

**Deplorables:
Emotions, Political Sophistication, and Political Intolerance**

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Abstract

While scholars have shown strong and enduring interest in the role of emotions in politics, questions remain about the connections between emotions and political intolerance. First, it is not clear which emotion (if any) is likely to produce intolerance toward one's disliked groups, with different studies favoring hatred, anger, or fear. Second, it is unclear whether these effects of emotion are moderated by sophistication, as some conventional political thought argues. Do the less-sophisticated, in other words, rely on emotions when making judgments, therefore being less tolerant than sophisticates, who rely on reason? Here, we test both hypotheses using a large representative sample of the American population. We find that hatred, anger, and fear are significantly but only modestly related to political intolerance. Moreover, the effects of emotions on intolerance are not consistently stronger among the unsophisticated. These findings provide little support for the conventional assumption that the less sophisticated rely on their emotions in making political judgments.

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You know, to just be grossly generalistic, you could put half of Trump's supporters into what I call the basket of deplorables. Right? The racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic – you name it. And unfortunately there are people like that. And he has lifted them up. He has given voice to their websites that used to only have 11,000 people – now 11 million. He tweets and retweets their offensive hateful mean-spirited rhetoric. Now, some of those folks – they are irredeemable, but thankfully they are not America.

Hillary Clinton

Populist and authoritarian political movements are on the rise across the world. In countries as diverse as the United States, Turkey, Hungary, Brazil, and Italy, authoritarian-populist leaders or parties are in government. One of the hallmarks of these movements is their crass majoritarianism, sometimes associated with a call for minority and dissident voices to be silenced, whether by the state or by the very supporters of these movements. Thus, it would appear that political tolerance, always the most elusive of democratic values, is once again under threat in many democracies.

A great deal of research has attempted to understand why some citizens extend civil rights to groups they dislike, while others do not (see Gibson, 2006, and Sullivan and Hendriks, 2009). Since intolerance represents a negative, almost instinctive reaction to a threatening outgroup, a particularly interesting approach has been to examine the emotional roots of intolerance (see for examples, Haas and Cunningham, 2014; Kuklinski, Riggall, Ottati, Schwarz, and Wyer, 1991; Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse, and Stevens, 2005; Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-

Morse, and Wood, 1995; Skitka, Bauman, and Mullen, 2004).

Yet unresolved issues remain in the study of emotion and intolerance. First, which emotion (if any) most powerfully drives intolerance? Noting the prominent role played by threat in predicting intolerance, some scholars have argued that intolerance is a reaction to fear and anxiety (e.g., Marcus et al. 1995). Others have emphasized the role played by anger (Skitka 2004), which, in intergroup settings, can produce a confrontational and aggressive response to target groups (Mackie, Devos, and Smith 2000). Yet others have made the case for a unique influence of hatred – indeed, Halperin, Canetti-Nisim, and Hirsch-Hoefler (2009) argue that hatred is perhaps the *most powerful* driver of intolerance.

A second unresolved issue concerns the interplay between emotion and political sophistication. While intolerance is often thought to be an emotional reaction to a threatening outgroup, tolerance – in contrast – is believed to be largely driven by considered reason, as via a “sober second thought” (Gibson 1998). Moreover, Halperin, Canetti-Nisim, and Hirsch-Hoefler (2009), for example, argue that hatred does not create intolerance among all citizens; rather, this sort of emotional engagement with one’s political opponents seems to most influence those who are politically unsophisticated. Various elitist theories of politics posit that because ordinary people typically rely on their emotions when making political judgments, intolerance often results. Elites, on the other hand, eschew emotional reactions to their opponents; because they rely on reason, tolerance is the outcome. Many political psychology scholars (e.g., Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen, 2000) are not so certain that a bright-line distinction can be made between emotion and reason, but that has not stopped the search for the emotional determinants of political intolerance within the mass public. On its face, the contemporary politics of populism

might be understood by this theory.

Our purpose in this paper is to reconsider the role emotions play in tolerance judgments. Using a large representative sample of the American public, the first part of our analysis focuses on investigating the emotional determinants of political tolerance. Following extant research, we investigate three measures of emotional engagement with political outgroups: hatred, anger, and fear. We then turn to the moderating role of political sophistication, under the hypothesis that those with little sophistication are more likely to rely upon emotions than those with greater sophistication. Contrary to some extant research, we find that emotions play only a limited and certainly not dominant role in producing political intolerance. More important than emotions are conventional predictors of intolerance, such as threat perceptions. In addition, our analysis reveals few significant differences in the importance of emotional engagements between the more- and less-sophisticated. Our findings underscore the need for additional research to reconcile some fairly fundamental discrepancies in whether, how, and when emotions structure political intolerance. We conclude the paper by drawing out the implications of our findings for contemporary debates about populism, suggesting that realistic grievances and inter-group conflict may play more significant roles in populist politics than is ordinarily thought.

Emotion-Based Theories of Political Intolerance

Intolerance has long been associated with psychological insecurity and the perception of threat (e.g., Gibson, 2006; Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus, 1982).¹ A particularly interesting – and

¹ We do not necessarily assume that psychological insecurity and threat perceptions are

fairly recent – extension to this classic model is to investigate individuals’ emotional reactions to threatening and disliked groups (e.g., Haas and Cunningham, 2014; Halperin, Canetti-Nisim, and Hirsch-Hoefler, 2009; Kuklinski, Riggle, Ottati, Schwarz, and Wyer, 1991; Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse, and Stevens, 2005; Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse, and Wood, 1995; Skitka, Bauman, and Mullen, 2004). Indeed, emotions have been shown to play a particularly important role when individuals engage in intergroup evaluations (Mackie, Devos, and Smith, 2000), as is most certainly the case for the decision about whether to “put up with” one’s political enemies.

Yet, even if scholars increasingly agree that intolerance is related to emotional reactions to target groups, it is far less clear which emotion is the key to understanding intolerance. Three particular emotions have dominated existing research: fear, anger, and hatred. We review research on each of these below, before drawing our hypotheses.

Fear

Fear is typically associated with withdrawal from, rather than with confrontation with, a target group (Frijda, Kuipers, and ter Schure, 1989), with the result that fear tends to decrease the likelihood of aggression against a group (Huddy, Feldman, and Cassese, 2007; Mackie, Devos, and Smith, 2000). Tolerance judgments differ from behavioral aggression however: rather than

grounded in emotions. Threat perceptions, in particular, may be a function of an entirely realistic analysis of the attributes and capabilities of one’s opponents (e.g., Sullivan et al., 1993; Wang and Chen, 2008). Fortunately, our analysis does not require a determination of the sources of these intolerance predictors.

being behaviors, they are attitudes regarding the extension or withdrawal of permission for a disliked group to engage in political activities. Thus, we conjecture that the tendency for fear to lead to avoidant *behaviors* does not in fact imply that this emotion will have only indirect and weak effects on tolerance *attitudes*.

Indeed, several existing studies show that fear (or an analogue, like anxiety) does in fact have a direct, positive influence on intolerance. Skitka et al. (2004) find that fear is positively correlated with intolerance, while Marcus et al. (1995) similarly demonstrate that normatively threatening experimental vignettes increase anxiety and also intolerance. Other research identifies the mechanism that may be at work: Fear begets intolerance because it increases both rumination (Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen, 2000; Mogg, Mathews, Bird, and Macgregor-Morris, 1990) and risk aversion (Lerner and Keltner, 2001; Huddy, Feldman, and Cassese, 2007). Together, these findings suggest that fearful individuals use a more careful, deliberative approach when making tolerance judgments. And as Kuklinski et al. (1991) show (but see Theiss-Morse, Marcus, and Sullivan, 1993), deliberation can produce greater levels of intolerance than can purely affective reactions to disliked groups. As such, we hypothesize that fear will have a direct, positive connection with intolerance.

Anger

Anger produces a confrontational mindset (Averill, 1983). In intergroup settings, this mindset can result in an increased desire to act aggressively against the outgroup (Claassen, 2016; Mackie, Devos, and Smith, 2000), as well as in a reduced desire to reconcile (Tam et al., 2007). As an emotion of approach, anger spurs individuals to take action against the target of their emotions. While this action may include behavioral aggression, it may also include support for

another party taking punitive action against the target group (Lerner, Goldberg, and Tetlock, 1998). For example, Huddy et al. (2007) find that Americans who were angry at Saddam Hussein and “terrorists” showed greater support for the Iraq War. It therefore seems likely that individuals who are angry at a group would also favor the government restricting that group’s civil liberties—that is, they would show greater intolerance toward the group. Indeed, Skitka et al. (2004) find anger to be one of the stronger correlates of intolerance, after perceived threat, outgroup derogation, and fear. As such, we hypothesize that anger will have a positive and direct influence on intolerance.

Hatred

In the study of intergroup conflict, hatred is often proposed as a unique determinant of hostility toward outgroups (e.g., Bar-Tal, 2007; Petersen, 2002; Staub, 2005). Although analyses of the dimensionality of emotional experience tend to lump hatred and anger together as, for example, “aversion” (Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen, 2017), Halperin (2008) has demonstrated the distinctiveness of these emotions (see also Smith and Mackie, 2005). Moreover, since tolerance requires antipathy toward the object of the tolerance (one cannot “put up with” that which one does not reject and dislike), antipathy and hatred would appear particularly likely to be associated with intolerance.

Indeed, this is the argument proposed by Halperin, Canetti-Nisim, and Hirsch-Hoefler (2009). Using survey data from Israel, they test the effects of fear, anger, and hatred on intolerance. They find that while fear and anger show weak and insignificant effects, hatred shows a strong positive association with intolerance. As they conclude, “hatred is key to the

understanding of political intolerance” (2009, p. 97). We similarly hypothesize that hatred will have a positive, direct effect on intolerance.

In sum, we examine the effects of three particular emotions on intolerance: fear, anger, and hatred. We treat these emotions as distinct, as do a number of analysts (e.g., Halperin, 2008; Halperin, Canetti-Nisim, and Hirsch-Hoefler, 2009; Mackie, Devos, and Smith, 2000; Smith and Mackie, 2005). We recognize that others view anger and hatred as part of single syndrome of aversive emotional engagement (e.g., Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen, 2017), and as a consequence Online Appendix D reproduces our entire analysis using an index that combines hatred and anger (we retain fear as a distinct emotion). The advantages of using the three emotions as separate independent variables include the ability to consider 1) whether some emotions are more consequential for intolerance than others, 2) whether some emotions are more relevant to those low in political sophistication than others, while 3) still allowing us to assess how much political intolerance is driven by emotions in toto. Except for a few minor details, which analytical strategy we employ has few implications for our substantive conclusions.

The Moderating Effect of Political Sophistication

Scholars further hypothesize that political sophistication moderates the relationship between emotions and intolerance (e.g., Halperin, Canetti-Nisim, and Hirsch-Hoefler 2009, 99). In particular, many argue that sophistication reduces the effects of emotions such that sophisticated individuals will be less likely to use emotions in their attitude-formation and decision-making processes. This hypothesis, of course, resembles the views of the framers of the American Constitution, who thought that the masses often made political judgments on the basis of their

“passions.”

For instance, some existing research (Rahn, 2000; Zinni, Mattei, and Rhodebeck, 1997) shows that emotions have a stronger effect on public opinion among the unsophisticated. Researchers interpret this finding as an extension of the well-established sophistication-interaction hypothesis (Delli-Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock, 1991), which posits that core beliefs and values have a stronger effect on public opinion among the sophisticated. Indeed, in a similar fashion, scholars have long believed that tolerance is mainly a product of reason, and that intolerance – on the other hand – follows when passions dominate (Theiss-Morse, Marcus, and Sullivan, 1993). To the extent that reason is the province of the sophisticated, this claim supports the hypothesis that sophistication will dampen the effects of emotions on intolerance.

Conversely, other research suggests that sophistication may in fact *increase* emotional linkages with intolerance. Rudolph, Gangl, and Stevens (2000) show that emotional engagement only produces political involvement when political efficacy (a correlate of sophistication) is high. And Lodge and Taber (2005) find that sophisticated subjects are more likely to respond emotionally to various political actors and groups because they have larger, more connected stores of political information. Hence, there are good reasons to expect that the links between their emotions and their political attitudes and behaviors are especially strong among sophisticated individuals.

The results of Rudolph, Gangl, and Stevens (2000) and those of Lodge and Taber (2005) also suggest that sophistication may play a more complex role with respect to the emotion-intolerance link. Indeed, the findings of Halperin, Canetti-Nisim, and Hirsch-Hoefler (2009)

point toward this complexity: Although sophistication decreases the effects of hatred on intolerance, sophistication instead flips the direction of the effect of anger, leading anger to have negative consequences for intolerance among the unsophisticated but positive consequences among the sophisticated.

Given this contradictory and confusing literature, we aim to retest this sophistication-moderation hypothesis using new data. We find more persuasive the argument that sophistication dampens the influence of emotion on intolerance, so we hypothesize that sophistication will reduce the effects of all three negative emotions on intolerance. We expect, in other words, to observe negative interaction terms between sophistication on the one hand, and anger, hatred, and fear, on the other.

Data and Measures

Data

The data upon which we rely for this analysis are known as the Freedom and Tolerance Surveys (FATS). These surveys, conducted from 2007 through 2011, use a generally constant methodology, the same survey firm, and a largely invariant survey instrument. The interviews were conducted on the telephone (with cell phone subsamples added in the 2010 and 2011 surveys). The samples were randomly selected from the population of phone owners 18 years old and older (for further details see Online Appendix A). Because earlier analyses of these data have shown no significant change within the time period of the surveys (“previous work by the authors”), we collapse them into a single database of approximately 4,000 respondents.

Dependent Variable: Political Intolerance

The widely-used Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus (1982) least-liked approach to measuring political intolerance begins by querying the respondents about their feelings toward a varied list of groups selected by the researcher but supplemented by the respondents' own nominations of other groups. Table 1 reports the descriptive results from the FATS data.

[PLACE TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

According to these surveys, the Ku Klux Klan is the most disliked of these groups, with more than two-thirds of the respondents naming members of the Klan as their most or third-most (explained below) disliked group. Still, other groups are also highly disliked: A majority of Americans feel very coldly toward militarists, atheists, radical Muslims, and U.S. communists. Only a single group—conservatives—attracts a mean feeling thermometer score that is warmer than the midpoint on the 101-point scale.

While some scholars have focused primarily on asking their respondents a series of tolerance questions about their most disliked group, others have expanded their questioning by asking about other highly disliked groups (e.g., Gibson and Gouws, 2003). In the case of the FATS surveys, the respondents were randomly assigned to be asked the tolerance questions either about their most disliked group or about their third-most disliked group. The logic of this approach is that greater variability is introduced by asking about less extreme but still highly disliked groups, even if this requires that the status of the group be controlled for in subsequent analyses.

Later, in FATS, the respondents were asked about whether these groups ought to be allowed to give speeches, run candidates for public office, and hold public demonstrations. These

make for valid measures of political tolerance because speaking, seeking public office, and demonstrating are all rights that democracies must allow for all political points-of-view (e.g., Dahl, 1971). Table 2 reports the respondents' replies.

[PLACE TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

The American people are more or less evenly divided on whether these highly disliked groups ought to be afforded their civil liberties. This division is most obvious when it comes to tolerance of the most disliked group—for instance, 49.4% would allow a speech by the group, while 43.1% would not. For the other highly disliked group, tolerance is more often reported than intolerance, although about one-third of the respondents would not tolerate any of the activities by this group (data not shown). As is often the case, limited variability in tolerance exists across the three civil liberties activities.

We created a combined index of intolerance from these three indicators. The item-set has strong psychometric properties, with relatively high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .75), strong unidimensionality (the eigenvalue of the second factor extracted in a Common Factor Analysis = .64), and roughly equal validity of the indicators (as shown by the approximately equivalent factor loadings of the items on the first unrotated factor). Because a simple summated index is very strongly correlated with the factor score from the first unrotated factor, it will serve as the dependent variable for our analysis. We scored this index (and all other variables in this analysis) to range from 0 to 1.

Independent Variables

Following convention (e.g., Gibson, 2006; Erisen and Kentmen-Cin, 2017) and earlier analyses

of these data (“previous work by the authors”), we created indices of three subdimensions of threat perceptions: sociotropic threat, egocentric threat, and perceptions of group power.

Sociotropic threat was measured by two items, one asking whether the group is “not dangerous to society” versus “dangerous to society,” and the other asking the respondents to rate the group as “not dangerous to the normal lives of people” versus “dangerous to the normal lives of people.” Egocentric threat perceptions were also measured by two items: whether the group would or would not “reduce your personal political freedom,” and whether the group would or would not “if they gained power, affect your personal security.” Finally, group power was measured with three questions: whether the group is “likely to gain a lot of power in the United States” versus unlikely to do so; whether the group is “unlikely to affect how well my family and I live” versus likely to do so; and whether the group is “powerful” or not. The measures are positively intercorrelated (i.e., if one type of threat is perceived, the other types are also likely to be perceived), but not very strongly (with the bivariate correlations ranging from .25 to .32). Across all groups, intolerance is correlated with sociotropic threat at .26, with egocentric threat at .16, and with perceived group power at .03. In a multivariate equation, all three threat predictors are significantly related to intolerance, although, as seen in earlier research (e.g., Gibson and Gouws, 2003), sociotropic threat perceptions are by far the strongest predictors. Together, the three threat measures account for 8% of the variance in political intolerance.

The analysis of (“previous work by the authors”) provides a basic model of the predictors of tolerance that we find useful.² However, we add a few additional variables to that equation in order to more fully incorporate group attributes into our analysis. These include perceptions of

² See Online Appendix B for a discussion of our measurement of these various concepts.

the degree of commitment of the group to democratic values and norms (e.g., Petersen et al., 2011), whether the respondents reported that they actually know a member of their disliked group, and fixed effects for each of the groups in the analysis (as “previous work by the authors” suggest).

Emotional Engagement with the Group

We asked the respondents to rate their most disliked group or their third-most disliked group in terms of three emotions: anger, hatred, and fear. Their responses were collected on a scale ranging from 0 to 10 (which was then converted for our analysis to range from 0 to 1). The mean scores showed that the respondents expressed more anger toward the groups than either fear or hatred, and they also expressed more hatred than fear. Nearly 30% (29.7%) of the respondents selected the most extreme response category for anger, while 18.1% and 15.3% scored at the extremes for fear and hatred, respectively. Conversely, considering the lowest points on the emotional engagement score, the percentages are 24.1, 16.8, and 12.2, for fear, hatred, and anger, respectively.

We draw two conclusions from these data. First, considerable variability exists among the respondents in their degrees of emotional engagement with the group they selected as highly disliked. Second, anger toward the group is more common than fear and especially more common than hatred.

The ratings on the three aspects of emotion are moderately intercorrelated, with an average of the Pearson correlation coefficients of .41. However, anger and hatred are somewhat more strongly related ($r = .56$), and fear and hatred are somewhat more weakly related ($r = .33$).

From these correlations, we conclude that emotions are interconnected but are far from redundant.³

Analysis

Table 3 reports our baseline analysis of the predictors of intolerance. The first conclusion we draw from the model in the table is that it accounts for a quite considerable amount of the variance in levels of intolerance—approaching one-half. Significant individual predictors of intolerance are political sophistication, dogmatism, a preference for order over liberty, sociotropic threat perceptions, and level of education. The other aspects of threat perceptions have little if any influence on intolerance (and some of the observed signs are not even in the hypothesized direction). While the equation reveals quite a number of highly significant predictors of tolerance, few of the relationships are of much magnitude. For instance, knowing members of the disliked group only slightly decreases intolerance, while perceiving the group to be undemocratic just marginally increases intolerance.

[PLACE TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

We also note that whether the group is most disliked or is another highly disliked group

³ As discussed above, there are both theoretical and empirical reasons to treat anger and hatred as indicators of the same latent concept, which some refer to as “aversion” (Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen, 2017). Consequently, we report in Appendix D a parallel analysis that tests the effects of fear and an aversion index derived from combining hatred and anger. The results of that analysis strongly reinforce the main substantive conclusions of this paper.

has some slight connection to intolerance, even in this fairly comprehensive model. Lastly, we observe that adding the group dummy variables to the base model raises the explained variance by 5 percentage points, which is, of course, a highly significant increase (data not shown). This indicates that there are still group-specific components of intolerance that are not captured by this reasonably well-specified model.⁴

Finally, we observe a quite substantial relationship between political sophistication and political intolerance, with the more sophisticated expressing significantly less intolerance. This is a direct effect of sophistication, which is different from the interactive hypothesis that suggests that the less sophisticated rely more on their emotions when developing a response to their disliked political enemies.

Do Anger, Fear, and Hatred Stoke Intolerance?

As we hypothesized, each of the three emotional reactions has a significant positive connection to levels of intolerance. However, all these coefficients, while significant, are fairly small (although we do acknowledge that the equation represents a reasonably comprehensive model of

⁴ Removing the group fixed effects from Table 3 produces only very minor changes to the findings. Fear loses its statistical significance, but the regression coefficient remains almost the same. The effect of group power becomes slightly greater and is statistically significant, while the effect of sociotropic threat increases slightly. Generally, however, the inclusion or exclusion of the group fixed effects in Table 3 has practically no substantive implications.

political intolerance).⁵ In addition, contrary to the findings of some earlier research, in our analysis hatred does not have a stronger connection with intolerance than does anger or fear. If anything, our results suggest that, among Americans, anger is the most important emotional pathway to intolerance.⁶

Moreover, although we find that all three emotions play some role in shaping intolerance judgments, all three emotions are nevertheless weaker predictors of intolerance than are the classic wellsprings of intolerance, such as sociotropic threats and dogmatic orientations. Even anger, the strongest emotional correlate of intolerance in our data, has a significantly weaker effect on intolerance (in absolute value terms) than dogmatism, support for order over liberty, and sophistication (for all comparisons, $p < .001$). Additionally, the coefficients of hatred and fear are weaker than the coefficients of sociotropic threat and education (for fear, $p < .001$ for both variables; for hatred, $p = .001$ when compared with sociotropic threat and $p = .004$ when

⁵ Although anger and hatred are correlated at $r = .56$, the equation reported in Table 3 does not suffer from issues of multicollinearity. The variance inflation factors (VIF) are below 3 across all predictors.

⁶ We conducted tests of the null hypothesis that the coefficients do not differ for each of the three pairs of emotion coefficients. We found that the effect of anger is significantly different from that of fear ($p = .015$) but not from that of hatred ($p = .190$). The coefficients for hatred and fear do not differ ($p = .394$). We conclude from this that anger has a somewhat stronger effect on intolerance than does fear, but that the effect of anger is not necessarily stronger than the effect of hatred.

compared with education). Thus, regarding the relative importance of the emotions, our findings clearly show that emotions make a significant but modest contribution to explaining political intolerance.⁷

The Moderating Effects of Political Sophistication

We use a measure of political knowledge as our indicator of political sophistication. In Table 4, we report an analysis that incorporates the interactions of sophistication and the three emotions within a single integrated equation. Because our basic model of political intolerance (shown in Table 3, above) is quite comprehensive, we only report in Table 4 the results of the equation that pertain to the interactions. However, these coefficients are drawn from the full equations (results of which are available upon request from the authors).

[PLACE TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

Our first important finding is that sophistication has no significant interaction with hatred. Moreover, although we are reluctant to treat our insignificant interactive coefficient as

⁷ In analysis presented and discussed more fully in Appendix D, we used a combined index of aversion (i.e., hatred and anger), as well as fear. First, we find that both fear and aversion are positively and significantly related to intolerance. Second, the impact of aversion (hatred/anger) is stronger than the impact of fear, and is significantly stronger than the impact of hatred and anger when these are treated as separate measures. Third, the influence of aversion is far from dominant, with predictors such as sociotropic threat, dogmatism, and sophistication, having the same or larger consequences for producing political intolerance.

distinguishable from zero, the sign of the coefficient points toward sophistication actually *increasing* the effects of hatred on intolerance. This finding runs contrary to that of earlier research by Halperin, Canetti-Nisim, and Hirsch-Hoefler (2009).⁸

Our data also reveal that anger and sophistication have a negative and significant interaction relationship. As the marginal effects plot in Figure 1 shows, anger, as hypothesized, increases intolerance only among those with very low levels of sophistication. Once sophistication reaches a level of about .33 on the 0-to-1 scale, the effects of anger are no longer significant. Our data therefore indicate that anger is significantly related to intolerance for about 28% of the sample (those with relatively low sophistication), and is not related to intolerance for the remaining roughly 72% of the sample that is somewhat or more sophisticated.⁹

[PLACE FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Finally, we turn to the emotion of fear. Our data indicate no significant fear-sophistication interaction. For neither the less sophisticated nor the more sophisticated does fear

⁸ When sophistication is 0 (indicating the least sophisticated), the estimated coefficient for hatred is .02. When sophistication is at its highest point (1), the coefficient is .08 (.02 + .06). We reiterate, however, that the proper inference from the hypothesis test is that the slope of the interaction term is not distinguishable from zero.

⁹ In Appendix D, we replicate this moderation analysis, replacing the separate measures of anger and hatred with the combined aversion index. This analysis supports our conclusion that the influence of emotion does not vary by levels of political sophistication: neither the fear nor the aversion interaction terms are statistically significant.

contribute much to political intolerance.

These results differ considerably from those found by Halperin, Canetti-Nisim, and Hirsch-Hoefler (2009), who also examine the interactions between sophistication and the emotions of fear, anger, and hatred. At conventional levels of statistical significance, they generally find hatred, but not anger (and probably not fear), to have a significant interaction with sophistication; we find anger, but neither hatred nor fear, to have significant interactions. Our marginal effects analysis reveals that anger increases intolerance when sophistication is quite low, and that even at moderate levels of sophistication, the relationship with anger evaporates.¹⁰

¹⁰ A caveat to these moderation results is the potential multicollinearity that could arise due to the correlation between the constitutive and the interaction terms in the regression model. The VIFs for the interaction terms of sophistication and anger (11.0), fear (6.2), and hatred (9.4) are particularly noticeable. Rescaling to zero and/or standardizing predictors are common techniques for dealing with *non-essential* multicollinearity that occurs merely due to the scaling or nonzero mean of predictor variables, which is often the case in continuous-by-continuous interaction models (Marquandt, 1980; Shieh, 2010). If we mean-center and standardize our variables, all VIFs fall below 3. The interactions between the standardized versions of anger, fear, hatred, and sophistication yield identical results as above (equations not shown). Hence, we have confidence in the conclusion that the effect of anger is to some small degree moderated by sophistication, while the effects of fear and hatred are not.

Discussion and Concluding Comments

Our results demonstrate that negative emotional reactions to disliked groups increase the intensity of intolerance toward those groups. Since intolerance represents a negative, almost instinctive reaction to a threatening outgroup, this is not a surprising finding. However, in contrast to some extant studies (e.g., Halperin, Canetti-Nisim, and Hirsch-Hoefler, 2009), we find that the role played by emotion is fairly limited. Our findings certainly do not agree with Halperin, Canetti-Nisim, and Hirsch-Hoefler (2009) that hatred is the “key” to understanding intolerance. Although hatred, fear, and anger all increase intolerance, their effects are noticeably weaker than such well-established determinants of intolerance as psychological insecurity and sociotropic threat.

The emotional well-springs of intolerance nevertheless remain a potentially fruitful avenue for future research. Researchers might consider experimentally manipulating emotions to test their causal effects on intolerance, as has been accomplished so profitably in the study of intergroup conflict (e.g., Mackie, Devos, and Smith, 2000). It is also worth considering whether additional emotions beyond fear, anger, and hatred – such as disgust and contempt (e.g., Tausch et al., 2011) – should be examined.

The disparity between our findings and those of Halperin, Canetti-Nisim, and Hirsch-Hoefler (2009) raises the issue of the role played by context in intolerance, and in particular, in how threats (and possibly emotional reactions) vary considerably across national contexts. It may well be that a key difference between the contexts of these two studies is the degree to which hatred characterizes Israelis’ feelings toward their political opponents. If hatred is in fact a more extreme form of anger, and if hatred is not widespread in the U.S., then it would be reasonable

that anger has the dominant influence in the U.S. whereas hatred dominates in Israel. Going much further with this argument, however, takes us beyond the scope of our U.S.-based data. Future research would profit from studying how contextual factors across societies affect the groups selected as most disliked, the degree of inter-group emotional engagement, and, ultimately, political intolerance (e.g., Peffley, Hutchison, and Shamir, 2015).

Our analysis also suggests that the conventional hypothesis that the less sophisticated rely on emotions in making political judgments while the sophisticated rely on reason is much too simplistic to warrant much further consideration. Most likely, all political judgments reflect both emotion and reason (assuming one accepts any sort of distinction between emotion and reason). Classical motivated reasoning, for instance, often begins with affective engagement with stimuli that have very little, if any, grounding in reason (e.g., the attractiveness of people). According to the theory, this initial stage of information-processing structures, if not dominates, subsequent conscious reasoning. The politically less sophisticated hold no monopoly over the use of emotion in producing political intolerance. And while intolerance can arise from simple emotional appraisals, it can also be the result of considered thought, as research from Israel and Taiwan on elite intolerance has shown (e.g., Sullivan et al., 1993; Wang and Chen, 2008).

The study of political intolerance shows signs of becoming a great deal more invigorated than it has been in the past, owing partly to theoretical advances and partly to the growing menace of political intolerance in many parts of the world. But the etiology of intolerance is complicated; indeed, many of the enigmas Gibson identified in 2006 remain unsolved today. And if we are correct about the role that context plays in producing intolerance, even more complicated models may be required. At a minimum, we think it would clearly be a mistake to

assume that intolerance is only or even primarily generated by emotional engagement with one's political foes. It would also be unwise to assume that only the unsophisticated rely on emotions when making political judgments. Unfortunately, in today's politics, it seems that social scientists who hope to eradicate or control political intolerance still have a large research agenda on their hands.

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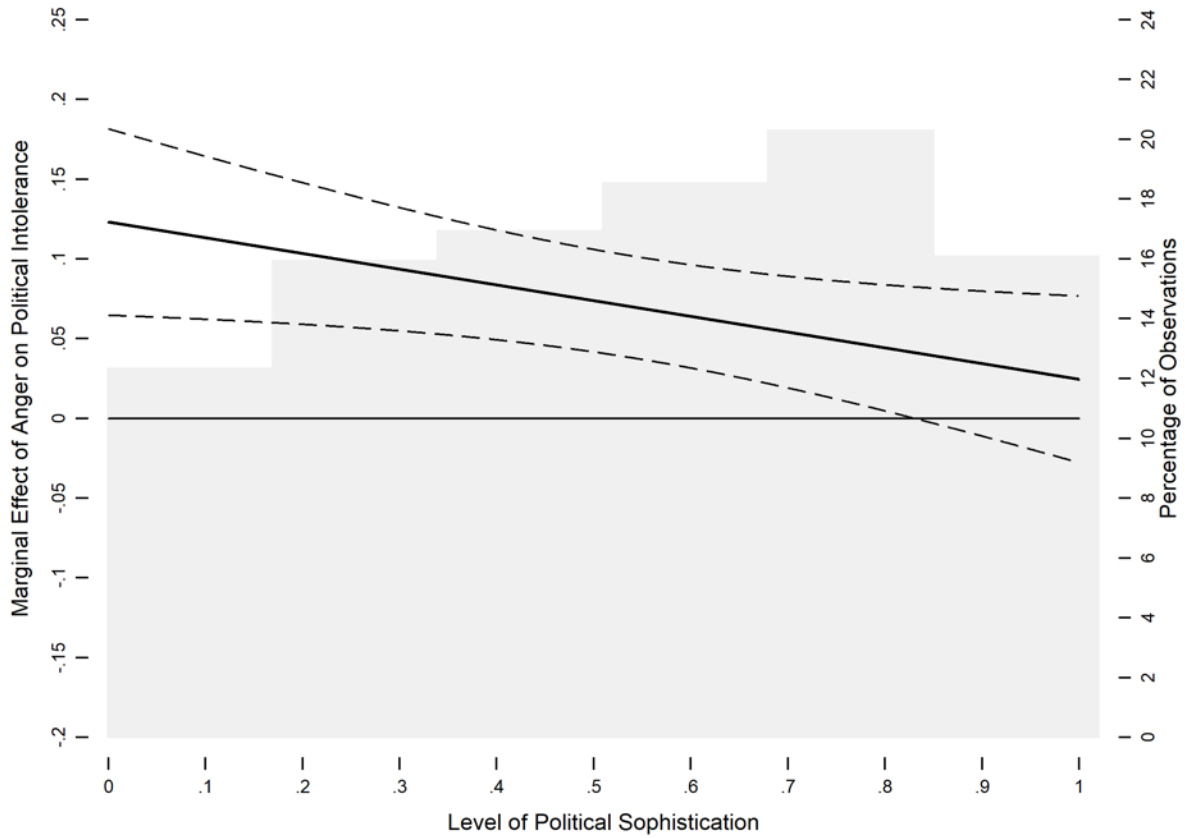
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Figure 1. The Marginal Effect of Anger on Political Intolerance Across Degrees of Political Sophistication



Note:

The confidence bands represent 95% confidence intervals. The histogram reports the frequency distribution of levels of political sophistication.

Table 1. The Distribution of Group Affect, FATS, 2007-2011

Group	Group Affect (Feeling Thermometer)					% Most Disliked	% Among Three Most Disliked
	% Disliked Very Much ^a	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	% Most Disliked		
Conservatives	7.0	53.8	22.9	4,084	.5	2.0	
Christian fundamentalists	12.8	48.5	26.1	4,086	1.5	7.2	
Liberals	11.3	48.3	23.6	4,088	.8	3.9	
Gay rights activists	22.9	45.3	30.6	4,079	1.9	9.4	
Anti-abortion activists	35.1	37.1	33.2	4,083	1.6	14.6	
Pro-abortion activists	39.2	30.9	33.3	3,993	6.2	19.4	
Communists	50.4	26.1	24.7	4,086	4.8	25.9	
Radical Muslims	56.0	20.3	23.7	4,068	14.2	39.5	
Atheists	64.9	16.9	24.7	3,690 ^b	10.6	36.8	
Militarists	77.7	10.6	20.1	4,092	15.1	42.8	
Members of the Ku Klux Klan	84.1	7.5	17.0	4,089	35.8	69.5	

Notes:

^a “Disliked Very Much” is defined as affect thermometer scores of 10 degrees or lower toward the group. Percentages are computed from the valid responses, which include “don’t know” responses but exclude refusals to answer. The number of observations for the least-liked questions is 4,066. Groups are sorted in order of decreasing mean affect.

^b The survey design in 2008 included a split-ballot structure on the question about atheists, resulting in only one-half of the sample in 2008 receiving the same question wording as in the surveys of 2007, 2009, 2010, and 2011. To ensure consistency in this measure, we exclude respondents who received a different wording of the question in 2008.

Source: Freedom and Tolerance Surveys, 2007-2011.

Table 2. Political Tolerance, Least-Liked Groups, 2007-2011

	Political Tolerance			Mean	Std. Dev.	N
	Percentage					
	Intolerant	Undecided	Tolerant			
<i>Most-Disliked Group</i>						
Allow Speech	43.1	7.5	49.4	3.0	1.4	2,073
Not Ban From Running for Office	44.2	7.9	47.8	2.9	1.4	2,067
Allow Rallies	47.2	9.7	43.1	2.8	1.3	2,067
Tolerance Index	–	–	–	2.9	1.1	2,069
<i>Another Highly Disliked Group</i>						
Allow Speech	30.1	11.1	58.8	3.3	1.3	2,058
Not Ban From Running for Office	35.9	11.6	52.5	3.2	1.4	2,057
Allow Rallies	37.0	11.5	51.5	3.1	1.3	2,058
Tolerance Index	–	–	–	3.2	1.1	2,059

Notes:

The percentages are calculated on the basis of collapsing the five-point Likert response set (e.g., “strongly support” and “support” responses are combined). The means and standard deviations are calculated on the uncollapsed distributions. Higher mean scores indicate more political tolerance. Note that the respondents were randomly assigned to be asked the tolerance questions on either their most disliked group or another highly disliked group.

Table 3. A Fully Specified Model of Political Intolerance

Type of Predictor/Indicator	r	b	s.e.	β
Anger toward the group	.22	.08***	.01	.09
Fear of the group	.16	.03**	.01	.04
Hatred of the group	.19	.05***	.01	.06
Group is most (versus 3 rd -most) disliked	.13	.04***	.01	.06
Sociotropic threat	.26	.11***	.02	.12
Egocentric threat	.03	.03	.01	.03
Group power	.17	-.01	.02	-.01
Perception that group is undemocratic	.06	.04***	.01	.05
Knows group member	-.15	-.05***	.01	-.06
Order preferred to liberty	.37	.19***	.02	.15
Support for the rule of law	-.21	-.06*	.02	-.04
Dogmatism	.38	.21***	.02	.17
Political sophistication	-.37	-.17***	.01	-.20
Ideological identity (liberal = high)	-.10	-.02	.02	-.02
Partisan identity (Democrat = high)	.04	.02	.01	.02
Religious attendance	.09	.02	.01	.02
Born-again	.16	.01	.01	.02
Female	-.16	-.03***	.01	-.06
Level of education	-.30	-.10***	.01	-.11
Owens home	-.08	.02	.01	.03
Age	.03	.04*	.02	.03
Black	.11	.04***	.01	.05
Hispanic	.10	.04***	.01	.04
Group dummy variables		Yes		
Intercept		.24***	.03	

Standard Deviation – Dependent Variable	.28
Standard Error of Estimate	.21
R ²	.42***
N	3,748
Notes: See Online Appendix C for information on the distributions of each of these variables.	
Unstandardized regression coefficients and R ² : *** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$	

Table 4. The Moderating Effects of Emotions and Political Sophistication on Intolerance

Type of Predictor/Indicator	b	s.e.	β
Anger toward the group	.12***	.02	.15
Fear of the group	.00	.02	.00
Hatred of the group	.02	.02	.02
Political sophistication	-.16***	.03	-.19
Anger \times Sophistication	-.10*	.04	-.10
Fear \times Sophistication	.06	.03	.06
Hatred \times Sophistication	.06	.04	.05
Intercept	.24***	.04	
Standard Deviation – Dependent Variable	.28		
Standard Error of Estimate	.21		
R^2	.43***		
N	3,748		

Notes:

These results are from supplementing the equation reported in Table 3 (above) with interaction terms for each of the three emotions interacted with political sophistication. The coefficients reported here pertain only to the emotions, political sophistication, and their interactions.

Unstandardized regression coefficients and R^2 : *** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$