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How Emotional Are Populists Really? Factors Explaining Emotional Appeals in the Communication of Political Parties

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Are populists really more emotional than mainstream parties? The alleged link between populism and emotional communication has barely been subject to systematic empirical scrutiny. I use literature on populist communication and appraisal theory to generate expectations about which political parties use which emotional appeals. I test these claims by applying a novel emotional dictionary to a large set of text data including more than 700,000 press releases and tweets from three European countries. As expected, I find that populist parties use significantly more negative emotional appeals (anger, fear, disgust, sadness) and less positive emotional appeals (joy, enthusiasm, pride, hope) than mainstream parties. Furthermore, I find that political actors adapt the usage of emotional appeals to different purposes depending on the communication medium and the politicians' status level. This study entails important implications for the research on emotional appeals in politics and populist communication.

KEY WORDS: discrete emotions, populist communication, political communication, text analysis, text as data

The idea that politicians routinely appeal to emotions in citizens has become widely accepted nowadays. Populist parties, for instance, are repeatedly referred to as communicating with an "extra emotional ingredient" (Canovan, 1999, p. 6). However, despite the widespread characterizations of populist communication as being highly emotional, the alleged link between populism and emotional appeals is still underresearched. Are populist actors really more emotional than other political actors? And if so, what emotions are they appealing to? Furthermore, what other factors influence the emotional appeals in political communication?

Generating knowledge in this field is highly important since explicit emotional appeals (such as emotional language) can be a powerful force. Emotions in general have the power to change how people perceive the (political) world. Studies have shown repeatedly that emotional responses impact citizens' information processing, attitude formation, and political behavior (Brader, 2005; Brader, Valentino, & Suhay, 2008; Druckman & McDermott, 2008; Kühne & Schemer, 2015; Small & Lerner, 2008; Vasilopoulos, Marcus, Valentino, et al., 2018; Vasilopoulou & Wagner, 2017).

The framework of this study is largely based on the theory of populist communication. This strand of literature assumes that one important difference between populist and nonpopulist actors is the extensive use of emotional appeals (Engesser, Fawzi, & Larsson, 2017; Hameleers, Bos, & de Vreese, 2016; Mudde, 2004). Populist actors are assumed to publicly share the emotions experienced by their clientele (Kriesi, 2014), and recent theoretical and empirical research indicates that there is a

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particularly strong link between populism and negative emotions (Rico, Guinjoan, & Anduiza, 2017; Salmela & von Scheve, 2018).

Existing research studying emotional language of political actors focused mainly on campaign data (Crabtree, Golder, Gschwend, & Indridason, 2018; Ridout & Searles, 2011). Furthermore, prior research focused predominantly on English-speaking countries, particularly majoritarian systems in the United States and the United Kingdom (Kosmidis, Hobolt, Molloy, & Whitefield, 2019) and typically differentiated between mere positive and negative affective language (Crabtree et al., 2018; Kosmidis et al., 2019). The theory of this study, however, is located in appraisal theory. This strand of literature suggests that emotions, even if they have the same valence, differ both in their causes as well as in their cognitive consequences (Lazarus, 1991; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Thus, this study contends that it is of utmost importance to move beyond mere sentiment.

By assuming that different emotions have distinct political consequences, this study expects political actors to make systematic usage of discrete emotional appeals for different purposes (Ridout & Searles, 2011). Populist parties are typically political outsiders, with no or only limited government experience. Furthermore, even if they have a history of government participation, populist actors tend to portray themselves as being outside of the political establishment (Ernst, Engesser, & Esser, 2017). Thus, populist parties should have a high interest in framing the state of the current (political) world in negative terms. Their main focus should therefore lie on negative emotions. Nonpopulist parties, on the other hand, often have extensive government experience, since they routinely switch from government to opposition and back (Hobolt & de Vries, 2015). They are therefore held responsible for the current state of the political system. Thus, in order to frame individuals' perception of the current political system in positive terms, they should make greater use of positive emotions.

However, I do not expect populism to be the only variable impacting emotionality. Based on literature on populist communication and appraisal theory, I also expect emotional appeals to be dependent on the communication medium (Twitter vs. press releases) and the politicians' status level (leader vs. backbencher). I test my expectations applying a novel emotional dictionary that measures emotional language in political text. The data set consists of more than 727,000 tweets and 27,000 press releases from all major parties and members of parliament in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland.

As expected, the empirical results largely confirm the theoretical expectations of this article. Overall, the results yield important insights into which factors determine emotional appeals of political actors. Moreover, the study entails important implications for political science in general by showing that political actors use discrete emotions for different purposes. Thus, this finding emphasizes the need to move beyond valence analysis in politics.

Emotional Appeals in Politics and Populist Communication

Previous research in political science—especially with a focus on emotional language—focused on mere valence, that is, the distinction between two broad categories of positive versus negative sentiment (Crabtree et al., 2018; Kosmidis et al., 2019). Yet, it has been repeatedly shown that emotions that carry the same valence may lead to consequences which affect individuals in opposite ways (e.g., Druckman & McDermott, 2008; Rico et al., 2017; Valentino, Brader, Groenendyk, Gregorowicz, & Hutchings, 2011). According to appraisal theory, each emotion exhibits unique patterns of appraisal which help individuals to deal with specific situations. Yet these patterns persist beyond the eliciting situation, thereby becoming a "an implicit perceptual lens for interpreting subsequent situations" (Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, & Fischhoff, 2003, p. 144). In the political context, prior research has found these lenses to impact a variety of different cognitive stages: information processing, attitude formation, and political behavior (Brader, 2005; Brader et al., 2008; Druckman & McDermott, 2008; Kühne & Schemer, 2015; Small & Lerner, 2008; Vasilopoulos, Marcus, Valentino, et al., 2018; Vasilopoulou & Wagner, 2017).

Populist actors are often described as highly emotional which has been assumed to be a key factor in their political success around the world. The concept of populism developed into one of the most contested concepts in political science of the past decades (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). In recent years, however, the ideational approach has gained significant popularity. This approach sees populism first and foremost as a set of ideas that portray populism as a "thin-centered" ideology (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). This ideology is based on the morally charged distinction between "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite," as well as on the appeal to the "general will" of the people.

Studies discussing populism often emphasize emotional appeals as a key characteristic of populist discourse (Kriesi, 2014). Researchers argue that populist actors use emotions to blame the elites and other groups for the grievances of society (Hameleers et al., 2016). After all, populists portray themselves typically as political outsiders—even if they are not—who criticize and blame the allegedly corrupt elites and the political establishment (Ernst et al., 2017). Thus, negative emotions are inexorably linked to populist communication. And indeed, a series of empirical studies shows the importance of negative emotional appeals for populist support.

Rico et al. (2017) show that in Spain, anger over the economic crisis can make individuals develop populist attitudes. In Britain, anger was associated with higher support for leaving the European Union (Vasilopoulou & Wagner, 2017), and in France, anger is associated with the strengthening of authoritarian policy preferences among right-wing individuals (Vasilopoulos, Marcus, & Foucault, 2018). Furthermore, Vasilopoulos, Marcus, Valentino, et al. (2018) found in their study on the Parisian terror attacks that anger is associated with voting for the French far-right party Front National. In the American context, Banks and Valentino (2012) show that anger is associated with symbolic racism and boosts opposition to racially redistributive policies among white conservatives. Fear, on the other hand, has also been found to significantly increase authoritarian policy preferences—yet, among left-wing individuals (Vasilopoulos, Marcus, & Foucault, 2018). Furthermore, anxiety has been found to cause conspiracy thinking about minorities (Grzesiak-Feldman, 2013) and to make individuals more likely to search for, remember, and agree with threatening pieces of news about immigrants (Gadarian & Albertson, 2014). Lastly, Scheller (2019) showed in a theoretical simulation that fear appeals of populist extreme parties can be successful in attracting new voters.

However, next to anger and fear, other negative emotions might also play an important role in the communication of populist parties. Disgust, for instance, prompts individuals to stay away from impure and dangerous substances. However, research indicates that humans not only experience disgust reactions from physical contamination but also from moral breaches (Lazarus, 1991). People experiencing disgust reactions are more likely to judge moral violations as more severe and have more negative views on specific minority groups (Inbar, Pizarro, & Bloom, 2009; Schnall, Haidt, Clore, & Jordan, 2008). Furthermore, Aarøe, Petersen, and Arceneaux (2017) showed that increased disgust sensitivity leads to increased opposition against immigration. Disgust responses can trigger the behavioral immune system which can lead individuals to oppose immigration in order to protect themselves from pathogens.

Sadness, on the other hand, is an emotion connected to disappointment, failure, and loss (Brader & Marcus, 2013). Little is known about its political consequences, but it shows similar appraisal patterns and individual consequences as fear. Sad individuals have been found to process political information more systematically and rely less on initial bias (Small & Lerner, 2008). Thus, similar to fear, sadness responses make individuals more open to new information and persuasion. Hence, similar to the persuasion effect of fear appeals (Scheller, 2019), populist actors could try to appeal to sadness in individuals in order to win over new voters.

All in all, building on this relationship between negative emotions and populist parties, I expect higher levels of negative emotional language associated with anger, fear, disgust, and sadness in the communication of populist parties. Nonpopulist actors, on the other hand, should be interested in framing the state of the world in positive terms by emphasizing the achievements of the political

establishment. After all, mainstream parties routinely switch from government to opposition and are therefore in a winning position (Hobolt & de Vries, 2015). Thus, they have an incentive to frame the status quo as positive as possible.

H1: Populist parties use appeals to negative/positive emotions to a greater/lesser extent than nonpopulist parties.

Other Factors Explaining Emotional Appeals

Yet, populism should not be the only factor influencing the usage of emotionally charged language. In fact, previous research found that the communication medium and the politicians' status level can influence the language and style politicians use in their political communication (e.g., Bos, van der Brug, & de Vreese, 2011; Engesser, Ernst, Esser, & Büchel, 2017; Van Kessel & Castelein, 2016).

In regard to communication medium, Twitter is one of the most widely used social network for political discussions. Online platforms in general are perfectly fitted for actors who want to use highly emotionalized styles to spread their messages, since social media circumvent journalistic gatekeepers and do not adhere to professional norms and news values (Engesser, Ernst, et al., 2017). This also allows for the usage of harsher language in order to discredit and attack political enemies. And indeed, previous research has found that Twitter is used by politicians with an antiestablishment agenda to voice unambiguous criticism and to identify the culprits of social problems (Van Kessel & Castelein, 2016). Hence, I expect populist parties to make more use of negative emotional language on social media compared to press releases.

However, next to its usage as a tool to attack established elites, social media can also offer the possibility of mobilizing support for elections (Kriesi, 2014). The Internet is often perceived as a place where unorganized groups of like-minded people gather and can be easily recruited (Shirky, 2008). Yet, in order to mobilize support, populist parties also need to appeal to positive emotions (Gerstlé & Nai, 2019). Assuming that populists typically portray themselves as political outsiders, due to a lack of government experience in the current political system, populist actors should focus on future-oriented emotions that attach the possibility of a brighter future to themselves. Future-oriented (prospective) positive emotions, such as enthusiasm and hope, have been found to be a powerful mobilizing force. According to affective intelligence theory, enthusiasm is part of the disposition system, which reinforces positive goal-directed behavior (Marcus, Neuman, & MacKuen, 2000). Enthusiasm has been linked to a higher political involvement (Marcus & Mackuen, 1993) and other forms of political participation (Valentino et al., 2011). Hope, on the other hand, is considered to be the most prospective emotion, insofar that it creates expectations and the belief that better outcomes are possible in the future (Chadwick, 2015; Just, Crigler, & Belt, 2007; Lazarus, 2001). Empirical studies found a persuasion effect of hope (Wirz, 2018) and showed that it is a crucial factor in voting preferences through stimulating information seeking during election campaigns (Just et al., 2007).

In regard to nonpopulist actors, I expect the opposite. Established mainstream parties are the main beneficiaries of the current political system; thus, they are expected to gain electoral support if they are able to shine positive light on their past track record. Hence, they should emphasize all the positive things that they themselves and the political system have brought forward in the past. To do so, they can appeal to retrospective positive emotions that put an emotional focus on the past. Joy, for instance, is a retrospective emotion, since satisfaction and happiness stem from the fact that developments in the (recent) past were congruent with one's own goals. Another retrospective emotion is pride, which is triggered by previous success and is described as a reaction to an "enhancement of one's ego-identity by taking credit for a valued object or achievement, either our own or that of someone or group with whom we identify" (Lazarus, 2001, p. 67).

H2a: Populist parties increase appeals to negative emotions and to prospective positive emotions in their Twitter communication.

H2b: Nonpopulist parties increase appeals to retrospective positive emotions in their Twitter communication.

Party leaders play an important role for all political parties. They are the most visible representative of the party in the media, thereby impacting the party's image among the public and other politicians (Bos et al., 2011). However, populist parties in particular depend on strong leaders to mobilize the electorate as they are often new and less known to the public. Furthermore, they often lack a clear political agenda, and their party structure is often more centralized and less organized. Thus, they are more dependent on a strong leader who organizes the party internally and represents the party externally (Kriesi, 2014).

Empirical research showed that populist leaders often exhibit high levels of populist style compared to other political actors (Bos et al., 2011; Engesser, Ernst, et al., 2017). Considering negative emotions as a key factor in populist style, it is reasonable to expect that populist leaders increase appeals to negative emotions compared to party backbenchers. Negative emotions play an important role for populist leaders in creating the image of a strong, authoritative leader. Anger can be used to attack opponents, while expressing the grievances and sadness of their electorate can help in portraying themselves as a "common man" (Bracciale & Martella, 2017; Kriesi, 2014). Furthermore, stirring up fear and anxieties can potentially help populist leaders in winning over new supporters (Scheller, 2019). On the other hand, populist leaders also need to appeal to positive emotions to mobilize support (Gerstlé & Nai, 2019). Again, since they are typically political newcomers with no track record in the current political system, populist leaders are expected to make use of prospective positive emotions. Some scholars argued that hope is one positive emotion that is often directed towards populist leaders (Engesser, Fawzi, et al., 2017). Hope, as a future-oriented emotion, has the potential to be a powerful persuasive tool, which has been found in a number of studies (Chadwick, 2015; Wirz, 2018). Similarly, enthusiasm appeals are expected to mobilize further support, based on existing partisan predispositions (Brader, 2006).

Concerning the communication of nonpopulist leaders, I expect the opposite. Similar to the hypothesis on nonpopulist Twitter communication, nonpopulist leaders should appeal significantly more to retrospective positive emotions (pride and joy), in order to prompt citizens to focus on their past achievements, framing their own past success in positive light.

H3a: Populist leaders make more appeals to negative emotions and to prospective positive emotions than party backbenchers.

H3b: Nonpopulist leaders make more appeals to retrospective positive emotions than party backbenchers.

Methods

Data. This article analyzes press releases and Twitter communication of all major parties in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland which were at some point during the research period represented in the national parliament (for an overview of all parties included, see Appendix S1 in the online supporting information). In total, the study includes 21 parties. In addition, the study also includes the Twitter communication of national Members of Parliament (MPs) from all three countries, including party leaders who are not actual MPs. The total number of individual Twitter accounts is 666. For

Austria and Germany, the research period starts on the January 1, 2016, and ends on the December 31, 2018. For Switzerland, the research period starts one year earlier, on January 1, 2015. Among all parties, four parties are classified as populist according to prior research (see Rooduijn et al., 2019): the Alternative for Germany (AfD), the German left-party Die Linke, the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), and the Swiss People's party (SVP).

For the empirical analysis, I retrieved tweets from the official party Twitter accounts, the available parliamentary groups Twitter accounts, and all available Twitter accounts of national MPs. I mined individual tweets, excluding retweets. For the data mining, I connected to the Twitter API using the Python package "tweepy" (Roesslein, 2009). This amounted to a total number of 754,941 tweets in the period of research, stemming from a total of 693 accounts. To collect press releases, I scraped official websites of the political parties and the websites of the party parliamentary groups. This amounts to a total number of 27,480 press releases. More descriptive information about the data sample can be found in Appendix S1 in the online supporting information.

Emotional Dictionary. This study applies a novel emotional dictionary ("ed8"), that has been specifically created to measure discrete emotional language in political text, while taking into consideration German language specifics. It can measure a wide range of different positive and negative emotions, namely anger, fear, disgust, sadness, joy, enthusiasm, pride, and hope.

The ed8 dictionary is based on the augmented dictionary (Rauh, 2018), a German sentiment dictionary that reliably discriminates positive and negative tone in German political language. However, the augmented dictionary cannot differentiate between different emotions. I therefore extended this dictionary with separate categories that attribute words to the eight different emotions included (for details on the construction process, see Appendix S2 in the online supporting information).

Using dictionaries can have a number of distinct advantages: it is fast and easy to implement, it involves low costs, and it increases replicability. This being said, simply employing an off-the-shelf dictionary does not automatically lead to valid and reliable results. Since dictionaries are highly context dependent and often tailored to the English language, applying them to data from another language or domain can lead to distorted results. This becomes clear in the validation process, where I compare the ed8 dictionary to human judgment and other off-the-shelf dictionaries available for German language. To validate and compare its results, I used a German crowd-working platform called *Crowdguru*, which is similar to Amazon's Mechanical Turk. As data, I selected 10,000 sentences coming from two important sources of political communication: parliamentary speeches and Facebook party accounts. Appendix S2 in the online supporting information gives details and the results of this validation test and the comparison to other dictionaries. Overall, the results show that the novel ed8 dictionary applied in this study outperforms widely used off-the-shelf dictionaries (NRC and LIWC dictionary) in several measures across all comparable emotions. It shows robust F1 scores and substantially improves the accuracy of automated text classification compared to other dictionaries.

Analysis. Before the dataset has been used in different analyses, a number of preprocessing steps have been conducted, following strategies applied in prior research (Rauh, 2018). Preprocessing included the complete removal of numbers, punctuation, links, German stopwords, as well as setting the remaining terms to lower case. I also dismissed any text document that was not written in German. Lastly, I disassembled tweets and press releases into sentences, thereby creating documents of comparable length. Without disassembling, the press releases would have been significantly longer than the tweets (average length in press releases is 225.8 words per document, compared to Twitter with 14.2 words per document). This would have impacted the proportion of emotional

words per document. After deconstructing the documents, the average length per document in press releases is 17.8 and on Twitter 9.5. After preprocessing, I applied the ed8 dictionary described above. The dictionary counts emotional terms in each document for each of the discrete emotions. For example, a document containing four anger words and two emotional words connected to joy obtains a value of 4 for anger and 2 for joy. To create comparable scores, I created normalized emotional scores, that is, dividing the emotional scores by the word count of each document. These normalized scores for each of the eight emotional categories serve as dependent variables in this study. I further multiplied the proportional emotional scores by 100 to receive percentages for the ease of interpretation. Appendix S2 in the online supporting information shows the mean values of the emotional scores by country.

The independent variables included in the analysis are the following: populism, Twitter communication, party leader (all three are dummy variables). Party leader communication includes exclusively tweets, because only on Twitter is the authorship of the message identifiable. Furthermore, party leaders are defined as the party chairs, the deputy party chairs, or the general secretaries of the parties (if available), following information from the official party websites.

Empirical Results

Hypothesis 1 predicted a higher level of appeals to negative emotions and a lower level of appeals to positive emotions in the communication of populist parties compared to nonpopulist parties. This hypothesis is fully confirmed, as can be seen in Figure 1. Populist parties show a higher salience of all negative emotions and a lower salience of all positive emotions. This is further indicated by the linear regression coefficients in Table 1. It shows significant positive coefficients for negative emotions and significant negative coefficients for positive emotions. This finding is in line with previous studies which found that extreme parties use less positive emotional language (Crabtree et al., 2018). Figure 1 also reveals that anger and fear have the highest salience in populist communication, emphasizing the important role of these emotions for populist parties (Nguyen, 2019; Rico et al., 2017).

In general, the coefficients in this study are relatively small. Populists use, for instance, approximately 0.58% more anger words per sentence than nonpopulists. A possible explanation for this might be that in the overall sample only small amounts of words are of an emotional nature. This coincides with prior research which found that only approximately 4% of words used in written texts carry affective content (Pennebaker, Mehl, & Niederhoffer, 2003). In the data of this study, the average percentage of emotional words appealing to negative emotions per document is 3.19% and 5.07% for positive emotions. However, while the effects are relatively small, considering the large size of the data set, small effects can still be substantively meaningful.

In Hypotheses 2a and 2b, I expected populist parties to appeal more to negative emotions and prospective positive emotions on Twitter, while I expected nonpopulist parties to increase their appeals to retrospective positive emotions. This hypothesis is only partly confirmed. Table 2 shows the effects of the independent variables on the eight emotional scores for populist and nonpopulist actors. As can be seen, populist parties do significantly increase negative emotions on Twitter, but only anger and disgust. Interestingly, disgust shows the largest coefficient for negative emotions with the coefficient being double as large as the one for anger. The coefficients for sadness and fear are significant and negative. Furthermore, populists do not increase appeals to enthusiasm and hope (prospective positive emotions) as expected. Instead, they significantly increase appeals to joy and pride (retrospective positive emotions), with the largest coefficient for joy.

Nonpopulist parties, as expected, increase appeals to joy and pride on Twitter, as indicated by the positive coefficients for Twitter in the lower panel of Table 2. However, contrary to my

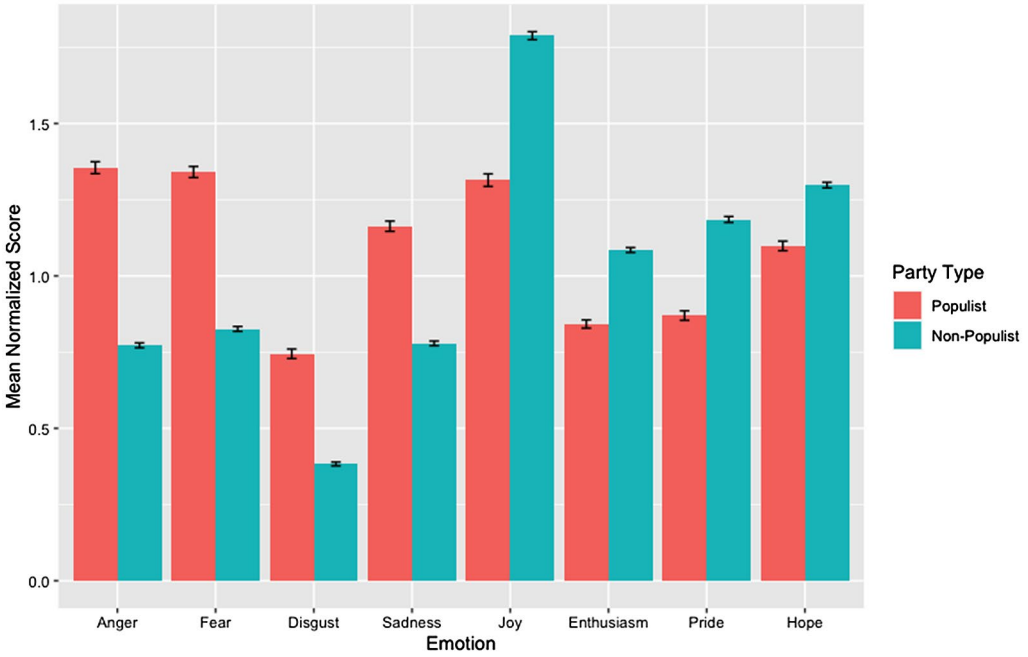

Figure 1. Mean normalized emotion scores by party type. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

expectation, they also slightly increase appeals to anger and disgust (and a very small increase for fear). These findings are further illustrated in Figure 2, which shows the effect of Twitter on emotional scores for populist and nonpopulist actors. Overall, these findings largely corroborate the idea that Twitter is used to attack political enemies, since anger and disgust are two emotions that can be used to attribute blame to opponents and emphasize their moral corruption (Hameleers et al., 2016; Lazarus, 1991). Opposite to what expected, it is not just populist actors that use Twitter to attack opponents but also nonpopulist actors. On the other hand, both party types increase appeals to joy and pride. As hypothesized, this finding lends support to the assumption that nonpopulist parties positively frame their own achievements as established parties retrospectively in order to mobilize support. But why do populist parties use joy and pride? Some theories argue that populists use pride and joy to create a positive ingroup identity, not necessarily based on their own achievements since they are typically political outsiders, but rather based on concepts such as nation or religion (Salmela & von Scheve, 2017). The mechanisms will be further investigated and discussed below.

In Hypotheses 3a and 3b, I expected populist leaders to increase appeals to negative emotions and to prospective emotions, while nonpopulist leaders should increase appeals to retrospective positive emotions, namely joy and pride. Table 2 gives a first indication that this hypothesis is partly confirmed. As expected, it shows that nonpopulist leaders increase appeals to joy and pride and decrease appeals to enthusiasm and hope, putting a clear focus on retrospective positive emotions (see the lower panel in Table 2). Opposite to what I expected, they also slightly increase anger and sadness, yet the coefficients remain very small. This is further illustrated in Figure 3. Populist leaders, on the other hand, increase negative emotional appeals compared to party backbenchers. As expected, they also increase appeals to hope and enthusiasm, and yet the coefficients remain as well relatively

Table 1. Linear Regression Model Predicting the Effect of Populism

	Dependent Variable							
	Anger	Fear	Disgust	Sadness	Joy	Enthusiasm	Pride	Hope
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Populist	0.583***	0.515***	0.362***	0.384***	−0.474***	−0.243***	−0.315***	−0.199***
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.013)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Constant	0.772***	0.826***	0.383***	0.779***	1.788***	1.085***	1.185***	1.298***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Observations	1,194,147	1,194,147	1,194,147	1,194,147	1,194,147	1,194,147	1,194,147	1,194,147
R^2	0.003	0.003	0.002	0.002	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.0004
Adjusted R^2	0.003	0.003	0.002	0.002	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.0004
Residual std. error	4.287	4.178	3.360	3.933	6.188	3.886	4.658	4.443
F statistic	3961.694***	3253.777***	2482.306***	2047.758***	1257.065***	835.441***	980.974***	431.870***

Note. Standard errors in parentheses.
*$p < .1$; **$p < .05$; ***$p < .01$.

Table 2. Predictors of Use of Each Emotional Appeal by Populism Status

	Dependent Variable							
Populist Actors	Anger	Fear	Disgust	Sadness	Joy	Enthusiasm	Pride	Hope
Twitter	0.095***	–0.052**	0.193***	–0.119***	1.066***	–0.061***	0.349***	–0.033*
	(0.024)	(0.023)	(0.019)	(0.021)	(0.026)	(0.017)	(0.019)	(0.020)
Leader	0.182***	0.122***	0.072***	0.184***	0.290***	0.047**	0.055**	0.059**
	(0.029)	(0.027)	(0.023)	(0.025)	(0.031)	(0.020)	(0.023)	(0.024)
Constant	1.256***	1.363***	0.585***	1.229***	0.452***	0.882***	0.593***	1.116***
	(0.021)	(0.019)	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.022)	(0.014)	(0.017)	(0.017)
Observations	279,995	279,995	279,995	279,995	279,995	279,995	279,995	279,995
R^2	0.0002	0.0001	0.0005	0.0003	0.007	0.0001	0.001	0.00003
Adjusted R^2	0.0002	0.0001	0.0004	0.0002	0.007	0.00005	0.001	0.00002
Residual std. error	5.271	4.934	4.222	4.548	5.547	3.663	4.219	4.248
F statistic	33.873***	10.768***	63.804***	35.016***	1050.915***	7.649***	181.508***	3.819**
	Dependent Variable							
Nonpopulist Actors	Anger	Fear	Disgust	Sadness	Joy	Enthusiasm	Pride	Hope
Twitter	0.156***	0.017*	0.151***	–0.021**	1.518***	–0.330***	0.409***	–0.253***
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.015)	(0.009)	(0.011)	(0.010)
Leader	0.039***	0.008	–0.015	0.023*	0.384***	–0.056***	0.270***	–0.032**
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.011)	(0.013)	(0.022)	(0.014)	(0.017)	(0.016)
Constant	0.661***	0.813***	0.281***	0.790***	0.702***	1.318***	0.875***	1.475***
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.012)	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.008)
Observations	914,152	914,152	914,152	914,152	914,152	914,152	914,152	914,152
R^2	0.0004	0.00001	0.001	0.00001	0.013	0.002	0.002	0.001
Adjusted R^2	0.0004	0.00000	0.001	0.00001	0.013	0.002	0.002	0.001
Residual std. error	3.936	3.918	3.046	3.725	6.323	3.949	4.778	4.500
F statistic	170.556***	2.393*	235.123***	3.586**	6254.572***	728.331***	1003.477***	323.569***

Note. Standard errors in parentheses.
*$p < .1$; **$p < .05$; ***$p < .01$.

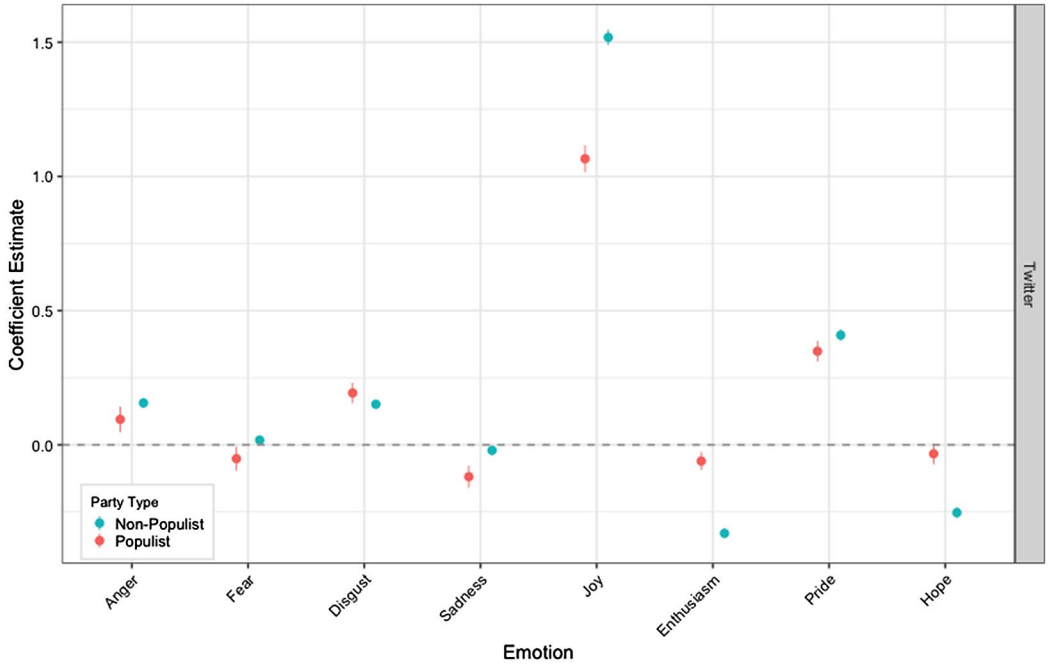

Figure 2. The effect of Twitter communication on negative emotional appeals conditional on party type. Figure 2 plots the regression coefficients based on the regression models in Table 2. The lines represent two-tailed 95% confidence intervals. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

small. The largest coefficient is again for joy with 0.29. This again raises the question why populist leaders use, opposite to what is expected, retrospective emotions (joy and pride). Another interesting finding concerns fear and sadness. While populists generally decrease appeals to sadness and fear on Twitter (see the upper panel in Table 2, the effect of Twitter for populists), populist leaders increase these appeals significantly on Twitter, with a larger coefficient for sadness than anger and disgust. This increase hints towards the notion that populist leaders focus particularly on appeals to fear and sadness compared to party backbenchers, for example, to identify with their electorate's grievances or to potentially sway new voters (Kriesi, 2014; Scheller, 2019).

Investigating the Mechanism: Qualitative Text Examples

To better understand how political actors use the emotional appeals identified above, it is necessary to delve deeper into the data at hand. To investigate the mechanisms, I took random samples of text documents with above-mean values in the outcome values at stake. If, for instance, populist actors really use anger and disgust to attack political opponents on Twitter, we should find examples of that strategy in the text documents. For a similar "small data" approach, see, for example, Engesser, Ernst, et al. (2017). Furthermore, this section provides only some examples; please see Appendix S3 in the online supporting information for further documents.

First, I start with examining populist communication. On Twitter, there are indeed numerous text examples that show populist actors using harsh and derogatory language associated with anger and disgust to attack opponents or specific outgroups. Beatrix von Storch (AfD) writes for example about the German president: "#scum President Steinmeier tramples on the law" (September 1, 2017), accusing him of unconstitutional behavior. She further tweeted numerous tweets about refugees in Germany, for example, "Unbelievable. Probation for a 'refugee' who rapes a 6-year-old girl. It's

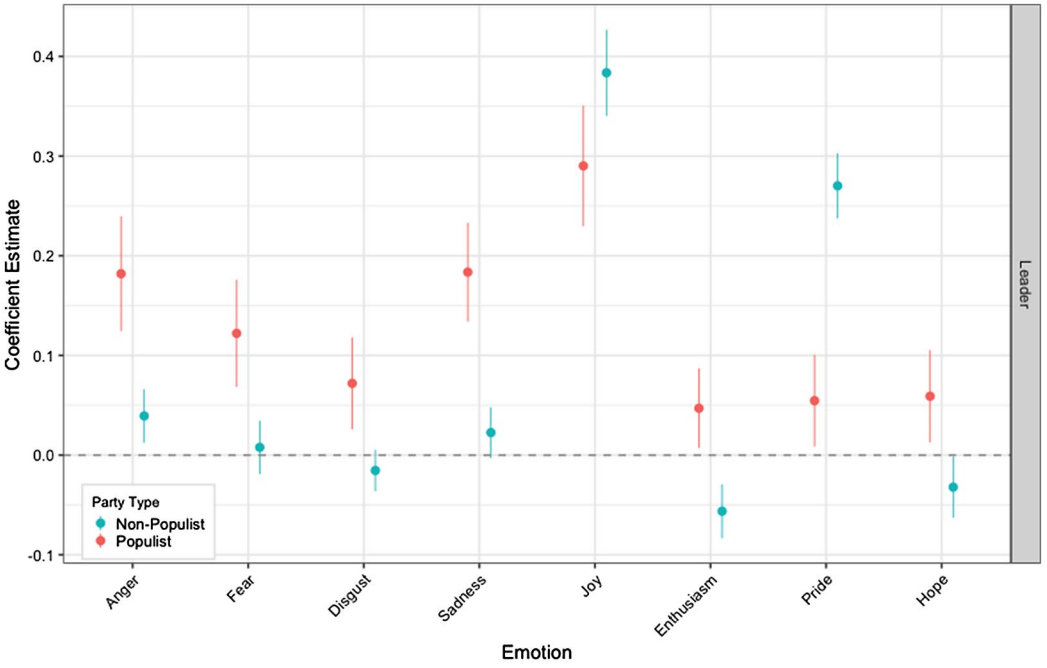

Figure 3. The effect of leader communication on emotional appeals conditional on party type. Figure 3 plots the regression coefficients based on the regression models in Table 2. The lines represent two-tailed 95% confidence intervals. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

disgusting. That's unacceptable. Our system is broken" (February 15, 2017). Bernd Riexinger from Die Linke tweets: "The German government mocks the fight for human rights in order to bow down again before Erdogan. Makes me want to puke" (September 2, 2016). Similar tweets with anger or disgust-related language can be found in Austrian and Swiss populist communication. For instance, Austrian MP Christian Höbart (FPÖ) tweeted this text together with a link about an alleged rape committed by four refugees: "Disgusting! Despicable! Sexual harassment: Charges against four students" (January 14, 2016).

While still appealing to anger and disgust, populist leaders also increase appeals to sadness and fear significantly. Numerous text examples can be found where populist leaders express sadness for the grievances of victims (often related to terrorism) or simply "common people." For instance, Beatrix von Storch (AfD) writes after the terrorist attacks in Berlin: "the victims have to ask the people in charge to remember them, so to speak. It's unworthy and sad" (January 10, 2017). Or Heinz-Christian Strache (FPÖ): "Very sad: did a Viennese woman die because rescue was overwhelmed by the asylum chaos?" (March 30, 2016). In addition, populist leaders also appeal to fear in their tweets: "Threatening, violent, intimidating, beating, pillaging, pillorying against dissidents" tweets Beatrix von Storch (AfD, August 27, 2017) about alleged attacks against AfD campaign posters. Other tweets refer to war and terror, migration, or crimes (often allegedly committed by refugees): "The future prospects for our country are bleak if even the smallest immigrants create a climate of fear at our schools" (Alice Weidel, AfD, March 31, 2018).

Lastly, in the beginning of this article, I hypothesized that populists would turn to prospective emotions on Twitter and in leader communication to mobilize support. While they significantly increase appeals to hope and enthusiasm in leader communication (text examples can be found in Appendix S3 in the online supporting information), the quantitative results above indicate that they show larger increases for retrospective emotions instead (mostly joy, but also pride). One possible

reason might be that they use joy and pride to create a positive ingroup identity (e.g., based on achievements of the nation instead of their own) or to promote a populist leader (Salmela & von Scheve, 2017). Indeed, text examples from Twitter show that they often express pride or joy in relation to the nation or towards the populist leader. For instance: "I am very proud of the performance of Switzerland" (Sandra Sollberger, SVP, June 2, 2016); "I am proud of this strong team for our home country Austria and our Austrian population!" (Heinz-Christian Strache, FPÖ, November 9, 2017) or "We can be incredibly proud of Norbert Hofer [leader of FPÖ]" (Heinz-Christian Strache, FPÖ, September 10, 2016). While using these appeals, they also explicitly exclude specific persons from these ingroup identities: "We do not need the services of Özil and Gündoğan to be proud of our country!" tweeted MP Andreas Bleck (AfD, June 14, 2018), referring to two German football stars with Turkish roots.

Now turning to non-populist communication, the quantitative results above indicated that nonpopulist actors increase appeals to retrospective emotions on Twitter and in leader communication. I expected these appeals to frame past achievements and political system in positive terms. Indeed, I found numerous text examples expressing joy or pride of their prior achievements and performances. Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (CDU), for example, refers to the state of the economy and the job market in her tweet "Today we are looking at a highly efficient Saar [state in Germany] economy with the highest number of employees subject to social insurance contributions" (May 24, 2017). Numerous other politicians congratulate party colleagues for the work they have achieved: "Thank you #sabinekubli for your many years of successful work" (Florian Brenzikofer, Switzerland, GPS, September 28, 2017). However, there are also a number of tweets that express joy and pride about the political system as a whole: "Germany has a strong democracy, let's be proud of it" (Uwe Schummer, CDU, October 24, 2017); "Pride in shared values in recognition of cultural diversity and strong participation of women" (Anna Christmann, Germany, Greens, March 16, 2018), "#Peace and #prosperity in #Europe did not fall from the sky, but is the result of hard work" (Cem Özdemir, Greens, Germany, January 22, 2018). These findings clearly show that nonpopulist actors not only use emotional language to frame their own past achievements in positive terms, but they highlight the positive aspects of the established political system as a whole. This finding largely strengthens the assumption that mainstream parties are main beneficiaries in the current political system and use emotional language to frame it in positive light.

Lastly, I found in the quantitative part of the analysis that nonpopulist actors increase appeals to anger and disgust on Twitter. Text examples suggests that they use emotional language associated with anger and disgust, similar to populist actors, to attack their political opponents. And numerous tweets show that mainstream actors perceive predominantly populist right parties as their political enemies. "This #AfD is racist and that's disgusting!" (Beate Müller-Gemmeke, Grüne Germany, July 28, 2018). Similar evidence comes from Austria and Switzerland: "Most disgusting brown dirt, and once again the FPÖ is involved" (Harald Walser, Grüne Austria, October 30, 2018); "As in confirmation of the editorial, SVP shows its repulsive, cynical inhumanity" (Michael Sorg, SP, August 28, 2015).

As additional robustness tests, Appendix S4 in the online supporting information provides supplementary analyses replicating the analysis country by country, with different dictionaries, and exchanging the linear regression model with a negative binomial regression. Overall, the findings of these additional exercises are very similar to the main analysis, adding additional robustness to the main findings.

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this article was to study how populist and nonpopulist actors differ in terms of emotional appeals and what factors impact these differences. I employed a novel emotional dictionary

and a unique data set consisting of text data from three European countries. The core finding of this study reveals that populist actors use more negative emotional appeals than nonpopulist actors. This finding is in line with prior research on the usage of emotional language in the communication of extremist parties (Crabtree et al., 2018). The empirical results indicate that populists use significantly more appeals to anger, fear, disgust, and sadness than nonpopulist actors. Especially anger and fear stand out in populist communication, showing the highest salience among all emotions under scrutiny. On the other hand, nonpopulist parties appeal significantly more to joy, enthusiasm, pride, and hope, with the highest level by far for joy.

Furthermore, the results have shown that emotional appeals depend on the communication medium and politicians' status level. Both party types increased anger and disgust on Twitter, as well as joy and pride. Populist leaders focused on appeals to fear, sadness, and joy while nonpopulist leaders increased appeals to joy and pride. These findings suggest that different negative and positive emotions are being used for different purposes. This assumption is further corroborated by the analysis of qualitative text examples. When political actors want to attack political opponents, the elites, the media, or outgroups such as refugees, they appeal to anger and disgust. This makes sense because both emotions are concerned with moral judgements and are elicited through violations of social norms (Lazarus, 1991; Petersen, 2010). As such, both emotions can strengthen preferences to punish rule violators. On the other hand, when populist leaders use language associated with fear and sadness, they seem to aim at identifying with and sharing the emotions of "the people." This finding provides empirical proof to theories arguing that populist leaders try to emotionally identify with the grievances of the "common" man on the street (Kriesi, 2014; Salmela & von Scheve, 2017). Lastly, populist actors have been found to mainly focus on joy and pride appeals instead of appeals to hope and enthusiasm on social media. Results indicate that they use joy and pride to create a positive ingroup identity, predominantly based on the nation (at least for populist right parties). This finding confirms prior theoretical work that argued the right-wing populist can use these emotions to make religious or national identities more salient (Salmela & von Scheve, 2017). This is assumed to be an easy strategy for (right-wing) populists, since taking pride in aspects such as ethnicity or nationality is far less demanding and complicated than taking pride in past individual achievements.

Nonpopulist actors, on the other hand, use retrospective emotions (joy and pride) to put a positive focus on their own past achievements. In addition, text examples showed that they also used these emotions to frame the political system as a whole in positive terms. This finding is in line with the assumption that established mainstream parties are the ones that benefit the most from the political status quo (Hobolt & de Vries, 2015).

Overall, these findings make an important contribution to the literature. They suggest that political actors use different emotional appeals systematically for different purposes: whether they want to attack opponents, to identify with their supporters, to focus on past achievements, or to create a positive ingroup identity. This result strongly emphasizes the need of moving away from sentiment analysis towards the investigation of discrete emotions.

What are the broader implications of these findings? Overall, populist and especially radical-right discourse can have a number of negative outcomes for democracy, by negatively stereotyping minorities, attacking media, or simply by enforcing negative discourse in society. Negative debating has been associated with detrimental outcomes such as affective polarization (Iyengar, Sood, & Lelkes, 2012). Specifically, high levels of appeals to anger in populist communication can further increase populist-right support, by making people develop populist attitudes and influence their voting behavior (Nguyen, 2019; Rico et al., 2017). Disgust, on the other hand, has been connected to an increase in anti-immigrant attitudes through the activation of the behavioral immune system (Aarøe et al., 2017). Importantly, this effect has been strongest in liberals rather than conservatives. This means that increasing appeals to disgust might impact the society as whole, not just populist-right partisans. These effects can further be propelled through social media which, as the

results of this study indicate, show significantly higher levels of anger and disgust for both populists and nonpopulist actors.

Furthermore, this study provides empirical proof to theoretical models that showed how populist leaders can win over new support. Scheller's (2019) simulation suggested that populist actors can sway new voters through appealing to fear, however, only when they are able to clearly distance themselves from ideological competitors. The results of this article indeed deliver proof that populist actors, and populist leaders in particular, show a high level of fear appeals in their communication. Furthermore, all included populist parties are at the far ends of the political spectrum (Rooduijn et al., 2019). Thus, these appeals could succeed in making citizens open for populist persuasion. Furthermore, if combined with anxieties about immigration (as the text examples indicate), fear appeals can lead to further consumption of fear-inducing messages (Gadarian & Albertson, 2014) and even to the strengthening of anti-immigrant attitudes (Brader et al., 2008). The consequences of sadness have been understudied thus far; yet it has been shown that, similar to fear, sadness can increase effortful information processing, induce a change of plans, and make individuals open for persuasion (Small & Lerner, 2008). Thus, this would further strengthen the persuasiveness of populist leaders, since they significantly increase appeals to sadness. Yet not only negative emotional appeals can have detrimental consequences for democracy and plurality. As the findings of this study show, populist (right) actors also use positive emotional appeals (joy and pride) to create an ingroup identity mainly based on nationality. These appeals can be important for reinforcing social identities and group solidarity (Turner, 2007), and yet they can also lead to antisocial behavior. Collective pride or collective narcissism have been associated with prejudice and hostility towards outgroups and minority groups (De Zavala, Cichocka, Eidelson, & Jayawickreme, 2009).

One important limitation of this study touches upon the generalizability of the results. The data of this study only include political communication from central European countries with similar media systems (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Yet, one could expect different emotional strategies of political actors in other parts of the world, especially since some studies support cultural differences in emotional arousal (see, e.g., Lim, 2016). However, evidence from political communication research supports broader generalizability of the findings. Gerstlé and Nai (2019) showed in their study about electoral campaigning that populist actors from different regions in the world share similarities when it comes to populist style, emotionality, and negativity, as do mainstream politicians. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the findings in this study could potentially travel beyond the central European context. In addition, this study is further limited since it only takes textual emotional appeals into consideration. Prior research found other forms of emotional expressions besides written language such as images (Iyer, Webster, Hornsey, & Vanman, 2014), background music (Brader, 2005), or facial and body expressions (D'Errico, Poggi, & Vincze, 2012; Ekman, 1993). This opens up new avenues of future work, for instance by combining textual and visual appeals. Furthermore, now that it has been established which emotions populist and nonpopulist parties appeal to, future research could turn to the question of how populist-right and populist-left parties differ in terms of emotional appeals. Another avenue of possible research is a further dissection of nonpopulist parties into government and opposition parties, which might yield additional knowledge on emotional strategies employed by political parties. Alternatively, future research could turn to long-term effects of negative populist emotionality and research how this influences the communication of other parties. This might further help in understanding the transformation of political discourse that we are currently witnessing around the world.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's web site:

Appendix S1. Details on Data and Variables

Table S1. List of Parties Included in the Analysis

Appendix S2. Dictionary

Table S2. Example Terms Per Emotional Categories

Table S3. Correlation Table between Different Emotions

Table S4. Precision, Recall, and F1 Score for the ed8 Dictionary

Table S5. Precision, Recall, and F1 Scores for the NRC EmoLex Dictionary

Table S6. Precision, Recall, and F1 Scores for the LIWC Dictionary

Figure S1. Human judgement against normalized emotional scores (negative emotions).

Figure S2. Human judgement against normalized emotional scores (positive emotions).

Figure S3. Mean normalized scores for eight emotions by country.

Appendix S3. Qualitative Examples