Feeling within reason

How appraisals shape emotional responses to politics

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5 Disentangling the Sophistication-Emotion Link: Political Interest and Confidence-in-Knowledge drive Political Emotions

Abstract

Why do some people report strong emotional responses to politics and others do not? Past work has suggested that political knowledge leads to emotional engagement, as knowledgeable citizens have stronger cognitive and affective ties with political objects. In this chapter, we argue that a core dimension of political sophistication is often overlooked: confidence-in-knowledge, which is highly related to political interest but not to actual knowledge. We argue and show empirically in three waves of the ANES and two preregistered studies (conducted in the Netherlands and the U.S.) that not knowledge but political interest and confidence in one's knowledge predict the intensity of emotional responses to politics. We test the causal link between confidence and emotions using an experimental confidence manipulation and find a direct effect on anger and anxiety, and a mediated effect via post-treatment confidence on anger, anxiety, pride and hope. If people are less confident, they report lower levels of emotions about politics. These results put into question the view that emotions are an expression of informed citizenship by showing that interest and confidence drive emotional responses to politics, while knowledge is unrelated to or suppresses the intensity of self-reported emotions. Moreover, our findings demonstrate the necessity of disentangling the different components of political sophistication when studying political emotions and other political outcomes.

Political sophisticates tend to be more emotional about politics than nonsophisticates (Brader, 2006; Miller, 2011; Taber & Lodge, 2006; C. Weber, 2013). While folk wisdom has long distinguished between reasonable non-emotional voters and unreasonable emotional voters, in political science the positive link between sophistication and emotions has become widely accepted. Expressing feelings in response to politics is now considered an important component of engaged and informed citizenship (Bas & Grabe, 2015; Brader, 2006; Miller, 2011).

Research studying the link between political sophistication and emotions has operationalized the former primarily as political knowledge, political interest, and attention to news, or as a composite index of all or a subset of these three (e.g. Miller, 2011). Approaches vary in which of these elements are emphasized in theory and in measurement. A problem that Luskin identified decades ago persists to date: "[M]ost sophistication research skips rapidly past definition. Most chapters barely outline the variable [...]. Clearly, we all think we are talking about the same thing. But are we?" (Luskin, 1987, p.857).

A key study investigating the sophistication-emotion link shows that sophisticates are more likely to report feeling anger, fear, hope, and pride about policies and candidates (Miller, 2011). Arguably the reason is that sophisticates care more about politics (Brader, 2006) and political outcomes (K. A. Dolan & Holbrook, 2001), and spend more time thinking about politics and appraising issues and candidates. This shapes opinions (Taber & Lodge, 2006), but also appropriate emotional responses (Miller, 2011). This approach thus considers emotions as reasonable responses to political developments, and views people's emotions as reflections of how they perceive politics. Ultimately, emotions help citizens to generate appropriate courses of action in response to political events (Marcus et al., 2000).

In this strand of literature, political sophistication is understood as either political knowledge (Carpini & Keeter, 1996), or, more broadly, as consisting of several elements, such as interest, knowledge and attention (Luskin, 1990). Work that followed and extended the sophistication-emotion link proposed by Miller (2011) has been inconsistent in conceptualizing and operationalizing political sophistication by using measures of interest and knowledge separately (Nai et al., 2017), or knowledge items only (Bakker et al., 2021; Gibson et al., 2020; Karl, 2021; Lamprianou

& Ellinas, 2019; Vegetti & Mancosu, 2020). This makes it difficult to integrate different theories and empirical findings regarding the sophistication-emotion link. It is therefore crucial to identify more closely which of the specific element(s) of sophistication cause(s) people to report more emotions. We therefore disentangle some of the key components of political sophistication here.

In this chapter, we argue that although political knowledge is now widely considered the core component of sophistication (Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Clifford & Jerit, 2016; Jerit & Zhao, 2020), it is the wrong trait to look at when trying to understand the link with political emotions. We offer a third approach to the sophistication-emotion link that is broad because it considers various different components of sophistication, but narrow because it urges us to theorize about each component individually. We argue that in order to understand the relationship between political sophistication and emotions, we need to be more precise in theorizing about the key components of sophistication: political interest, knowledge and, additionally confidence-in-knowledge.

The importance of confidence-in-knowledge as an independent dimension of political sophistication has been stressed by work on political misinformation (Jerit & Zhao, 2020; Kuklinski, Quirk, Jerit, Schwieder, & Rich, 2000). We propose that confidence-in-knowledge is a more relevant factor than actual knowledge when it comes to the study of political emotions. The reason is that the appraisals that lead to emotions do not need to be factually correct. People simply need to be confident in their appraisals.

Empirically, we first extend Miller's work that has shown that political sophistication increases the likelihood of feeling emotional about politics (Miller, 2011). We use three waves from the American National Election Study (2012-2020), which we complement with two preregistered studies.

We first show that political knowledge has no consistent effect on emotions whereas political interest mostly has a positive effect on a range of emotions. Second, we demonstrate that the effects of confidence-in-knowledge and political interest on emotions are very similar. Both are consistently positively related to emotional responses to politics. Third, we establish a causal relationship between confidence-in-knowledge and emotional responses to politics by using a prereg-

istered experimental manipulation of confidence-in-knowledge using knowledge question difficulty.

These findings challenge the dominant view that sophistication leads to emotions through learning and evaluations of the political environment. Rather than a corollary of information and knowledge, emotions should be conceived of as a product of general interest in politics and feeling confident in one's knowledge about it.

5.1 Conceptualizing Political Sophistication

Although political sophistication has received ample scholarly attention over the past decades, the literature has not settled on a single definition. We distinguish two main approaches to political sophistication. The first is a narrow approach that follows Carpini and Keeter (1996) and sees political knowledge as the core component of political sophistication. Research following this approach often focuses on how we can improve measures of knowledge (Vidigal, n.d.), avoid gender biases (K. Dolan & Hansen, 2020; Kraft & Dolan, 2022) and racial biases (Pérez, 2015) in knowledge questions and discourage cheating (Clifford & Jerit, 2016; Style & Jerit, 2020). The term political sophistication, in this work, has largely been replaced by the more specific term political knowledge, or political awareness.

A second, broader, approach follows Luskin (1990) who defines political sophistication as "political belief systems", describing "the extent to which a person's cognitions of some stimulus domain are both highly *differentiated* (roughly, numerous and wide-ranging) and highly *integrated* (organized or constrained). [...] Political sophistication is political cognitive complexity [and] political expertise" (p.332). According to this view, its components are both factual political knowledge and ideology, i.e. the integration of knowledge in political beliefs. Its predictors are opportunity (occupation, parental interest in politics, exposure to political news), ability (intelligence) and motivation (occupation, political interest).

Past work on the sophistication-emotion link suffers from a discrepancy between how it has been theorized and how it has been studied. The theoretical link between sophistication and emotions follows the narrow approach focusing mostly on political knowledge. Past studies on the sophistication-emotion link have argued

that people who know more about politics will also feel more strongly about politics (Brader, 2006; Gibson et al., 2020; Lamprianou & Ellinas, 2019; Vegetti & Mancosu, 2020). The core idea is that the more one knows about politics, the more one will reason and make appraisals about it, leading to stronger emotional ties with political objects.

However, when operationalizing political sophistication, Miller (2011) takes a broader approach, studying sophistication as an index of both knowledge and interest. Taking a broader approach to political sophistication allowed Miller (2011) to be less specific about which component of a broader sophistication concept should elicit emotions.

Recent work on political misinformation has directed our focus toward another component of sophistication: confidence-in-knowledge (Lee & Matsuo, 2018; Thomas, Bulevich, & Dubois, 2012). Increasingly, measures of confidence, although under the label of certainty-in-knowledge, are making their way into measures of political knowledge (Graham, 2022; Vidigal & Jerit, 2022).

Especially if we try to explain what drives emotional responses to politics – though this might be true for other outcomes, as well– political interest and confidence-in-knowledge, we aruge, are the relevant components to study. In the next sections we describe in more detail why we expect interest and confidence-in-knowledge, but not factual knowledge, to increase emotional responses to politics. We also discuss in more detail what confidence-in-knowledge is and what we know about its behavioral outcomes and relationships with other components of political sophistication.

Directing our focus towards confidence-in-knowledge as a core component of sophistication is consistent with Luskin's (1987) view of political sophistication. He states: "The 'sophistication' in political sophistication has nothing to do with acuity. Its opposite is not naiveté or false consciousness but sheer ignorance. [...] Sophistication is a matter of how much and how a person thinks about politics, not what" (p.864).

5.2 The Sophistication-Emotion Link: Interest, not Knowledge

We start this discussion by introducing appraisal theories, which have strongly influenced political psychology work on emotions. Appraisal theories assume that emotions are a response to evaluations of our environment (Moors et al., 2013). A situation is appraised along a set of core appraisal dimensions. Each emotion is considered to be a result of a unique combination of appraisals (Scherer & Meuleman, 2013; Scherer et al., 2001; C. A. Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). For instance, anger is evoked in response to a negative event that is caused by a specific actor. Moreover, to feel anger we need to feel a sense of control over a situation: that the situation could have been prevented or that we have the power to change it. If we change one appraisal dimension, a different emotion is expected. For example, if in the previously sketched situation we feel responsible ourselves, we are likely to experience guilt instead of anger. Anxiety is a more diffuse emotional state. It is characterized by low certainty and low control. We feel anxious when we are unsure about what caused an event, and when we feel little control over a situation. Positive emotions work similarly. If we feel responsible for a positive event, we are likely to feel proud. Feeling positive about a future event that we have little control over and are not certain will occur, leads to hope (Scherer & Meuleman, 2013; C. A. Smith & Ellsworth, 1985).

In appraisal theories the assessment of goal relevance is essential. If a stimulus is seen as irrelevant to one's goals, it is unlikely that it will elicit any emotional response. Brader (2006) links goal appraisal with political sophistication in his 'Relevancy Hypothesis': political sophisticates pay more attention to politics, learn more about it and simultaneously are more invested in political outcomes (K. A. Dolan & Holbrook, 2001). A bill that goes against one's political preferences, for instance, will elicit stronger negative emotions among sophisticates than non-sophisticates. By definition, sophisticates are more likely to be aware of the event in the first place and better able to understand its political consequences. According to this reasoning, higher political sophistication is linked to stronger emotional responses to politics through higher appraisals of goal relevance. Brader (2006) does not specify which component of sophistication is at work in this process.

Miller (2011) describes the link between political sophistication and emotions

as follows: Political sophisticates pay more attention to politics and make appraisals more frequently and about a wider range of issues. These appraisals are stored in long-term memory in a cognitive-affective structure consisting of knowledge about political objects and affective ties with these objects (Lodge & Taber, 2005). When sophisticates are asked how they feel about a given political issue, they find it easier to recall these emotions than non-sophisticates (Miller, 2011). As a result, the emotional responses to various political events should generally be expected to be more intense among political sophisticates than among non-sophisticates.

Political knowledge may help us incorporate complex new information (Rhee & Cappella, 1997; Zaller et al., 1992) but this does not mean that people who are more knowledgeable absorb all new information. Rather, knowledge helps us incorporate information that is relevant as much as it helps us dismiss information that is *not* relevant. Whether political knowledge leads to higher or lower goal relevance appraisals among highly knowledgeable people will depend on several other factors, such as prior attitudes and beliefs (Taber & Lodge, 2006) or the credibility of information (Vegetti & Mancosu, 2020). In fact, Price, David, Goldthorpe, Roth, and Cappella (2006) find a small negative relationship between subjective issue importance of health care issues and issue-specific knowledge about it, suggesting that just because people know a lot about an issue does not necessarily mean they give it more importance. Similarly, Vidigal and Jerit (2022) find that once misinformed about an issue, people who find the issue important are less likely to correct their misinformation. Thus, issue importance and knowledge can be negatively related.

Moreover, secondary appraisals of responsibility, certainty, or control are always subjective and therefore do not have to be based on factual information (Scherer & Moors, 2019). What is important is that people are interested enough in politics to make any appraisals at all, and less so whether these appraisals are based on correct factual knowledge. In other words: it is possible that someone has strong affective ties that are based on entirely incorrect factual information (Weeks, 2015).

Thus, we expect that political knowledge is not related to emotional responses to politics. The positive effect of sophistication on emotions that Miller (2011) reports should be produced by the interest component of sophistication.

Political interest itself contains cognitive and affective components. Prior (2018,

p.14) calls situational interest a "feeling of curiosity and discovery". It can be triggered by positive emotions, the prospect of a reward of engaging with political content, or by anxiety (Albertson & Gadarian, 2015; Valentino et al., 2011). Silvia (2008) sees situational interest itself as an emotion that is elicited by appraisals of novelty and coping potential. Connelly (2011) adds goal relevance to this model and shows that it is in fact the strongest predictor of situational interest in academic texts. Dispositional interest is a more stable trait that develops through sustained situational interest. It involves more cognition. People with high dispositional interest tend to find politics more important, more fun and tend to enjoy giving their attention to complex political issues (Prior, 2018, ch. 2). Political interest, thus is different from political knowledge, which often but not necessarily is a result of political interest. It is possible to know a lot about politics without being too interested, as much as one can be interested without having a good understanding of political processes. Throughout the literature, political interest and knowledge have been found to have a weak to moderate correlation (Arceneaux, Johnson, & Maes, 2012; Bakker et al., 2021; Nai et al., 2017). In the ANES data presented in this chapter, the correlation is approximately 0.3. In our two original samples, the correlation does not exceed 0.2.

Past work has shown that people with higher political interest tend to feel a stronger duty to vote (Blais & Galais, 2016). Political interest is also related to public concern about issues such as the environment, peace, the economy or immigration (Prior, 2018, ch.14).

To be interested in something, we need to think it is important to us personally, or to values we hold. Politically interested people are more likely to encounter political stimuli and more likely to perceive political stimuli as goal relevant. Brader's *Relevance Hypothesis* is therefore linked much more clearly to political interest than knowledge. This leads us to the following hypotheses:

H1: Factual knowledge about politics is unrelated to experiencing emotional responses to politics.

H2: Political interest is positively related to experiencing emotional responses to politics.

5.3 The Sophistication-Emotion Link: Confidence, not Knowledge

Recent work on political sophistication and political misinformation has highlighted another dimension of political sophistication, namely confidence-in-knowledge (Lee & Matsuo, 2018). If people are confident in their knowledge it does not necessarily mean that they know more about politics than people who perceive themselves as less knowledgeable. Rather, political knowledge and confidence-in-knowledge are independent dimensions with a weak correlation (Alba & Hutchinson, 2000; Carlson, Vincent, Hardesty, & Bearden, 2009). Confidence-in-knowledge also has different antecedents than political knowledge does (Lee & Matsuo, 2018; Thomas et al., 2012). Education, for example, predicts higher levels of knowledge but not confidence-in-knowledge (Lee & Matsuo, 2018). Moreover, the two concepts have different consequences. People who are confident in their knowledge about politics are more engaged in politics (Lee & Matsuo, 2018; Schäfer, 2020), report more extreme political attitudes (Fernbach, Rogers, Fox, & Sloman, 2013) and are less consensus-oriented (Light, Fernbach, Rabb, Geana, & Sloman, 2022).

Confidence-in-knowledge is closely related to internal political efficacy, which refers to the confidence in one's skills to participate in politics. Kaid, McKinney, and Tedesco (2007) has also called confidence-in-knowledge "political information efficacy". Both concepts probe people's confidence in understanding the political system and political developments. Yet internal political efficacy focuses also on people's confidence in their own ability to play an active part in politics (see also M. Weber & Koehler, 2017). This latter aspect is not part of confidence-in-knowledge, which only concerns confidence in one's knowledge about politics.

Prior (2018) identifies confidence-in-knowledge, although under the label of "self-efficacy" as a key prerequisite of political interest: "We tend to find things more interesting that we understand (or believe we could understand)" (p.356). This is in line with Silvia (2008)'s model of interest, which considers novelty and coping potential the main appraisals driving interest. To be interested requires that something is in principle comprehensible, and that we feel that we have the skills and knowledge to deal with it (Silvia, 2008, p.58). Thus, confidence, interest and

knowledge are related, although studying if and under which circumstances confidence leads to interest or interest leads to knowledge is not the focus of this chapter.

We theorize that confidence-in-knowledge relates to the experience of emotional responses to politics in two ways. First, if one is confident about their knowledge of politics, we expect that person to more rapidly and consistently produce appraisals of a political stimulus. Confident people will be less hesitant and therefore more likely to place the new stimulus in a broader context, producing, for instance, a causal chain of events, a responsible actor, and possible future scenarios. Gomez and Wilson (2008) show that politically knowledgeable people are better at *correctly* assigning responsibility. However, incorrectly placed blame attribution can just as well elicit anger, as long as the person believes they are right. If one is confident about how to appraise a stimulus on dimensions such as responsibility, certainty and control, appraisal theories predict clear emotional responses such as anger, hope, pride, etc. Again, none of the appraisals need to be factually true, and therefore confidence and knowledge are distinct concepts. People that lack confidence may not be able to confidently place the stimulus in a single broader context, and therefore may be ambiguous in how they appraise a situation. For example, they may not confidently single out one actor as responsible, but rather believe that there are multiple equally plausible options. If one is ambiguous about how to appraise a stimulus, appraisal theories do not predict a clear emotional response. In sum, the ambiguity of appraisals of low confidence people likely produce weaker emotional responses.

Second, confidence may also generally produce appraisals of high certainty and high control. Confident people are more likely to assess the circumstances around the stimulus as highly certain and very much under control than people who are not confident. A similar point has been made by Valentino et al. (2009), who argue that highly efficacious citizens feel a higher sense of control and certainty and thus higher levels of anger. Although this argument concerns internal efficacy rather than confidence-in-knowledge, the discussed mechanism is very similar. Highly confident people may even be more likely to point towards a responsible actor. This line of reasoning implies that confidence-in-knowledge is linked to specific emotions, namely those which emerge from appraisals of high certainty and high

control: anger or pride.

The difference between these two theoretical approaches is that the first assumes that confidence-in-knowledge will lead to stronger emotions, generally. Appraisals can be made in any direction, for instance low or high certainty, but among people with high confidence, this is done with less ambiguity. The second approach assumes that people with high confidence-in-knowledge have a general tendency to appraise different events in a certain way, i.e. to make high certainty and high control appraisals more frequently. The result would be that they are more likely to experience specific emotions (anger, pride). We did not preregister any emotion-specific hypotheses but rather expect that confidence-in-knowledge will generally increase the intensity of emotional responses.

H3: Confidence-in-knowledge is positively related to the intensity of self-reported emotions.

We expect confidence-in-knowledge to be highly correlated with political interest. In fact, some research shows that manipulating confidence increases political interest (Bishop, 1987; Lasorsa, 2009). We also expect the two concepts to have a similar effect on the experience of emotional responses to politics. Yet, theoretically we should still make a distinction between the two concepts. We have argued how political interest affects emotions via a relatively general route, activating appraisals through goal relevance. Confidence-in-knowledge, on the other hand, follows a more specific route through secondary appraisals, such as certainty, control and responsibility. Importantly, these appraisals do not have to be based on factually correct information and the effect of confidence-in-knowledge should be independent of the effect, or lack thereof of factual political knowledge. It is plausible that as much as interest and confidence affect emotions, specific emotions also have an impact on interest (Albertson & Gadarian, 2015; Marcus et al., 2000) and confidence (Rico et al., 2020). Therefore, only experimentally manipulating confidence allows us to make any claims about the causal ordering of sophistication and emotions. We use question difficulty, a simple confidence manipulation, to test whether confidence has a causal effect on self-reported emotions.

This approach is informed by self-perception theory, which argues that survey

context influences people's confidence and self-perceptions of their political engagement (Bem, 1972; Bishop, 1987). Specifically, self-perception theory argues that answering difficult knowledge questions can unsettle people's understanding of their own political competence and interest. This has consequences for subsequent survey responses in which respondents are asked to report information that is not directly available to them but requires a level of introspection. In such cases, respondents observe their behavior, almost like an outside observer, to answer the questions that follow.

In a survey context, this means that they consider how they have answered previous questions. This has been previously tested to see how the placement of knowledge questions (Bishop, 1987; Lasorsa, 2009), measures of political participation, or feeling thermometers (Robison, 2015) affects subsequent self-reported political interest. If people are asked a range of political knowledge questions prior to reporting their political interest, they report lower interest than if they report interest first. The theorized mechanism is this: if respondents struggled to answer some of the knowledge questions, they will question how interested in politics they really are. As a consequence, they will report lower levels of political interest. Similarly, if respondents report prior political participation before answering a political interest item, they will use these responses to inform their response to the interest item (Robison, 2015). On average, then, respondents report lower interest compared to when they simply report their interest without reflecting on their behavior beforehand. What is manipulated here, according to Prior (2018, p.341), is "a subjective sense of being able to understand and influence politics". Thus, while this might also have consequences on self-reports of political interest, we argue that it is primarily a manipulation of confidence-in-knowledge.

These studies are mainly concerned with survey context effects, or the effects of asking knowledge questions before the interest (or participation) items, or asking about interest before knowledge. We deviate from this approach as knowledge questions inevitably bring up a range of political issues that could themselves elicit emotional responses. Therefore, we experimentally manipulate knowledge question difficulty but keep the question content stable across the two conditions. We expect that individuals who answer easier questions will have more confidence in

their knowledge, whereas those who are exposed to more difficult questions will be less confident.

H4: Respondents in the easy condition, compared to the difficult condition, report higher confidence in political knowledge.

H5: Respondents in the easy condition, compared to the difficult condition, report higher levels of self-reported emotional responses to politics. [12]

5.4 Methods

Evidence for our hypotheses comes from three separate sources: (1) a reanalysis of the three most recent waves of the ANES (Hypotheses 1 and 2, Hypothesis 3 tested in the 2020 wave), (2) a pre-registered original study conducted in the Netherlands via Dynata in summer 2022 (H1-H5), and (3) a pre-registered original study conducted via Prolific in the United States in the fall of 2022 (H1-H5). They will each be discussed in this section, before we present the results of all three data sources together below. Each results section contains an overview table of the measures across the five samples.

American National Election Study 2012 - 2020

We start with a conceptual replication of the core findings presented by Miller (2011) using three recent waves of the American National Election Study 2012-2020. The reason to include these three waves is based on a recent change in the emotions question in the ANES in 2020 when instead of emotions concerning the two presidential candidates, respondents were asked to report how they felt about how things were going in the country at the time (we used a similar measure in our original study).

To increase the validity of our findings and test whether our effects also apply to more specific emotion questions, we add two ANES waves with the old emotion

[12] Hypothesis 4 and 5 were pre-registered in the reverse order. We additionally pre-registered to measure decreases in confidence through response time, expecting that easy questions would decrease response time to post-treatment confidence measures and emotions questions. We did not find any effects for response time.

items. In 2012 and 2016, emotion items were asked in reference to presidential candidates. In 2012, these were Barack Obama, as the Democratic candidate, and Mitt Romney as the Republican candidate. In 2016, the candidates were Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. Following Miller (2011), we pool observations concerning the two candidates in each year and control for candidate party and policy differences. We construct a measure for policy differences as the means of the absolute differences between self-placement and candidate placement on various policy items. When placing themselves on the ideological scale (in all waves) from left to right, or on specific political issues (only used as control in the 2012 and 2016 waves), respondents could indicate that they had not thought about this enough to answer the question. While this could be interpreted as missing values, which would lead to exclusion of these respondents from our models, such a response is likely systematically related to confidence, interest and knowledge. Thus, we impute a value of 4, i.e. the center of the scale, for these responses. Otherwise, we would risk systematically biasing our sample.

We use standard errors clustered at the respondent level to account for repeated measurement. In 2020, the emotions question did not concern a specific candidate or issue. Thus, we cannot control for policy differences and cannot account for who people thought of when reporting their emotions. However, in all models, we control for ideological self-placement, partisan identification (from 1 strong Democrat to 7 strong Republican), age, education, race/ethnicity, and income.

Finally, in 2020, a confidence measure for 6 political beliefs was added to the ANES. This measure was designed to study misinformation, i.e. to detect participants who are confident in false beliefs, or not very confident despite their beliefs being correct (Graham, 2022). Respondents were given two statements, such as: "Russia tried to interfere in the 2016 presidential election", and "Russia did not try to interfere in the 2016 presidential election". They then indicated which one they thought was more likely to be true and how confident they were about that on a 5-point scale. For our confidence measure, we only use the second step, i.e. the confidence items across the six beliefs. We create a measure as the mean across the six items, which we standardize (for more information on the individual items and the distribution of the measure, see Figure B8 in the online appendix). The analysis

of the ANES confidence measure was not pre-registered as we became aware that this measure was included after pre-registration.

Dutch Sample (Dynata)

Data for the Dutch sample was collected in October and November 2022 by Dynata. A total of 2579 participants were recruited to obtain a sample of 2010 participants. We asked respondents to pledge not to cheat (Clifford & Jerit, 2016) and included a simple attention check. Participants had to listen to a soundbite and select the word that was said in the soundbite. 98% of participant passed this check. After excluding all participants with missing values on the key variables, we obtain a sample of 1991 respondents that consists of 49.8% men and 50.2% women, and a mean age of 54.2.

Before exposing participants to either easy or difficult knowledge questions, we measured participants' political interest, baseline confidence in knowledge, and factual knowledge. We use these variables to test H1 and H2.

We measured confidence in knowledge with the following two items, which were taken and slightly adapted from the scale for perceived knowledge proposed by Flynn and Goldsmith (1999): 1. "Among my circle of friends, I'm one of the 'experts' on politics"; and 2. "Compared to most other people, I know less about politics" (reverse coded). Participants were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the two statements. The two items are significantly but not highly correlated (Peason's r = 0.36, p <0.001, $\alpha = 0.53$). We nonetheless combined them to an index for confidence (mean = 2.81, sd = 0.82).

Next, we measured baseline factual knowledge using four moderately easy knowledge questions: 1. "Ordering the political parties below from ideological left to right, which of the orders would you say is correct?"; 2. "Who is currently president of France?"; 3. "What year did the Netherlands join the European Economic Community, which would later become the EU?" 4. "What is the current position of Hugo de Jonge?". To calculate an index of political knowledge, we created the sum of correct answers, and divided by 4 to obtain a scale ranging from 0 to 1. On average, participants answered 2.77 questions correctly. As Figure 22 shows, two of the questions were very easy (top row), while two were really moderately easy.

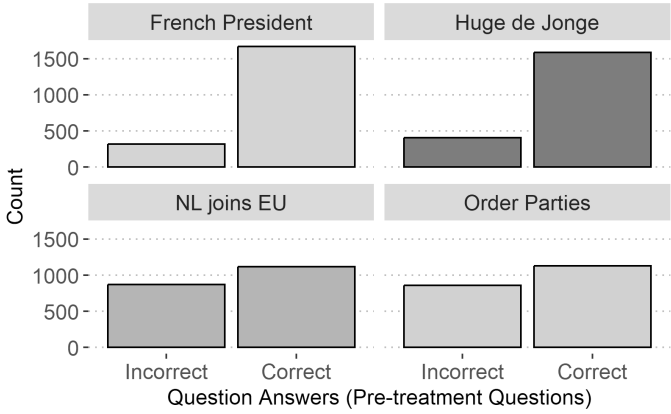

Figure 22. Dutch Sample (Dynata): Distribution of correct answers on the common knowledge questions (pre-treatment).

We will reflect on the implications of this in the discussion.

Additionally, we measured political interest ("Are you very, rather, or not at all interested in politics?", 7-point scale, mean = 4.41, sd = 1.62), ideology on a 7-point scale (mean = 4.20, sd = 1.42), age, gender, education and internal efficacy. Internal efficacy is measured on a 5-point scale with the following two items, which are combined to an index ($\alpha = 0.64$, mean = 3.01, sd = 0.84). 1. "I am well capable of playing an active role in politics", and 2. "I have a clear picture of the most important political issues in our country". These measures are deliberately different from other commonly used measures of internal efficacy, such as the one used in the American National Election Study: "Sometimes, politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.", as this measure would have strongly overlapped with our measure of confidence-in-knowledge. All measures were then standardized so that a one-point increase equals an increase by one standard deviation on the respective predictor variable. We measured emotional responses with the following item: "Thinking about politics, have you recently felt any of the emotions below and with what intensity did you feel that emotion?" Four emotions (anger, fear, enthusiasm, hope) were presented in random order and participants indicated the intensity with which they had

felt the emotion on a 7-point scale ranging from "Not at all" to "Very strongly". All measures were standardized.

U.S. Sample (Prolific)

For the second original data source, a sample of 1163 participants was collected in December 2022 by Prolific in the United States. Again, we included two attention checks (Berinsky et al., 2014), each with a warning if respondents failed once, and excluded those who did not pass after receiving the warning. The final sample consisted of 47.2% men and 51.5% women. 1.3% of respondents identified as non-binary. We randomly imputed male or female gender for these respondents as the group was too small to estimate a separate gender effect. The sample consisted of 30.78% Independents, 48.07% Democrats, and 21.15% Republicans. When Independents were asked whether they leaned one way or another and were recoded according to their leanings, overall 12.3% identified as not leaning either side. The sample mean age was 45.45 years.

We again measured pre-treatment confidence in knowledge but added two items to the pre-treatment confidence scale: "I know a lot about current affairs and political issues", and "When it comes to current affairs and political issues, I am quite knowledgeable". We combined the four items to an index (Cronbach's alpha = 0.91, mean = 4.42, sd = 1.39).

We measured factual knowledge using four questions, which each have three answer categories (1. "For how many years is a United States Senator elected - that is, how many years are there in one full term of office for a U.S. Senator?" 2. "On which of the following does the U.S. federal government currently spend the least?" 3. "What is the current unemployment rate in this country?" 4. "How much of a majority is required for the US Senate and U.S. House to override a presidential veto?"). The questions, especially the first and last, were quite easy. On average, respondents answered 2.14 questions correctly (see Figure 23). The means score is comparable to the first study.

Political interest was measured in the same way as in Study 2 but on a 5-point scale (mean = 3.52, sd = 1.01), and ideology on a 10-point scale from extremely liberal (0) to extremely conservative (10). The U.S. sample leaned somewhat more

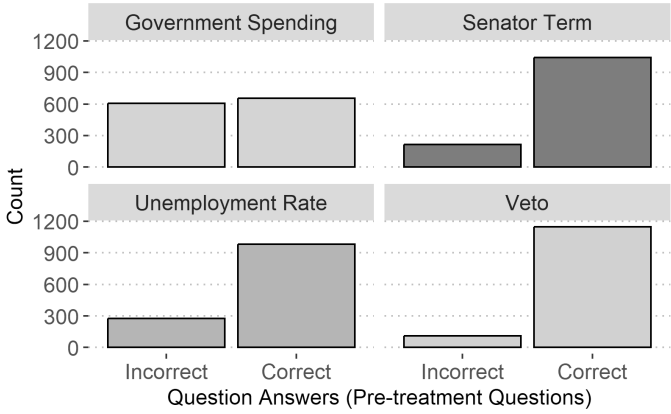

Figure 23. U.S. Sample (Prolific): Distribution of correct answers on the common knowledge questions (pre-treatment).

towards liberal than conservative (mean = 3.99, sd = 2.87). The efficacy items were identical to those in Dutch sample (mean = 4.76, sd = 1.27).

Finally, we measured emotions using the question: "Thinking about how things are going in the country these days, to what extent do you feel: hopeful, outraged, angry/ happy, proud, irritated, or nervous?" The emotion labels were presented in random order and respondents answered on a 5-point scale from *not at all* to *extremely*. We combined the three anger-related items (Cronbach's alpha = 0.90), two fear items (Cronbach's alpha = 0.90) and three positive items (Cronbach's alpha = 0.87). All measures were standardized.

Experimental Manipulation of Confidence

In both original studies, we manipulated confidence by randomly exposing participants to easy or difficult knowledge questions. This allowed us to keep the question content stable across the two conditions and ensured that specific issues raised by the questions did not elicit emotions. The easy condition was similar to commonly used knowledge questions, they were straightforward, multiple-choice questions about political institutions, processes, or current affairs. We used two

methods to make questions more difficult. We either switched from closed multiple choice questions to open-ended questions (Bullock & Rader, 2022; Mondak, 2001), or made questions more difficult by slightly changing their content. In the Dutch sample of the Dutch Sample (Dynata), this was done, for instance, by asking who has the *most* seats in the Dutch parliament (easy condition), instead of who has the *second most* seats (difficult condition). Instead of asking who is currently vice president of the United States, we asked who was vice president during Barack Obama's first term. In the U.S. sample, we asked in the easy condition who was never prime minister of the UK (correct answer: Angela Merkel), whereas in the difficult condition, we asked who was currently prime minister of the UK (correct answer: Rishi Sunak - he had only been prime minister for a few weeks at that point). Importantly, these questions did not vary substantially in their content so it is unlikely that they would elicit different associations and emotions. The easy and difficult knowledge items are shown in the Figure B12 and B14 in the Appendix. All question wordings can be found in Tables A44 and A45. Note that in Study 2 we decreased the number of questions slightly to avoid that respondents' confidence, after answering too many questions would be dampened even in the easy condition.

5.5 Results

H1-H2: Interest, not Knowledge, is Associated with Emotional Responses to Politics

Before turning to the tests of H1 and H2, let us assess the relationships between the core variables. Generally, the correlations between political interest and political knowledge are positive but low: r = 0.25 in the 2012 ANES data, 0.26 in 2016, and 0.29 in 2020; 0.18 in our Dutch sample; and 0.15 in our U.S. (Prolific) sample (all relationships are statistically significant at $p < 0.001$). Confidence-in-knowledge, however, strongly correlates with political interest (ANES 2020: r = 0.35, $p<0.001$, Dutch sample: r = 0.67, $p<0.001$, U.S. sample: r = 0.77, $p<0.001$). Perhaps not surprisingly, people's confidence in knowledge only weakly correlates with their actual knowledge (r = 0.19 in the Dutch and r = 0.18 in the U.S. sample, $p<0.001$). The correlation between confidence and knowledge is slightly stronger (r=0.24) in

Table 10: Overview of Tests of Hypothesis 1.

Sample	IV = Political Knowledge	DV = Emotion Self-Reports
ANES 2012 (U.S.)	4 Knowledge Questions: 1. Maximum terms president, 2. Budget deficit, 3. Senator term length, 4. Medicare.	"Has [candidate] because of the kind of person he is or because of something he has done, ever made you feel angry/ afraid/ hopeful/ proud?" IF YES: "How often?" [5-point scale]
ANES 2016 (U.S.)	4 Knowledge Questions: 1. Senator term length, 2. Federal gov. spending, 3. Most seats in the House of Representatives, 4. Most seats in the U.S. Senate	"Has [candidate] because of the kind of person (s)he is or because of something (s)he has done, ever made you feel angry/ afraid/ hopeful/ proud/ disgusted?" IF YES: "How often?" [5-point scale]
ANES 2020 (U.S.)	4 Knowledge Questions: 1. Senator term length, 2. Federal gov. spending, 3. Most seats in the House of Representatives, 4. Most seats in the U.S. Senate	"How angry/ irritated/ outraged/ afraid/ worried/ nervous/ proud/ happy/ hopeful do you feel about how things are going in the country?" IF YES: "How often?" [4-point scale, emotions clustered in 4 emotion families]
Dutch (Dynata)	4 Knowledge Questions: 1. Ordering of Dutch parties by ideology, 2. Who is president of France?, 3. Date Dutch EU membership, 4. Political function of Hugo de Jonge	"Thinking about politics, have you recently felt any of the emotions below and with what intensity did you feel that emotion? Anger/ fear/ enthusiasm/ hope" [7-point scale]
U.S. (Prolific)	4 Knowledge Questions: 1. Senator term length, 2. Federal gov. spending, 3. Current unemployment rate, 4. Required majority to override presidential veto	"Thinking about how things are going in the country these days, to what extent do you feel angry/ irritated/ outraged/ afraid/ nervous/ proud/ happy/ hopeful " [5-point scale]

the ANES 2020 data but it is still the lowest correlation of the three (see also Figures B7, B9, and B10 in the online Appendix).

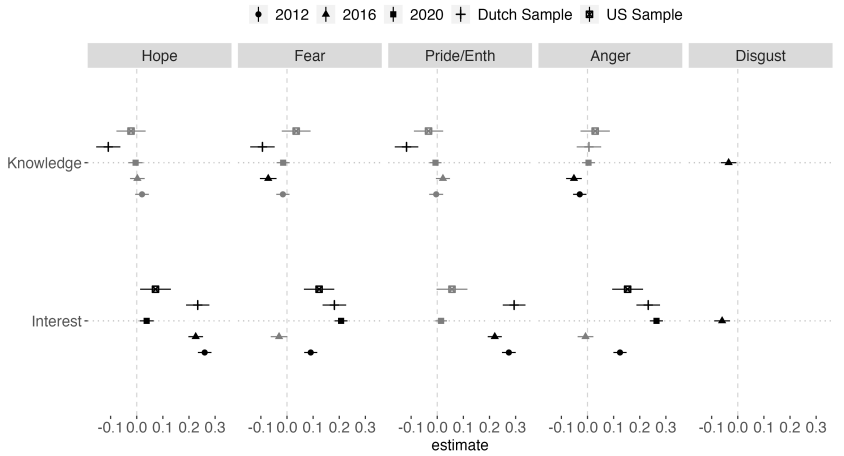

Figure 24. The effects of political knowledge and interest on five emotions across five samples. The symbols are the point estimates of the effects of knowledge and interest using OLS regressions. The lines represent the 95% confidence intervals of these effects. Black estimates are statistically significant at a level of p <0.05. Shapes represent the five samples (ANES 2012, N = 10075; ANES 2016, N = 7500; ANES 2020, N = 7160; Dutch sample, N = 1975; U.S. sample, N = 1250. Sample sizes vary slightly by model). Each panel represents a separate dependent variable. In all models we control for gender, age, education, and ideology. Other controls are added depending on data availability and context. They are described in the text and can be found in the full models in the appendix.

Figure 24 shows our tests of H1 and H2, disentangling the effects of political interest and knowledge in five samples. From left to right, it shows the five emotion categories (note that disgust was only included once in the ANES survey in 2016). Political knowledge is, for the most part, unrelated to self-reported emotional responses to politics. Political knowledge is significantly related to hope in one of the five samples (Dutch sample: b = -0.11, p <0.001), to lower fear/anxiety in two of the five samples (ANES 2016: b = -0.07, p <0.001, Dutch sample: b = -0.1, p <0.001), to lower anger in two ANES samples (2012: b= -0.03, p <0.01, 2016: b

= -0.05, p <0.01), to lower enthusiasm in the Dutch sample (b =-0.118, p<0.001) and to lower disgust in the 2016 ANES sample (b = -0.35, p <0.05). In conclusion, 7 out of 21 coefficients are negative and statistically significant, while the rest are non-distinguishable from zero. We conclude that, as past work has suggested, there is no positive relationship between political knowledge and emotional responses to politics. We also cannot conclude that there is a consistent negative relationship between the two. Rather, our analyses of five samples across political contexts and time suggest that political knowledge is not systematically related to emotional responses to politics.

Next, we turn to political interest as a predictor of emotional responses to politics (see also Figure 24). Political interest is positively related to feeling hope in all five samples (ANES 2012: b = 0.26, p <0.001, ANES 2016: b = 0.23, p <0.001; ANES 2020: b = 0.04, p <0.01; Dutch sample: b = 0.233, p <0.001; U.S sample: b = 0.072, p <0.05). It is positively related to experiencing fear in all but one sample (the 2016 ANES sample: b = -0.030, p = 0.062), and to pride (enthusiasm in the Dutch sample). Only in the 2020 ANES and the U.S. samples is the relationship not statistically significant. Political interest is positively related to anger in all samples, except the 2016 ANES sample. In 2016, political interest negatively predicted feeling disgusted (b = -0.06, p <0.001). We find the expected positive relationship between political interest and emotional responses to politics in 16 out of 21 tests, across emotions, samples and across time. We accept both H1 and H2, concerning the lack of a relationship between political knowledge and emotions on the one hand, and the positive relationship between political interest and emotional responses to politics on the other. However, which emotions are related to political interest might be context-dependent – both across time and geographical context. We reflect on this in the discussion section.

In the previous section, we argued why political knowledge is not necessary for people to experience emotional responses to politics. The findings presented here show empirical proof for this claim. Rather than factual knowledge, political interest drives emotions. In the following section of this chapter, we add confidence-in-knowledge, which, we have argued above, might be another driving factor in the sophistication-emotion link.

H3: Confidence, not Knowledge Drives Emotional Responses to Politics.

We present our results with different model specifications. Because interest and confidence are highly related and we expect similar effects, we first add confidence to the model but do not control for interest. We then add interest in the full models, which can be found in the Appendix. When we speak of confidence-in-knowledge in this section, we always refer to the pre-treatment confidence measure. The post-treatment measure is discussed in the next section.

As expected, confidence-in-knowledge significantly and positively predicts self-reported emotions (see Tables A39 and A42). In the Dutch sample, with each increase by one standard deviation, which corresponds to an absolute increase of 0.83 points on the non-standardized scale, anger increases by 0.181, anxiety increases by 0.125, pride by 0.189 and hope by 0.118 standard deviations. All relationships are statistically significant at $p < 0.001$. In the U.S. sample, confidence is related to anger ($b = 0.17$, $p < 0.001$) and anxiety ($b = 0.11$, $p < 0.001$) but not the positive emotions. This is further confirmed by the 2020 wave of the ANES, which includes a measure of confidence in six factual beliefs. A closer description of this measure can be found in the online Appendix, Figures B7 and B8. The results are in line with the results from our U.S. sample. Confidence is positively related to anger ($b = 0.217$, $p < 0.001$), anxiety ($b = 0.157$, $p < 0.001$), but is negatively – thought weakly – related to pride ($b = -0.034$, $p < 0.001$). We accept Hypothesis 3, as we find a consistent relationship between confidence-in-knowledge and self-reported emotions. However, as with interest, the relationship might be context-dependent, as we find an effect of confidence-in-knowledge on pride and hope in the Dutch sample but not in the two U.S. samples.

The effect of confidence-in-knowledge disappears once we control for political interest and internal efficacy in the Dutch and U.S. samples (see Tables A40 and A43), but is is robust to the inclusion of political interest and internal political efficacy in the 2020 ANES wave (see Table A37). It is possible that the effect of confidence is mediated by efficacy and interest. Naturally, feeling more confident about one's knowledge will make one more confident in one's ability to shape politics and to be aware of the most important political issues (efficacy). As past work has shown, decreased confidence can also decrease self-reports of political interest

(Bishop, 1987; Lasorsa, 2009). We did not expect a mediation and thus measured interest before the confidence measure. This makes our data ill-suited to formally test a mediated effect. [13]

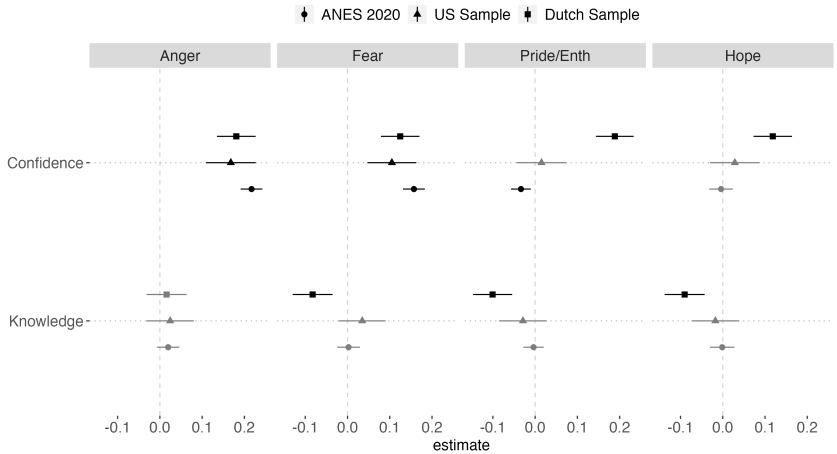

Figure 25. The effects of political knowledge and confidence-in-knowledge on four emotions across three samples. The symbols are the point estimates of the effects of knowledge and confidence using OLS regressions. The lines represent the 95% confidence intervals of these effects. Black estimates are statistically significant at a level of p <0.05. Shapes represent the five samples (ANES 2020, N = 6283, Dutch Sample, N = 1980, U.S. Sample, N = 1250). Each panel represents a separate dependent variable. In all models we control for gender, age, education, and ideology. Other controls are added depending on data availability and context. They are described in the text and can be found in the full models in the appendix.

H4-H5 The Causal Effect of Sophistication on Emotions.

We present two tests for H4 and H5. First, we test whether the treatment affected post-treatment confidence. Then, we test whether the treatment affected

[13] It is possible that the effects are driven by self-enhancing response styles (Clifford & Jerit, 2016; Style & Jerit, 2020). Style and Jerit (2020) argue that we can catch self-enhancers through a catch-question that was included in the 2020 ANES wave. 188 participats are identified as self-enhancers. The measure is unrelated to the confidence, interest or knowledge measures. Adding it as control, does not change the results.

Table 11: Overview of Tests of Hypothesis 3.

Sample	IV = Confidence-in-Knowledge	DV = Emotion Self-Reports
ANES 2020 (US)	"Which of these two statements do you think is most likely to be true?" see Figure B8 THEN: "How confident are you about that?"	"How angry/ irritated/ outraged/ afraid/ worried/ nervous/ proud/ happy/ hopeful do you feel about how things are going in the country?" IF YES: "How often?" [4-point scale, emotions clustered in 4 emotion families]
Dutch (Dynata)	"Among my circle of friends, I'm one of the "experts" on politics.", "Compared to most other people, I know less about politics." [5-point scale]	"Thinking about politics, have you recently felt any of the emotions below and with what intensity did you feel that emotion? Anger/ fear/ enthusiasm/ hope" [7-point scale]
U.S. (Prolific)	"Among my circle of friends, I'm one of the "experts" on politics.", "Compared to most other people, I know less about politics.", "I know a lot about current affairs and political issues.", " When it comes to current affairs and political issues, I am quite knowledgeable." [5-point scale]	"Thinking about how things are going in the country these days, to what extent do you feel angry/ irritated/ outraged/ afraid/ nervous/ proud/ happy/ hopeful " [5-point scale]

Table 12: Overview of Tests of Hypothesis 4.

Sample	IV = Experimental Manipulation of Confidence	DV = Confidence Post-Treatment
Dutch (Dynata)	Question Difficulty, see Table A44	"In general, would you say that you know a lot or a little about politics?" [7-point scale]
U.S. (Prolific)	Question Difficulty, see Table A45	"In general, would you say that you know a lot or a little about politics?" [7-point scale]

Table 13: Overview of Tests of Hypothesis 5.

Sample	IV = Experimental Manipulation of Confidence	DV = Confidence Post-Treatment
Dutch (Dynata)	Question Difficulty, see Table A44	"Thinking about politics, have you recently felt any of the emotions below and with what intensity did you feel that emotion? Anger/ fear/ enthusiasm/ hope" [7-point scale]
U.S. (Prolific)	Question Difficulty, see Table A45	"Thinking about how things are going in the country these days, to what extent do you feel angry/ irritated/ outraged/ afraid/ nervous/ proud/ happy/ hopeful " [5-point scale]

self-reported emotional responses. Finally, we present a mediation analysis for both samples. However, in the Dutch sample, we measured post-treatment confidence after the emotions, making it ill-suited to test a mediation. We therefore ask readers to interpret these analyses cautiously.

To assess whether the manipulation itself was successful, we first compare test results in the easy versus the difficult conditions. In the Dutch sample, out of eight treatment questions, respondents answered on average 70% (5.6 questions) of the questions correctly in the easy conditions, but only 35% (2.8 questions) in the difficult condition. In the U.S. sample, we did not code two open-ended questions because they did not have a clear correct or incorrect answer. Out of the remaining six questions, in the easy condition respondents correctly answered 80% (4.8 questions), on average, compared to only 42% (2.5 questions) in the difficult condition. We show the individual knowledge items by treatment group in the Appendix. While there is some variation in difficulty across items, for each item fewer people answered the difficult questions correctly than in the easy condition.

Moreover, our post-treatment confidence measure ("In general, would you say you know a great deal or rather little about politics?"), measured on a 7-point scale, allows us to test whether our experimental manipulation affects levels of confidence. In the Dutch sample, mean confidence after the easy treatment was 3.94 and significantly lower ($p < 0.001$, $t = -4.6974$, $df = 1994.2$) after the difficult treatment with a mean of 3.61. The same is true in the U.S. sample. In the easy condition, people on average reported a confidence of 4.28 on a 7-point scale. In the difficult condition, post-treatment confidence was significantly lower at 3.94 ($p < 0.001$). In Study 2, we also directly asked respondents how difficult they found the questions on a 5-point scale. In the easy condition, reported difficulty was significantly lower (mean = 2.75) than in the difficult condition (mean = 3.55, $p < 0.001$).

The effects are robust to the full model specification. On average, participants in the easy treatment group reported higher confidence post-treatment (Dutch sample: $b = 0.18$, $p < 0.001$, U.S. sample: $b = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$). These effects hold when we control for pre-treatment confidence (see Tables A46 and A47 in the appendix).

We now turn to the results of our experimental manipulation of confidence on self-reported emotions. We first conduct one-sided T-tests for each emotion

(non-standardized for easier interpretation), comparing means in the two treatment groups. In the Dutch sample, in the easy condition participants on average reported higher anger levels (mean = 4.71) compared to the difficult condition (mean =4.56, t = -1.9054, df = 1956.4, p <0.05). Anxiety levels in the easy condition were also on average higher (mean = 3.6) than in the difficult condition (mean = 3.45, t = -1.8923, df = 1975, p <0.05). Levels of hope and enthusiasm did not differ between conditions. In a second step, we specify a full model that includes the same predictors and covariates as the model for H1 and H2 (see Tables A48 and A49). Adding the covariates does not change the treatment effects. Controlling for factual knowledge, pre-treatment confidence, political interest, gender, age, ideology and education, participants in the easy condition as a whole reported higher anger (b = .083, p = 0.06) and anxiety (b = .078, p = 0.08.

We further explicitly test a mediation of the treatment effect on the four emotions by post-treatment confidence. The mediation is implied in H4 and H5, that our treatment affects confidence and directly, or indirectly, self-reports of emotions. The mediation analysis is exploratory, it was not pre-registered, but we include the same control variables as in the previous models and estimate a simple causal mediation model (Tingley, Yamamoto, Hirose, Keele, & Imai, 2014). The mediate function included in the *mediation R package* conducts a mediation analysis based on bootstrapping 1000 random samples and re-estimating the model to obtain more robust estimates. Overall, we find a significant causal mediation effect in all models, even where we did not find a direct effect of the treatment on the emotion, i.e. on hope and enthusiasm. The mediation models of the Dutch sample are presented in the online supplementary material (Figure B15). The Dutch study was conducted before the U.S. study and was not designed to test a mediation as we measured confidence after the emotions. Therefore, its results should be interpreted with caution. We find that when people are presented with easier knowledge questions, they report higher confidence post-treatment. This leads to higher reporting of anger with an average causal mediation effect of 0.045, which is statistically significant (p <0.001). The average direct effect (effect of treatment when confidence is held constant) is not significant, suggesting that the treatment does not have an independent effect on anger but affects anger through confidence. For anxiety, the

average causal mediation effect is 0.055 and statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). For enthusiasm and hope, we did not find a total effect but we find a causal mediation by confidence. If confidence is held constant, the treatment has no effect on enthusiasm and hope. But if the treatment is mediated by confidence, it affects self-reported levels in these emotions ($p < 0.001$).

We replicate these findings in the U.S. sample. First, in one-sided T-tests, we find that anger is indeed lower in the difficult treatment (low confidence treatment). Mean anger (as the index of three anger-related emotion items) is 2.75 in the difficult treatment and 2.86 in the easy treatment ($p < 0.05$). When we specify the full model, the easy experimental condition increases self-reported anger by 0.104 ($p = 0.062$). We were not able to replicate the effect of our treatment on anxiety but the effect of our treatment on anger is similar in both studies, both in terms of effect size and level of significance.

Finally, we also estimate the mediation models for the U.S. sample (see Figure 26). Note that in contrast with the Dutch sample here we have measured confidence prior to the emotions, making the U.S. sample suitable for a mediation analysis. Confidence mediates the effect of the treatment on the four emotions in all cases, except for anxiety (top right panel). The average direct effect of the treatment on the emotions is not statistically significant in any of the four mediation models but the average causal mediation effect is statistically significant for anger ($p<0.001$), hope ($p<0.1$), and pride ($p<0.01$. In other words: people presented with easier knowledge questions report higher confidence, and, as a result, more anger, hope, and pride. The changes in felt emotions are the direct result of the increased confidence, and only indirectly of the manipulation itself.

5.6 Discussion and Conclusion

Using five surveys from two different contexts, we demonstrate that confidence-in-knowledge (H3-5) and political interest (H2) coincide with more emotions about politics, whereas political knowledge does not (H1). The findings suggest that it is important to disentangle the concept of political sophistication and to more carefully examine its core components. Building on appraisal theories of emotions, we

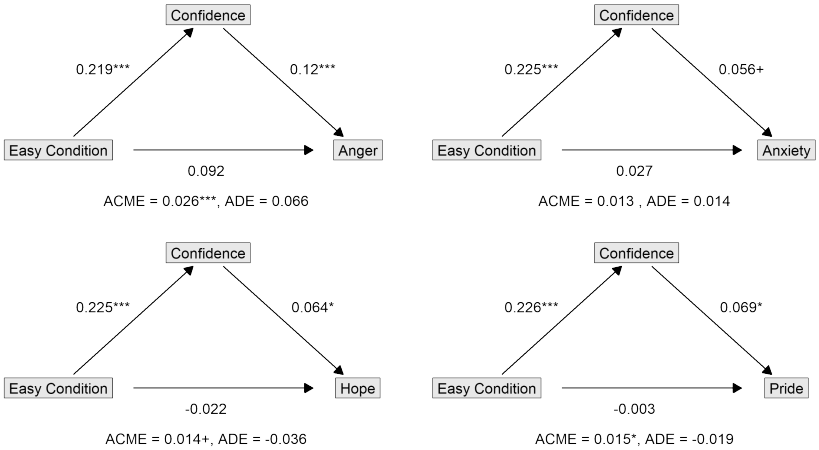

Figure 26. Effect of treatment on anger, anxiety, pride, and hope mediated by confidence (post-treatment), controlling for political knowledge, gender, age, education, and ideology. Sample: U.S. sample (Prolific), N = 1250.

have more closely identified confidence-in-knowledge and political interest as the driving forces in the sophistication-emotion link.

Our theory is that political interest leads to emotions through higher appraisals of goal relevance, and confidence-in-knowledge leads to emotions through secondary appraisals. People with high confidence in their understanding of politics are more certain of their appraisals. Their emotions are therefore less ambiguous and we expected that they report any emotion with higher intensity. Our findings are in line with this interpretation.

We have also suggested a second possible theoretical link between confidence and emotions, via appraisals of certainty and control. These appraisals are most likely related to feelings of confidence (Valentino et al., 2009). People with high confidence might have a general tendency to appraise events with high certainty and high control. In this view, we would expect that confidence-in-knowledge is primarily related to emotions that are elicited by high certainty and high control appraisals: anger and pride. However, we do not find that the relationship between confidence and emotions is stronger for these emotions. In the ANES 2020 sample,

confidence is even negatively related to pride.

We identified two more relevant issues. First, we have discussed different theoretical mechanisms that link interest and confidence-in-knowledge to emotions. Yet, in practice it is difficult to disentangle them. For example, interest and confidence are correlated to the point that one may consider them indicators of a single latent variable. We advise against this, as the correlations between interest and confidence vary substantively, and, moreover, at a theoretical level interest and confidence are distinct concepts. Second, and more problematically, it is possible that confidence influences political interest (see Prior, 2018, ch.14). This presupposes a complex mediation model that our research design cannot test.

The second issue concerns the conditions under which political interest and confidence-in-knowledge are related to emotions in politics. The results show variation across time and context. For instance, confidence is related to positive emotions in the Dutch sample but not in the U.S. samples. On average, however, interest and confidence both lead to reporting stronger emotions. Further research should study what contextual factors predict which specific emotions are related to political interest and confidence across time and context. Two potential candidates are the salience of specific political issues and elite-cue taking. Testing these mechanisms is beyond the scope of this chapter but they illustrate that more work is required to understand how political sophistication and its components shape emotional responses to politics.

Our findings come with clear recommendations for future work studying the link between political sophistication and emotions, and beyond.

First, we need more precise theories that link political sophistication and its components to political outcomes. Using appraisal theories we have provided theoretical arguments linking three core components of sophistication – confidence, interest and knowledge – to emotional responses to politics.

Empirically, we have shown the necessity of disentangling the components of political sophistication. Failing to do so would lead to different conclusions concerning the sophistication-emotion link.

Second, we have established confidence-in-knowledge as a core component of political sophistication. While work on political misinformation has stressed the

importance of confidence-in-knowledge, it is rarely measured outside of that field. We have demonstrated the benefits of doing so in the field of emotions research but we urge future work in other fields to study confidence-in-knowledge in addition to more conventional measures of sophistication, such as interest or knowledge.

Recent work has argued that emotions are not expressions of ignorance but results of interest and knowledge, and thus expressions of good and informed citizenship (Miller, 2011). In this chapter, we have challenged this view. We have argued and demonstrated that knowledge about politics does not lead to stronger emotional engagement. Rather, political interest and confidence-in-knowledge lead to more intense emotional responses to politics. The findings presented in this chapter thus suggest that emotions are neither expressions of good nor bad citizenship. Rather, they require us to look deeper into what produces political emotions: the issues and events that elicit emotions, the appraisals that underlie them, and the individual differences and dispositions that shape them.