participants voting for the "correct" candidate were awarded 50 cents; those voting for the "incorrect" candidate were docked 50 cents. About 36 percent of participants in the high cost condition failed to request any information at all about the candidates in the study, while 70 percent of participants who incurred no cost to get information about these same candidates requested the maximum amount of information possible.²¹

Findings of this experimental study *strongly* support Downs's assertion that, with all else equal, **as the cost of obtaining political information increases, the level of political knowledge decreases.**

More indirect support for the same proposition comes from a 2010 comparative study of the United States, the United Kingdom, Denmark and Finland. In the United States, media are privately owned for-profit companies largely subject to market discipline, whereas media in Denmark and Finland are publicly owned and heavily subject to "public service" oversight. The United Kingdom falls in between the two poles. The researchers, who combined content analysis of television broadcasting with information from surveys of individuals in the countries studied, distinguished between "hard news," including matters of public policy and the identity of public officials, and "soft news" including focus on sporting events and celebrities.²²

- This 2010 study found that, where market-driven media dominated, hard news aired infrequently and prime-time hours were dominated by entertainment. Where publicly owned media dominated, hard news aired more frequently and during prime time. Indeed, **public service media provided much more hard news than did market-driven media.**
- Where public-service media dominated, as in Denmark and Finland, those individuals with less political interest were *more* politically knowledgeable than their "low political interest" counterparts in the United States.²³

Considering these findings along with Downs's ideas suggests that, **if hard news is so ubiquitous that gathering it is without cost, there will be many "inadvertent" consumers.**²⁴ **Consistent with this proposition, average political knowledge was greater in Finland and Denmark than in the United States.**²⁵ *In the United States*, survey respondents' political knowledge varied more depending on their level of *political interest*.²⁶ Thus, **where political information gathering is more costly given its lesser ubiquity, knowledge will likely be tied more closely to variable levels of political interest.** The general

positive relationship between political knowledge and political interest may itself be interpreted as reflecting that there are lower information costs to those who find gathering political information intrinsically rewarding, all other things equal.²⁷

By increasing the volume of news media outlets beyond traditional news sources, the rise of cable television and the Internet have increased the quantity and accessibility of political information for those who have access to these outlets. So **why has average political knowledge in the U.S. electorate remained low, and why have knowledge gaps between relatively informed and uninformed Americans increased?**²⁸

Although recent surveys continue to show disparities in U.S. respondents' level of access to the Internet, these have become less pronounced.²⁹ However, **substantial differences in use of the Internet to access or share information about politics persist**, with men, those who are more educated, and those who have greater income doing so more often than women and those with less education and income.³⁰ **When differences in access are coupled with easy avoidance of political information**, variation in relative preferences for political news versus entertainment becomes important for predicting political knowledge.

- A 2005 study of U.S. respondents who took part in a representative panel survey conducted at two points in time, in 2002-2003, found that, as media choice associated with cable television and Internet access increased, the negative relationship between preferences for entertainment over news (measured at time 1), on the one hand, and political knowledge (measured at time 2, a year later), on the other, likewise increased.³¹

Thus, access to cable television and the Internet increased the political knowledge gap between those in the U.S. electorate who prefer news and those who prefer entertainment.³² **Decreasing the costs of gathering political information by making it widely accessible through digital media in addition to traditional news sources will not increase average political knowledge in the United States if most Americans prefer entertainment to political news, and if it is easy to avoid news in favor of entertainment.**

Likely Consequences

What then are the likely consequences of low levels of political knowledge for voting behavior and for campaign rhetoric? Research in cognitive science, psychology, and political science suggests that humans are cognitive misers, trying to reduce mental costs associated with using higher-level reasoning processes in decision-making.³³ To do this, we make decisions using shortcuts in information processing known as cognitive heuristics, and we base these heuristics on cues we observe in our environment.³⁴ The relative importance of a given choice—such as voting—will influence the cognitive strategy used. If a person regards a decision as important, she will use more self-conscious deliberation strategies.³⁵ But research suggests that most people make everyday life decisions, including voting, by using cognitive heuristics. **Voting research shows that a majority of American voters rely on such informational cues as party affiliation, candidate ideology, interest group endorsement of candidates, and candidate likeability to make voting decisions.**³⁶ In an experimental study, participants tried to circumvent information costs by requesting information from other participants who were viewed as political experts, given that they had access to more political information than did the focal respondent.³⁷

Recent research has shown that use of cognitive heuristics may not be as effective a substitute for political knowledge as was previously thought,³⁸ as these heuristics may not lead voters to cast ballots for the candidate who best represents their interests.³⁹ An experimental study found that cognitive

heuristics—such as party affiliation, candidate ideology, endorsements, polls that show which political candidate is most likely to win, and candidate likeability—were employed more effectively to identify the candidate who best represented a voter’s interests *by those voters who were politically knowledgeable* than by those who were not.⁴⁰ Statistical analyses of numerous American National Election Surveys produced similar results.⁴¹

Research has found that people who rely more on cognitive heuristics to make their voting decisions are more open to political persuasion than are their more politically knowledgeable peers.⁴² Openness to persuasion is defined as the probability that a person will change her attitude about a political candidate or proposed policy based on exposure to new information.⁴³

- A 2008 analysis of Italian election data found that those who were less interested in politics and less politically knowledgeable had less stable and less internally coherent political attitudes than did their counterparts who were more politically interested and knowledgeable.⁴⁴
- Using the 2004 National Annenberg Election Survey’s pre-and post-election survey design, and attending to many methodological problems that can lead researchers to make faulty inferences about campaign effects, a 2011 study tried to indirectly estimate which type of voters had been most influenced by the intervening campaign. The impact of particular campaign messages was not examined directly. Rather, if respondents’ attitudes changed substantially between the pre- and post-election survey, they were judged to have been persuaded by the campaign. While voters with more political awareness were more likely to change the weight they gave to a particular attitude or issue in their voting choices in light of the campaign, *voters with less political awareness were more likely to have changed their party identification, their attitudes about specific political issues and their economic assessments* as a function of the campaign.⁴⁵

Where the 2008 study suggests that **those with less political knowledge are more open to persuasion and are thus the most rewarding targets for political-party competition**,⁴⁶ the 2011 study suggests that **voters with different levels of political knowledge may be differentially susceptible to different kinds of campaign effects**.⁴⁷ Thus, failure by researchers to distinguish carefully among these different kinds of effects, as well as other methodological issues, may help account for why research on campaign effects has produced inconsistent findings.

More direct studies of the impact of particular types of persuasive messaging also find that **the level of political knowledge matters in voter susceptibility to persuasive appeals pertaining to policy proposals or political candidates, and in voter susceptibility to what campaign managers perceive as “mudslinging.”** This may be because political experts and novices differ in their reliance on “cognition” and “affect” (i.e., emotion) when forming social judgments.⁴⁸ Novices, who lack political knowledge, use affect to make political decisions, while experts, who have a stored repository of information about political issues, candidates and events, rely on a mix of cognition and affect.⁴⁹

- A 1997 experiment found that those who were less politically aware were more readily persuaded by “easy” arguments against policy proposals. Easy arguments were political statements concluding that a policy would have a specific negative effect, *without* explaining how or why the negative effect would ensue. Political awareness was measured by a scale assessing attentiveness to politics. “Hard” arguments took the audience explicitly through each step of a process through which the policy would produce the claimed negative consequence. Such hard arguments were more persuasive to those who were politically aware than to those who were not.⁵⁰
- A 2004 study combined survey data from the 1988-1992 American National Election Studies with an independent data base of political advertisements in 97 contested Senate races and with content coding of press coverage of these races. The researchers examined the impact of various

types of campaign messaging on citizens' evaluation of candidates, measured by a "feeling thermometer" from the National Election Study/Senate Election Study. The study distinguished various types of negative campaigning from what was termed "mudslinging," measuring the latter based on a survey of campaign managers. When managers reported that their opponents engaged in "smear tactics, relentless attacks, deceptive messages [or] unwarranted or unconscionable criticisms" this was coded as mudslinging.⁵¹ If both managers reported mudslinging, the campaign was coded highest on mudslinging; if only one manager reported mudslinging, the campaign was coded in between on mudslinging; and if neither manager reported mudslinging, the campaign was coded lowest on mudslinging. The researchers found that, **among those who were ill-informed about politics, mudslinging campaigns adversely affected evaluation of both incumbents and challengers. The politically knowledgeable remained unaffected by campaign mudslinging.**⁵²

- A 2010 laboratory experiment found that, among politically knowledgeable individuals, pre-existing negative or positive assessments of the politicians proposing policies did *not* influence support for the policy or assessments of its likely success in addressing a particular social issue. *But among those who lacked political knowledge*, these pre-existing positive or negative assessments of the politicians proposing the policies did matter.⁵³
- A 2011 analysis of the 1992 and 2000 American National Election Study data found that persons with moderate levels of political knowledge were more vulnerable to "priming" through media focus on a particular issue than were either the highly politically knowledgeable or the politically ill-informed. Moderately knowledgeable persons differ from the ill-informed in being motivated. But the moderately knowledgeable differ from the highly knowledgeable in not having developed an internal, coherent structure of attitudes making them resistant to persuasive appeals.⁵⁴

In Sum

In short, politically knowledgeable individuals may be better able to *resist* the impact of "easy" arguments, and better able to *resist* the persuasive power of mudslinging and emotional appeals. But the moderately politically knowledgeable may be more vulnerable to priming through media focus on particular issues than are the ill-informed or the highly knowledgeable.⁵⁵

Finally, **political candidates may find the use of negative campaign tactics and personal attacks on opposing candidates more acceptable if they think that their constituency is politically uninformed.**⁵⁶ An innovative 2007 nationwide study surveyed almost 3,000 political candidates running for office at all levels of government, including Congress, state legislatures and other statewide offices and judgeships, between 1996 and 1998. Candidates were more likely to find the use of negative campaigning—including push polls, focusing on opponents' negative characteristics, making statements of fact out of context, and negative advertisements—as well as of personal attacks based on such behaviors as infidelity, previously unpublicized homosexuality, and youthful illegal drug use, to be acceptable if the candidates believed that the electorate was *poorly informed* about politics.⁵⁷

¹ J. Taylor Danielson, Department of Sociology, The University of Arizona, and Robin Stryker, Department of Sociology and Research Director, National Institute for Civil Discourse, The University of Arizona, prepared this research brief, August 30, 2011.

² George E. Marcus, "Emotion in Politics," *Annual Review of Law & Political Science* 3, 2000, pp. 251-50; Richard R. Lau and Ivy Brown Rovner, "Negative Campaigning," *Annual Review of Political Science* 12, 2009, pp. 285-306; Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Dirty Politics: Deception, Distraction and Democracy*, Oxford University Press, 1992; Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Karilyn Kohrs Campbell, *The Interplay of Influence: News, Advertising, Politics and the Internet*, Wadsworth Publishing, 2005; Kim L. Fridkin and Patrick J. Kenney, "The Dimensions of Negative

Messages,” *American Politics Research* 36, 2008, pp. 694-723; Michael M. Franz, Paul B. Freedman, Kenneth M. Goldstein and Travis N. Ridout, *Campaign Advertising and American Democracy*, Temple University Press, 2008; John G. Geer, *In Defense of Negativity: Attack Ads in Presidential Campaigns*, University of Chicago Press, 2006; Gary Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, Longman, 2009; Ira Teinowitz, “Study: Obama Gains on McCain in Negative-Ad Race,” *Advertising Age*, <http://adage.com/campaigntrail/post?article.id=132167>, 2008.

³ See e.g., Lau and Rovner 2009, *supra* n. 2; Richard R. Lau, Lee Sigelman and Ivy Brown Rovner, “The Effects of Negative Political Advertisements: A Meta-Analytic Assessment,” *American Political Science Review* 93, 2007, pp. 851-876; Fridkin and Kenney 2008, *supra* n. 2; Kim L. Fridkin and Patrick J. Kenney, “Do Negative Messages Work? The Impact of Negativity on Citizens’ Evaluations of Candidates,” *American Politics Research* 32, 2004, pp. 570-605; Kim L. Fridkin and Patrick J. Kenney, “Variability in Citizens Reactions to Different Types of Negative Campaigns,” *American Journal of Political Science* 55(2), 2011, pp. 307-325; Stephen Ansolabehere and Shanto Iyengar, *Going Negative: How Negative Advertisements Shrink and Polarize the Electorate*, The Free Press, 1997; Brian L. Roddy and Gina M. Garrmone, “Appeals and Strategies of Negative Political Advertising,” *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 32, 1988, pp. 415-427; Richard R. Lau and Gerald Pomper, *Negative Campaigning: An Analysis of US Senate Elections*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2004; Michael Basil, Caroline Schooler and Byron Reeves, “Positive and Negative Advertising: Effectiveness of Ads and Perceptions of Candidates,” in *Television and Political Advertising: Psychological Processes*, ed. F. Biocca, Lawrence Erlbaum, 1991, pp. 245-262; Esther Thorson, William G. Christ and Clarke Caywood, “Selling Candidates Like Tubes of Toothpaste: Is the Comparison Apt?” In *Television and Political Advertising*, vol. 1, ed. F. Biocca, Lawrence Erlbaum, 1991, pp. 145-172; Sarah Sobieraj and Jeffrey M. Barry, “From Incivility to Outrage: Political Discourse in Blogs, Talk Radio and Cable News,” *Political Communication* 28, 2011, pp. 19-41; Geer 2006 *supra* n. 2; Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Paul Waldman and Susan Sherr, “Eliminate the Negative? Categories of Analysis for Political Advertisements,” In *Crowded Airwaves: Campaign Advertising in Elections*, ed. James A. Thurber, Candice J. Nelson and David A. Dulio, Brookings Institution, 2000, pp. 44-64. Inconsistent findings stem from differences in how researchers define and measure negative advertising, and in how, and on what outcomes (including voting turnout, vote choice and diverse evaluative measures of candidates), they estimate the impact of negative campaigning. Serious methodological issues, including problems of endogeneity, have hampered this research (Lau and Rovner 2009, *supra* n. 2; Fridkin and Kenney, 2004, 2011, *supra* n. 3). Researchers now agree that there is much variability in the tone and content of negative advertising, and they are devoting great effort to examining separately the multiple “dimensions of negative messages,” (Fridkin and Kenney 2008, *supra* n. 1, p. 694). These include distinguishing between: pure attack advertisements versus contrast advertisements, attacks focused on issues vs. attacks focused on persons or traits, relevant vs. irrelevant attacks, and incivility, mudslinging or outrage discourse vs. negativity itself.

⁴ Lau and Rovner 2009, *supra* n. 2; Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1997, *supra* n. 3; Owen G. Abbe, Paul S. Herrnsen, David B. Magelby and Kelly Peterson, “Are Professional Campaigns More Negative?” In *Playing Hardball: Campaigning for the US Congress*, ed. Paul S. Herrnsen, Prentice Hall, 2001, pp. 70-91; James A. Thurber and Candice J. Nelson, *Campaign Warriors: Political Consultants in Elections*, Brookings Institution, 2000.

⁵ Susan T. Fiske, “Attention and Weight in Person Perception: The Impact of Negative and Extreme Behavior,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 38, 1980, pp. 889-906; Shelly E. Taylor, “A Categorization Approach to Stereotyping,” in *Cognitive Processes in Stereotyping and Intergroup Behavior*, ed. D. L. Hamilton, Lawrence Erlbaum, 1981, pp. 83-114. As Kim Fridkin and Patrick Kenney (2011, *supra* n. 3, p. 308) put it, “[t]he reason that people attend readily to negative information is that the content of negative messages is filled with clues about events or situations that people should avoid.” See also Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, “Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk,” *Econometrica* 47, 1979, pp. 253-291; Richard R. Lau, “Negativity in Person Perception,” *Political Behavior* 4, 1982, pp. 353-277; Kathleen M. McGraw and Marco Steenbergen, “Pictures in the Head: Memory Representation of Political Candidates,” in *Political Judgment: Structure and Process*, ed. M. Lodge and K. M. McGraw, University of Michigan Press, 1997, pp. 15-42. Most—but not all—research finds that, not only do negative ads get more attention, they also are more memorable (Fridkin and Kenney 2004, *supra* n. 3).

⁶ Thomas Frank, *What’s the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*. Holt Paperbacks, 2005.

⁷ Morgan Marietta, “From my Cold Dead Hands: Democratic Consequences of Sacred Rhetoric,” *The Journal of Politics* 70(3), 2008, pp. 767-779; George Lakoff, *The Political Mind: Why You Can’t Understand 21st Century Politics with an 18th Century Brain*, Viking Adult, 2008, Drew Westen, *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation*, Public Affairs, 2008.

⁸ Sobieraj and Barry 2011, *supra* n. 3; Fridkin and Kenney, 2008, *supra* n. 2, Fridkin and Kenney, 2004, 2011, *supra* n. 3; Deborah Jordan Brooks and John G. Geer, "Beyond Negativity: The Effects of Incivility on the Electorate," *American Journal of Political Science*, 51(1), 2007, pp. 1-16; Diana C. Mutz, "How the Mass Media Divide Us," in P. S. Nivola and D. W. Brady, *Red and Blue Nation? Vol. 1, Characteristics and Causes of America's Polarized Politics*, The Brookings Institution, 2006, pp. 223-262; Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Erika Falk, "Continuity and Change in Civility in the House," in *Polarized Politics: Congress and the President in a Partisan Era*, ed. J. R. Bond and R. Fleisher, Congressional Quarterly Press, 2000, pp. 96-108.

⁹ See Sobieraj and Barry 2011, *supra* n. 3.

¹⁰ For discussion of such research, see Jerry W. Lee and Robin Stryker, *National Institute for Civil Discourse Research Brief No. 4: Classical Rhetoric, Contemporary Science and Modern Civil Discourse*, August 3, 2011, and citations therein. See also Marcus 2000, *supra* n. 2; Lau and Rovner 2009, *supra* n. 2; Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain*, Harper-Collins, 1995; Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens*, First Ed. Houghton-Mifflin-Harcourt, 1999; Jonathan H. Turner and Jan E. Stets, "Sociological Theories of Human Emotions," *Annual Review of Sociology* 32, 2006, pp. 25-52; Theodore D. Kemper, *A Social Interactional Theory of Emotions*, John Wiley & Sons, 1978; Theodore Kemper and Randall Collins, "Dimensions of Microinteraction," *American Journal of Sociology* 96, 1990, pp. 32-68; J. M. Barbalet, *Emotion, Social Theory and Social Structure: A Macro-sociological Approach*, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

¹¹ Anthony Downs, "An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy," *The Journal of Political Economy* 65(2), 1957, pp. 135-150.

¹² David J. Andersen, "The Electoral Environment and House Races: Political Knowledge, Political Interest, and Government Evaluations as a Function of Electoral Density," Presentation prepared for the 2009 Midwest Political Science Association, 2009; Larry Bartels, "Uninformed Votes: Information Effects in Presidential Elections," *American Journal of Political Science* 40, 1996, pp. 194-230; Michael X. Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter, *What Americans Know and Why It Matters*, Yale University Press, 1996; Shanto Iyengar, James Curran, Anker Brink Lund, Inka Salovaara-Moring, Kyu S. Hahn, and Sharon Coen, "Cross-National Versus Individual-Level Differences in Political Information: A Media Systems Perspective," *Journal of Elections, Public Opinions and Parties* 20, 2010, pp. 291-309; Michael Schudson, "America's Ignorant Voters," *Wilson Quarterly* 24, 2000, pp. 16-22; John Zaller, *The Nature and Origin of Mass Public Opinion*, Cambridge University Press, 1992. Some researchers argue that these results may *not* reflect true voter ignorance, but may stem instead from how researchers gathered, coded and evaluated the data (Cheryl Boudrea and Arthur Lupia, "Political Knowledge," in *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*, ed. J. N. Druckman, D. P. Green, J. H. Kuklinski and A. Lupia, Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 171-187).

¹³ Andersen, 2009, *supra* n. 12; Delli-Carpini and Keeter 1996, *supra* n. 12; Iyengar et al 2010, *supra* n. 12; M. Kent Jennings, "Political Knowledge over Time and Across Generations," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 60, 2006, pp. 228-252; Schudson 2000, *supra*, n. 12. For critiques, see Boudrea and Lupia 2011, *supra* n. 12.

¹⁴ Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, *supra* n. 12.

¹⁵ Jennings 1996, *supra* n. 13. Jennings found that knowledge of the political system possessed by members of younger cohorts declined with age, suggesting that time proximity to formal education may be related to level of political knowledge.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Kimmo Grönlund and Henry Milner, "The Determinants of Political Knowledge in Comparative Perspective," *Scandinavian Political Studies* 29, 2006, pp. 386-406. The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) is a collaborative research program involving election study teams throughout the world. For more information, see <http://www/cses.org/> (accessed September 22, 2011).

¹⁸ Andersen 2009, *supra* n. 12. The American National Election Studies (ANES, sometimes NES) is a collaborative research program between the University of Michigan and Stanford University, producing comparable data on voting and political participation at regular intervals. For more information, see <http://www.electionstudies.org/> (accessed September 22, 2011).

¹⁹ Downs 1957, *supra* n. 11; Iyengar et al. 2010, *supra* n. 12, T.K Ahn, Robert Huckfeldt and John Barry Ryan, "Communication, Influence and Informational Asymmetries among Voters," *Political Psychology* 31(5), 2010, pp. 763-787.

²⁰ Ahn, Huckfeldt and Ryan, 2010, *supra* n. 19.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Iyengar et al 2010, *supra* n. 12.

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- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 293.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ Ahn, Huckfeldt and Ryan 2010, *supra* n. 19.
- ²⁸ Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, *supra* n. 12; Markus Prior, “News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout,” *American Journal of Political Science* 49(3), 2005, pp. 577-592; Schudson, 2000, *supra* n. 12.
- ²⁹ See Robin Stryker and Heidi Reynolds-Stenson, *National Institute for Civil Discourse Research Brief No. 3: New Media Usage and Civic Engagement (2)*, July 28, 2011, and citations therein.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*
- ³¹ Prior 2005, *supra* n. 28.
- ³² *Ibid.*
- ³³ Shelly Chaiken, “Heuristic Vs. Systematic Information Processing and the Use of Source Versus Message Cues in Persuasion,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 39(5), 1980, pp. 752-766; Lakoff 2008, *supra* n. 7.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*
- ³⁵ Chaiken, 1980, *supra* n. 33; David DeSeno, Richard Petty, Derek D. Rucker, Duane T. Wegener and Julia Braverman, “Discrete Emotions and Persuasion: The Role of Emotion-Induced Expectancies,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 86(1), pp. 43-56; Richard R. Lau, David J. Andersen and David P. Redlawsk, “An Exploration of Correct Voting in Recent U.S. Presidential Elections,” *American Journal of Political Science* 52(2), 2008, pp. 395-411.
- ³⁶ Teresa Capelos, “Feeling the Issue: How Citizens’ Affective Reactions and Leadership Perceptions Shape Policy Evaluations,” *Journal of Political Marketing* 9, 2010, pp. 9-33; Chaiken 1980, *supra* n. 33; Lau, Anderson and Redlawsk, 2008, *supra* n. 35; David W. Schwieder and Paul J. Quirk, “Missed Cues: Judgment Heuristics and Citizen Competence,” Paper presented at Midwest Political Science Association, 2004.
- ³⁷ Ahn, Huckfeldt and Ryan 2010, *supra* n. 19.
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- ⁴¹ Lau, Andersen and Redlawsk 2008, *supra* n. 35.
- ⁴² Ryan L. Claassen, “Political Awareness and Electoral Campaigns: Maximum Effects for Minimum Citizens?” *Political Behavior* 33, 2011, pp. 205-223.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.* See also Zaller 1992, *supra* n. 12.
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- ⁵¹ Fridkin and Kenney 2004, *supra* n. 3, p. 578.
- ⁵² *Ibid.* This study also examined how negative advertising by incumbents and challengers affected both the producer and target of the negative messages. *For the politically ill-informed*, increased negativity by incumbents

backfired, with enhanced negativity by incumbents associated with substantially reduced evaluations of these incumbents, whereas increased negativity by challengers was associated with diminished evaluations of the incumbent-target of the challenger's campaign. *For the politically knowledgeable*, increased negativity by incumbents had no impact on the evaluation of the challenger-target of the incumbent's campaign, but increased negativity by challengers did adversely affect knowledgeable voters' evaluation of the incumbent-target of the challengers' campaign. Because mudslinging as measured in this study pertained to the campaign itself rather than to the messages of each campaigner, assessed separately, we do not know the impact of mudslinging on the intended target versus on the producer. A thorough discussion of the research on negative campaigning is available in Robin Stryker, Carli Brosseau and Zachary Schrank, *National Institute for Civil Discourse Research Brief No. 7: Negative Campaigning*, September 12, 2011, and citations therein.

⁵³ Capelos 2010, *supra* n. 36.

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⁵⁷ *Ibid.*