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Mehr als Valenz: Distinkte Emotionen als Mediatoren der Medienwirkung auf Vertrauen in Politikerinnen und Politiker

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Beyond simple valence: Discrete emotions as mediators of political communication effects on trust in politicians

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Abstract: Within this paper, the relationship between citizens' emotional reactions to political reporting and their judgment of trust in politicians is investigated. Drawing on appraisal theories of emotion, this paper seeks to answer the question whether affect predicts trust judgments and which emotion plays what role. Findings of two media effects studies, one in the context of the 2013 German televised debate and in the context of the 2014 EU elections, supported the assumption that (1) emotions play a role over and above cognitive evaluations of politicians and (2) effects of affective states differ depending on the appraisal of the emotion. Emotions that can be characterized by other-control appraisals (anger) and no-control appraisals (happiness) do affect trust in politicians, while emotions with situational control appraisal (fear, sadness) or self-control appraisal (pride) do not have an effect. The studies confirm that emotions play a crucial role for subsequent trust judgment over and above evaluations of politicians and also support the idea that valence-based approaches are too simplistic to explain the relationship of emotions and trust judgments.

Keywords: Political trust, discrete emotions, media effects, appraisal

Zusammenfassung: Das vorliegende Manuskript umfasst zwei Studien, die emotionale Reaktionen als Mediatoren der Wirkung medialer politischer Information auf Vertrauensurteilen untersuchen. Aufbauend auf appraisal Theorien der Emotion, soll der Frage nachgegangen werden, ob verschiedene Emotionen unterschiedlich starke Einflüsse auf politische Vertrauensurteile haben. Hierzu wurden zwei Medienwirkungsstudien im Rahmen des TV-Duells zur Bundestagswahl 2013 in Deutschland und den Wahlen zum europäischen Parlament 2014 durchgeführt. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass (1) emotionale Reaktionen einen Einfluss auf politische Vertrauensurteile über klassische, kognitive Variablen wie die Parteiidentifikation hinaus haben und dass (2) die Einflüsse der Emotion auf das Vertrauensurteil von der Valenz, aber auch vom control-appraisal der Emotion abhängen. Emotionen wie Wut oder Freude beeinflussen das Vertrauensurteil, während Emotionen mit situationalem control-appraisal eher keinen Einfluss auf das wahrgenommene Politikervertrauen haben. Diese Ergebnisse legen nahe, dass Emotionen eine wichtige Rolle bei der politischen Urteilsbildung und der Erklärung von Effekten politischer Kommunikation spielen. Außerdem konnte gezeigt werden, dass es von Bedeutung ist, *welche* emotionale Reaktion (z. B. Angst vs. Wut) auf mediale politische Information gezeigt wird.

Schlagwörter: Vertrauen in Politiker, distinkte Emotionen, Medienwirkung, Appraisal

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1. Introduction

Trust in politicians is seen as essential for the functioning of democracies. Since most democracies are representative in nature, citizens have to trust their representatives to keep the interest of the citizens, both majorities and minorities, in mind and to not use their power to pursue own interests (Hetherington, 2005). If people have no confidence in their government and political leaders, they are, for example, less likely to obey the rules and laws necessary for the functioning of the system (Scholz & Lubell, 1998). Since political leaders have become the main focus of the political coverage in the media (Adam & Maier, 2010) and since people rely more and more on characteristics of politicians when casting their vote (Caprara, Vecchione, Barbaranelli, & Fraley, 2007), it has become crucial to investigate, how trust judgments about political leaders come to be. Trust in politicians is often defined as the willingness to be vulnerable towards the actions of a politician, based on the expectation that the politicians will bear the voters' interest in mind (Halmburger, Rothmund, Schulte, & Baumert, 2012).

Up until now, explanations for media effects on political trust judgments on the micro-level have been predominantly cognitive. Take as an example the role of negativity in the media for trust evaluations of politicians: Negative information is activated when reading about political failure, incompetence or dishonesty; the salient negative information may then influence the subsequent trust judgment (Kleinnijenhuis, van Hoof, & Oegema, 2006). Similar to other areas in political communication research, scholars have – for many years – overlooked the importance of affect regarding the political processes in general (Marcus, 2003), political media effects and trust judgments in particular (Cassino & Lodge, 2007; Just, Crigler, & Belt, 2007; Kühne, Schemer, Matthes, & Wirth, 2011). When looking, again, at negativity in political communication – whether it be negative campaigning or simply a concentration of negative information in the news – it seems self-evident that political communication is able to elicit emotions; these emotions, in turn, might be crucial for the understanding of trust in politicians (Brader, 2006; Lau, Sigelman, & Rovner, 2007). Moreover, research in political communication and political psychology has not only shown that emotions are important when it comes to the explanation of communication effects and political attitudes but also which discrete emotion plays a role (Lecheler, Schuck, & De Vreese, 2013; Nabi, 1999, 2010; Valentino, Gregorowicz, & Groenendyk, 2009) – both questions are at heart of the studies within this paper.

To sum up, this paper contributes to the understanding of emotional underpinnings of political trust judgments in at least two ways: First, I will show that emotional reactions towards political communication explain political trust judgments over and above other predictors of political trust like party identification, or evaluations of politicians. This adds to the discussion whether emotional reactions towards politicians can be distinguished from evaluations of their personality or performance. Second, the two studies in this paper show that the influence of different affective states (anger, fear, sadness, happiness, pride) varies in accord with predictions derived from appraisal theories of emotion.

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2. Trust in politicians and emotions

Some scholars claim that within their social environment, citizens think of politicians in the same way as they think of a neighbor or an acquaintance (Lee & Jang, 2013). Thus, trust in political leaders might be conceptualized as a special form of (interpersonal) social trust (Williams, 2012). In interpersonal trust judgments, emotions play a very important role – independent of whether one knows the trustee or not (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005). This paper aims at transferring the theoretical considerations, expectations and results from social judgments and emotions to two political communication contexts. Within two studies, I aim to investigate the relationship between media consumption, discrete emotions and trust in politicians. Drawing on appraisal theory of emotion and on the cognitive-functional model of discrete emotions (Lazarus, 1991; Nabi, 1999; Smith & Ellsworth, 1987) I expect (1) emotions to explain political trust judgments over and above traditional stable and situational variables and evaluations of politicians and (2) different discrete emotions to have different effects on trust in politicians depending on the control appraisal of the emotion. In other words, it is examined if and how emotions may shape trust judgments of political leaders.

In psychology this interplay between cognition and emotions has been investigated since the sixties, while in political communication research, similar other fields of communication (see e.g., Nabi, 1999), scholars have rather focused on "cold" cognitive processes than on emotions, as the latter were not applicable to ideas of deliberative, purposeful reasoning (Brader, Marcus, & Miller, 2011; Kühne et al., 2011; Marcus, 2003). However, the development of theories, especially in political psychology and persuasion research has increased the interest in emotions in political communication research. Both the Affect Intelligence (AI) theory (Marcus, Neuman, & MacKuen, 2000) Marcus, MacKuen, & Neuman, 2011) and cognitive functional model of persuasion (Nabi, 1999, 2010), underlining the unique effects of discrete emotions in information processing and persuasion, contributed to the idea that emotions are crucial when forming (political) judgments (see also Brader, 2005, 2006; Brader et al., 2011).

On the basis of these theories, studies have investigated the role of emotions in political participation (Valentino et al., 2011), for political opinion formation (Banks, 2014), in evaluations of political institutions (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 1998; Rahn, 2000) and – most important for this purpose – in the formation of judgments about political leaders (Brader et al., 2011; Ottati, Steenbergen, & Riggle, 1992), thus several scholars claim that emotional states have a unique influence on the perception of political leaders (Just et al., 2007; Vogel & Otto, 2017). In contrast to this line of research, Ladd and Lenz (2008) argue that emotions towards political candidates are only 'rationalizations' of political evaluations. They show that there is only little support for the notion that emotions directly influence candidate evaluations. This line of research is supported by other studies, showing that positive emotions towards the preferred political candidate and negative emotions towards the opposite candidate are just two sides of the same coin (Just et al., 2007), which supports the notion that emotions towards a specific candidate are very similar to the evaluation of the candidate. However,

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these results could also be an outcome of the American presidential bipartisan system, i.e., being in favor of one candidate automatically means opposing the other presidential candidate.

Taking into consideration this line of research I also try and investigate whether emotional states are able to explain trust judgments of politicians over and above other well-known predictors of political trust judgments and show that emotional states are not only the same as evaluations of politicians' performance or sympathy. At that point, it is, of course important to mention some prominent individual level predictors of trust in politicians and politics. There are two major theoretical approaches explaining political trust cultural and institutional theories. *Cultural theories* of trust claim that trust is achieved early in childhood and adolescence and does not change much thereafter (Uslaner, 1998, 2008). Consequentially, more stable factors like demographic variables, political interest and party identification (PID) predict political trust. Of course, citizens trust the candidates of their preferred party more than other politicians, consequentially PID is a strong predictor for trust in politicians.

The relationship between political interest and political trust are not that simple, however, the correlation between those variables seems to be evident (Catterberg & Moreno, 2006). Explanations for this relationship could be that (a) politically interested citizens are also more engaged and more partisan and therefore show higher levels of political trust (Catterberg & Moreno, 2006) or (b) political interest is – like political and interpersonal trust – one marker of social capital and the reason for the correlation between these variables is a higher order factor – namely social capital (Putnam, 1993; Shah, 1998).

Concerning demographic variables, formal education and age seem correlate positively with political trust (Schoon, Cheng, Gale, Batty, & Deary, 2010). The reasons, however, are subject to debate: While some scholars argue that education, similar to political interest, is a mere proxy for other factors that lead to high political trust (e.g., engagement, socio-economic factors), others describe a causal relationship between education and trust, i.e., education leads to value patterns which again account for higher political involvement and trust (Hooghe, Dassonneville, & Marien, 2015). Finally, older citizens seem to show higher levels of political trust than younger citizens (Mishler & Rose, 2001). It is, however, unclear whether this is due to a real increase in trust across the life-span or whether these are merely cohort effects, again, showing political socialization rather than an effect of age on political trust (Mishler & Rose, 2001; Schoon & Cheng, 2011; Schoon et al., 2010).

However, not only stable variables are able to explain trust in politicians but also situational variables are able to change trust judgments (Sønderskov & Dinesen, 2016). Otherwise, it would make little sense for politicians to do campaigns, talk in interviews about their confidence or question the trustworthiness of the political opponent. *Institutional* theories of trust claim that trust is not as stable and depending on the performance of political institutions and politicians.

Consequentially, research has shown that the information environment indeed influences trust insofar that negative information about political failure or even scandals are able to reduce perceived trustworthiness of a politician while posi-

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tive information could improve the assessment of trustworthiness (Adriaansen, van Praag, & de Vreese, 2010; Bennett, Rhine, Flickinger, & Bennett, 1999; Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2006; Otto & Maier, 2016).

To sum up, two notions lead to the first hypothesis: Firstly, while many scholars see emotions as crucial for candidate perception, others doubt their importance and think of emotions as similar to evaluations of politicians. Secondly, political trust is explained by (a) stable variables like political interest, PID or education and (b) evaluations of politicians' personality and performance. Therefore, the first assumption reads as follows:

> *H1: When forming a trust judgment about a politician, emotional states are able to explain these judgments over and above evaluations of politicians, party identification, political interest and demographic variables.*

3. (Discrete) Emotions in political communication

Besides the idea to test whether or not emotions play a substantial role over and above cognitive processes and established variables for political judgments and opinion formation, a growing body of research also aims to answer the question "which emotion plays what role?" (Valentino, Brader, Groenendyk, Gregorowicz, & Hutchings, 2011, p. 156). Or in other words, are all emotions similarly important within the political opinion formation process, for political participation and voting, or the evaluation of political actors? Indeed, scholars have found important differences when it comes to the relationship of discrete emotions and political opinion formation.

At that point most scholars have focused on the different effects of anger and fear/anxiety on political information processing, attitudes and behavior. Anger, but not fear mediates effects on racial prejudice (Banks, 2014; Banks & Bell, 2013) and attitudes towards alcohol policies (Goodall, Slater, & Myers, 2013). While fearful citizens support protective policies, anger support punitive policy ideas (Huddy, Feldman, Taber, & Lahav, 2005; Nabi, 2003). In one of the few studies exploring different positive emotions Lecheler et al. (2013) found enthusiasm but not contentment to affect political attitudes. Furthermore, scholars have found anxiety to trigger rather rational decisions, while anger and enthusiasm lead to partisan motivated processing of information (Brader et al., 2011). Most important for the studies presented here, scholars found that emotions mediate effects of political information and political events on trust in the government, more precisely the emotions pride and hope are positively correlated with trust in government (see also Brader et al., 2011; Gross & D'Ambrosio, 2004).

Although, (discrete) emotions have now been investigated within the political communication process more regularly and emotional processes are known to be crucial in social judgment, the role of specific affective states for the evaluation of political actors is still in its infancy. However, in conceptualizing judgments of politicians as a (mediated) social judgment one is able to transfer ideas from appraisal theories of emotion to the political communication context.

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3.1 Appraisal and trust judgments

Earlier work on the impact of mood and emotion on social judgments was predominantly characterized by *valence-models* collapsing all negative and all positive emotions to one factor each and not taking into account different effects of discrete emotions as shown above (Nabi, 1999, 2010). The idea was that each and every negative or positive emotion is attributed to the object of judgment and is influencing (trust) evaluations of others. Consequently, all negative emotional states were thought to negatively affect a subsequent trust judgment, while all positive emotions were supposed to increase trust in others (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005). More recently, scholars also have been taking into account *appraisal theories* of emotion (Lazarus, 1991; Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001; Scherer, 1999) to form hypotheses about the role of discrete emotions for trust judgments. Appraisal theories argue that emotions have a cognitive component, i.e., the appraisal of people or situations. These appraisals explain why emotional responses may differ from person to person in the same situation or why the same individual experiences different emotions in similar situations. Appraisal theories of emotion distinguish between situations and their emotional reactions in terms of the primary appraisal, i.e., the valence (positive vs. negative) of an emotion, but also in terms of the emotion's *control appraisal*, which is crucial to the investigation of emotional correlates to trust judgments. For example, anger, sadness and fear are all negative in valence but differ in their appraisal of control. Anger is characterized by high other-control appraisal, i.e., people feel angry when assessing another person as responsible for their negative emotion. If people perceive situational, nonhuman factors (e.g., certain circumstances like an illness or disaster) to be responsible for their negative emotion, they react with sadness or fear, which are therefore characterized by high situational control appraisal. Furthermore, scholars have identified emotions with no control appraisal (e.g., happiness), i.e., they could be caused by the situation, other persons or oneself and self-control appraisal (guilt, pride) (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005; Lerner & Keltner, 2000).

Of course, there are other appraisals that contribute to the experience and effects of emotions such as appraisals of anticipated effort or responsibility (Lazarus, 1991; Lerner & Keltner, 2000), however, the control appraisals of the emotion should be the decisive factor for trust judgments as these emotions select whether emotional reactions (e.g., to political information) is attributed to situational factors, a person (in this case the politician) or has no specific trigger, i.e., no control appraisal. Of course, there are also personality variables and situational variables defining whether or not somebody rather experiences e.g., anger of fear. Valentino et al. (2009) found political efficacy to influence emotional reactions and information provided by the media can highlight certain appraisals and then shape recipients' emotional reactions (Kühne, 2013). However, it is not at heart of this paper to show why certain citizens react anxious while other get angry when being exposed to political information (Weeks, 2015), but rather, how specific emotional reactions correlate with subsequent trust judgements about politicians.

Research in the tradition of appraisal theories indicates that not all negative or positive emotions influence social judgments in the same way. Lerner and col-

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leagues (Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, & Fischhoff, 2003; Lerner & Keltner, 2001), for example, found fear and anger – two emotions with negative valence – to have different effects on (social) judgments; while feeling angry did affect the subsequent judgment, fear did not. Quite similar, Dunn and Schweitzer (2005) found the negative emotion anger and the positive emotions gratitude and happiness to influence trust judgments while pride (positive), guilt and sadness (negative) did not influence trust judgments. The researchers explain these results on the basis of the aforementioned appraisal theories of emotions, more precisely stating that the control appraisal of the emotions determines their correlation with trust judgments. These appraisals, thus, explain the emotional experiences *and* their effects (Lerner & Keltner, 2000), which is important for the question that I want to answer: do different discrete emotions have differential effects on political trust judgments? More recent research has focused on the importance of discrete emotions. Similar to the emotion psychology work on discrete emotions, evidence seems to be strongest for the anger vs. fear distinction.

Within the present paper, I want to investigate whether the valance of an emotion *and* the control appraisal contribute to the understanding of the question which emotion plays a role in political trust judgments. More precisely, I expect emotions with negative valence and other-control appraisal to negatively influence the subsequent trust judgment, as these emotions are attributed to the politician, rather than to the situation or to the individual him- or herself; *anger* for example is an emotion which meets both of these criteria. In contrast to that, *sadness* and *fear* are characterized by situational control appraisal, and therefore I do not expect any effects on the trust judgment (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005; Lerner et al., 2003; Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001). Based on these considerations, the correlations between different emotions and trust evaluation should not only depend on the valance of the emotion experienced but also on their appraisal tendency. I therefore pose the following hypothesis with regard to different discrete emotions and their relationship with political trust judgments:

> *H2a: The emotion anger will be negatively correlated with the trust judgments of a politician.*
> *H2b: Happiness will correlate positively with the trust judgment of a politician.*
> *H2c: The emotions fear and sadness will be uncorrelated to subsequent trust judgments.*

The emotion pride plays a special role when it comes to appraisals: while pride can be characterized by self-control appraisal (being proud of something oneself has accomplished) or by other-control appraisal, i.e., group-based pride, when feeling proud about a member of one's ingroup (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005; Nabi, 1999). Therefore, I do not have a clear assumption and pose the question:

> *RQ1: Will the emotion pride be correlated with a political trust judgment or not?*

Table 1 gives an overview of all emotions which will be investigated in the studies and their appraisals.

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Table 1. Overview of the appraisals of discrete emotions used in the studies

Emotion	Primary appraisal (valence)	Secondary appraisal (control appraisal)	Study	Assumed effect on trust judgment
Anger	Negative	Other	I and II	-
Fear	Negative	Situational	I and II	0
Sadness	Negative	Situational	II	0
Happiness	Positive	No	I and II	+
Pride	Positive	Self/Group	II	0/+

Note. Appraisal tendencies are based on the results of earlier studies (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005; Ellsworth & Smith, 1988; Keltner, Ellsworth, & Edwards, 1993; Lerner et al., 2003; Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001; Nabi, 1999; Smith & Ellsworth, 1987)

4. Overview of the studies

In the following, two studies are presented, which investigate how emotions may influence a subsequent trust judgment in the context of elections campaigns. The first study was conducted in the context of the 2013 German televised debate during the campaign for the German national elections. Similar to general research in political communication, studies within televised debates have predominantly focused on cognitive processes and effects such as the evaluations of politicians, political interest or political learning (Benoit, Hansen, & Verser, 2003; Vogel & Otto, 2017). In sum, the first study seeks to investigate (1) whether emotional states during a debate correlate with subsequent trust judgments of politicians at all (2) whether different discrete emotions (e.g., anger vs. anxiety) differ with regards to their correlations with trust evaluations and (3) whether or not these trust judgments explain trust variables over and above stable (party identification, demographics, political interest) and other situational variables (e.g., evaluation of debate performance).

Within the second study results of the first study should not only be replicated but I was also able to implement more than just three emotional states in an experimental design. In doing so, I attempted to show that the causal influence of political communication with positive vs. negative valence on trust judgments in politicians is indeed mediated by discrete emotions. By conducting both studies, I was able to investigate the aforementioned research questions for a small set of emotions at first, using a diverse stratified sample in terms of demographics and PID (study I) and then expand the scope of the study to a bigger set of emotions using an experimental design with student participants in a different campaigning context and different politicians.

5. Study I: Anger, fear, and happiness in the TV debate 2013

5.1. Method

The first study was conducted in the run-up to the 2013 federal election in Germany. The data was collected as part of a German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES) component on the evening of the only televised debate between the main

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competitors in the 2013 German national election campaign, Chancellor Angela Merkel (Christian Democratic Union) and her challenger Peer Steinbrück (Social Democratic Party). 308 participants followed the televised debate in four different cities at the university campuses.

Prior to the debate, participants completed a pre-test questionnaire, asking for political predispositions and demographic variables. After watching the debate, participants completed a post-test questionnaire, assessing the dependent variables (trust in Angela Merkel and Peer Steinbrück), the emotional states, and the evaluations of the politicians as well as their PID.

Sample. The stratified sample (N = 308) was quite diverse concerning party identification (24% Christian Democrats; 26% Social Democrats; 19% Greens; 4% Left-Wing Party; 2% Free Democrats; 5% other parties; 18% no party affiliation), gender (51% male; 49% female), age (M = 40.2, SD = 18.2) and education (58% high school degree or higher), but not representative for the German electorate.

Dependent variable. Trust in Angela Merkel and Peer Steinbrück was measured using a three items scale, showing high reliability measures (Cronbach's α = .85 for trust in Merkel and α = .83 for trust in Steinbrück). The scale was previously used in various large scale surveys as well as media effects studies and showed good validity and reliability (Rattinger, Roßteutscher, Schmitt-Beck, & Weßels, 2009). Moreover, the scale correlated significantly with satisfaction with government (r = .65, p < .001 for trust with Merkel) or external political efficacy (r = .31, p < .001 for trust in Merkel, r = .21, p < .001 for trust in Steinbrück)

Emotions during the debate. To measure discrete emotions during the televised debate, the participants were asked: "How much [anger/fear/happiness] did you feel while watching [Angela Merkel/Peer Steinbrück]?" they felt on a 7-point scale (1-not at all; 7-very much).

Control variables. To test whether the emotional response accounts for a significant amount of variance in trust judgments after controlling for important predictors for trust in politicians, I included several control variables like party identification, demographics and the overall debate performance as well as general evaluations of politicians in the analysis (for question wording, means and standard deviation of all items see appendix A).

5.2. Results

In the first study, my aim is to investigate the effects of the discrete emotions anger, fear and happiness on trust judgments over and above other important variables like PID, demographics and general evaluation of the politicians. For this purpose, a stepwise regression analysis with trust judgments of Merkel and Steinbrück representing the dependent variables is conducted. In a first step, I am taking into account PID as well as other important demographic variables (age, gender, education) which possibly contribute to the trust judgment of the candidates. To rule out the possibility that emotional reactions simply reflect candidate evaluations, the second step of the regression analysis is conducted to represent the overall evaluation of the candidates as well as the evaluation of their debate per-

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formance. In a third step, I analyze whether anger, fear and happiness might be able to explain the variance of the trust judgment. Table 2 shows the effect of anger (Merkel: β = -.31, p < .001; Steinbrück: β = -.23, p < .001), and fear (Merkel: β = .002, p = .969; Steinbrück: β = -.03, p = .574) on the trust judgments. The pattern of these results can be interpreted as a first indication of the importance of appraisals: anger affects social judgments while fear shows no significant effect in this study, thus confirming hypotheses *H2a* and *H2b*; it is important to note that the relationship between fear and trust remains insignificant even on the 20%-α-level[1]. Happiness, an emotion with no control-appraisal, also seems to be attributed to the politicians, as this emotion affects the trust judgment of both politicians in a positive way (Merkel: β = .12, p = .006 Steinbrück: β = .17, p < .001). Table 2 also indicates that anger and happiness are able to explain variance above and beyond important demographic variables (age, gender, education) and party identification as political interest. One might argue that the emotions indicate a general evaluation of the politician or an evaluation of the debate the participants followed. However, the aforementioned emotions have an influence on the trust judgment even when controlling for perceived debate performance and general evaluations of politicians (*H1*)[2].

The findings of the first study show promising results with respect to the importance of control appraisals for trust judgments. However, as mentioned earlier, the study is limited to three emotional states, which do not represent every possible control appraisal (see table 1). I want to test whether the emotional states are actually elicited by media stimuli or simply reflect participants' mood[3].

1 In the case of *H2b* the null hypothesis (i.e., there is no effect) is the actual hypothesis. In order to limit Type-II-error, which is the more severe error in this case, I increased the α-level to 20% when testing *H2b* (see e.g., Nickerson, 2000 for a discussion).

2 There is evidence from the US that positive emotions towards one candidate might be the same as negative emotions towards the opposing candidate (Just et al., 2007). However, trying to explain the trust judgment of Merkel bey emotions towards Steinbrück and vice versa let to insignificant effects of the emotions. This might be a subtle hint for the idea that the emotions were indeed triggered by the candidate during the televised debate.

3 In order to rule out that the happiness measure only reflects participants positive mood I included the question, whether Angela Merkel/Per Steinbrück made participants happy before the debate into the analysis. There was no effect of the measurement before the debate. Consequentially one could argue that the emotions were indeed elicited by the debate content. Furthermore, I tried to predict the trust judgments of Merkel by feelings towards Steinbrück and vice versa. There were no significant effects of the emotions towards one candidate on the trust evaluation of the other. This speaks against the notion that negative emotions towards one candidate and positive emotions towards the opponent might be two sides of the same coin (Just et al., 2007).

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Table 2. Regression results for trust judgments study I

	Trust in Merkel		Trust in Steinbrück	
	β	*p*	β	*p*
Block 1: Demographics				
Age	.13	.038	-.006	.925
Gender	.18	.001	-.04	.497
Education	.16	.013	-.02	.786
PID	.53	< .001	.38	< .001
Political Interest	.13	.011	-.052	.418
R^2	.32		.14	
Block 1 + Block 2: Candidate evaluation				
Debate performance	.17	< .001	.12	.028
Overall evaluation	.62	< .001	.65	< .001
R^2	.66		.56	
Block 1 + Block 2 + Block 3: Emotions				
Anger	-.65	< .001	-.23	< .001
Fear	.001	.969	-.03	.574
Happiness	.12	.006	.17	<.001
R^2	.72		.62	

Note. Party identification (PID) and Gender are Dummy-coded. '1' representing CDU/CSU for Merkel and SPD for Steinbrück and '0' indicating other or no party identification. '1' indicating female participants and '0' indicating male participants.

6. Study II: Experimental examination of anger, fear, sadness, happiness and pride

To test the *mediating* role of discrete emotions as well as to clarify the role of the media on emotions and trust judgments, I conducted an online media effects experiment and investigated how positive and negative news articles about two EP politicians affect trust judgments via the emotions anger, fear, sadness, happiness and pride. As in study 1, only happiness was used, one cannot rule out the valence as explanation for positive emotional states. To account for this limitation in study I, I include pride as a positive emotion, which has not been addressed very often in previous research (Nabi, 2002), but seems to be very important in the political communication context (Brader, 2006; Ridout & Searles, 2011).

As negative information (about politicians) in the media leads to negative emotions and positive information leads to more positive emotions (see e.g., Lecheler, Bos, & Vliegenthart, 2015; Lecheler et al., 2013) I first of all expect that the emotions tested here are actually triggered by the political information:

> *H3a: Positive information about the politicians will increase happiness and pride.*
> *H3b: Negative information about politicians will increase fear, anger, and sadness.*

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In more detail, I expect the emotions to partially mediate the effects of valence on trust judgments about the politicians. However, while all emotional states should be affected by the stimulus (H3a, H3b) only anger and happiness should show affect the evaluation of the politician, i.e.,

> *H4: Anger and happiness mediate the effect of positive and negative information on the political trust judgment.*

Finally, there should be a direct effect of positive/negative information on the political trust judgment.

> *H5: Positive information increases, while negative information decreases trust in the politicians.*

6.1. Method

Experimental Procedure. I used a 2 x 2 design, with one between-subjects factor representing the *valence or negativity* of the article (positive vs. negative) and one within-factor representing the two articles. The participants were asked via e-mail to take part in an online survey and were randomly assigned to the negative or positive condition. After completing a number of demographic questions, the participants read two articles on two different EU-politicians. One article was about a German EU-politician from the Social Democratic Party (president of the EP Martin Schulz) and the other about an unknown German EU-politician (Pirate party candidate Julia Reda). The participants were then asked to evaluate the trustworthiness of the respective candidate. Both articles were presented in a randomized order. Upon completion of the experiment, the participants were debriefed and informed about the manipulation of the articles and the purpose of my study.

Sample. Participants were mostly recruited from a southwestern German university. Students received course credit for taking part in the experiment. The sample was rather young (M = 25 years, SD = 7.9), well-educated (84% High School degree or higher), and female (65%). Altogether 529 subjects (257 positive, 272 negative condition) were included in the analysis. The groups differed slightly in group size; however, there were no significant differences in age, gender, education or party preferences across the two experimental groups (see appendix C).

Stimuli. All participants received an article on the nomination of Julia Reda, the German EU-candidate of the Pirate Party and on the nomination of Martin Schulz, top-candidate of the Social Democrats for the EU-elections in 2014 (well-known politician). As expected, on a scale from 1 (don't know her/him at all) to 6 (know her/him very well) participants indicated to know Martin Schulz significantly better than Julia Reda (M_{Reda} = 1.1, SD_{Reda} = 0.32; M_{Schulz} = 1.8, SD_{Schulz} = 0.74; T = 14.61, p<.001)[4]. The newspaper articles were kept as identical as possible except for the manipulated information in order to achieve high *internal*

4 Although participants knew Martin Schulz significantly better than Julia Reda, the prominence of Schulz was still rather low. This could be explained by the perceived low importance of EP-elections in Germany ("second order elections").

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validity, while still trying to present the information within a realistic frame. To assure external validity, (1) real politicians as well as real parties were used in the article. The stimuli were also based on real coverage about the EU-nomination. (2) The articles underwent proofreading by two professional journalists to make the articles as realistic as possible and increase experimental validity.

Dependent variable. *Trust in the individual politician* was measured after each article with a four-item-scale, asking whether the politician "is not trustworthy", "she/he is an honest person", "she/he is making promises but not keeping them" and on a 6-point scale (1-do not agree at all; 6-fully agree), whether "she/he is only pursuing her/his own interests". The scale showed acceptable to high internal consistency with Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$ for trust in Julia Reda and $\alpha = .76$ for Martin Schulz. The items were taken from a larger political trust scale, which was used in previous media effects experiments (Halmburger et al., 2012).

Mediating variables. To assess emotional responses, I asked participants to indicate on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 6 (very much) whether they experienced anger, fear, sadness, happiness and pride, while reading the article.

6.2. Results

The second study serves a threefold purpose. My first aim is to replicate the findings from the first study with respect to the discrete emotions anger and fear, however using different politicians from different parties (pirate party) as trustees. Secondly, the number of emotions is extended and sadness (negative valence/situational control appraisal) and pride (positive valance/self-control appraisal) are also taken into account. Finally, by conducting a mediation analysis to investigate the whole process, I want to show whether emotional responses to media stimuli are actually mediating the subsequent judgment. To test the indirect effect and show the mediating role of the emotional responses, the PROCESS tool is used for these analyzes (Hayes, 2012).

First of all, participants in the negative condition report more negative emotions than participants in the positive condition as assumed in hypothesis *H3a* and *H3b*; participants in the negative condition report more anger, fear, sadness than participants in the positive condition (see table 3)[5]. Although all emotions are affected by the treatment (see a-path coefficients figure 1 and 2), there is only a significant indirect effect of anger and happiness on the evaluation of trust in both politicians. However, there is no significant mediation of fear and sadness regarding both politicians in the study (see table 3).

The results for the emotion pride are a little bit more puzzling. While pride has no effect on the trust judgment of the unknown Pirate Party candidate Julia Reda the indirect effect for the president of the EU-Parliament Martin Schulz yields significant results (table 3). Figure 1 and 2 show an illustration of the effects of the different emotions (b-path coefficients; note that, again, the b-path coefficients for fear, sadness and pride (Reda) are even insignificant on the 20%-α-level supporting *H2b*).

5 Note that the positive condition was taken as 'baseline' for the analyses and the negative condition was coded as the treatment condition.

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Table 3. Group comparison of the mediating variables (emotions), depending variables and indirect effects for study II.

	Article A Reda			Article B Schulz		
	Negative	Positive		Negative	Positive	
	M (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*p*	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	p
Mediating variables						
Anger	2.1 (1.29)	1.34 (0.75)	< .001	2.36 (1.24)	1.35 (0.81)	< .001
Fear	1.55 (0.98)	1.27 (0.64)	< .001	1.73 (1.06)	1.22 (0.57)	< .001
Sadness	1.67 (1.07)	1.20 (0.57)	< .001	1.70 (1.09)	1.21 (0.56)	< .001
Happiness	1.52 (0.84)	2.15 (1.12)	< .001	1.39 (0.76)	2.01 (1.12)	< .001
Pride	1.34 (0.73)	1.72 (1.08)	< .001	1.32 (0.67)	1.82 (1.11)	< .001
Dependent variables						
Trust in Reda/Schulz	3.18 (0.64)	3.53 (0.59)	< .001	2.95 (0.89)	3.51 (0.64)	< .001

	Indirect effects on trust					
	Article A Reda			Article B Schulz		
Mediated via	IND	BootSE	BootCI	IND	BootSE	BootCI
Anger	-.091	.04	-.176, -.017	-.219	.05	-.327, -.117
Fear	-.008	.05	-.041, .022	.009	.03	-.045, .081
Sadness	-.028	.02	-.076, .009	-.045	.03	-.113, .001
Happiness	-.088	.03	-.158, -.037	-.085	.03	-.187, -.001
Pride	-.021	.02	-.055, .003	-.081	.04	-.166, -.028

As figure 1 and 2 show, there is still a significant direct effect of the experimental manipulation on the trust judgments after taking into account the emotional states as mediating variables (*H4*). Of course, emotional reactions towards political information are not able to fully explain the media effects, but other processes (e.g., general evaluations, and deliberation about the possible performance of the politician) are also affecting the trust judgment (see also study 1).

Figure 1. Mediation model of indirect effects of treatment on trust judgment of Julia Reda via discrete emotions. All path coefficients are unstandardized. ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001. experimental group is dummy coded with 0 = positive, 1 = negative

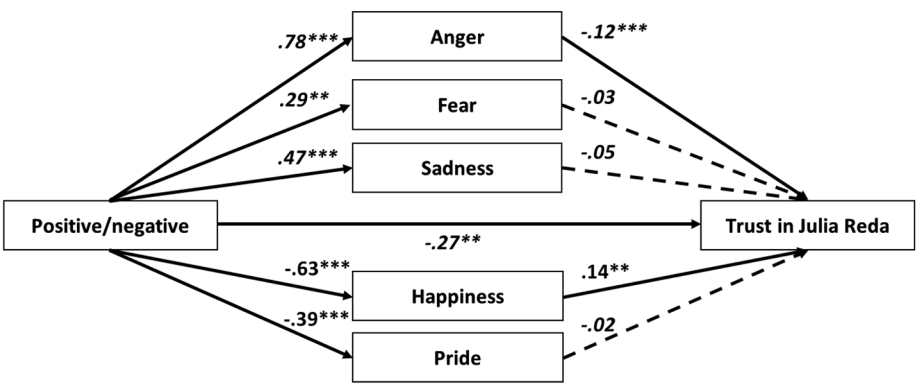

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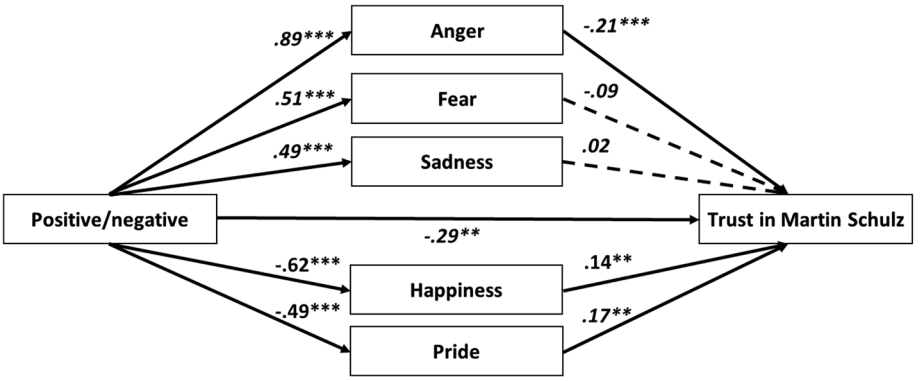
Figure 2. Mediation model of indirect effects of treatment on trust judgment of Martin Schulz via discrete emotions. All path coefficients are unstandardized. **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$; experimental group is dummy coded with 0 = positive, 1 = negative



7. Discussion

Emotions are crucial when it comes to the evaluation of others in general (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005) and politicians in particular (Just et al., 2007). Against this backdrop, this paper shows that emotions are able to explain variance in trust judgments over and above evaluations of politicians, party identification or other important variables for the assessment of trust (study I). As for the question of *which* discrete emotion is an important predictor of political trust judgments, I found both the valence of the emotion and the control appraisal to play an important role (study I and II). Emotions, which can be characterized by other-control appraisal (anger) or no control appraisal (happiness), affect the subsequent trust judgment as they might be attributed to the politician, while emotions with situational control appraisal (fear, sadness) do not correlate with trust evaluations of politicians.

In transferring these ideas, models and findings from the field of emotion psychology to communication research, this paper contributes to the existing body of literature in at least three ways: Firstly, up to now the aforementioned processes have hardly been investigated for the judgments of politicians or in the political arena at all. This paper provides two studies in the highly relevant contexts of the German televised debate and the 2014 European Parliament elections presenting real politicians in real election campaigns, thus assuring a high external validity. Secondly, most of the research focuses on social judgments of friends or acquaintance or completely unknown trustees (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005). In contrast to that, the studies investigate judgments of *mediated* trustees, as the participants have no personal contact to the politicians; thus, it is possible to transfer ideas from interpersonal (face-to-face) judgments and interactions to mediated social judgments. This is not trivial as people sometimes tend to evaluate the personality of politicians along different dimensions than those of friends or even other medi-

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ated persons (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Fraley, & Vecchione, 2007). However, the replication of the results shows that the role of emotions and control appraisal is similar to other trust contexts and might thus be a general principle of person perception (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005).

Moreover, the studies presented here do also contribute to the idea that political communication like a televised debate, is indeed able to trigger certain emotions which, in turn affect trust judgments. This study is amongst the first to investigate the role of emotions in a debate context and – at the same time – analyze more stable influences on trust judgments (e.g., party identification) as well as situational influences of the (media) environment, i.e., the debate context and evaluations of debate performance, thus combining earlier research on media effects on evaluations of politicians. Being able to detect emotional influences besides some of the most crucial and powerful variables in political communication research (see e.g., Maier & Faas, 2011 for televised debates; Rudolph & Evans, 2005 for political trust research in general) is far from being trivial and contributes to the literature in political psychology, media effects research and debate research (Neely, 2007; Vogel & Otto, 2017).

However, inconsistencies and limitations should not remain unmentioned as they might also lead to future research strands. First, I want to highlight the special role of pride, which has not been investigated in political communication so far, although it seems to be an important emotional state which can be triggered by political communication (Brader, 2006). In light of the results on the different trustees Reda and Schulz, it might be worthwhile to take into account the idea of collective emotions. Collective pride is an emotion that is experienced due to a political or sports triumph of a person who is perceived as a representative for a certain group (Sullivan, 2014). As a German EU-politician, Martin Schulz could be seen as representative for Germany and the participants might have experienced collective pride, which in turn was attributed to Martin Schulz, having an effect on his evaluation (see Sullivan, 2014 for a discussion). Moreover, the social democratic campaign in Germany as well as the media coverage was dominated by the idea that, as a German, Martin Schulz could become the most powerful person in Europe (Gattermann, 2014). This aspect might also explain the effects of pride on the judgments regarding Martin Schulz. As most participants did not know Julia Reda and she had no chance of becoming and office holder in the European Union, it should be hard to attribute (group-based) pride to Reda and shape her trust judgment. However, it is important to notice that these are post-hoc explanations for the role of pride and the popularity of different politicians.

The idea of using discrete emotions as mediators in study II leads to my second point of discussion. Usually, emotions such as pride are conceptualized as consequence of a certain cognitive evaluation. I do, of course, not neglect the primacy of cognition hypothesis, quite in the contrary, cognitive processes only lead to the emotional reactions I describe here (including the whole appraisal process). It is, thus, rather a fast and dynamic interplay between cognitive and emotional processes. It would be counterintuitive to speak of all these processes as emotional in a purist sense (so that emotion is possible without thought) (Lazarus, 1984, 1999).

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So why are the emotions then conceptualized as mediators rather than as an outcome of a certain evaluation of a politician? One could argue that the investigated emotions might simply be an effect or a byproduct of positive or negative evaluations of the politicians rather than mediators. While I cannot rule out empirically the fact that emotions are an outcome of the trust judgments, there are some reasons to believe that the processes function as expected in this paper. First of all, the mediation analyses in study II show that *all* emotions were triggered by the newspaper stimulus, but only some of them contributed to the explanation of the trust judgment. This main finding makes it plausible to think of a primacy of emotional reaction. There is no plausible reason to believe that the evaluation of the politician should result in such different emotional responses, quite contrary, a lack of trust should for example increase the emotion fear, not anger (De Cremer, 1999). Furthermore, considerations on the interplay between cognition and emotion support the idea of emotions as mediators. Cassino and Lodge (2007) describe a *primacy of affect* for political evaluations; in their work, they argue that (1) the (cognitive) judgment process comes *after* the affective process and (2) one cannot think of a purely cognitive judgment as each and every concept is emotionally tagged. Similar to this, the *hot cognition* hypothesis states that all political objects are emotionally laden. It is thus impossible to think of a politician without triggering affective reactions, especially in campaign periods (Lodge & Taber, 2005). Thus, despite the fact that the emotional reaction is already an outcome of cognitive appraisals these processes should run faster than the trust judgments. Again, this is not to say that cognitive processes (cognitive appraisals) do not influence the emotional reaction in the first place, however trust judgments should be much slower as they include (rather cognitive) evaluations of the given information (see also study 1) *and* the emotional reactions toward this information. Hence, the trust judgments might rather be influenced by the emotion than vice versa. However, further research needs to clarify the causal processes and this relationship by investigating the attribution processes in more detail.

In a similar vein, there is reason to criticize the mediation analyses as they are carried out here. Although experimental designs are generally appropriate to test causation, experiments that do not manipulate the mediating variable alone are often criticized (Bullock, Green, & Ha, 2010). Similar to other (media effects) experiments, I cannot rule out that the manipulation does only affect the emotional states alone, thus the idea of causal mediation might be problematic. It is, in other words impossible to say why some participants felt rather anger than anxiety when being exposed to the negative stimulus. However, it was not the primary purpose of study 2 to test which media characteristics lead to which emotional response, but rather if these emotional responses affect political trust judgments differentially.

Having said that, this limitation leads to a further research strand that should be addresses by further research; it would be worthwhile to see if certain characteristics of the media are able to elicit different emotions. Negativity seemed to be related to all of the emotions in this study; however, it would be possible to consider media characteristics, which are, for example, able to trigger anger but not fear or sadness (Kühne, 2013; Weeks, 2015). Certain characteristics of the media

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and personality factors should then lead to certain appraisals and emotional responses, which could, in turn, explain the effects of discrete emotions on political judgments in more detail.

Finally, both items use one item measures to assess the affective states. One item measures are problematic for several reasons. Firstly, it is – at least in cross-sectional studies like this – hard to assess the reliability of such a measure. Secondly, and equally important, the validity of such a measure is questionable as one item could not be representative for the whole construct of anger or fear. There are reliable scales in the field of communication science that are able to assess discrete emotions, which should be used in future research on that topic (Renaud & Unz, 2006).

In applying these concepts and approaches to political communication research, we are able to better understand the underlying processes of media effects and evaluations of politicians. The present paper provides a step towards the answer to the question, which emotion plays what role for social judgments in a political communication context. While the investigation of emotions in political communication research has been overlooked for a long time due to normative implications and research traditions, we are now heading towards collaborative research in politics, psychology, communications and neuroscience in order to come to a sound judgment of the role of emotions in the political arena.

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Appendix A – wording of all items used in both studies, means, standard deviations and Cronbach's alpha for all items and scales

Study I		*M* [Merkel]	*SD* [Merkel]	*M* [Steinbrück]	*SD* [Steinbrück]
Trust in individual politician	Trust in Merkel Cronbach's α = .85; trust in Steinbrück Cronbach's α = .83				
	She/he is trustworthy.	2.55	1.09	2.46	0.93
	She/he keeps the interests of voters in mind.	2.73	1.03	2.62	0.88
	She/he is an honest person.	2.63	1.02	2.61	1.02
Emotions	In how far did you feel the following emotions about Angela Merkel and Peer Steinbrück, while following the debate…				
	…anger	2.47	1.76	2.11	1.67
	…fear	1.50	1.11	1.65	1.23
	…happiness	2.64	1.67	2.65	1.66
Debate performance	How did [Angela Merkel/ Peer Steinbrück] perform during the debate…	3.39	0.96	3.74	0.85
Candidate evaluation	Generally speaking, what do you think of [Angela Merkel/ Peer Steinbrück] on a scale from -5 to +5?	6.91	3.05	7.05	2.58
Study II		*M* [Reda]	*SD* [Reda]	*M* [Schulz]	*SD* [Schulz]
Trust in individual politician	article 1: Reda Cronbach's α = .76, article 2: Schulz Cronbach's α = .80				
	She/he is not trustworthy	4.00	1.19	3.75	1.27
	She/ he makes promises she/ he can't keep	3.77	1.14	3.14	1.10
	She/he is pursuing her/his own interests	3.91	1.12	3.13	1.15
	She/he is an honest person	3.81	0.91	3.21	1.01
Emotions	In how far did you feel the following emotions, while reading the article…	*M* [article 1]	*SD* [article 1]	*M* [article 2]	*SD* [article 2]
	…anger	1.71	1.12	1.85	1.12
	…fear	1.41	0.84	1.48	0.89
	…sadness	1.43	0.88	1.45	0.89
	…happiness	1.84	1.04	1.71	1.01
	…pride	1.53	0.94	1.57	0.95

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Appendix B – Results comparability of the two experimental groups and manipulation check (study II)

There were no differences between the two experimental conditions with regards to age (M_{neg} = 25.1, SD_{neg} = 8.1, M_{pos} = 24.9, SD_{pos} = 7.8, t = 0.3 p = .791), education (M_{neg} = 5.2, SD_{neg} = 0.6, M_{pos} = 5.2, SD_{pos} = 0.6, t = 0.5 p = .491) and gender (positive condition: 72% female, 28% male; negative condition: 75% female, 25% male; $\chi^2(1, 466) = 0.527$, p = .464). The manipulation check yields significant differences for the evaluation of valence: Participants in the negative condition perceived the articles as more negative than in the positive condition (article 1: M_{neg} = 4.7, SD_{neg} = 1.1, M_{pos} = 1.7, SD_{pos} = 0.8, t = 36.5 p < .001; article 2: M_{neg} = 4.4, SD_{neg} = 1.2, M_{pos} = 1.8, SD_{pos} = 0.8, t = 28.6, p < .001)

Appendix C – correlations between emotions in study 1 and 2

Study 1

	Fear Merkel	Anger Merkel	Happiness Merkel	Fear Steinbrück	Anger Steinbrück	Happiness Steinbrück
Fear Merkel	1					
Anger Merkel	.553**	1				
Happiness Merkel	-.069	-.298**	1			
Fear Steinbrück	.305**	.027	.312**	1		
Anger Steinbrück	.083	.140*	.286**	.551**	1	
Happiness Steinbrück	.247**	.315*	.108	-.054	-.223**	1

Notes. *p < .05, **p < .01

Study 2

	Reda				
	Fear	Anger	Sadness	Happiness	Pride
Fear	1				
Anger	.539**	1			
Sadness	.491**	.536**	1		
Happiness	.155**	-.005	.002	1	
Pride	.145**	.021	.085	.595**	1
	Schulz				
	Fear	Anger	Sadness	Happiness	Pride
Fear	1				
Anger	.639**	1			
Sadness	.508**	.602**	1		
Happiness	.061	-.069	.061	1	
Pride	.039	-.027	.117*	.704**	1

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Appendix D – translated stimuli for the positive and negative experimental condition[6]

Article Reda negative

Julia Who? The Pirate Party compiles their electoral list for European Parliament elections
The Pirate Party of Germany elected Julia Reda during their party congress in Bochum as top candidate for the EP elections. „Europe belongs to the people, not to governments" Reda emphasizes and explains her plans. The top candidate seems to be politically ingenuous, given that her sole experience in politics derives from an internship at the Swedish member of the EU parliament Amelia Andersdotter. The discussions at the party management level and quarrels between party members left a mark on Reda. It is therefore an open question whether citizens will vote for the unknown candidate or not. „We got bogged down a little bit" Julia Reda said in an interview. She doesn't even deny that the Pirates' only political issues are transparency and participation. Neither Reda nor the Pirates hold positions on issues such as Euro rescue or the Crimea crisis. The fact that the Facebook-profile of the top candidate was translated into twelve languages in course of the election campaign seemed to be the only success, but it is certainly not enough to regain lost voters in the campaign. If you believe in the most recent polls, Julia Reda's visions of Europe will remain a dream.

Article Reda positive

Wind of change for the Pirates in Europe
The Pirate Party of Germany elected Julia Reda during their party congress in Bochum as top candidate for the EP elections. „Europe belongs to the people, not to governments." Reda emphasizes and explains her plans. Party insiders have high hopes for Reda as she is a fresh face and not part of the discussions and quarrels at the party's management level. Reda is considered as an ambitious politician for Europe who could already gain experience as assistant of the Swedish member of the EU parliament Amelia Andersdotter. „It is time to look ahead", the expert in participation and foreign and security politics Reda says. She is one of the few party members being competent not only to talk about transparency and internet politics. Reda' s vision of Europe is an European federal state with regions united by a shared cultural background. Her big international network-like her connection to Andersdotter - are also extremely important. Similar to the online campaign - her facebook-profile is no available in twelve languages. A party companion states that „with Julia, people all over Europe will understand what we stand for."

6 Original stimulus material is available from the author upon request.

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Article Schulz negative

A failed mayor as Europe's hope?
The president of the EU-parliament Martin Schulz got elected with 97,2 percent as top candidate of the SPD for the European Election at the delegate conference in Berlin. It is a highly expected result for Schulz as he is on the political agenda nearly every day as Germany's most popular EU-politician. However, the career of the SPD shooting star has not started very successful: As mayor of Würselen near Aachen he nearly ruined his commune because of the building of an expensive swimming pool. His campaign also evoked harsh criticism: He changed the Twitter-account of the president of the EU-parliament into his personals account - and gained 78.000 followers in one whack. Following this decision all parliamentary groups were outraged and requested the EP presidency to rest for the campaigning period, following an official procedure of the EP. It seems that Schulz is doing everything to prevent from an election debacle for his party like in 2009. The election on May 25th will show whether voters approve such a reckless strategy or not.

Article Schulz positive

A new hope for the comrades
The president of the EU-parliament Martin Schulz got elected with 97,2 percent as top candidate of the SPD for the European Election in Berlin. "This is a sign of confidence that touches me and for which I am grateful", Schulz said after his election. Without a doubt, he is the most popular German EU politician, which is also evident by looking at his Twitter account with 78.000 followers. This success is accompanied but a deep friendship to some of Europe's most powerful figures – be it German vice-chancellor Sigmar Gabriel or Angela Merkel. Schulz, one of the powerful men in Social Democracy at the moment, wants to carry the whole social democratic parliamentary party along and to guide them to successful elections. Therefore he got up early and already started campaigning in March. His prominence surely is an advantage for his campaign. "We are ready for the election". Fellow party members are looking forward to the elections. On 25th of May this optimism should turn into votes.

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